

Establishing a European Monitoring Centre for Racism and Xenophobia

1996/0298(CNS) - 19/03/1997 - Economic and Social Committee: opinion, report

The Commission's proposal for a regulation has in essence already been approved at a number of meetings of the European Council. The Economic and Social Committee has also issued an opinion on the Communication from the Commission on racism, xenophobia and anti-semitism and the Proposal for a Council Decision designating 1997 as European year against racism, in which the Commission had already called for the establishment of a monitoring centre. The ESC supports the immediate establishment of the European monitoring centre on racism and xenophobia". The Committee expressly welcomes all the tasks assigned to the monitoring centre under Article 2 of the proposal. The ESC stresses that this proposal has nothing to do with the question of whether any extension of the Community's powers is not in fact desirable in this particular case. For legal reasons, however, the ESC feels bound to make it clear that Article 235 should not be used to expand Community powers by the back door. However, in line with this procedure and the respective remits of the Community institutions and the Member States, the reports, deliberations and conclusions of the monitoring centre will be able to contribute to the formulation of proposals and the adoption of measures at both Community and national level. The Committee would highlight the fact that racism and xenophobia can often be encouraged, or even provoked, by measures taken in the public arena. The cause and effect of racism and xenophobia may arise in private relationships and in the public arena. This being so, the monitoring centre's remit must also be expanded to reflect this. The ESC is pleased that cooperation with non-governmental organizations is given adequate attention in the regulation (cf. point 21 of the explanatory memorandum and Article 7(1) of the proposal), except that the monitoring centre only "may" cooperate with such organizations. The word "may" must be changed to "shall".