

## **Leading European rights agencies warn that economic crisis fuels racism and xenophobia**

In a joint statement issued ahead of tomorrow's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, three leading European human rights bodies today expressed concern that the current economic crisis is beginning to fuel racist and xenophobic intolerance.

The statement was released today by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

“Our organisations are alarmed by reports indicating an upsurge in violent attacks targeting migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, and minorities such as the Roma,” the statement says.

“Europe's history demonstrates how economic depression can tragically lead to increasing social exclusion and persecution. We are concerned that in times of crisis, migrants, minorities and other vulnerable groups become ‘scapegoats’ for populist politicians and the media.”

The three institutions note that such “scapegoating” has already led to increased hostility and incidents of violent hate crime against minorities and migrants in some countries.

They stress that, as the economic crisis deepens, there is a great need for politicians and other public figures to carefully consider their statements to avoid inciting and inflaming ethnic, racial and religious tensions.

The statement calls on political leaders and other public figures to speak out against all forms of violence motivated by racial hatred or xenophobia, and to act responsibly and refrain from providing simplistic explanations with racist, xenophobic or anti-Semitic connotations to complex social, political and economic problems or phenomena.

It also urges governments to provide training to law enforcement personnel and the judiciary, monitor hate crimes in co-operation with civil society, intensify efforts to collect data and statistics, and ensure that victims of discrimination and hate crime have access to effective remedies.

Finally, the three organisations warn against cutting back essential social protection and inclusion programmes, which can have a disproportional negative impact on marginalized minority and migrant groups already suffering from precarious living conditions.

Read the full statement at: <http://fra.europa.eu>

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