

Press Release – 16 May 2017

[Danish version](#)

## Concerns about tightening of family reunification rules in Denmark, but good progress of diversity in policing

Strasbourg, 16.05.2017 – The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) today published its [fifth report on Denmark](#) in which it analyses recent developments and outstanding issues and makes recommendations to the authorities.

ECRI welcomes the Danish authorities support to civil society organisations working with integration, including newly-arrived refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection during the migration crisis. The Council of Europe’s anti-racism body also notes positive steps to increase diversity in policing by recruiting more officers from ethnic minority backgrounds and to address the social marginalisation of members of the Greenlandic Inuit community residing in Denmark.

However, the report criticizes Danish policies vis-à-vis refugees, namely new rules for family reunification for beneficiaries of subsidiary protection, including an extension to three years of the normal waiting period before a family can be united. This goes against ECRI’s previous recommendation to address the issue as a matter of priority through a wide-ranging reform.

Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland said: “Tightening rules for family reunification increases the danger of minors being separated from their families for indefinite periods of time and makes them more vulnerable to trafficking and sexual abuse”.

The Danish authorities also introduced, again, a reduced level of social welfare benefits for some groups of newly-arrived persons, including refugees and beneficiaries of subsidiary protection. ECRI had criticised a similar scheme of differential social welfare standards in the past. In the current report, ECRI has reiterated its concern about the actual amounts, which are widely viewed as being too low to facilitate the integration of recipients into Danish society.

The report also criticises the persistence of racist hate speech, in particular against Muslims. Furthermore, data collection for hate crime incidents needs to be improved.

“Combatting racist hate speech is of utmost importance to ensure that the human dignity of everyone is fully respected.” said ECRI’s Chair, Christian Ahlund.

In spite of a previous recommendation to tackle the problem of school segregation, ECRI noted there has been a new development in one location, suggesting that this practice still occurs.

The report makes a number of recommendations. The following two are to be implemented on a priority basis and will be the subject of interim follow-up by ECRI within two years:

- a comprehensive data collection system for racist and homo-/transphobic hate speech incidents should be set up, with fully disaggregated data by category of offence, type of hate motivation, target group, as well as judicial follow-up and outcome. The authorities should also take measures to tackle under-reporting of hate speech.
- ethnic segregation in the Langkaer school in Aarhus should be ended as a matter of urgency and measures taken to prevent any such practices in Danish schools in the future.

The report, including Government observation, was prepared following ECRI’s visit to Denmark in [September 2016](#) and takes account of developments up to 8 December 2016, except where expressly indicated.

*ECRI is a human rights body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent experts, which monitors problems of racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds such as "race", national/ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language (racial discrimination); it prepares reports and issues recommendations to member States.*

For more information on ECRI: [www.coe.int/ecri](http://www.coe.int/ecri)

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