

Increase in racist and homophobic violence in Europe

European Parliament resolution on the increase in racist and homophobic violence in Europe

The European Parliament,

- having regard to international human rights instruments which prohibit discrimination based on racial and ethnic origin, and notably the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and the European Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ECHR), both signed by all Member States and a large number of third states,
 - having regard to Articles 2, 6, 7 and 29 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 13 of the EC Treaty, which commit the EU and its Member States to uphold human rights and fundamental freedoms and which provide European means to fight racism, xenophobia and discrimination,
 - having regard to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, especially Article 21 thereof,
 - having regard to European Union activities to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and homophobia, in particular the anti-discrimination Directives 2000/43/EC implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin¹ and 2000/78/EC establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation², as well as to the proposal for a framework decision on combating racism and xenophobia³,
 - having regard to its previous resolutions on racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia, protection of minorities, anti-discrimination policies and the situation of Roma in the EU,
 - having regard to Rule 103(4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism, homophobia and anti-gypsyism are motivated by irrational reasons and are sometimes linked to social marginalisation, exclusion and unemployment, as well as by a refusal to conceive diversity in our societies as a source of richness,
- B. whereas several Member States have experienced violent events and/or killings motivated by racist, xenophobic and anti-Semitic hatred, while other direct and indirect forms of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and homophobia persist inside and outside the EU,

¹ OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p. 22.

² OJ L 303, 2.12.2000, p. 16.

³ OJ C 75 E, 26.3.2002, p. 269.

- C. whereas the Russian authorities have banned the march for equality and tolerance for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people planned for 27 May 2006 in Moscow in violation of the right of peaceful assembly and demonstration guaranteed by the ECHR, in a situation where political and religious authorities were involved in denigration and incited and participated in the violent events that subsequently occurred,
- D. whereas political figures at European, national and regional level have a responsibility to set a good example by promoting tolerance, understanding, respect and peaceful coexistence,
- E. whereas some political parties, including those in power in a number of countries or well represented at local level, have deliberately placed issues of racial, ethnic, national, religious and gay intolerance at the heart of their agenda, allowing political leaders to use language that incites racial and other forms of hatred and stokes extremism in society,
- F. whereas calls for open violence of a homophobic nature have come from a member of a Polish governing party in relation to the plans to hold a gay rights march in Warsaw,
- G. whereas Member States have foreseen various measures against political parties that promote programmes and activities that are contrary to the values guaranteed by the ECHR, including the withdrawal of public funding,
- H. whereas disgraceful and serious racist incidents take place during football matches, and whereas there are concerns that similar events could take place during the current World Cup,
- I. whereas education, especially at primary level, is a critical 'upstream policy' area in fighting racist attitudes and prejudice in later life, and whereas policy makers ought to pay due regard to the benefit of a good social and ethnic mix in state primary education,
- J. whereas the media play an important and significant role in the public perception of racist violence and in some Member States tend to use one-dimensional and biased descriptions of violence, thus bearing responsibility for spreading misinformation on racism and xenophobia,
- K. whereas the existence of a large number of internet homepages which provide the main source of information about racist groups and groups which incite hatred raises concerns as to how to counteract this problem without violating freedom of expression,
- L. whereas the police and judicial systems in Member States play a crucial role in the prosecution and prevention of racist violence; whereas, however, they sometimes fail to protect citizens against racist violence and to discourage extremists from committing crimes of such a nature, and in this respect Member States should consider whether their police forces and judicial systems suffer from 'institutional racism'; whereas in some countries, police violence specifically targets ethnic, racial and sexual minorities and directly violates their right to freedom of assembly,
- M. whereas there is a lack of statistical data on racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and homophobia in the Member States, and notably on violence and discrimination related to these phenomena,

- N. whereas, after five years of negotiations, the Council has still not adopted the Commission proposal for a Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia, leading the Commission to threaten to withdraw it, and whereas this instrument would have been a useful tool to address and punish perpetrators of race hate crime,
- O. whereas four Member States – Germany, Luxembourg, Austria and Finland – have been referred to the European Court of Justice for their failure to satisfy the requirements of Directive 2000/43/EC,
1. Deplores the fact that the Council has been unable to adopt the abovementioned proposal for a framework decision on combating racism and xenophobia, and urgently calls on the future Finnish Presidency of the Council to restart work on it and on the Council to reach an agreement on explicitly extending it to homophobic, anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and other types of offence motivated by phobia or hatred based on ethnicity, race, sexual orientation, religion or other irrational grounds; calls on the Member States to reinforce criminal law measures aimed at the approximation of the penalties for such offences throughout the EU; urges all the Member States to effectively implement the anti-discrimination directives and the Commission to bring before the Court of Justice those Member States which fail to do so and to submit before mid-2007 proposals for new legislative tools covering all the grounds for discrimination set out in Article 13 of the EC Treaty and having the same scope as Directive 2000/43/EC;
 2. Strongly condemns all racist and hate attacks, urges all national authorities to do everything in their power to punish those responsible and to fight the climate of impunity with respect to those attacks; expresses its solidarity with all victims of such attacks and their families, including:
 - the premeditated murder of a black woman of Malian nationality and the Belgian child of whom she was the nurse perpetrated in Antwerp on 12 May 2006 by a young Belgian right-wing extremist, this same person having a few moments earlier seriously wounded a woman of Turkish origin while trying to kill her;
 - the murder of a 16-year old boy in January 2006 and of a 17-year old boy in April 2006 in Brussels, and expresses its indignation at some of the media coverage of these murders which at times led to unfounded criminalisation of whole communities in the eyes of the general public;
 - the kidnapping, torture and assassination of Ilan Halimi in February 2006 in France by a gang of 22 persons of different origins, and expresses its deep concern at the anti-Semitic dimension of this crime;
 - the assassination of Chaïb Zehaf in March 2006 in France due to his ethnic origin;
 - the brutal assault on a German citizen of Ethiopian origin, Kevin K, in the village of Poemmelte, Saxony-Anhalt, on 9 January 2006, in particular because of its racial motive;

- the horrific torture and murder of Gisberta, a transsexual living in the Portuguese city of Oporto, in February 2006 by a group of adolescent and pre-adolescent minors;
 - the attack against Michael Schudrich, Chief Rabbi of Poland, which took place in Warsaw, as well as the declarations by a leading member of the League of Polish Families inciting violence against LGBT people in view of the march for tolerance and equality;
 - the attack suffered on 8 April 2006 by Fernando Ujiguilete, a Portuguese national of Guinean origin, in Castellar del Vallès (Spain); on account of this racist attack, Ujiguilete had to spend several days in hospital;
 - the increase in the number of racist attacks, calls and chants by fans with neo-Nazi allegiances in football stadiums;
3. Welcomes the fact that the mass demonstrations organised in Antwerp and Paris to express public horror at the events referred to above and public support in the fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism were attended by thousands of people; welcomes also the demonstrations for tolerance in Poland and notably the warm welcome given to the 2006 Gay Pride parade in Warsaw;
 4. Is seriously concerned about the general rise in racist, xenophobic, anti-Semitic and homophobic intolerance in Poland, partly fuelled by religious platforms such as Radio Maryja, which has also been criticised by the Vatican for its anti-Semitic discourse; believes that the EU should take appropriate measures to express its concerns and notably to address the issue of the participation in the government of the League of Polish Families, whose leaders incite people to hatred and violence; reminds Poland of its commitments and obligations under the Treaties, in particular Article 6 of the EU Treaty, and the possible sanctions in the event of non-compliance; urges the Polish government in this context to reconsider the abolition of the Office of the Plenipotentiary for Equal Status; requests the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia to conduct an inquiry into the emerging climate of racist, xenophobic and homophobic intolerance in Poland and the Commission to verify if the actions and declarations of the Polish Minister of Education are in conformity with Article 6 of the EU Treaty;
 5. Strongly condemns the Russian authorities' decision to ban the first Gay Pride in Moscow on 27 May 2006, as well as their failure to ensure the safety and security of peaceful demonstrators and human rights activists, and reminds the Russian authorities that freedom of assembly is a basic human right guaranteed by Article 31 of the Constitution of the Russian Federation; expresses its deep concern about the role which Russian politicians and faith organisations have played in inciting violence and hatred against LGBT people; expresses its hope that similar events will not occur in the future and encourages the Russian authorities to allow the Gay Pride parade in 2007 and to ensure the safety of its participants;
 6. Is deeply disappointed at the failure of EU leaders to raise this matter during the EU-Russia Summit on 26 May 2006;

7. Is equally disappointed at the failure of the meeting of President Barroso and Commissioners Frattini and Spidla with the religious leaders of Europe on 30 May 2006 to condemn the active participation of Russian Orthodox priests in the violent anti-gay and neo-Nazi march in Moscow on 27 May 2006;
8. Expresses its astonishment and concern at the reaction of the President of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly to the incidents in Moscow, when he congratulated Russia on its human rights record, instead of condemning the violation of basic human rights which took place on 27 May 2006;
9. Calls on the EU representatives at the upcoming G8 summit to raise the issue of human rights with Russia as a matter of urgency, in particular the right to demonstrate peacefully;
10. Calls on the institutions of the European Union, the Member States and all European democratic political parties to condemn all acts of intolerance and of incitement to racial hatred, as well as all acts of harassment or racist violence;
11. Regrets that several Member States are experiencing rising support for extremist parties and groups with a clear xenophobic, racist, anti-Semitic and homophobic agenda, some of which have recently acceded to government in Poland, and stresses the need to address the roots of this phenomenon, such as social marginalisation, exclusion and unemployment;
12. Urgently requests all Member States to at least foresee the possibility of withdrawing public funding from political parties that do not abide by human rights and fundamental freedoms, democracy and the rule of law as set out in the ECHR and the Charter of Fundamental Rights, and calls on those that already have this possibility to do so without delay;
13. Asks Member States to launch campaigns and projects at all levels and sectors, in particular in the media and in schools, to promote cultural diversity as a form of richness and economic dynamism, gender equality, the fight against discrimination, tolerance, dialogue and integration, for instance in the context of the European Years of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) and Intercultural Dialogue (2008);
14. Calls on the Member States to give proper attention to the fight against racism, sexism, xenophobia and homophobia both in their relations with each other and in their bilateral relations with third countries;
15. Calls on the Commission to continue developing an anti-discrimination policy alongside its emerging policy on integration; considers that, for equality to be achieved, due regard needs to be paid to integration and other non-legislative measures, such as promoting interaction and participation;
16. Stresses the need to support anti-racist and anti-xenophobic initiatives in relation to the current World Cup in Germany and asks authorities closely to monitor and to prosecute and condemn those responsible for racist acts;

17. Recalls the need for sound and clear definitions and statistics on racism and xenophobia, in particular on racist and xenophobic violence, as a means of effectively combating these phenomena, as already highlighted in the EUMC's 2005 annual report, which stresses the lack of statistical registration of racist violence in Italy, Portugal and Greece;
18. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the governments of the Member States, the Council of Europe and the government of the Russian Federation.