

WRITTEN QUESTION E-1536/09
by Nicolae Vlad Popa (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Infringement of the fundamental rights of European citizens

The European Union is founded on the universal and indivisible values of respect for human dignity, liberty, equality and solidarity. These values are common to all the Member States and the principle of non-discrimination is embodied in all Community legislation.

Council Directive 2000/43/EC¹ of 29 June 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons in respect of racial or ethnic origin was adopted in order to ensure compliance with this principle.

In addition, in November 2007, the Council adopted framework decision 2008/913/JHA² of 28 November 2008 on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law, under the terms of which racism and xenophobia are considered direct infringements of the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms and the rule of law, the principles upon which the European Union is based and which are common to the Member States. Under the framework decision each Member State is required to take the measures necessary to ensure that public and deliberate incitement to violence or racial hatred against a group of persons or members of such a group defined by reference to race, colour, religion, descent or natural or ethnic origin shall be punishable.

Following the recent events in Italy, including 'hate speeches' and similar by a number of Italian dignitaries, Romanian citizens exercising their right to freedom of movement in Italy are finding themselves the victims of growing tension. Such utterances seek only to promote racist ideology and encourage discrimination on the basis of nationality. While freedom of expression and association should be protected, exceptions should be made in cases where this freedom is abused to encourage acts of coercion, violence or provoke hatred, where it is used as an incitement to illegal acts or provocation and where it is likely to provoke such acts.

In view of this:

What measures by the Italian State does the Commission consider necessary in order to protect Romanian citizens going legally about their business on Italian territory and who now find themselves exposed to attacks motivated by nationalist hatred following certain utterances in the mass media to the effect that 'Romanians do not deserve to remain in Europe, their speciality being rape'?

¹ OJ L 180, 19.7.2000, p. 22.

² OJ L 328, 6.12.2008, p. 55.