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**Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)**

**Hearing on the rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups with the Chairpersons of three Council of Europe human rights monitoring mechanisms:**

**European Committee of Social Rights**

**Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**

**European Commission against Racism and Intolerance**

**Paris, 18 November 2009**

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## I. Opening statement by Mr Serhiy Holovaty, Chairperson of the Monitoring Committee

Dear guests, dear colleagues,

As you may recall, the Assembly, in its Resolution 1619 (2008) on “the functioning of democratic institutions and the progress of the Assembly’s monitoring procedure” welcomed our Committee’s proposal to organise a hearing among the Council of Europe monitoring mechanisms and human rights institutions to identify ways and means to improve synergies.

Within this more general context, I have decided to give priority to an exchange of views with the three human rights monitoring mechanisms represented here today, the European Committee for Social Rights, the European Committee against Racism and Intolerance and the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The reason is that the recent economic crisis has placed at particular risk the rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups and has thus made it of utmost importance to ensure complementary actions among these three human rights monitoring mechanisms, which all deal with the rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, and our Committee.

It is my great pleasure that the President of the European Committee of Social Rights, Mrs Polonca KONČAR, the President of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, Mr Alan PHILLIPS, and the Vice-Chair of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, Mr Nils MUIZNIEKS, have all three accepted my invitation, despite their heavy schedules, and are here with us today. I welcome them as well as the members of the Secretariat who accompany them, Mr Giakoumopoulos, Director of Monitoring, Mr Kristensen, Ms Akip and Mr Stavros.

We are all particularly interested to exchange ideas with our guests on how to optimise synergies between parliamentary monitoring and the work carried out by the human rights monitoring mechanisms they chair. We would be particularly grateful if at the end of our discussion, we could identify a number of specific issues of their competence upon which we could focus in our country specific monitoring with respect to the human rights of vulnerable groups. And as vulnerable groups, I mean the children, the elderly, the disabled persons, the migrants (whether legal or illegal), the persons belonging to minorities (whether national, ethnic or religious, including the Roma).

Since I do not want to take time from our discussion and time is pressing, I prefer to stop here and give the floor to our three guests for a brief presentation. I suggest that we shall then put questions to our guests and give them again the floor for their replies.

I shall first give the floor to Mrs KONČAR, President of the European Committee of Social Rights, then to Mr Alan PHILLIPS, President of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and subsequently to Mr Nils MUIZNIEKS, Vice-Chair of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

## II. Statement by Mrs Polonca Končar, President of the European Committee of Social Rights

Mr Chairperson, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure that I am here today to address you on one of the CoE's two core human rights treaties, namely the European Social Charter: indeed, the Charter is, like the European Convention on Human Rights, a comprehensive treaty on human rights covering a wide variety of rights related to housing, health, education, employment, social protection and movement of persons.

I can assure you that I fully share your concern for strengthening the impact of the monitoring mechanisms. I would also like to pay tribute to your role in holding States to their commitments to ratify the Charter. As you know, many States have ratified the Revised Charter in the past few years, most recently Ukraine, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and the Russian Federation and your contribution to bringing this result about has been most precious. Today only 5 States have not ratified the Charter (Liechtenstein, Monaco, Montenegro, San Marino and Switzerland) and we expect that your committee will use all its influence to ensure that they ratify as soon as possible.

Although conceived as a complement to the European Convention on Human Rights and despite the progress made in its almost 50 years of existence, there is no denying that the European Social Charter has faced many obstacles and in some ways continues to fight an uphill struggle:

1) for many years social rights were not given due recognition caught up as they were in the discourse of the cold war; 2) the use of the term "Charter" (instead of "Convention") has unfortunately tended to obscure the fact that it is a legally binding treaty and 3) the initially rather half-hearted commitment of the CoE member States made for a complex and ineffectual supervisory mechanism.

It was only after 1989 that a political consensus to elevate the status of social rights finally emerged; a consensus which made possible the adoption of the Revised Charter and a strengthening of the supervisory mechanism, notably through the collective complaints procedure.

However, as developments in recent years have shown the consensus is fragile and circumscribed in its reach; it is continually challenged by forces that maintain that social rights are not fundamental human rights or, more significantly, claim that they constitute a hindrance to economic gain in the globalised market. Fallacious as they are, such arguments may nevertheless be part of the explanation why several States have still not ratified the Revised Charter and why many States hesitate to accept the collective complaints procedure, something that is obviously a cause for concern.

If the idea of a *continuum of civil and political rights and social rights* is not to become obsolete or something that is merely given lip service without our actually providing the resources needed to put it into practice, then the European Social Charter must be recognised as a full-fledged extension of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Charter's supervisory body, the European Committee of Social Rights, should likewise be recognised as being invested with an indispensable function which, if it does not exactly match that of the European Court of Human Rights, is at least of a similar nature from a functional viewpoint.

However, there is more at stake than the principle of indivisibility of rights. The notions of solidarity and distributive justice embedded in the Charter are deeply connected to the very essence of democracy and the rule of law. If we are serious about freedom we have to be serious about the material underpinnings to freedom. History tells us that material want and structural injustices provide fertile ground for extremism to take root. Social justice in a way holds the "centre" together and by enabling people to be included and to participate in the life of society – not just in a formal sense, but in a real sense – it allows democracy to do what it is supposed to do: to protect and advance human freedom.

Now let me turn to some more practical concerns: as I mentioned we count on your continued assistance in ensuring the remaining ratifications of the Revised Charter and especially acceptance of the collective complaints procedure, but I ask myself if the time has not come for your Monitoring Committee to put more emphasis on the actual application of the Charter rights in the countries that you accompany.

In formal terms, the responsibility for the follow-up to the findings of violations of the Charter lies with the Committee of Ministers, but to be frank the follow-up action taken is not always as efficient as it could be. I would definitely welcome an active role by your committee here and I would not consider it to be overlap or repetition. It is all well and good that the CoE seeks to avoid overlaps and repetition in its activities, but the

political reality is that States sometimes have to be reminded of their international law obligations more than once before the message sinks in!

The material scope of the Charter is vast, but let me try give you a brief glimpse of the kinds of issues and problems dealt with by the European Committee of Social Rights in its conclusions and decisions. Without going into specific cases and without mentioning names I can assure you that these problems affect also some of the countries that are under your monitoring procedure.

First of all, I would like to do away with the common misperception that the Charter is primarily about labour rights and social security. In fact, some of the Committee's most important decisions in recent years, concern the rights of children, the right to housing, the right to protection against poverty, the rights of migrants, the rights of the disabled, the elderly and other vulnerable groups. The Committee have found violations, for example relating to corporal punishment of children and inadequate measures to combat trafficking of children. In the field of housing violations have concerned shortages of affordable housing for poor people and lack of safeguards in eviction cases (notably re-housing). The Committee continues to find cases where legislation does not adequately protect the disabled and the elderly against discrimination, we continue to be confronted with situations where migrants, regular as well as irregular, Roma and other vulnerable groups are not being treated equally in the labour market, or do not enjoy equal access to education, social assistance, health care, housing, and so on.

Having said that, it is obvious that the traditional labour rights and social security rights are of central importance in the Charter and are perhaps especially topical in these times of economic crisis. As regards individual labour rights what the Committee has often found is that national legislation as such respects the Charter's requirements, but the situation in practice is less than satisfactory. Rules on working time and leave and particularly on health and safety at the workplace are not properly enforced. Working conditions are frequently poor and dangerous, labour inspections are not adequately resourced or the applicable sanctions are not sufficient with the sometimes tragic results that we know.

With respect to collective labour rights, the possibility of forming trade unions is in some cases unduly restricted by excessive membership requirements or other obstacles of a procedural nature. In other cases open attempts to discourage workers from joining trade unions and other anti-union measures are not being sanctioned as they should.

Among the recurring problems of conformity concerning the right to social security we come across social security systems which are not sufficiently comprehensive in terms of the risks they cover or in terms of the proportion of the population protected – in a few countries some of the traditional branches of social security are virtually non-existent. Another frequent violation we encounter is that income-replacing benefits such as old-age pensions and unemployment benefits are not adequate in the meaning of Article 12 of the Charter. And it is not that the Charter's standard is very demanding: in order to comply the benefits in question should not fall below the poverty threshold of the countries concerned...

It would be naïve to think that social rights such as those guaranteed by the Charter will not come under pressure as a result of the current economic crisis the full consequences of which we have yet to see. This makes it even more important to harness the efforts of the CoE monitoring mechanisms and stand guard for social rights. In fact, the economic crisis is something of an opportunity for the CoE to profile itself and gain much-needed visibility as a steadfast defender of the social rights of citizens at a time when they need it most. For social rights are not the "problem" that has to be solved, social rights must not be sacrificed in order to restore the economy and its financial markets to their previous "glory". Social rights are part of the solution, bringing Europe out of the crisis in a durable and sustainable way requires more social protection, not less!

### **III. Statement by Mr Alan Phillips, President of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities**

#### ***The Economic Crisis and the risk to the rights of vulnerable minorities protected under the Framework Convention for the Protection of national minorities***

##### **Introduction**

As President of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, let me thank you and your colleagues for this opportunity to exchange views with yourselves and my counterparts in the European Social Charter and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance on the impact of the current economic crisis on vulnerable, national minorities.

You, Mr. Chairman, and the Parliamentary Assembly, in its resolution 1619 (2008), emphasized the need to identify ways to optimize synergies between the Council of Europe monitoring bodies. This is a constant challenge, as we are all busy with our own agendas, but your lead here today is crucial to ensure complementary, reinforcing actions among all human rights monitoring mechanisms, while emphasizing our unique strengths to improve the situation of the most vulnerable groups. Indeed we have already had a valuable discussion with our counter parts earlier this morning.

We base our work and analysis today on two key factors. Firstly the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has been ratified by 39 states and secondly our country monitoring visits provide us with a breadth and depth to the work in our specific field.

I would like to thank you, M. Serhiy Holovaty, for choosing this theme of discussion, which is of particular priority to the Advisory Committee, since the recent economic crisis has placed at risk the legal protected rights of persons belonging to national minorities.

##### **Commentary on Effective Participation**

The Advisory Committee in its Opinions has often expressed concerns and recommendations on the social and economic difficulties faced by persons belonging to national minorities and currently these concerns are growing.

Article 15 of the Framework Convention obliges State's Parties

*"to create the conditions necessary for the effective participation of persons belonging to national minorities in cultural social and economic life and in public affairs, in particular those affecting them."*

This is complemented by article 4 ,which aims to ensure the applicability of the principles of equality and non-discrimination.

Participation in social and economic life is one the important themes addressed by our recent Commentary on Article 15 of the Framework Convention that draws on a decade of monitoring and visits in 39 countries.

The Commentary highlights the perspective that effective participation in social and economic life is essential for enhancing social cohesion, reducing tensions, while ensuring the development of a truly democratic society. In the Advisory Committee's view, effective participation requires States not only to remove the barriers preventing minorities from equal access to economic sectors and social services, but also requires States to take positive measures of support and promote their effective participation in the delivery of benefits and outcomes. I hope this Commentary can be made available to the Committee and can be of use for you within your own parliaments.

##### **Advisory Committee's identification of some main issues:**

Anticipating this discussion in Paris today, two weeks ago during the plenary session of the Advisory Committee, I invited members to hold a "tour de table" on this subject focusing on the economic crisis and national minorities.

A number of important points emerged:

## 1. Differentiation and the need for reliable data

The Advisory Committee agreed that there were significant differences in the impact of the economic crisis upon different "traditional" national minorities and "newer" minorities in each and every country. Consequently it is difficult and sometimes dangerous to generalise on where the main problems are and which minority is particularly affected.

Some circumstances were obvious, but it is clear that reliable data is needed on the current economic situation of national minorities in all State Parties, identifying probable developments and assessing the most appropriate possible targeted responses.

The Advisory Committee has systematically invited State parties to collect data regularly, disaggregated by age, sex and geographical distribution, and gather up-to-date information on the socio-economic situation of persons belonging to national minorities<sup>1</sup>. It will be obvious to all of us here that the collection of such data should be made in accordance with international standards of personal data protection.

## 2. The disproportionate impact on some national minorities

Economic crises usually impact disproportionately negatively upon the most socially excluded and economically marginalised; they often have less resources, both personal and financial, to be able to adapt or cope with the stresses. They are often of a lesser priority for government or to those individuals and institutions that do have social and economic capital.

Many members of some minorities, including Roma, are particularly vulnerable in the current economic crisis, especially the many that worked casually in the construction industry or received remittances from family members working abroad.

Unemployment and part time employment has grown and is growing in many countries and is having a disproportionate impact on some minorities. Members of the Advisory Committee reported on some budgets in the minority education field being reduced, which will lead to fewer opportunities for some minority communities. In some cases it is having a disproportionate impact on positive measures to reduce past discrimination and on the prospects of mainstreaming pioneering models of good practice developed by civil society organisations and local authorities.

Budgets for kindergartens, teaching assistants and outreach workers are often being considered as optional, despite being highlighted as crucial for the integration of some vulnerable minorities by the Council of Europe's Education Division. Vulnerable minorities include many impoverished Roma, whose mother tongue is the Romani language, and who particularly need this form of educational support.

Access to social and economic rights can be in danger, but access to civil and political rights can also suffer indirectly. For example, in some countries, it seems that fewer resources are available for providing opportunities to learn the state language or to improve professional skills. Furthermore there are trends to reduce the resources provided for translation of judicial acts, and interpretation services that would reduce equal access to justice for members of minority communities. In a few States' Parties the budgets of institutions that safeguard the effective participation of minorities are being disproportionately cut and in some cases institutions have been closed.

## 3. The need for economic understanding and investment

However not all is gloomy. Some foresighted governments have ring fenced expenditures on minorities and are investing in the future. Others have increased expenditures on education and training to encourage short term expenditure, as an investment for future income.

Furthermore cross boarder trade has increased significantly in some circumstances, notably on the boundary of the Euro zone, responding to exchange rate changes. Members of national minorities are already playing a significant but unheralded role in promoting trade using their multi-culture and multilingual talents. Furthermore, as economies grow again, many of them will bring talents and contribute to filling labour

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<sup>1</sup> The Advisory Committee underlines in its Opinions that the collection of such data should be made in accordance with international standards of personal data protection, as well as respecting the right for persons belonging to a national minority freely to choose to be treated or not to be treated as such.

shortages in other countries- as well as at home-, while sending remittances back to their families to spend and invest.

However it is crucial to develop a more profound understanding of the economic situation of national minorities and how targeted education, training and investment in them can lead not only to greater social inclusion, alongside the realisation of minority rights , but also lead to major economic advantages for society as a whole.

Consequently the Bureau of the Advisory Committee is encouraging the Council of Europe to stimulate other actors, to promote action orientated research to identify where minorities do or could make positive contributions to the economies of Europe.

It is important to be positive and creative here and present the dynamic contributions of minorities, showing areas where investments in human and financial capital may lead to benefits for all of society. The current economic crisis can provide an opportunity to create a new paradigm in the future.

Mr Chairman, we would be delighted to co-operate with yourselves and colleagues of ECRI and the European Committee of Social Rights to develop this and similar initiatives. Furthermore we would be happy to consider a request to share with you regularly our key recommendations, included in our country Opinions.

Thank you Mr Chairman.



#### **IV. Statement by Mr Nils Muiznieks, Vice-Chair of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**

In the name of European Commission against Discrimination and Intolerance (ECRI), I would like to welcome the opportunity of holding a dialogue with the Monitoring Committee of the PACE. ECRI has excellent regular interaction with deputies in the PACE, as several are observers at our plenary meetings. Parliamentary support for ECRI's activities has always been of crucial importance. Now such support is more important than ever: the current economic crisis gives rise to new challenges in the field of the fight against racism and all related forms of discrimination and intolerance. On 21 March 2009, ECRI issued a joint statement with the OSCE's Office of Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination expressing concern about the crisis beginning to fuel racist and xenophobic intolerance.

ECRI particularly appreciates the fact that the hearing involves another two mechanisms for which discrimination is an important part of their mandate: the European Social Charter and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. I can assure the Committee that, in practice, the cooperation between our three mechanisms has evolved: in its monitoring work ECRI refers to the standards of the other two mechanisms; we use one another's factual findings and analysis in drafting our reports; ECRI invariably calls for ratification of the European Social Charter and the Framework Convention; we coordinate our calendars and try to reinforce each other's message.

ECRI welcomes the opportunity to reinforce our cooperation with the PACE Monitoring Committee in the 14 countries of special interest to you. ECRI would like to stress three main issues that are of particular relevance to the Monitoring Committee.

##### **1. Racist speech and violence**

ECRI has defined racism in some detail in its General Policy Recommendation No. 7 on national legislation to combat racism and racial discrimination. I would merely note that, in a context of economic crisis, it becomes easier for racists to peddle fear, to look for scapegoats for the difficulties and to advocate discrimination against minorities, migrants and the "other". With regard to protecting freedom of expression while combating racism, I would like to draw your attention to a conference ECRI organized at the end of 2006 on this topic, for which we commissioned excellent background papers covering the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and other materials, all of which are available on our website.

ECRI places great importance on the response of the criminal justice system to instances of racist speech and violence. Here, we focus not only on the existence of the appropriate legislative norms, but also on their application and the training of law enforcement officials. We have sought to identify best practices in law enforcement in our General Policy Recommendation No. 11 on combating racism and racial discrimination in policing, where we examine such issues as racial profiling, the need for complaints mechanisms against the police, and the definition of a racist incident.

A particularly challenging issue is engaging the media to address racism. In this realm, a criminal law approach of bringing the force of law against those involved in hate speech is best complemented by self-regulation, including codes of conduct governing portrayal of minorities and complaints mechanisms against the media. Governments have a special responsibility to ensure that public broadcasters promote a culture of respect and intercultural dialogue.

A related issue is that of racism in political discourse. While, on occasion, there is a need for the intervention of the criminal justice system, here again self-regulation is preferable, with parliamentary codes of conduct, NGO monitoring and research being of great importance. Here ECRI often draws attention to the principles enshrined in the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society.

##### **2. Comprehensive legislation against racial discrimination**

The second issue ECRI would like to stress as a priority is the need for comprehensive legislation against racial discrimination in all fields (employment, housing, health, education, access to goods and services private and public). Many countries prohibit discrimination in the labour market, but we urge countries to adopt an all-inclusive ban on discrimination in line with our General Policy Recommendation No. 7.

We are convinced that it is essential to bring such legislation to life through awareness-raising among the public, training of the relevant officials, and the establishment of a well-functioning equality body. Such bodies should have the powers not only to review complaints about discrimination, but also to assist victims

(also in court proceedings), to promote awareness raising, to engage in pro-active investigations and to provide advice to the government. It is essential that such bodies be independent from the government and be seen as being independent.

A key tool in combating discrimination is the existence of disaggregated statistics or “ethnic data” broken down along such parameters as ethnic origin, language, religion and country of origin. Such data permit assessing the true situation of different groups in society, monitoring the impact of policy and combating discrimination. Of course, I must mention the necessary caveats: that the data should be provided on a voluntary basis, that it should be based on self-identification and that the necessary safeguards for confidentiality and data protection should be in place.

### **3. Problems of particular groups**

The third priority ECRI would like to highlight is the situation of certain groups particularly vulnerable to racism and racial discrimination. Migrants and foreigners are a group of particular concern to ECRI. While most of the 14 countries of special interest to the PACE Monitoring Committee are people “exporters”, this is not true of all of them: Russia has been a magnet for many immigrants from neighbouring countries and their situation would be a logical subject of interest to us. Most of the countries of special interest to the PACE Monitoring Committee have a significant number of citizens abroad whose situation has undoubtedly been affected by the crisis.

Some countries have vulnerable Muslim or other religious minorities, others have ethnic minorities. In others, past and current conflicts have produced significant numbers of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who are particularly vulnerable.

In most European countries, a group of special concern to ECRI is the Roma. Roma are among the most frequent victims of violence and discrimination. ECRI often examines the situation of the Roma in education, housing and health and the effectiveness of government programmes to address disparities.

To conclude, ECRI urges the Monitoring Committee of the PACE to pay particular attention to three issues: racist speech and violence, anti-discrimination legislation, and the problems of groups vulnerable to racism.

We look forward to intensified cooperation and dialogue with the Monitoring Committee of the PACE. In the current, fourth round of reporting, we have introduced an innovation, whereby we highlight three recommendations for interim follow-up two years after publication of the country report. It would be useful for us to exchange information with you on these areas of priority concern in the countries of interest to you.

ECRI's forthcoming work on general themes might of particular interest to you as well. We have commissioned an external study on the impact of the crisis on immigrants and populations of immigrant background. Our consultant on this project is the general rapporteur of the European Committee of Social Rights. We have also begun work on new General Policy Recommendations on anti-Gypsism and discrimination in the labour market. We look forward to continuing the dialogue with you on these issues and to exchanging information with you on the countries of special interest to you.

## V. Chairman's summing-up

The recent financial crisis calls for a particular attention to the Human Rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups, such as the children, the elderly, the disabled persons, the migrants (legal or illegal) and the persons belonging to minorities (national, ethnic or religious, including the Roma). Indeed, the crisis had and will continue to have detrimental effects on the effective respect of the rights of the persons belonging to these groups.

On the basis of what we heard from our guests today, the Monitoring Committee's co-rapporteurs could pay particular attention to the following issues in the countries they monitor:

- Practical and legal obstacles to **access to justice** for vulnerable groups (no provision of legal aid, no translations etc.) and **non execution** of domestic judgments and decisions granting social benefits;
- Comprehensive **anti-discrimination legislation** and **specialised bodies**;
- **Racist speech and racist violence**: legal framework and implementation; measures to fight impunity;
- Discriminatory **access to employment** or absence of positive measures to ensure access to employment for disadvantaged or vulnerable groups;
- Inadequate **housing policies**, including evictions targeting vulnerable groups;
- Undue restrictions to or inadequate safeguards for:
  - **education and professional training** for vulnerable groups, including restrictions to education in minority languages but also to teaching of the state language or in the state language leading to marginalisation;
  - **collective labour rights and the right to safe and human working conditions** (including working time and leave);
  - **social security** (including old age pensions, unemployment benefits and health care) leading to poverty.

I would be grateful if the mechanisms chaired by our guests could give us **information on these issues with respect to the countries which are on the work programme of our committee** so as to facilitate the work of our co-rapporteurs.

We can also all agree on the need to collect **reliable data** on the current economic situation of persons belonging to vulnerable groups in the member states so as to identify probable developments and assess the most appropriate possible targeted responses.

I thank Mrs KONČAR, Mr PHILLIPS and Mr MUIZNIEKS for the constructive and fruitful exchange of views we had today with them and I look forward to our continuing and enhanced co-operation.

## APPENDIX

Publication on the PACE Web-Site of the Hearing on the rights of persons belonging to vulnerable groups



The header of the webpage features the Council of Europe logo on the left, consisting of a blue banner with yellow stars and the text "assembly.coe.int". To the right, the text "Council of Europe" is displayed in white. Below this, a navigation menu includes links for "Home", "Portail de l'Assemblée en français", "Extranet", "Council of Europe", and "Search". A secondary banner shows a photograph of the PACE assembly hall with the text "pace" in large blue letters and "Parliamentary Assembly Council of Europe" to its right.

24/11/2009

### Monitoring

### PACE Monitoring Committee to focus more on rights of vulnerable groups

Strasbourg, 24.11.2009 – PACE’s Monitoring Committee should have a greater focus on the rights of vulnerable groups, such as children, the elderly, the disabled, migrants and minorities, according to its Chairperson.

“The financial crisis will continue to have detrimental effects on how these groups are treated,” pointed out Serhiy Holovaty (Ukraine, ALDE) at a recent hearing with the heads of three Council of Europe human rights monitoring bodies, Polonca Koncar of the European Committee of Social Rights, Alan Phillips of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, and Nils Muiznieks who is Vice-Chair of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance.

The committee decided to make greater use of these bodies’ work when assessing how vulnerable groups in monitored countries are faring in the justice system, employment, housing and education, and whether they face discrimination or racism.

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