

# The use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse

## **High-level panel meeting**

on the occasion of the International Day  
for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Paris, 21 March 2005

ECRI: European Commission  
against Racism and Intolerance  
November 2005

The opinions expressed in the study on “The use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic arguments in political discourse”, by Mr Jean-Yves Camus, are the responsibility of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy of the Council of Europe or any of the mechanisms or monitoring bodies established by it.

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## I. Introduction

On the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination on 21 March 2005, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) organised a high-level panel meeting on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse, with the participation of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr Terry Davis, the Chair of ECRI, Mr Michael Head and members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Deeply concerned by the increasing use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse, including by mainstream political parties, ECRI adopted on 17 March 2005 a Declaration condemning this alarming trend which has been observed in many member states of the Council of Europe. (The declaration appears in the appendix, p. 55).

This trend, which is well documented in ECRI's country monitoring work, was further substantiated by an independent study commissioned by ECRI in order to investigate this dangerous phenomenon in more depth. This study, carried out by the political scientist Jean-Yves Camus, provides shocking evidence of numerous cases in which European or national elections have given rise to the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic rhetoric, or other discourse which has an impact on racism

and xenophobia in public opinion in many Council of Europe member states.

Immigrants and refugees, especially those from Muslim countries, are primary targets of politicians who exploit feelings of insecurity in an increasingly complex and multicultural world. Most worryingly, the theory of a so-called "clash of civilisations" is gaining ground. At the same time, antisemitism also continues to be encouraged either openly or in a coded manner by certain political leaders and parties.

ECRI therefore suggests in its Declaration concrete legal and policy measures, including self-regulatory measures which can be taken by political parties or national parliaments, to be adopted in all Council of Europe member states.

There is no doubt that political leadership can play a crucial role in combating racism and influencing public opinion in a positive way. It is therefore of the utmost importance that political parties be involved as much as possible in the fight against racism and intolerance as led by ECRI and other national and international actors in this field. This high-level panel meeting, which brought together parliamentarians, representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, research centres and academics working on the issue, was therefore an important opportunity for bringing this issue to the forefront of national and international debate.



**II. Speeches**





## Mr Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe



Ladies and gentlemen,

As we mark the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, let us remember the victims of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa on 21 March 1960 – the massacre which prompted the United Nations to commemorate this Day on 21 March every year. Let us remember at the same time all the other victims of racism throughout the world, past, present and future victims of racist violence and racial discrimination in their everyday lives.

Racism is a violation of human rights, rooted in dislike for someone who is different, or contempt for someone who is deemed inferior. When this dislike or contempt becomes hatred, it can lead people to commit unspeakable crimes as the horrors of the Second World War and the more recent wars in the Balkans and the South Caucasus showed to the whole world.

The Council of Europe was born out of the ashes of the Second World War, out of the desire encapsulated in two words: “Never again”. It was intended to build a new Europe, based on the shared values and principles of pluralist democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights, a Europe free of racism and racial discrimination.

Today, the principles on which the Council of Europe was founded are still far from being permanently entrenched. We must continually defend them – and to do so, we must have a sound understanding of what threatens them.

Racism and intolerance in all forms – be it antisemitism, Islamophobia or xenophobia – strike at the heart of the idea of a democratic society based on respect for the equal dignity of all human beings. We

must be constantly mobilised against these evils and campaign against them not only on one day in the year, but each and every day.

We in the Council of Europe have created the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, ECRI, to lead this campaign, and I have come here today to show my active support for ECRI and its mission.

This panel meeting is bringing together representatives of intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations, parliamentarians and academics, as part of this campaign. The study by Jean-Yves Camus contains some striking examples of the use of racist rhetoric during national and European elections. Since the report was written, there have been other examples, and there are worrying signs that we will see something similar in the United Kingdom, one of the founding members of the Council of Europe, during the election which is widely expected in May.

However, I should like to deliver two messages of confidence:

The first is that of the continual and determined commitment of the Council of Europe to the fight against all forms of racism. Our action is not limited only to pointing out what is wrong, far from it. We also recommend various measures to remedy the situation, and propose targeted, concrete solutions. I expect that the Chair of ECRI will shortly give us some examples of these solutions.

The second message is that of my hope that the sense of responsibility of our politicians will lead them to resist the temptation to play with fire. But that in itself is not enough. At the end of the day, we cannot build a democracy without political parties. It is political parties which

can and should be our strongest allies in achieving a society free of racism.

They should be in the forefront of our active campaign against racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and islamophobia. Many European politicians have been

involved in this struggle throughout their political lives.

Tana de Zulueta is one of them, and I look forward to her contribution as well.

Thank you.

## Mr Michael Head, Chair of ECRI

**“Taking a stance against the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse”**



The findings of Jean-Yves Camus' research confirm just how timely and useful the preparation of this study was.

ECRI's mission is to combat racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and intolerance. But to do this we have to be able to identify these phenomena in the varying forms they assume over time and in different contexts. These contexts include public debate and, within it, political discourse.

If we want to be effective in proposing viable solutions against the exploitation of racism in politics, we need to be able to detect it: not only when politicians make little secret of the prejudice that inspire their statements or policies; but also when the racist and discriminatory nature of statements and policies lies somewhere beneath the surface and becomes apparent mainly as a result of time and repetition.

This study provides us with further knowledge to enable us to do precisely this.

ECRI's concern with the exploitation of racism, antisemitism and xenophobia in political discourse has been a feature of our work for many years now.

We have two main concerns. There is not just concern about the possible consequences on social cohesion of protracted and basically unchallenged racist or xenophobic political discourse in Europe, but there is also concern about what has already resulted from it.

It is a vicious circle of cause and effect. Political discourse inspired by racial or cultural prejudice and xenophobia has deeply shaped public opinion in Europe today, and this has had in turn two effects: first, it has favoured the adoption of measures which have impacted disproportionately on certain minority groups; second, it has affected the human rights of people belonging to these

groups. Only a few weeks ago, ECRI published its third report on Austria. This addresses precisely the link between a certain type of political discourse, the decline in the general public's support for asylum seekers and the adoption and the continuation of policies concerning this group of persons, for instance in the areas of social assistance and use of detention, the conformity of which with human rights has been widely questioned.

Racist or xenophobic political discourse, particularly where it has been fuelled by the media, has also already favoured a situation where discriminatory or even violent behaviour directed against certain minority groups is seen as more acceptable. In a report on the United Kingdom published in 2000, ECRI specifically addressed this issue, particularly with respect to asylum-seekers. ECRI will be addressing the issue again in its report on the UK which is to be published in June.

Another of the immediate practical effects of this sort of political discourse is that it generates a form of political paralysis. This in turn deters measures which would be to the advantage of minority groups. It is, for example, difficult to see the failure in Germany to establish an effective national specialised body as anything other than a failure of political will. In Poland the protracted reluctance, so far, to prosecute antisemitic hate speech seems to result from a straightforward unwillingness to acknowledge the social importance of the crime.

According to Mr Camus' study, there has been a stabilisation or even regression in the rise of extremist political parties in Europe which resort to explicitly racist or xenophobic propaganda. Of course ECRI is very pleased with this development.

Even so, there are notable exceptions to this trend, as shown, for instance, in Belgium.

More importantly there are grounds for even greater concern. Entire parts of the political platforms of extremist parties are being – or have been – imported, along with the accompanying racist or xenophobic rhetoric, by mainstream political parties.

One field where this is particularly apparent is immigration. Here, the tone of political debate, even among mainstream political parties, has not only hardened considerably – one only has to think about the political debate around immigration in countries such as Denmark, Switzerland or Italy – but it has tended to stigmatise entire communities, notably of non-citizens.

These communities have been targeted and stereotyped by mainstream political parties in many countries, particularly through the use of arguments centred not only around security (the fight against terrorism) but also culture – i.e. arguments defining different cultures as pre-defined and monolithic entities and, even more dangerously, entities incompatible with each other. The debate on multiculturalism in the Netherlands provides a telling example of this.

**B**ut, as the Secretary General so rightly pointed out, it is not enough just to analyse these manifestations of racism, antisemitism and xenophobia. This is not an end in itself. For ECRI, it is a necessary step in the process of devising practical and viable solutions for governments to adopt to counter these phenomena. ECRI has already identified a number of possible solutions, which I would like to share with you:

First, member states should thoroughly implement the ordinary criminal law provisions against racist offences and racial discrimination. These are applicable to all individuals and not specifically to organisations or political parties. Here, I should point out that, in order to address racism and racial discrimination in all its contemporary manifestations, for ECRI legal provisions against racism and racial discrimination should cover behaviour based on grounds such as “race”, colour, language, religion, nationality (meaning citizenship of a country) and national or ethnic origin.

Second, they should adopt and implement provisions penalising the leadership of a group that promotes racism, as well as support for such a group and participation in its activities.

Third, they should establish an obligation to suppress public financing of organisations which promote racism, including public financing of political parties, where such a system is in place. There are legal provisions in this sense in Belgium, for instance.

In addition to legal measures, ECRI supports self-regulatory measures that can be taken by political parties or national parliaments. At the national level in the United Kingdom and in Ireland, for instance, voluntary agreements have been entered into by campaigners before elections, generally under the auspices of a national specialised body for combating racism.

At the international level, we have the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-racist Society, which sets out guidelines for acting responsibly when dealing with issues related to “race”, ethnic and national origin and religion. The Charter also encourages political parties to work towards representation of minority groups at all levels of their party system. Signature of the Charter was explicitly supported, *inter alia*, by the General Conclusions of the European Conference against Racism of October 2000. At present, parties from some 26 states have signed the Charter. However, a mechanism for the effective implementation of the Charter is still needed.

At the end of the day, however, one cannot expect changes in political discourse without recognition of the problem at the very top. Ultimately, therefore, ECRI calls for courageous and effective political leadership which recognises the grave, long term consequences of responding to challenges by inappropriate rhetoric based on racist, antisemitic and xenophobic language and assumptions.

I emphasise, finally, that the long-term consequences on social cohesion are not all that is currently at stake. Without effective political leadership we face the immediate consequences of measures which are seen to be disproportionate or unfair by significant groups within our societies. This immediate risk requires an immediate response.

## Ms Tana de Zulueta, Member of the Parliamentary Assembly

**“The role of politicians in combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance”**



I will join the previous speakers in affirming in the strongest terms that racism, antisemitism and xenophobia are a threat to democracy, the rule of law and the respect of human rights – in a nutshell, to all the principles which are the foundations of our political systems.

I am supposed to talk about the role of politicians in combating these phenomena. Instead, as a provocation, I shall start by reminding you how politicians contribute to generating them.

Unfortunately, populism is a temptation for many of us. It is easy to propose simplistic and stereotyped solutions in response to the anxieties and uncertainties felt by our electorate in the face of the changes affecting our societies. It is easy to shift the responsibility for the failure of some policies onto particular sections of the population, with the argument that they do not want to integrate, do not want to participate, do not want to adapt; basically, that they want to continue to be different.

In reality, “difference” is part of the European background. Our societies have been multiethnic and multicultural for a long time. People belonging to different religions, races or cultures have been living together for decades. Migration – in the two forms of immigration and emigration – is well embedded in our national experiences. Yet it is so much easier to say that immigrants and minority ethnic groups do not want to be integrated, rather than admit that we have failed to devise effective integration and non-discrimination policies to enable them to participate in society with the full respect of their dignity and rights. It is so much easier to deny the complexity of the migration phenomenon and label all those who arrive in Europe illegally as economic immigrants, or all other European and neigh-

bouring countries as safe. After all, immigrants do not vote and do not even know their rights, let alone how to enforce them.

In our time, fear of terrorism is pervasive. What we considered as established rights are being sacrificed to security concerns. It is exactly in times like this one that politicians and political parties are more than ever duty bound to show rigour, self-restraint, intellectual honesty and integrity. Freedom of expression cannot be confused with the deliberate misrepresentation of reality; electoral popularity cannot be obtained at the cost of encouraging racism, intolerance and xenophobia and the failure of some policies cannot be ascribed exclusively to their intended beneficiaries.

If we do that, not only should we contravene the fundamental principles of solidarity, equality, human rights and rule of law, but we would create a very dangerous world for ourselves to live in. Instead of fighting racism and social exclusion we would generate more, and instead of improving the cohesion of society we would create fertile ground for extremism and the rejection of democratic rules. A dangerous, undemocratic and violent world is certainly not what our electorate wants.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, assembling members from the parliaments of the 46 member states, has shown several times to be aware of the role of politicians and political parties in combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance. An alarm bell was rung in 2000 by the resurgence of extremist parties propagating and defending ideologies incompatible with democracy and human rights.

Since then, the Political Affairs Committee – to which I belong – and the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights,

have a fixed mandate to work on this issue and, when necessary, make recommendations to member states or the Committee of Ministers.

I said earlier that politicians are duty bound to show rigour, self-restraint, intellectual honesty and integrity. This view is shared by the Assembly. In one of its most recent texts, the Assembly invited political parties to devise a new code of ethics based on the following elements:<sup>1</sup>

- their programmes and activities should respect fundamental rights and freedoms,
- political alliances with extremist parties should be excluded,
- the transparency of financing should be enhanced, and
- they should endeavour to propose plausible solutions to the social and economic problems which cause public concern.

Moreover, political parties have a duty to be democratic themselves, and ensure that they are representative of all sections of our societies, including groups that may be the target of discrimination and racism.

These recommendations, contained in a number of Assembly instruments and in the Charter of European political parties for a non-racist society, are not fully implemented, even by mainstream parties with a sound non-racist background. How many politicians of migrant origin do we know? How many of them sit in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe? Here is our first task: how can we be credible when we say that we want to fight against racism and social exclusion if our party structures themselves do not manage to do it?

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, politicians can unfortunately play a role in generating racism or intolerant attitudes in society. This can happen implicitly, through arguments which are not racist at first sight, or through explicit racist, xenophobic or intolerant discourse.

The sanctions against this type of behaviour should be proportionate to its gravity and should be applied without hesitation, by the party concerned in the case of actions by isolated members, or by the State, when such actions are tolerated, supported or conducted by a political party.

The Assembly has clearly stated that in cases of racist, xenophobic or intolerant dis-

course of exceptional gravity, political parties could be suspended, prohibited or dissolved.

Of course, all guarantees should be given to avoid the arbitrariness of such a decision, which should be implemented in the full respect of the rights and freedoms of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Guidelines on Prohibition and Dissolution of Political Parties adopted by the Venice Commission.

Council of Europe member states, however, should not hesitate to introduce specific legislation to this end, and to implement it.

We have to prevent any escalation of the tone of implicitly or overtly racist rhetoric among politicians, including by dissuading them through the threat of sanctions.

I am going to describe an emblematic example of a possible response to racist rhetoric among politicians, which occurred in my country, Italy, a country with a long tradition of emigration. Many of our emigrants were the target of xenophobic behaviour in the past, which might have led us to believe that we were immune to arguments and discourse of this kind.

In Verona, in the north of the country, a political party, the Northern League, conducted a public campaign against the Sinti community, despite the fact that it has been established there for a long time. Fortunately, the Sinti community was well organised and defended itself by bringing a legal action under a relatively recent law (from the 1980s) punishing incitement to racial discrimination. Last February, the court not only gave the leaders of this campaign a six-month suspended prison sentence, but, above all, banned them from holding local office for five years and ordered them to pay 35 000 euros in damages to Sinti organisations. This was a first in Italy and is a clear reminder to political leaders of the acceptable limits to political discourse and of their responsibilities. In my opinion, it is important that the law-based state should issue a reminder of what these limits are. The Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly plays an important role in this through the resolutions it adopts in this field. In this way it plays an educational role vis-à-vis our national parliaments.

**S**ecretary General of the Council of Europe,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. Resolution 1344 (2003) on Threat posed to democracy by extremist parties and movements in Europe.

I am grateful to ECRI for organising this event today in Paris and for inviting representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly. Above all, I am grateful for the initiative of giving visibility to the fight against the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic arguments in political discourse by organising a public presentation.

Politicians and political parties should be called to order. I shall try to do my part. I

shall report the outcome of our discussions today to the Political Affairs Committee and encourage the Assembly to take further action in this particular field.

I also hope that today's presentation will raise the interest it deserves among the media. A public stand against racist, antisemitic and xenophobic arguments in politics was urgently needed. This event is good news, and should be widely reported.



### **III. Study on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse**

Jean-Yves Camus



# Xenophobic, racist and antisemitic discourse in national and European Parliament election campaigns between June 2003 and 13 June 2004: general analysis and national case studies

## General introduction

In 2004, in both west European and central and east European countries, albeit with variants, parties that use racist, antisemitic and xenophobic political discourse are increasingly being censured, stigmatised and therefore sidelined. The Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society adopted in 1997 and the range of national legislation imposing criminal penalties for expressions of racism, antisemitism, xenophobia and, as a rule, negation of the genocide of the Jews by the Nazis reflect a high degree of consensus on the subject among democratic parties and public opinion. Until recently, the use of these topics in political discourse during and outside election periods was more or less restricted to parties classified by political scientists as far-right.<sup>1</sup> As we shall see, these parties scored modest results in the European elections, including in the countries newly admitted to the European Union. But I shall show that under the pressure of both the international context (the rise of radical Islamist terrorism) and specifically European trends (the shift from homogeneous to multicultural society in many countries, the fact of immigrants settling and founding families and the economic crisis), racist and xenophobic discourse has been reinjected into the political agenda by traditional (conservative or liberal and sometimes even left-wing) political parties or at least by individual members of those parties. I shall demonstrate that this discourse primarily

targets immigrants and refugees, especially those from Muslim countries, and sometimes Islam itself, as a religion, often confused with its political expression, Islamism. Lastly, I shall discuss the specific case of the resurgence of antisemitic acts and statements and the discourse referring to them, as well as the very scattered but very real instances of antisemitic prejudice in political parties which nonetheless remain marginal.

Finally, I shall make three case studies of the use of racist, xenophobic and antisemitic discourse in countries belonging both to the Council of Europe and to the European Union: Belgium, the Republic of Ireland and Latvia. To conclude this introduction, I should like to make one point clear. Firstly, a reference to a given political party or country in this report does not in any sense imply an intention on my part to stigmatise that party or country or make a value judgment denying its democratic nature (except in the case of parties unanimously recognised as anti-democratic). All the parties mentioned operate legally, as evidenced by their participation in the electoral process. Where one of them breaches the law, it is for the courts of the country concerned, and for them alone, to punish that party. Likewise, all the countries mentioned are democracies which support the founding principles of the international organisations they belong to (or of the European Union or the Council of Europe). While the facts mentioned in this report call for discussion and possibly for changes in attitude, and in some cases require legal penalties, they do not warrant a blanket derogatory judgment on the country concerned.

1. For a theoretical definition of the far right, see the thesis of the Dutch political scientist Cas Mudde: *The Extreme Right Party Family*; University of Leiden, 1998. For an up-to-date review of the forces within this movement: Pierre Blaise/Patrick Moreau (ed.): *Extrême-droite et nationaux-populismes en Europe de l'Ouest*, Editions du CRISP, Brussels, 2002.

## Part one: The far right, the traditional vehicle for racist, antisemitic and xenophobic discourse, has scored modest election results in recent years

Any study of the use of racist and xenophobic themes in an election campaign presupposes an analysis of the presence of far-right parties and their results. From this standpoint, the outcome of the June 2004 elections was undistinguished and cannot be regarded as a landslide for xenophobic nationalist parties.

A country-by-country examination shows a decline in Austria, where the FP scored 6.33% and only one seat as against 23.4% and five seats in 1999. In Germany, far-right parties remain very much on the sidelines, since the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD) scored 0.9% and the Republikaner 1.9%. In France the Front National admittedly progressed (9.81% as against 5.69% in 1999), but this increase should be viewed with caution because the 1999 score was not representative in the wake of the split caused by Bruno Mégret leaving the party in January 1999, and the FN's score was lower than its score of 12.9% in the 2004 regional elections. The far right made little progress in Italy: Fiamma Tricolore, an unrepentant fascist party, scored 0.7% where its predecessor, MS-Fiamma Tricolore, had scored 1.6%, though this loss was offset by the 1.2% scored by Alessandra Mussolini's Alternativa Sociale list. These two parties obtained only one seat owing to the electoral system, which borders on full proportional representation, and while the National Alliance party moved up from 10.3 to 11.5%, it can no longer be regarded as part of the far right. The Lega Nord (Northern League) showed only a very slight increase, from 4.5 to 5%, perhaps due to the short-term effect of sympathy for its leader Umberto Bossi, who was temporarily prevented from heading the list.

So there are few cases in which the far right made significant progress. This happened in Belgium, where the Vlaams Blok's score rose from 15.1 to 23.16% of the Dutch-speaking electoral college vote, while the Front National, standing in Wallonia and Brussels, scored 7.45% of French-speaking vote (as against 4.1% in 1999). This success was confirmed by the regional elections held on the same date and was indisputably the best result scored by a far-right party in western Europe. The increase was also spectacular in Poland, where the League of Polish Families (LPR) scored 15.92% and the Samobrona (Self-Defence) party 10.78%. It was substantial in Greece,

where ex-New Democracy MP George Karatzaferis' party LAOS obtained one seat with 4.11% of the vote. It was real in Slovenia, where the SNS (Slovene National Party) scored 5.2%, with no seats, but progressed by comparison with the general election held in 2000 (4.4%) and above all confirmed this trend in the general election of September 2004, when it scored 6.6%. Lastly, the Latvian Fatherland and Freedom Party (LNKK), which ranked first with a score of 29.82%, is on the borderline between conservative right and far right.

There was a much smaller increase for the Danish Dansk Folkeparti (6.8% as against 7.1%) and the Swedish Sverigedemokraterna (1.13% as against about 1%). In the Netherlands the only reason for the increase was that the List Pim Fortuyn, which scored 2.6% this time, did not stand in the 1999 election. Lastly, the British National Party's score of 4.9%, totalling 808,200 votes, must be viewed as a danger signal. While the British electoral system prevented the party from obtaining a seat, its score can nevertheless be regarded as high in view of its radical racist discourse.

However, these successes should not be allowed to mask two facts.

Firstly, there is no far right at all in some countries (Cyprus, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg) and there are merely small far-right groups in several others (Spain, Estonia, Lithuania, Malta, Portugal). Secondly, in the new EU member countries of eastern Europe, xenophobic ultra-nationalist parties, many of which are the self-proclaimed successors of parties of the same type that existed between 1918 and 1940, suffered setbacks which confirm the decline observed in the previous national elections. For example, Miroslav Sladka's Republikani scored only 0.79% in the Czech Republic (1% in the general election of June 2002, when they lost their representation in parliament); the Hungarian MIEP scored 2.35% (4.4% in the general election of April 2002, when it lost all its seats); and in Slovakia the SNS (Slovak National Party) imploded, with a score of only 2.01% (in the general election of September 2002 the SNS and its ally in the European elections, the PSNS, together scored 7%).<sup>2</sup>

2. For a synoptic table of the far right's results in the European elections, see *Searchlight Magazine*, No. 349, July 2004, pp. 25-26.

### 1. Election results: an outline interpretation

## 2. The far right: a brief analysis of its discourse

As I said in the introduction, these parties' racist, xenophobic and antisemitic discourse was widely heard during the campaign for the June 2004 European elections, as in national elections, and remains the main source of racist political discourse during and outside election campaigns. To understand its scope, one must also remember that even far-right movements with little electoral impact usually receive broad and sometimes disproportionate media coverage, which focuses more attention on them and gives them a higher profile. A series of examples will serve to illustrate the far right's racist discourse.

The most radical expressions of racism and antisemitism are to be found in **Germany** in the propaganda of the Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands (NPD), which achieved significant scores in one *Land* (Saxony: 3.26%) and in a number of *Kreis* such as Sächsische Schweiz (7%) and Riesa (7.7%), also in Saxony.<sup>3</sup> The NPD, whose campaign slogans were *Out of the European Union, A Europe of fatherlands, For a strong nationalist group in Strasbourg*, is opposed to Turkey entering the European Union and in the April issue of its monthly *Deutsche Stimme* published a photo of Turkish women loaded with large packages walking along a road, with the caption *Europe faces another Turkish assault*. Another of the NPD's major concerns is Europe's enlargement to the east: in an interview published in *Deutsche Stimme* in April 2004, a party official, Rolf Haschke, said that "millions of people from Poland, Hungary and the Baltic countries will cross into western Europe as cheap labour and seek work, especially in Germany". Here, this exploitation of the usual antagonism between the German far right and the peoples of eastern Europe takes on special significance because the party concerned demands a return to the 1937 borders and sold a "Kalender des Nationalen Widerstandes" (National Resistance Calendar) during the campaign, featuring an article on "the myth of the Reich and its historical borders" and another on "the Waffen SS volunteer army". Lastly, the NPD sets itself apart from the other German parties with its use of openly antisemitic rhetoric, as reflected for example in an article in the June 2004 issue of *Deutsche Stimme* entitled "State Terror under the Star of David", illustrated by a photo of Prime Minister Ariel

Sharon and sub-titled "Israel eliminates the leaders of the Palestinian liberation movement one after the other", a reference to the Hamas leaders. In the particular context of Germany attention should be drawn to what political scientists call the "grey area" between the conservative right and the far right, consisting of periodicals and organisations that welcome contributions from intellectuals and elected representatives who are not members of extremist groups. Before enlargement, the new right journal *Junge Freiheit*, on sale at newsstands, published many articles on the theme of the "invasion" from eastern Europe, the "Romanian immigrants problem", the "crime wave" and the "cost of Poland's accession" – all variations on the theme of the "danger from the east", the leitmotiv of German ultra-nationalism.<sup>4</sup>

In **Austria** the FP continued to use the standard xenophobic rhetoric to the effect that enlargement of the European Union was dangerous because of the predictable influx of labour from the east. In May 2004, Hans Kronberger, a candidate in the European elections, thus came out against the Greens' proposal that enlargement include the entire Balkans, which he described as a "highly explosive powder keg". He also voiced concern at the consequences of Slovakia's accession, pointing up the problem of Slovakia's nuclear power plants. At the same time, Magda Bleckmann, the party's Secretary General, spoke out against Turkey's entry into the EU, referring to Islamist organisations' action against the Turkish state's secular system and stating that "if Turkey joined, Europe would be financially and culturally overwhelmed". The FPÖ drew up a "ten-point platform", a sort of government programme starting with the proposal to introduce a basic monthly income of 1000 euros. But the second point is headed "Stricter regulation of immigration and the right of asylum: Austria is not an immigration country". Along the same lines, the party launched two campaigns on asylum-seekers, one called "Asyl stop", confined to the Land of Carinthia, whose Minister-President is Jörg Haider and whose slogan is "Carinthia can't take in any more immigrants", and the other called "Asyl eldorado", calling for a halt to the giving of social rights to asylum seekers,

3. Full results available from: [http://www.npd.de/wahl\\_info/wahlen/europawahl\\_2004.html](http://www.npd.de/wahl_info/wahlen/europawahl_2004.html)

4. On the theme of eastern Europe in *Junge Freiheit*: see "Flut aus dem Osten", in: *Antifaschistische Infoblatt* No. 62, spring 2004, pp. 42-43.

who allegedly misuse the benefits given to them by the Austrian state. Lastly, the FPÖ's head of list and sole MEP Andreas Mølzer had acquired a reputation in the past as editor of the Viennese weekly *Zur Zeit*, which was independent of the party but voiced the thinking of the national-conservative movement and attracted attention on several occasions with its overt xenophobia and antisemitic innuendo. Before he was elected, Mølzer, who used to be Haider's cultural adviser, proposed to several European parties including the French Front National and the Vlaams Blok that they set up an "anti-immigration group" in the European Parliament. He is a key figure in the attempts to forge a permanent, institutionalised link between European far-right parties.

During recent election campaigns in Denmark the Dansk Folkeparti's xenophobic ideology was expressed in the actual terms used in the party platform – the idea that the Danish people are homogeneous in religious, cultural and ethnic terms, so that "the country is grounded in the Danish cultural heritage, and Danish culture must therefore be reinforced and preserved". The platform defines culture as "the sum of the Danish people's history, experience, beliefs, language and customs". The party says "Denmark is not and has never been an immigration country, so we shall not allow it to be turned into a multiethnic society". During the election campaign the party newspaper *Dansk Folkeblad* continued to devote extensive space to criticism of Islam, for instance commending Ibn Warraq's book, *Why I am no longer Muslim*<sup>5</sup> and placing the article next to a photograph of a crowd of Muslims praying, with a few men in traditional clothing in the foreground, though there is nothing to suggest that the picture was taken in Denmark. The same issue of the newspaper contained an article entitled "Den evige kommissær", a long indictment of Ms Beate Winkler, Director of the EUMC in Vienna, and of the work of this centre, which the article accuses of introducing a new form of totalitarianism. The Dansk Folkeparti's ideology should be viewed in its proper context: it is extensively influenced by the thinking of a private far-right foundation, Danske Forening, and its newspaper *Danskeren*. Unlike the party, which seeks to deny any connection with extremism, Danske Forening does nothing to hide its

5. *Dansk Folkeblad*, No. 3, 2004.

extremist ties, as demonstrated by a text on its website ([www.dendanskeforening.dk](http://www.dendanskeforening.dk)) entitled *Det nationale gennembrud; Europæiske modstandere af multikulturalismen*, by Peter Neerup Buhl, who includes among the European opponents of multiculturalism his own organisation, the Vlaams Blok, the French Front National, the FP, the Republikaner and even the Serb Radovan Karadzic and the antisemitic Russian movement Pamyat. The list of recommended books on the same website under the heading dissident literature includes the works of the above-mentioned parties' leaders, and others such as *La Colonisation de l'Europe; discours vrai sur l'immigration et l'Islam* by Guillaume Faye, published in Paris in 2000 by the neo-Nazi publisher *Æncre* – an outright call to racial war.<sup>6</sup> Just before the start of the campaign for the European elections, the newspaper *Danskeren* also advertised a book by Rolf Slot-Henriksen, who runs various anti-Muslim Websites, on the Islamist peril in Denmark.<sup>7</sup>

Extremist nationalist parties in Spain also made use of xenophobic discourse, and Democracia Nacional, which aims to be the modern spearhead of a far right that still bears the stamp of the Falangist legacy, extensively imitated the slogans and programme of the French Front National. The party's slogan is "Spaniards first". Its favourite campaign themes are set out in a speech by its leader, Rafael Ripoll, at a public meeting in support of the Swedish nationalist party Ny Demokraterna on 10 June 2004.<sup>8</sup> Naturally, the terrorist attacks perpetrated by radical Islamists in Madrid on 11 March 2004 offer the movement an excuse to claim that Spain, together with other parts of Europe including Serbia, has become a land open to conquest by Islam. According to Ripoll, like the rest of Europe, our country is in a decadent downward spiral and the blow can be fatal: given the Third World's population boom, combined with our falling birth rate and cyclical

6. It will be noted that the Dansk Folkeparti does not state its opposition to a multicultural society, i.e. to communitarianism, which remains a democratic choice of social model. It rules out a multiethnic society, and therefore the presence of people from other countries, even if they are integrated into Danish culture.

7. R. Slot-Henriksen: *Muslimke ekstremistbevaegelser i Danmark*, published by Rafael, 2003. The book, which was produced for Dansk Kultur Forening, is listed in *Danskeren* No. 1, February 2004. In his list of extremist groups the author jumbles together Hizb ut Tahrir, Salafists, the Sufis.

8. Posted on the party's website: [www.democracianacional.org](http://www.democracianacional.org).

economic crises, Europe's peoples are clearly in danger of extinction". Like other parties of the same ideological persuasion, the movement describes the European Union as a "tower of Babel dreamed up by internationalist oligarchs". But its use of the "Muslim peril" theme (since Democracia Nacional is also against Turkey's entry into the European Union) remains an isolated case although Spain was so deeply affected by the March terrorist attacks: the entire political spectrum showed definite restraint when it came to exploiting issues such as immigration and Islamism, including during the campaign for the general election.

Far-right parties in France, on the other hand, kept to their traditional themes: the alleged links between immigration and insecurity or terrorism and between immigration and economic crisis. Bruno Mégret's Mouvement National Républicain (MNR), for example, campaigned on the slogan "Keep Turkey out of Europe" and, at the same time, "Islamists out of France". In brief, the MNR's policy is that "immigration is the nest of Islam in France and Islam is the nest of Islamism". Two features distinguish this party from its European counterparts: firstly, it is the only one to advocate "co-operation with moderate Arab countries" (which it does not identify) and secondly, it is one of the very few parties to explicitly challenge the United States on account of their alleged share of responsibility for the spread of Islamism – it urges the Americans to "stop supporting Muslim factions in the world, especially in Europe, as they do in Kosovo, Bosnia, Macedonia and Chechnya".<sup>9</sup> The Front National also geared its campaign to Turkey's entry into the EU and to migration flows from Turkey and eastern Europe. At the party's end-of-campaign banquet in Paris on 10 June 2004, Jean-Marie Le Pen as usual stoked up fear of the influence of Islam and challenged Muslim immigrants' loyalty to their host country, even where they have French nationality: "In a Europe of 25 countries today and 27 in three years – and then why not 30, or 35, or 40, with Turkey! with Kosovo! – France will have no more power or influence at all, it will be a vassal of the Germans or the Americans. [...] Michel Barnier is even already thinking of introducing an "exceptional partnership" – those are his words – with Morocco! This obscure status

9. MNR leaflet: Islamists out of France: let's put France to rights with Bruno Mégret".

would put Morocco, according to the Foreign Ministry, I quote, 'halfway between association and accession' to the European Union! But why stop halfway! When one is halfway, one doesn't usually turn back, one carries on to the finishing line, and the finishing line is Morocco's entry into the European Union, which would at least have the advantage of being logical in view of the number of Moroccans already living in the Union, or who have dual nationality, that of their host country, France, and that of their real motherland, Morocco!" Referring to the drastic security measures taken for the ceremonies commemorating D-Day (6 June 2004), he also made an automatic connection between immigration, Islamist terrorism and France's suburbs, saying, "Incidentally, it doesn't seem to me very logical to be afraid of terrorists arriving from abroad to kill off Mr Bush when you only have to put an ad in any slightly sensitive suburb to recruit all the volunteers you need!".

In Italy the Libertà di Azione list headed by MP Alessandra Mussolini campaigned on the basis of an insidiously xenophobic platform, defining the essence of Europe as Greek in its thinking, Roman in its values of justice and civic sense, and Christian in the values that shape and motivate it. It also stressed that Europe was rooted in 3 000 years of culture and history and, although it did not call for foreigners living in Italy to leave, it concluded that migration flows are not inevitable. The fact that Roberto Fiore, leader of the overtly racist and antisemitic movement Forza Nuova, was in second position on the list obviously sheds a different light on this platform. A government party, the Lega Nord per l'Indipendenza della Padania, also makes regular use of xenophobic discourse. A May 2004 issue of its newspaper, specially produced for the election, included on page 6 a photograph of a ship loaded with illegal immigrants, topped by the caption "Never again", and the picture of an election poster bearing the headline "No to immigrants' right to vote" with a text including assertions such as "The right to vote cannot be the starting point of citizenship, it is an end point" and "The right to vote is a symbol; no party can grant it to immigrants, nor can Parliament, only the people can". The article on the same page welcomed the 61.5% increase in deportations and the 37655 instances of immigrants being escorted back to the border

since the adoption of the “Bossi-Fini law” of 30 July 2002 on illegal immigration.

Lastly, in the same issue, one of the Lega Nord candidates in the European elections who was elected in June 2004, Mario Borghezio (who holds the entirely unofficial title of President of the Government of Padania), signed an article entitled *No to the Islamic invasion* which included the following statement: “Islam has positioned itself in the world arena with strong expansionist intentions which follow highly specific strategies for gaining ground in moderate Muslim countries and in Europe”. The author, adding that under these circumstances there is nothing unrealistic about protests against the building of mosques in our countries, approved of these protests on the grounds that for Muslims, the mosque is not only a place of worship but also a place for meeting other Muslims socially and reinforcing their identity, making judgments on society and issuing political watchwords. On the basis of a number of cases in which places of worship were proved to have been used to propagate radical Islamism, the author then generalised about the link between the existence of a mosque and the growth of terrorism: numerous investigations conducted by various public prosecutors have amply demonstrated that pro-terrorist activities are carried out in mosques and Islamic

centres in various cities in Padania such as Milan and Cremona. The National Alliance, a right-wing conservative party which took over from the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement, used much more moderate language on immigration and nationality issues and devoted minimal time to them in its election campaign. The National Alliance’s position on the revision of the Bossi-Fini law, stated shortly after the election itself (29 June 2004), in fact confirms this attitude: the party proposed setting up a Ministry of Immigration and making the deportation of illegal immigrants subject to a court order. While some of its proposals – such as stricter conditions for issuing residence permits, or the possibility of deporting a non-Community immigrant who commits the offence of selling counterfeit goods – are indisputably stringent, the movement takes the opposite approach from that of Lega Nord: according to Ignazio La Russa, the National Alliance’s national co-ordinator, “these measures are not simply punitive, but also facilitate integration”. Integration thus remains an objective, whereas the Northern League pursues the aim of massively deporting non-Community immigrants and halting migration flows, and also confines itself to an ethnic definition of citizenship.

## Part Two: racist and xenophobic discourse appears in mainstream parties

One of the most disturbing developments of recent years is the fact that racist and xenophobic discourse is no longer confined to the fairly limited sphere of far-right parties. Issues relating to immigration policy and the right of asylum, in particular, have become major factors in the electorate’s vote and a key element in political debate, especially in western Europe. As a result of the events of 11 September 2001 and more generally the rise of radical Islamism, the theory of the “clash of civilisations” is now acceptable and it is permitted to query the Muslim religion’s compatibility with democratic values. In addition, the persistent economic crisis has justified proposals for curbing migration flows in a few countries, though several have opted for mass regularisation of illegal

immigrants (including Italy, Spain and Portugal, while the “Chevènement law” in France has led to the regularisation of more than half of the country’s illegal residents). The tone of some democratic parties’ discourse on the subject has indisputably hardened, to the extent that in several countries the majority of citizens are in favour of stringent curbs on immigration and on the right of asylum. It is not the purpose of this study to give an account of the debates that have arisen on these issues in political circles and civil society in European countries outside election campaigns, so I shall simply give a few examples of the way in which these issues may have over-determined the electoral climate in 2004.

Clearly, the political option of rejecting federalism and preferring a Europe of nations, as well as criticism of the growth of Community prerogatives encroaching on

national sovereignty, are democratic choices which do not as such comprise any form of racism or xenophobia. Xenophobia is totally absent from movements such as Paul Van

### 1. The special case of “Euro-sceptic” or “pro-sovereignty” parties

Buitenens's Dutch list Europa Transparant and Hans-Peter Martin's Austrian list. On the other hand, several "Euro-sceptic" lists made dangerously manipulative use of nationalist and xenophobic rhetoric, some with the aim of taking votes from far-right parties (as the MPF did in France in relation to the Front National), but with the danger of legitimising this type of discourse in traditional right-wing and sometimes even left-wing parties. The distinctly right-wing French list of **Mouvement pour la France**, headed by Philippe de Villiers, geared its campaign to the issues of Turkey's entry into the EU, immigration and Europe's Christian identity. The issue of Turkey ranked second behind employment in the MPF's campaign platform, which supported "a European Europe in which France will preserve its identity and influence". It was reflected in the campaign posters, which displayed the slogan "No to the Constitution; Keep Turkey out of Europe" next to the photo of the head of list. The party launched a national petition asking the President of the Republic to hold a referendum. Philippe de Villiers, speaking to his movement's youth members, justified his position as follows: "Turkey's entry into Europe means the end of Europe; it is no longer Europe, but Eurasia, as if France was applying to join the African Union. If Turkey comes into Europe, there is a risk that the President of Europe might be Turkish: for my part, that is a possibility I rule out. Turkey will be the top power in demographic terms, with more votes and more MEPs than France. Today it is the hub of illegal immigration from the whole of Asia into Europe".<sup>10</sup> The issue of immigration was also one of the MPF's "ten commitments" for the European elections. The movement came out against "a communitarian Europe" and stated that in the face of the "immigration explosion" each country needed to take back the prerogatives that Europe had conferred on itself for controlling migration flows. The MPF also takes a highly restrictive view of what Europe's cultural foundations should be. After the Buttiglione affair, it explained that "after the 'yes' to Turkey and the refusal to refer to Europe's Christian origins in the draft Constitution, we now have proof that the European Union has become an anti-Christian club".<sup>11</sup> Lastly, the Euro-sceptic party that scored the best result in western Europe

was the British **UK Independence Party** (16.1% of the vote). Xenophobia was not UKIP's campaign theme, since it focused entirely on its slogan "Say No to European Union". But the head of list, journalist Robert Kilroy-Silk, had already sparked controversy in early 2004 when he published an article in the *Sunday Express* referring to the "Arabs who killed more than 3 000 civilians on 11 September" then "danced in the streets" for joy, also describing them as "suicide bombers" and "limb amputators". Kilroy-Silk was forced to resign from the BBC, where he had hosted a programme for the last 17 years, and said in his defence that he had meant the regimes of some Arab countries, not Arabs in general. He is not from the far right, but from Labour. UKIP, which was formed in 1993, has always done its utmost to expel racist elements from its ranks. Its founder and first leader, the historian Alan Sked, had to expel one of his own London School of Economics students, Mark Deavin, who had become a member of the party's national executive and was in fact a member of the far-right British National Party. Deavin had helped to write the antisemitic book *Who are the Mind-benders?* by Nick Griffin, Chairman of the BNP and head of its list. In 2001 one of the party leaders, Mark Lester, who is Jewish, left the party after discovering that the UKIP manager for Scotland, Alistair MacConnachie, had written a letter casting doubt on the scale of the Holocaust, and especially after the party executive had decided that the penalty imposed – a five-year suspension – was to be reduced to one year.<sup>12</sup> UKIP's current leaders include Ashley Mote, who was elected MEP and has written a book entitled *Overcrowded Britain: Our Immigration Crisis Exposed*. The publisher presents the book as follows: "political correctness has hijacked our freedom to discuss one of the burning issues of the day. This book offers a full, open and if necessary controversial discussion of immigration. It looks at the facts and squarely faces up to many of the consequences of mass immigration and the urgent decisions Britain must take. [...] Nine out of ten immigrants arriving in the United Kingdom stay here. In social terms immigration causes many problems that can only get worse". This is a more radical version of the party's official position that "immigration is

10. Text available from <http://mpf26.free.fr>.

11. Press release of 28 October 2004.

12. On individual relationships between UKIP members and the far right, see *Searchlight*, July 2004, pp 8-9.

out of control” and “Britain is full”. UKIP’s election platform pinpointed “five freedoms” it intended to uphold: freedom to leave the European Union; freedom not to be a victim of crime; freedom from “bureaucratic politicians” and “political correctness”; and

Less frequently, racist and xenophobic discourse can be heard even in potential government parties, usually when political debate causes the electoral agenda to focus on issues linked to national identity, immigration and the status of asylum-seekers. I have recorded a few examples of what can be regarded as outright “contamination” of democratic parties.

In Luxembourg the general election and the European elections took place on the same day. The Aktiounskomitee fir Demokratie a Rentegerechtegkeet (ADR) scored 9.5% of the vote in the general election, with 5 MPs, and 8.03% in the European elections, with no MEPs. The ADR opposed Turkey’s entry into the European Union, since it considers that Turkey is not a European country, partly for historical and geographical reasons, but chiefly for cultural reasons.<sup>13</sup> One of its MPs, Mr Jacques-Yves Henkes, also tabled a bill amending the law of 3 April 1996 establishing a procedure for consideration of asylum applications. The explanatory report to the bill takes up the theme of asylum shopping, which in the author’s view “prompts illegal immigrants to choose the country where abuse of the asylum procedure has the best chances of success”. On 19 March 2003 the ADR submitted an application for an amendment to the Constitution, which would henceforth include the provision that “the national language of Luxembourg citizens is Luxembourgish”. On 23 January 2004 it spoke out against the government plan to open reception centres for refugees. The ADR is also one of the few European parties in favour of abolishing citizens’ right to hold dual nationality.<sup>14</sup> It also wants migration flows to centre on the countries that have common cultural foundations and values, i.e. the current and future member countries of the European Union.<sup>15</sup> The ADR’s demand was not met on the issue of granting the

freedom from overcrowding by immigrants. The platform obviously has xenophobic overtones, although UKIP tried to distance itself from extremists during the campaign for the European elections.

right to vote to non-Community foreigners, since the Electoral Law of 18 February 2003 provided for this right subject to five years’ residence in Luxembourg.

In Sweden the debate revolved around a challenge to the well-established consensus on access to social benefits for all European Union nationals. The only parties to oppose access were Sverigedemokraterna and the far-left party KPML(r) (Kommunistiska Partiet Marxist-Leninisterna, Revolutionrerna). The Prime Minister Gran Persson himself (Social Democrat, Arbetarepartiet-Socialdemokraterna) was in favour of it. After the trade unions in the transport and construction sectors among others had voiced some discontent in October 2003, the government had worked out a compromise, agreeing to this opening up of social protection but at the same time calling for stricter controls on undeclared labour and illegal immigration.

Suddenly, on 21 November 2003, Prime Minister Gran Persson changed his mind. In an interview on *Dagens Eko* (a current affairs programme broadcast every hour on the main public radio station Sveriges Radio, whose editorial staff are said to be close to the Social Democrats) he advocated restricting the access of nationals of new European Union member countries to social benefits, explaining that we want the free movement of workers, but not social welfare tourism. We must not be naive. He explained that the situation was outrageous because a European Union national needed to work only ten hours a week to be fully entitled to Sweden’s social benefits.

This news was broadcast in a television report on 11 November 2003 under the headline “Anxiety about enlargement to the East”, produced by journalist Johan Zackrisson Winberg in the programme *Uppdrag granskning*, whose content was widely criticised for its xenophobic overtones. The report was based on the case of an Estonian nurse who came to work for ten hours a week in Sweden and immediately brought in her husband, her two children and both pairs of grandparents, all of them receiving various social welfare allowances; it

## 2. The parties of the parliamentary right

13. Press release of 24 September 2004.

14. Interview with Christian Schaak, of the ADR, on RTL, Neen zur duebler Nationalitit, 19 January 2004.

15. The ADR proposed setting up schools for integrating immigrants through tuition in Luxembourgish.

explained, without proof, that this person was costing Swedish citizens 320 000 Krona a year. The report also included an interview with a representative of the Social Welfare Fund who explained how people fraudulently drew allowances. The programme forecast that this fraud would increase after enlargement of the European Union and explained that wages would fall as a result of this additional foreign competition on the labour market from probably tens of thousands of east Europeans. Lastly, xenophobic prejudice was reflected in the programme's closing sentence: "The question is: how much generosity can we and do we want to offer?"

This biased presentation of the issues sparked a wave of protests both to the Prime Minister and to the interviewed official of the Ministry of Trade, who had simply explained the existing regulations, which he merely applied. The Sverigedemokraterna harnessed the content of the programme for its own purposes the very next day, sending the media a press release which included long quotations from the programme. On 28 April 2004 the Social Democratic Party's proposal to restrict access to social benefits for nationals of the new European Union member countries was rejected when Parliament put it to the vote. The ruling party lost by 137 votes for, 182 against and 4 abstentions. Conservative leader Per Westerberg (Moderata Samlingspartiet) accused Gran Persson of paving the way for xenophobic views, while Liberal MP Erik Ullenhag (Folkpartiet) said, it is a shameful taint on the European flag to propose that a citizen's rights should depend on his or her national origin".

On 7 September 2004 the daily *Dagens Nyheter* published statistics demonstrating that "social welfare tourism" had by no means flooded the country, since the number of applicants for residence permits recorded between 1 May and 31 August 2004 had increased by only 780 over the same period in 2003.

In the Netherlands xenophobic discourse has hardened still more markedly in recent years, as evidenced by the success of the List Pim Fortuyn in the 2002 general election. This success was short-lived, but Fortuyn's legacy is thoroughly alive. It is reflected in civil society, as demonstrated by the poll conducted in November 2004 by the TV channel KRO to elect "the greatest Dutch person of all time": Fortuyn was chosen ahead of William of Orange and

Anne Frank, whose nationality was in dispute. But it is also apparent in political circles: for several years now, many politicians have spoken out on the failure of the Netherlands' communitarian model. A striking feature of the campaign for the European elections was the debate on the reform of the right of asylum carried out by Jan Peter Balkenende's government. On 17 February 2004, despite criticism from a substantial section of the population and several human rights organisations, Rita Verdonk, the (Liberal) Minister for Integration, got Parliament to adopt a bill providing for the deportation of 26 000 asylum-seekers who had arrived in the Netherlands before 1 April 2001. Although the government regularised 2 300 asylum-seekers at the beginning of the year, those whose applications were rejected will now be returned to their countries of origin by 2007, regardless of the time they have spent in the Netherlands. This drastic measure triggered a crisis in the ruling coalition: the head of the Liberal parliamentary group Jozias Van Aartsen accused the Christian Democrat Prime Minister of failing to give his minister sufficient support;<sup>16</sup> Balkenende replied that the bill would be adopted without amendments, in spite of the discontent simmering inside his own party, the CDA, some of whose grassroots members were against the bill. The Prime Minister basically said that his party had to introduce this reform, adding, "It isn't easy, but it's necessary". According to a poll conducted by the NIPO institute on 14 February 2004, two-thirds of Netherlands citizens were in favour of more flexible legislation for asylum-seekers who had been living in the country for more than five years. The debate on this new legislation fuelled numerous verbal excesses. On 24 January, for example, Radio Nederland, a state radio station broadcasting internationally, hosted a discussion of immigration issues with the VVD MP Stef Blok, party spokesperson on the right of asylum and immigration; student Jamila Faloun, Vice-President of the Association of Muslim Women al Manar, and journalist Robbert Bodegraven, publisher of the weekly magazine *Contrast*, published by Forum – the Institute for Multicultural Development. In brief, Mr Blok said during the discussion, "Therefore we should transfer the responsibility for learning the language to the country of origin. I don't

16. Statement by Van Aartsen broadcast by the radio station NOS on 2 February 2004.

want the Dutch taxpayer to pay for the fact that somebody chooses an 18-year-old bride [from his country of origin], who may be illiterate, and then we have to pay for two or three years' education to teach her Dutch". He also stated his view that "successful integration calls for less immigration". On the other hand, dissenting voices were heard even among the ranks of the Liberal party. But there were also some inappropriate statements made by the former Deputy Prime Minister Hans Dijkstal, for example, he said that it was shameful to stigmatise Muslims and judge immigrants according to their degree of integration into Dutch society. "Muslims are being stigmatised," he said. "An entire religion is under attack, whereas most Muslims are moderate and respectable people";<sup>17</sup> and then claimed, by making an unacceptable comparison that the government plan to issue immigrants with a certificate spelling out their degree of integration reminded him of the Second World War years, particularly the yellow star imposed on Jews by the Nazis. This part of his statement prompted a forceful response from the Liberal leader, Gerrit Zalm, who regretted the wording of his comparison and explained that government policy was "very much misunderstood". But the debate did not stop at the government bill on asylum-seekers. Another government bill which provided for juvenile delinquents from the Dutch West Indies who had committed an offence in the Netherlands to be sent back to the West Indies, recently had to be (temporarily?) dropped. The minister in charge of relations with former colonies, Thom de Graaf, took the opposite stance on the subject from Rita Verdonk, who in the end set up a committee to "work out measures to regulate migration" between the Dutch West Indies and the Netherlands.<sup>18</sup>

There is also an ongoing debate on the issue of whether to make blasphemy a criminal offence.<sup>19</sup> Overall, the debate on immigration and integration has been more impassioned than ever since film director Theo Van Gogh was murdered on 2 November 2004. However, the Minister for Integration Rita

Verdonk nevertheless chose to contain it within the normal bounds of a democratic discourse by stating that the Muslim community should not be held responsible as such for Van Gogh's murder, but according to a poll published by the daily *Algemeen Dagblad* on 6 November, Islam has a poor image in the Netherlands. 79% of those questioned consider that the murder reflects a deterioration in the country's social atmosphere; 51.7% do not believe the murder reflects a failure of Moroccan integration, but almost a quarter (23.9%) believe it does. Unusually, more women (52.9%) than men (43.2%) take the view that the integration of Moroccans has failed. More than 80% demand extra measures to combat Islamist extremism: a tougher judicial system (65%), heavier prison sentences (62%), deportation of militant imams (60%) and stricter controls on mosques (52%). 48% of those questioned are even in favour of abolishing the right to dual nationality. The political outcome of this climate is that if elections were to be held now (November 2004), the new party that soon will be formed by (ex-VVD) MP Geert Wilders, who is firmly against the multicultural society, would become the country's third party with more MPs than the Liberals.<sup>20</sup> Both Wilders and a part of the Liberal right are influenced by the neo-conservative foundation Edmund Burke Stichting, which published a second edition of its political manifesto "De crisis in Nederland – en het conservatieve antwoord" (by Bart Jan Spruyt and Michiel Visser) at the beginning of 2004. The manifesto spotlights the problems of crime, "immigration and multicultural togetherness" and Islamism, expressly referring to Huntington's theory of the "clash of civilisations"<sup>21</sup> and using fairly radical terms.<sup>22</sup>

This uncertainty about identity, based in particular on the obvious fear of the fundamentalist components of Islam taking root, also affects Scandinavia. In **Denmark**, for example, the government had a law on residence requirements for religious preachers adopted in February 2004. The text, inspired by the Dansk Folkeparti, is in fact specifically designed to control the entry of imams into the country. According to the Prime Minister Anders Fogh Rasmussen, it

17. Statement of 6 June 2004, published by the daily *Algemeen Dagblad*.

18. On this point, see the Aruba newspaper *A.M* of 28 September 2004.

19. The CDA Minister of Justice, Mr Donner, suggested in mid-November that persons who committed contemptuous blasphemy should be prosecuted more often under Article 147 of the Criminal Code. The Lower House (Tweede Kamer), however, plans to repeal the article in question.

20. *Algemeen Dagblad*, 17 November 2004.

21. Text available from <http://www.burkestichting.nl/>.

22. *Viz* the title of the article co-signed by Spruyt and Wilders in *Het Parool* of 22 October 2004: "Halt the import of Islamic culture".

has so far been too easy for foreign missionaries to obtain residence permits, while a government spokesperson said that the new law was intended to assure us that [missionaries] are worthy of the trust that society shows in them by letting them enter. The law in fact reflects the danger of far-right ideas catching on in a country where the centre-right government's parliamentary majority is entirely due to the benevolent neutrality of the DF, which can in return impose part of its political agenda. While the guarantees required of clerics entering Denmark are not exorbitant in themselves (a minimum level of education, financial independence and membership of a recognised religious community), the double-speak used in presenting the law is unhealthy: though the Prime Minister took a literal view of the text, which applies to all religions, Peter Skaarup, speaking on behalf of the DF, admitted that "in theory these rules concern all religions, but in practice they are aimed at imams".<sup>23</sup>

I shall conclude this overview with the case of **Switzerland**. In elections to the National Council on 19 November 2003, the Swiss People's Party (Schweizerische Volkspartei) became the country's top party with 26.6% of the vote. The SPP is a typical example of those government parties which belong neither historically nor ideologically to the far right, but to the agricultural right, and have evolved over the years, in this case under the leadership of the current Minister of Justice Christoph Blocher, towards xenophobic populist positions reflected in speeches on the need to halt immigration and reduce the number of asylum-seekers (*requérants d'asile*, as the Swiss call them).

During the general election campaign, SPP representatives again targeted asylum-seekers. At a press conference on 6 January 2003, Yvan Perrin, municipal councillor for La Côte aux Fées in the canton of Neuchâtel, spoke out against criminal asylum-seekers in terms that amounted to generalisation, repeatedly referring to drug trafficking, criminals, acts of violence and racketeering. He added that conditions of detention for criminal asylum-seekers and criminal illegal immigrants should not be the same as for other prisoners, echoing an argument commonly brought up in xenophobic security-oriented discourse – that of the privileged conditions of detention granted to foreigners, which prompted him to say, We

23. Quoted by the *Guardian* on 19 February 2004.

must give up all forms of luxury when it comes to these individuals.<sup>24</sup> On 21 August 2003 the Deputy Chairman of the party, Toni Brunner, elected representative for the canton of St Gall, took up the theme of the growing proportion of criminals of foreign origin and the more recent theme of criminal tourism, comparable to the right-of-asylum tourism mentioned elsewhere. He then played on one of the favourite themes of xenophobic populist discourse: the fact that honest citizens are fed up with foreigners' abuse of social benefits – "but the citizens of this country don't simply feel powerless in the face of rising crime; they also feel very disturbed at the increasing abuse of our social system". However, this sentence was simply the prelude to a much more violent diatribe: "In this country we don't simply offer a wage to imprisoned criminals so that they earn more than they would doing a normal job in their countries of origin; no, we even allow whole families to enter Switzerland illegally and send their children to school, even without having residence permits, and benefit from a highly developed public health system. There are even leaflets giving undocumented immigrants and other illegal entrants precise instructions on how to get social benefits. Not to mention the pseudo-refugees whose asylum applications have been rejected, but who still manage to stay in Switzerland by all sorts of tricks, by fictitious marriages or simply by digging their heels in. If they're clever enough, they even get themselves an AI pension to live off comfortably in their countries of origin – which they fled because they were allegedly persecuted there".<sup>25</sup>

The party's September 2003 platform document entitled "In favour of an independent foreign policy" confirms that the SPP is extremely suspicious of anything that comes from abroad, and particularly from the European Union. It repeats the party's view that joining the European Union would level Switzerland down: "Switzerland's accession to the EU must be rejected essentially for economic reasons. It would have many disadvantages for the Swiss economy, especially higher taxes and rents and declining prosperity". The document also comes out against the Schengen and Dublin agreements on the grounds that signing them would leave Switzerland with

24. Text available from [http://www.svp.ch/?page\\_id=176&t=3](http://www.svp.ch/?page_id=176&t=3).

25. Text available from [http://www.svp.ch/index.html?page\\_id=612&t=3](http://www.svp.ch/index.html?page_id=612&t=3).

a “security deficit” because there would be no more border controls.

Lastly, the SPP made wide use of xenophobic discourse during its campaign for the two popular votes held on 26 September 2004 with a view to facilitating the naturalisation of second and third generation foreigners. This time a campaign poster was even more telling than the party’s writings and speeches: the SPP poster showed a box full of Swiss passports towards which hands, several of them coloured, were stretching out with a grasping air. The caption was “Mass naturalisations? Twice NO to the naturalisation plans”. At a press conference on 13 August 2004, National Councillor Ulrich Schlüer, representing the canton of Zurich, revealed the party’s true thinking: he claimed it was a “deceitful plan for mass naturalisations” – wording designed to conjure up the fantasy of the native population being swamped by foreigners. The text would introduce “integration by order, not in reality”, simply because the SPP considered the criteria for becoming Swiss too lenient (five years’ study in Switzerland). What the party criticised was the plan to allow the law, instead of the residents of the municipalities concerned, to say who could become Swiss. It claimed that the government (which nevertheless included Christoph Blocher in the key post of Minister of Justice) maliciously intended to carry out “mass naturalisations by eliminating the sovereign (*author’s note*: the people) for the sole purpose of vamping up the statistics on foreigners.<sup>26</sup> On the same date National Councillor Jasmin Hutter (St Gall) said that naturalisation must neither be degraded nor made automatic.<sup>27</sup> She used an interesting line of argument against selling off the right to Swiss citizenship, drawing on the results of the Irish referendum, which she said had been held to stop citizenship tourism. On the same date, Yvan Perrin expressed indignation at fictitious marriages and the fact that not much attention is paid either to the possibility of a criminal past or to knowledge of one of the national languages. Quite obviously, being married to a Swiss citizen is enough for a foreigner to be considered both honest and integrated. The party’s official manifesto on the subject entitled “Twice No to mass naturalisations”,

26. Text available from [http://www.svp.ch/index.html?page\\_id=1191&l=3](http://www.svp.ch/index.html?page_id=1191&l=3).

27. See [http://www.svp.ch/index.html?page\\_id=1192&l=3](http://www.svp.ch/index.html?page_id=1192&l=3).

published in June 2004, stated the SPP’s usual line: “this practice [*author’s note*: easier naturalisation] will make our country still more attractive to foreigners without resources or training who come to Switzerland solely to be naturalised and thus enjoy the generous social benefits provided for Swiss citizens.

In May 2004 the SPP counterattacked with a proposal for a popular initiative entitled In favour of democratic naturalisations, which involved restoring exclusive power to the municipalities to decide by a vote whether a candidate for Swiss nationality was to be naturalised. This meant reversing the decision given in mid-2003 by the Federal Tribunal, which had ruled that as a vote on the matter was not subject to appeal, the right to decide on naturalisation could no longer be conferred on citizens and any decision to reject an application should be subject to appeal. The text presenting the proposal also contained a xenophobic passage aimed at a fairly specific target: the SPP explained that in Switzerland the state has the monopoly of violence and that as a result, the practice of vendetta and violence for purposes of personal revenge was prohibited; it concluded that the citizens of this country are therefore entitled to refuse the right of citizenship to individuals *or members of ethnic groups* for whom the principle of personal revenge in response to an injustice they have suffered [...] is self-evident. This is clearly aimed at refugees from the Balkans, who are one of the SPP’s regular targets, and possibly at Muslims. Above all, the SPP does not consider individuals’ acts alone, but their membership of an entire group suspected of perpetuating local customs in Switzerland. It is this jump to a presumption of collective guilt that makes the discourse xenophobic.

Racist and xenophobic discourse is also used by democratic parties in eastern Europe, in the countries newly admitted to the EU. The controversy that marked the first four months of 2004 in Slovenia over the plans to build a mosque in the capital Ljubljana was a typical case of exploitation of xenophobia, in a country which is nevertheless highly democratic and ethnically homogeneous and has never been hit by terrorism. Slovenia has only about 50 000 Muslims out of 2 million inhabitants; most of them come from the countries of former Yugoslavia (Bosnia and Macedonia), and they have been trying to secure a place of worship since 1969. In December 2003 the

municipality of Ljubljana agreed to the construction of what was to be the country's one and only mosque. However, a petition launched by the ultra-nationalist municipal councillor Mihael Jarc<sup>28</sup> (Slovene People's Party – SLS) and signed by 12 000 citizens prompted the municipal council to consider holding a local referendum on the project in April 2004, although the mayor, Danica Simsic (Union List of Social Democrats – ZLSD) had decided to ask the Constitutional Court whether such a referendum was legal. At Christmas 2003 the Catholic Archbishop of the capital, Mgr France Rode, announced that he was against the project and said on the television channel Pop TV, "Slovenian policy-makers must ask themselves whether they are in favour of a political centre representing another culture establishing itself on Slovenian territory. I myself am taking my distance on this issue".<sup>29</sup> The Mufti of Slovenia, Osman Djogic, answered that Slovenia's Muslims wish to live in an atmosphere of tolerance with their fellow-citizens of other religions". To date, although the local referendum was not held in the end, and in spite of Danica Simsic's support for the planned mosque, the latter has not yet been built. The campaigns for the European elections and the October 2004 general election in Slovenia were marked by two other instances of xenophobia. Firstly, according to the daily *Delo* (1 February), Prime Minister Anton Rop (Liberal Democratic Party – LDS) described the leader of the populist opposition party Nova Slovenia as "Argentinian citizen Anton Bajuk", although the latter is Slovenian and was born in Ljubljana, even if his family emigrated to South America after 1945. Secondly, on 4 April 2004, the Slovenians voted in a referendum on restoring the rights of persons "deleted" from the register of permanent residents in February 1992. In October 2003 Parliament had adopted a law retroactively restoring permanent resident status to the thousands of citizens who had been illegally deleted from the state registers in 1992, thereby losing their rights: when Slovenia became independent, more than 30 000 former Yugoslav citizens were deprived of all their rights overnight. According to official figures, 18 000 people were left with temporary residence permits

28. He said on BBC news on 2 April 2004, "In the Middle Ages our ancestors were attacked by Muslim soldiers who did nasty things here. It's our historical subconscious".

29. Reported by the daily *Dnevnik* on 18 January 2004.

or without legal status, while 11,000 left the country. Prime Minister Anton Rop's centre-left government called on the electorate to boycott the referendum, which was held with the support of the opposition parties. About 30% of the 1.6 million registered voters took part in it. The law on the manner in which the rights of "deleted" persons could be restored was rejected by 94.6% of the voters, while 3.8% voted in favour. The outcome will not have any legal consequences: an authoritative decision by the Constitutional Court requires the Ministry of the Interior to give the persons concerned permanent residence permits. But the campaign was smattered with xenophobic statements. Firstly, Dr Miha Brejc, Deputy Chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SDS) and one of those who promoted the referendum, wanted to prevent former officers of the Yugoslav People's Army (JNA) from being covered by the law: "No former officers of the Federal Army!" he said, "We don't agree that these 450 officers, or perhaps more, should be given what they don't deserve – they acted against us!". Secondly, in February, Janez Jansa, Chairman of the SDS party, claimed that the injustices committed against those who had been deprived of their rights had affected "a few illiterate cleaning women",<sup>30</sup> an obvious allusion to former Yugoslav citizens from Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Kosovo, and to Roma.

I now come to the borderline case of **Poland**, where two Catholic-inspired<sup>31</sup> parties which are against joining the European Union, regarded by some as retiring and by others as far-right, achieved high scores last June: the League of Polish Families (Liga Polskich Rodzin), whose programme states its aim of fighting to ensure respect for Catholic morality and keep the national heritage in Polish hands, and Self-Defence (Samoobrona), whose leader Andrzej Lepper carefully avoids such phrases and simply proposes a programme based on a social market economy as advocated by several European Churches.<sup>32</sup> Nonetheless, two types of xenophobic dis-

30. Remarks quoted by the daily *Mladina* on 15 March 2004.

31. While both parties state in their platforms that they draw their inspiration from the Church's social doctrine, it is quite clear that neither has ever received the slightest mark of approval either from the Polish Church or from the Vatican or *a fortiori* from Pope Jean-Paul II.

32. Speech before the European Parliament on 4 May 2004.

course operate in these movements' policies: firstly, anti-German rhetoric – especially in Samoobrona, a populist agrarian party – due to fear of the return of those who were expelled, chiefly from Silesia, and are suspected of wanting to retrieve their land, which would be all the easier because of Germany's strong economy and the wide income gap between the two countries; secondly, anti-Jewish rhetoric, a peculiar form of antisemitism without Jews (who now number only about 3 000 as against 3 million in 1939), based mainly on popular and religious prejudice. Thus, the Samoobrona MP Rafal Majewski voiced his anxiety at the number of Israelis of Ashkenazi origin who in his view were likely to emigrate to Poland to flee a difficult situation in the Middle East. "Their influence is growing in Poland," he said. "They are buying property and investing in businesses. Poles don't want to feel like second-class citizens in their own country". He added, "I don't want it thought that I am speaking out against Jews, but we want to preserve our children's rights", also saying he was convinced that "60% of the press is controlled by Jews".<sup>33</sup>

The League of Polish Families (LPR) exudes the same anti-Jewish prejudice, and so to an even greater extent does the radio station close to the party, Radio Maryja, headed by the redemptionist priest Tadeusz Rydzyk (a station alleged to have 4 to 6 million listeners). In 2004 the convicted antisemitic propagandist Dariusz Ratajczak said on the radio station, Since the Holocaust has been on the school curriculum, everyone believes that Auschwitz was a death camp rather than a normal labour camp. He added, In a Catholic country like Poland, as long as most ministers are Jewish and stink of onions, Poland will never be Polish.<sup>34</sup> The newspaper *Nasz Dziennik* and the television channel TV Trwam, which belong to the same group, undoubtedly played a major role, together with Radio Maryja, in the LPR's and Samoobrona's winning their electorate in the European elections.

33. Majewski made these remarks, which were reported by the English-language newspaper *Gulf News* on 3 June 2002, during a trip to Dubai, where this daily is published.

34. See Sarah Elsing in: <http://www.cafebabel.com/fr/> of 28 May 2004.

### Part Three: Antisemitic rhetoric in the European election campaign remains marginal, but importing the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into national political debates is likely to generate excesses

Antisemitic rhetoric played only a marginal part in the European election campaign, as it did in the earlier national election campaigns. However, new trends include ethnic and religious lists, many inspired by a form of Islam that can be described as fundamentalist, standing for election either in an attempt to organise a political party or to express, via a grassroots organisation, a form of antizionism which has antisemitic overtones or associations. In national elections, this trend was most apparent in **Belgium**. Two Islamist parties stood in the general election of 18 May 2003 (results for the Chamber of Representatives only): Noor (1 141 votes; 0.02%) and the Parti Citoyenneté Prospérité (PCP – Citizenship Prosperity Party) (8 258 votes; 0.13%), as well as the "Resist" list (10 059 votes; 0.15%) produced by the alliance of a far-left party (the maoist Belgian Labour Party) and a radical Islamic/Arab nationalist party (the European Arab League – EAL). The Noor Party had a highly reactionary platform comprising various points modelled on the Sharia (abolition of banking

interest, marriage at adolescence, introduction of sexual segregation in public places and schools, setting up of a statutory alms fund), but with no antisemitic slant, not even a reference to the Middle East situation. The PCP on the other hand, headed at the time by the Salafist Jean-François Bastin, not only had a programme calling for the Sharia to be introduced as the country's law for Muslims, but also had very close ties to the Molenbeek Islamic Centre and its imam, Sheikh Bassam Ayachi. The centre's website Assabye.com had been prosecuted following a complaint lodged in 2002 by the Centre pour l'Egalité des Chances et la Lutte contre le Racisme (Centre for Equal Opportunities and Action Against Racism) on account of the website's Jihadist and antisemitic content, which overtly advocates the destruction of the State of Israel.<sup>35</sup> Because of the legislation on antisemitism, the PCP's discourse is heavily coded. Its programme for the 2003 election thus stated its opposition to "certain obscurantist religious tendencies which claim to combat or dismiss economic and technical advances

conducive to general prosperity” and to “any ideology, doctrine, party or ethnic group that monopolises political, economic or cultural power solely in its own interest, to the detriment of distinct original modes of expression”. The PCP, which also condemned “ultra-liberal big capital”, thus used a battery of anti-Jewish clichés which feature in standard far-right discourse as a means of designating the Jewish community, without naming it, as the source of the country’s ills. During its campaign for the European elections, the PCP (which no longer includes Bastin among its members) distributed a leaflet entitled “Sheikh Bassam calls you to vote PCP – List 16”, illustrated by a photograph of the Omar Mosque in Jerusalem surrounded by Israeli tanks and soldiers, with Palestinian women and children in tears beside them. The daily *Le Soir* (15 June 2004)<sup>36</sup> described the leaflet as intended to “import the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and stoke up hatred in passing”. The party defended it on the grounds that “Palestine symbolises the suffering potentially generated by state terrorism. It also symbolises cohabitation between the three great monotheistic religions, which could very easily live in harmony if the country was not under the yoke of a seemingly democratic, but in fact selfish and racist tyrannical regime which oppresses one people the better to satisfy another”. The third grouping, “Resist”, was closely dependent on the radical antizionist slant of the European Arab League, which expresses views close to those of the Lebanese Hezbollah. Underlying its simultaneously Islamist and Arab nationalist (namely Nasserist) ideology is a form of antizionism which does little to mask antisemitism. “Resist” in fact refers to Israel as the “Zionist entity” (*zionistische entiteit* in its Flemish-language documents). During the campaign for the 2003 general election the controversy surrounding the EAL revolved around several issues. Firstly, the possibility of

dissolving it (under the law of 29 July 1934 banning private militias) on account of its decision to set up a private militia to patrol neighbourhoods with a large immigrant population, officially for self-defence purposes, after the murder of Mohammed Achrak, a young teacher of Moroccan origin, by a 60-year-old racist in Antwerp on 26 November 2002, followed by two nights of rioting between EAL activists and the police, which the League accuses of institutional racism.

The second issue that arose was the possibility of proceedings to withdraw Belgian nationality (under Article 23 of the Nationality Code) from Dyab Abou Jahjah, leader of the EAL, on the grounds that he had lied to obtain Belgian nationality in 1996. Lastly, the possibility of both prosecuting and dissolving the League was raised after it held a demonstration in favour of the Palestinian people near the Jewish district of Antwerp on 1 April 2002; the demonstration sparked antisemitic excesses such as a firebomb being thrown at a synagogue on the previous night and demonstrators breaking the windows of Jewish shops and publicly burning a dummy wearing the traditional orthodox Jewish hat. In the end, the Centre pour l’Égalité des Chances et la lutte contre le Racisme lodged a complaint against the EAL, which had a text posted on its website stating that “Antwerp is the bastion of Zionism in Europe, which is why its must become the Mecca of pro-Palestinian action”. Over and above the issue of antisemitism, other EAL activities during the 2003 and 2004 election campaigns helped to heighten its intolerant image. In 2003, when the Flemish ecology party Agalev put up posters in the streets showing a homosexual couple in traditional Muslim clothing, the EAL demanded the withdrawal of the posters, which it considered offensive to Islam, and official apologies from the ecologists. As none were forthcoming, death threats were twice made against the Chairman of the Agalev youth organisation, Karim Bouziane. In 2004 Abou Jahjah also campaigned in favour of women wearing the Muslim headscarf; he held a demonstration on this issue in Brussels on 22 February 2004 and on the same day sent an EAL delegation to the demonstration held in Paris for the same reason. On 28 June 2003, the EAL took note of the failure of “Resist” and founded the Muslim Democratic Party, which scored 0.1% of the

35. Assabyle closed down in spring 2004 after the Brussels Court in Chambers referred its Webmasters Abdelrahmane Ayachi and Raphaël Gendron to the Criminal Court on 7 May 2004 for contravening the laws against racism and negationism. The complaint concerned a text posted on the website explaining that “Nazism and Zionism are the same” and comparing the body movements of David Levy, former Israeli Minister for Foreign Affairs, to those of Adolf Hitler. The website immediately reappeared under the name [www.riabaat.org](http://www.riabaat.org).

36. M. Bousselmati, “Des prémices d’extrême droite musulmane” (The beginnings of a Muslim far right), *Le Soir*, 15 June 2004.

Dutch-speaking college vote in the regional election of June 2004. As the League had set up a Dutch branch headed by Mohamed Cheppih, the same controversy broke out in the Netherlands. On 5 May 2003, during the celebration of the end of the German occupation of the Netherlands, Islamist supporters of the EAL chanted antisemitic slogans and tried to burn an Israeli flag before they were arrested by the police.

Among the controversies that arose during the campaign for the European elections, there is the unique case of the Europe Palestine list, which stood in France, in the Ile de France region only; it scored an average of 1.83% of the vote, but exceeded 5% in several municipalities on the outskirts of Paris with large Muslim populations.<sup>37</sup> The Europe Palestine list was in fact mounted by an association supporting the Palestinian people, the Coordination des Appels pour une Paix juste au Proche-Orient (CAPJPO – Co-ordination of Appeals for a Just Peace in the Middle East), whose policy is to introduce the Middle East issue into French political debate whenever an election takes place. This approach was disavowed by Ms Leila Shahid herself, the General Representative of the Palestinian Authority in France, who termed it “counter-productive” and asked for the list to be withdrawn. The first ingredient in the controversy was the presence on the list of the Franco-Cameroonian comedian Dieudonné M’Bala M’Bala, who had caused considerable upset during the campaign with a television sketch that the authorities representing the Jewish community in France and anti-racism organisations considered antisemitic. In the particular context of the resurgence of antisemitic acts in France since the beginning of the Second Intifada (Autumn 2000), several of which made the headlines during the election campaign, the Jewish community authorities had already been seriously dismayed at the list’s campaign manifesto because of its unilateral analysis of the causes of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: among other things, the manifesto condemned the “Israeli Government [which] turns its back on peace and flouts international law and the basic rights of an entire people which it ceaselessly decimates, imprisons and plunders with impu-

nity and with George Bush’s blessing” and the “constant blackmail designating those who demand a just peace in the Middle East as antisemitic” and the construction of an “apartheid wall”. However, these expressions of antizionism remained within the legal bounds of normal ideological dispute. But in Paris on 8 June, the list’s big campaign meeting took on a different tone when Dieudonné denounced “Zionist propaganda” as being all-powerful in France, and the writer Alain Soral and the artist Siné got the audience to whistle at the names of various French Jewish personalities, and to identify and name the authors of various pro-Israel quotations: this gave the audience the opportunity to boo, with all the anti-Semitic connotation given by the list, Roger Cukierman, President of the CRIF (Representative Council of the Jewish Institutions of France), Dominique Strauss-Kahn, presented as a member of the “Zionist party”, the historian Alexandre Adler and the philosopher Alain Finkelkraut. Speeches were made by Tawfik Mathlouti, founder of the private Paris radio station Radio-Méditerranée, who never names Israel and refers to it as “the Zionist entity”, and by Christophe Oberlin, head of the Europe Palestine list, who accused Israel of being “a racist country” and Patrick Gaubert, UMP candidate for Ile de France and President of the LICRA (International League Against Racism and Antisemitism) of “waving the flag of antisemitism”. These speeches may raise the question of whether the boundary has not been crossed between free judgment of Israeli policy and systematic criticism of individuals on the basis of their religious affiliation, together with denial of Israel’s right to exist. Fortunately, Europe Palestine remains an isolated case. A similar attempt was made, along different lines, in Italy, where Bassam Saleh, leader of Rome’s Palestinian community, founded the Europe Palestine association (in liaison with its French counterpart) and stood for election in the Lazio area on the list of the Partito dei Comunisti Italiani. The Palestine Forum, of which he is one of the organisers, published a text entitled “Palestine and the forthcoming European elections”, which includes a dubious reference to “Europe’s collusion in the plan hatched by the Israeli authorities to wipe out the Palestinians”.<sup>38</sup>

In France, a study of the conduct of the campaign for the European elections shows

37. For an on-the-spot report from Garges les Gonesse, where Europe Palestine achieved its highest score (10.75%), and distinctly antisemitic quotations from supporters of the list, see the Communist daily *L’Humanité* of 22 June 2004.

38. Text published on 19 May 2004.

that even where overt expressions of racism and xenophobia were few and far between, at least among mainstream political parties, the climate leading up to the ballot was nonetheless partly shaped by the entry into the debate of issues concerning the position of Islam in the public arena, the nature and scale of expressions of antisemitism, and more broadly, secularism and national identity.

It must first be remembered that on 17 December 2003 the President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, announced his intention of tabling a government bill banning the wearing of “ostensible” religious symbols in state schools, which came into force at the beginning of the September 2004 school year. His announcement came in the wake of the report submitted on 12 December by the Stasi commission on secularism set up by the President on 3 July 2003. As soon as the President announced his decision to ask Parliament to legislate, what many Muslim associations perceived as an *ad hoc* law against the Islamic headscarf prompted several demonstrations in Paris and other large cities in France, especially on 21 December 2003 and 17 January 2004. Each demonstration attracted wide media coverage of a kind that effectively injected into the political debate attitudes both querying the compatibility of Islam with the republic (and secularism). The involvement of the law was presented by some Islamist organisations and their allies from the anti-globalisation movement as casting a religious and ethnic stigma on Muslims opposed to the law whilst they are not at all proven to be in the majority, and even a discussion of whether the provisions of the future law were not too lenient to cope with the scale of the alleged “Islamist peril” – with some people advocating an outright ban on wearing the Muslim headscarf in public or the adoption of provisions prohibiting patients in public hospitals from choosing the sex of the doctor who examined them. Above all, the nature, content and real aims of the law were misrepresented.

After the demonstration of 21 December, for example, the RTL radio station described the bill as targeting the Muslim headscarf alone (“Some 3 000 people demonstrated in Paris on Sunday against the future law banning pupils from wearing the Muslim headscarf at school”, RTL, 22 December). After another demonstration on 17 January, the television channel

France 5 referred to a demonstration “against the law banning pupils from wearing the Islamic headscarf at school” (current affairs programme *C dans l’air*, 17 January). More than any other (a third demonstration was held on 14 February), the demonstration on 17 January helped to ethnicise the political debate. It was organised by a small radical Islamist group, the Parti des Musulmans de France (PMF), with the participation of other radical groups from abroad (Parti Citoyenneté Prospérité and European Arab League). Mohammed Ennacer Latrèche, Chairman of the PMF, uttered antisemitic slogans which received broad media coverage. On 22 January the Communist daily *L’Humanité* reported that “the Paris public prosecutor has opened an investigation into the allegedly antisemitic remarks made by the Chairman of the Parti des Musulmans de France (PMF). The investigation ended in January 2005 for lack of evidence. During the pro-Muslim headscarf demonstration last Saturday, Mohammed Latrèche said that “Zionism is an apartheid-based ideology and we fight it as we fight Nazism”. He immediately said he was the victim of a “slander campaign”, since in his view, the Minister of Justice had “decided to comply at once with the instructions of the Representative Council of the Jewish Institutions of France and the International League Against Racism and Antisemitism (LICRA)”. Latrèche had also stated that *Le Monde* was a “Zionist newspaper controlled by the LICRA” and had thrown several Jewish journalists to the mob, as it were, especially Elisabeth Schemla, editor of the online newspaper [www.proche-orient.info](http://www.proche-orient.info). At the time, some journalists were reporting, with proof on hand, following the discourse by the online newspaper *Proche Orient Info*, the existence of ties between the PMF and far-left negationist groups, which introduced a further dimension into the debate: that which highlights the antisemitic tone of part of the pro-Palestinian discourse. The weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur*, for example, reported that “the Parti des Musulmans de France, led by the Islamist agitator Mohammed Latrèche, who denounces the “Palestinian genocide” organised by Israel, was fraternising with the negationist Serge Thion, in the name of the Palestinian cause”.<sup>39</sup>

39. Claude Askolovitch, *Le Nouvel Observateur*, 6 February 2003.

This was the climate in which the government bill was adopted on first reading by the National Assembly on 10 February 2004 and by the Senate on 3 March, and in which the French voted in their regional and cantonal elections of 21 and 28 March 2004. The whole period was also marked by the sudden entry into media vocabulary of the term “Islamophobia” used by the opponents of the law, such as Islamists from the left as well as from the far left, to condemn the alleged stigma it cast and, more generally, according to them, the atmosphere of suspicion fostered with regard to Muslims, especially since 11 September 2001. A Collective Against Islamophobia was set up at that time<sup>40</sup> to make a list of “Islamophobic” acts<sup>41</sup> and statements identified as such, whether made by politicians or intellectuals. The controversy escalated further in March 2004 when the Communist Party chose as its head of list for the regional election in Ile de France the President of the anti-racist organisation MRAP (*Mouvement contre le Racisme et pour l’Amitié entre les Peuples* – Movement Against Racism and for Friendship among Peoples), Mouloud Aounit: some people interpreted this as an attempt to harness the French-born electorate of North African origin and the opponents of the law on religious symbols, which the MRAP had opposed.<sup>42</sup> Controversy turned into crisis in the left-wing majority on the Ile de France regional council after 28 March, when the Socialist President of the region, Jean-Paul Huchon, refused to appoint Aounit as vice-president, contrary to an agreement which according to the Communist Party appears to have been concluded before the ballot.

Another salient feature of the pre-election climate (leading up to the European elections this time) was the repeated occurrence of antisemitic acts, the most serious of which of which attracted a great deal of media attention. The most serious of these was a knife attack committed on 4 June 2004 against a pupil of a Talmudic school in Epinay-sur-Seine by a young Muslim who

was later proved to have also struck several non-Jewish people on the same spot. The series of public statements that immediately followed the attack itself gives a good idea of the way this type of incident is ethnicised. On the basis of eye-witness accounts, including that of the injured boy, the perpetrator was rightly classified as a “young man of North African origin” by the police seeking him. A more precise but non-verified version started to circulate immediately. “The young Jewish man was attacked by a young man of North African origin who shouted *Allah Akhbar* (God is great),” Sammy Ghozlan, President of the Council of Jewish Communities of Seine-Saint-Denis, told the AFP press agency, unhesitatingly linking the attack to the existence and influence of the Europalestine list<sup>43</sup> and transforming the act into a religiously motivated attack. In a press release, the President of the Conseil Français du Culte Musulman (French Council for Muslim Worship), Dalil Bou-bakeur, Rector of the Paris Mosque, then “condemn[ed] this horrible, appalling and disgusting act on behalf of France’s Muslim community” and “express[ed] his solidarity with the Jewish community, especially the victim”. He repeated the theory of a religiously motivated attack by stating that “invoking the name of Allah, as the perpetrator of this attack did, is an instance of abuse and an unacceptable pretext”, while and it was only *suspected* that there might be a religious motive for the attack. Dominique de Villepin, the Minister of the Interior, immediately travelled to the scene. Questioned by the AFP, he firmly condemned “this horrible attack” and expressed his “profound concern”. But he added another possible interpretation of the act by denouncing “cable TV channels that increasingly broadcast in France and put across messages that have nothing to do with peace”, although there was nothing to suggest that the act or its perpetrator might be linked to any media influence.<sup>44</sup> and that moreover, until then, the government had refused to ban anti-Semitic channels such as Am Manar. A few weeks later, after the European elections, similar controversies broke out after the fictitious antisemitic attack staged by a female passenger on a suburban train (9 July 2004) and the fire at a Jewish social centre in Paris, which was pre-

40. Website: <http://www.islamophobia.net/>.

41. According to this website, “In a report published on 24 October 2004, the Collective has recorded over a period of 11 months [*author’s note*: in 2003-2004] 182 Islamophobic acts, of which 118 targeted individuals, including 27 attacks of which 4 were serious, and 64 targeted institutions or representations of Islam, including 28 attacks on mosques and 11 cases of vandalism in cemeteries, desecrating more than 200 graves”.

42. All the press articles are available on the website: [www.aounit2004.org](http://www.aounit2004.org).

43. *Le Monde* of 5 June, “Jewish teenager knifed in the street at Epinay-sur-Seine”.

44. The French government decided to ban Al Manar in December 2004.

sented as an antisemitic act whereas the alleged arsonist was a former (Jewish) employee of the centre (21 August 2004). Each time, lack of caution in the immediate responses to the incident, coupled with distortion of the facts in some cases and remarks incriminating a community and a religion, regrettably helped to ethnicise social relationships.<sup>45</sup>

The frequency of antisemitic acts, which remains high, is also a source of recurring controversy. According to the Ministry of the Interior's statistics, it started to rise again in the first half of 2004: 67 antisemitic acts and 160 threats were recorded between January and the end of March 2004, as against 42 antisemitic acts and 191 threats in the last quarter of 2003. Yet according to the figures presented by Nicolas Sarkozy on 27 January 2004, the number of antisemitic acts and threats had dropped by 37% from 932 in 2002 to 588 in 2003. Likewise, the number of "serious acts" (attacks, stones thrown at places of worship and schools, desecration of graves) had decreased by one third from 192 in 2002 to 125 in 2003. It is not the purpose of this report to discuss all the consequences of the rise of antisemitic acts on the one hand and anti-Muslim (also known as "Islamophobic") racist acts on the other, including the increasingly entrenched split between anti-racist associations. However, it should be pointed out that during the election campaigns a number of Jewish associations specifically accused the left-wing parties, especially the Communist Party, and the far-left parties, especially the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire (LCR), of accommodating a radical form of antizionism that these associations considered tantamount to antisemitism.<sup>46</sup>

45. The latest example is almost a textbook case: in Marseille on 17 October 2004, Ghofrane Haddaoui, a French girl of Tunisian origin, was killed with blows from stones, which smashed her skull, by a young man of North African origin whose advances she refused. The macho crime immediately turned into ... stoning. A demonstration in her memory was held on the spot on 27 November, while Parliament was discussing a government bill on domestic violence. The famous singer Jean-Jacques Goldmann, who demonstrated in Marseille with the association "Ni putes, ni soumises", used the term "stoning" in a statement to the daily *Le Parisien* on 28 November. This was one of the few newspapers to publish a statement by a demonstrator who precisely protested against the use of this inappropriate term. There is an example of a tragic incident in which the origins of the victim and the murderer prompted some media to use a xenophobic stereotype, distorting the facts.

I now come to two instances of antisemitic discourse that marred the campaign for the European elections and resembled expressions of traditional political antisemitism, with a partly religious basis and no link to the exploitation of Islam or the Middle East conflict. The first instance concerns Hungary, where in May 2004 the head of the far-right MIEP party's list in the European elections, the Calvinist clergyman<sup>47</sup> Lorant Hegedus, urged Hungarians to exclude the Jews before they exclude you. In 2002 Mr Hegedus, former Deputy Chairman of the Justice and Life Party (MIEP), had been sentenced to 18 months' imprisonment for a statement made on 16 July 2001 in the MIEP's local newspaper in the 16th district of Budapest, Ebreszto, advocating the elimination of the Galician hordes from public life;<sup>48</sup> in Hungarian coded vocabulary the term he used designates Jews. He was acquitted on appeal in November 2003. Also in May 2004, he declared on state-owned Hungarian radio that he maintained everything he had said on the subject. In December 2003, following the court decision to acquit him, the former Prime Minister Peter Medgyessy's centre-left government had promulgated a law against incitement to racial hatred. However, the Constitutional Council had declared the law unconstitutional, ruling that it "unnecessarily restricted freedom of expression", and consequently refused to endorse a law which had been adopted in Parliament by a small majority and would have prohibited "public incitement to hatred of a nation or race or national ethnic, or religious minority" and "incitement to acts of violence against such groups". In Hungary, where 600 000 Jews were exterminated during the Second World War, there has been a resurgence of antisemitism

46. On Thursday 10 September 2003 the Douai Court of Appeal sentenced the Communist mayor of Seclin (Nord), Jean-Claude Willem, to a 1 000 euro fine for calling on his local authority departments to boycott Israeli products. Proceedings had been brought against him by the Association culturelle israélienne of the *Département*. The LCR lodged a complaint against the President of the Conseil Représentatif des Institutions Juives de France, who had stated on 25 January 2003 that antizionism is what cements this current of opinion which extends from revolutionary parties such as Lutte Ouvrière and the Ligue Communiste Révolutionnaire to a fraction of the far left.

47. In a press release dated 21 January 2002, the synod of the Hungarian Reformed Church very firmly condemned both Mr Hegedus' remarks and the inclusion of ten clergymen among the MIEP candidates in the 2002 general election.

in the past few years. In January 2004 an Israeli flag was burned during a demonstration by the Civic Circles, a political association set up by the former Conservative Prime Minister Viktor Orban just after his defeat in the 2002 general election. Another case shook the country at the start of the campaign for the European elections. A broadcaster on Radio Tilos, a Budapest-based private radio station whose name means “banned” in Hungarian, lambasted the Christian religion on the air when he presented a programme in an obvious state of drunkenness. The MIEP and a section of former Prime Minister Orban’s movement immediately seized on the affair and called it a “Jewish plot” against Christianity. The ORTT, the regulatory body for television broadcasting, imposed penalties on the radio station, which was banned from broadcasting for a month, deprived of public funding for six months and warned that it might lose its frequency if such an incident recurred. The radio station management appealed the decision, and the film director Gyrgy Palos, a member of the Tilos management board, argued that his radio station and that of the MIEP were given different treatment: it is amazing that such a ridiculous incident should have become the top political issue, he said. Meanwhile Pannon Radio (the MIEP’s radio station in Budapest) and even the state radio call Jews ‘Galicians’ and gypsies ‘dark-skinned people’; yet the ORTT has never found fault with that”.<sup>49</sup> During the demonstrations held by the MIEP against Radio Tilos in

January 2004, several thousand demonstrators gathered in front of the radio station’s offices brandishing placards saying “Buzz off to Israel”, booing the government coalition headed by the Socialist (ex-Communist) Party with shouts of “Down with this Jews’ government!” and burning an Israeli flag.<sup>50</sup> A final distinctive feature of the situation in Hungary is that antisemitism is also considered perfectly respectable on newsstands, where the MIEP’s monthly “Magyar Forum” is on sale. The list of books available by mail order from the newspaper in 2003-2004 is undoubtedly unique in Europe, since it offers books applauding the Hungarian Waffen SS, others honouring Regent Horthy, a negationist book on Auschwitz and a translation of a 1930s French classic on the judeo-masonic plot theory – many of them illustrated by drawings and caricatures like those produced by the Nazi *Stürmer*.<sup>51</sup>

In Greece, for years now, both the Central Board of Jewish Communities in Greece, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre and the various human rights organisations have condemned the unchanging antisemitic features of MP George Karatzaferis’ discourse. The party he founded, “People’s Orthodox Alarm” (LAOS), scored an unexpected success with 13.7% of the vote in the Athens municipal elections in October 2002. The Greek Helsinki Monitor launched a forceful campaign against LAOS in the run-up to the European elections of 13 June 2004, pointing out for example that the party’s local officials included four neo-Nazi activists and that Mr Karatzaferis had publicly claimed Mossad was involved in the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001. The GHM concluded in a press release dated 7 June 2004 that LAOS preached antisemitism “more than any other party has ever done in Greece”. After the party’s breakthrough in the latest local elections, the Simon Wiesenthal Centre had called for Mr Karatzaferis’ television channel to be closed down on the grounds that it broadcast “antisemitic propaganda”. Below are some of the antisemitic quotations published in the party’s newspaper *Alpha Ena*: in the issue of 5-6 June 2004, “Zionism orchestrates anti-Greek propaganda”, “Zionists control the planet”,

48. The English version of the statement is as follows: “The Christian Hungarian state would have warded off the [ill effects] of the Compromise of 1867 had not an army of Galician vagabonds arrived who had been gnawing away at the country which, despite everything, again and again, had always been able to resurrect from its ruins the bones of its heroes. If their Zion of the Old Testament was lost due to their sins and rebellions against God, let the most promising height of the New Testament’s way of life, the Hungarian Zion, be lost as well .... Since it is impossible to smoke out every Palestinian from the banks of the Jordan using Fascist methods that often imitate the Nazis themselves, they are returning to the banks of the Danube, now in the shape of internationalists, now in jingoistic form, now as cosmopolitans, in order to give the Hungarians another kick just because they feel like doing so... So hear, Hungarians, the message of the 1 000th year of the Christian Hungarian state, based on 1 000 ancient rights and legal continuity, the only one leading you to life: EXCLUDE THEM! BECAUSE IF YOU DON’T, THEY WILL DO IT TO YOU.” [In block capitals in the text.]

49. Quoted by the French daily *Libération* on 11 March 2004.

50. *Ibid.*

51. The French author of the translated book is Léon de Poncins. The most striking caricature is on the cover of the book by Zoltan Bosnyak, *Szembé Judeavall*, portraying a bearded, hook-nosed Jew with a black felt hat and a menacing look.

“It has been proved beyond doubt that the terrorist attack against the Twin Towers in New York was due to action by America’s Jewish Zionists” and “the symbol of the dollar is not D but \$ (SH), which stands for shekel, in honour of the first Jewish currency”; and in the issue of 29-30 May 2004, “The election of Rozakis as Greek judge to the European Court of Human Rights is a Zionist victory [...] which confirms the dominant trend in the European Parliament. Clearly, of course, that is a victory for Zionism, with the consequences you can imagine” and “What kind of Europe do you like? American, Zionist, internationalist or multicultural?”. However, it would be a mistake to regard the far right alone as responsible for spreading antisemitism in Greece: the left also propagates anti-

semitism, as evidenced by composer Mikis Theodorakis, who is considered close to Communist circles. In an interview in *Haaretz* on 26 August 2004, he clarifies his statement of 4 November 2003 that “the root of evil is the Jewish people”. He maintained his position, explaining that in his view “the root of evil today is Bush’s policy” and adding, “I don’t understand how the Jewish people, who were the victims of Nazism, can support this fascist policy” – a statement that reduces the Jews to a single entity. Again confusing “Jew” and “Israeli”, he then said, “There isn’t a single people in the world that supports this policy except the people of Israel [...]. I’m afraid Sharon will lead the Jews – as Hitler led the Germans – to the root of evil”.

### Case study No. 1: Belgium

A case study of Belgium is essential for several reasons. Firstly, Belgium held regional elections at the same time as the European elections. Secondly, it is a federal state gripped by inter-community tensions exacerbated by a xenophobic far-right Flemish nationalist party, which is incidentally in no way representative of the entire Flemish national movement in terms of its history and aspirations. Lastly, one of the main campaign issues was, unusually, the legal steps already taken or to be taken in the future against this party, the Vlaams Blok: it was gaining in popularity at the time and the democratic parties had agreed to quarantine it, which meant refusing to appoint members of the Blok to regional or national government duties. So before looking at racist, xenophobic and anti-semitic discourse in the Belgian political context, it is important to identify the Vlaams Blok’s ideology and programme on these issues. The party’s 70-point platform, which has very recently been amended for legal reasons discussed below, calls for the establishment of an independent Flemish republic with Brussels as its capital. It also advocates “a complete halt to immigration”, “restriction of the right of asylum”, “the effective repatriation of illegal immigrants and refugees with unjustified claims” and “a humane and generous policy of return [to the country of origin]”. It regards naturalisation only as “the culmination of a process of integration and *assimilation*. This xenophobic view of society is obviously aimed first and foremost at non-Community foreigners, but the Blok also shows real hostility to Belgium’s French-speaking popula-

tion and even complains of its “sometimes contemptuous and racist attitude to Flanders and the Flemish people”.<sup>52</sup> The terms used by the party in denouncing the chaos caused by Walloon state control and the economic gulf between the two provinces, together with the claim that Brussels is a Flemish city and the accusation of Walloon harassment of Flemish speakers show this to be another form of xenophobic prejudice, which leads as a matter of course to the demand for separation and is sometimes expressed with considerable violence, even where the target is not named: in his speech in Bruges on 1 May 2004, Frank Vanhecke said that once relieved of the burden of the stolen billions (*author’s note: stolen by Wallonia*), Flanders can become a model state in terms of social benefits, and repeatedly described native Flemish people as victims of discrimination. In recent years the Blok’s discourse on immigration has attracted support from outside the party: this became apparent in 2004 over the issue of whether to grant non-Community foreigners the right to vote in local elections, which became one of the key issues in the political debate preceding the 2004 elections. The Socialist and ecology parties have been proposing since the late 1980s that the right to vote be extended to immigrants who have lived in Belgium for at least five years. Towards the end of 2003 the idea gained ground in the centre and on the right,

52. See “Un programme d’avenir: un Etat indépendant flamand” (A Programme for the Future: an Independent Flemish State) posted on [http://vlaamsblok.be/site\\_frans\\_programme\\_4.shtml](http://vlaamsblok.be/site_frans_programme_4.shtml).

dividing the Liberal Party (VVD) and the Christian Democrat Party (CDH), so that some elected representatives belonging to these two parties (and moderate nationalists belonging to the NVA, the former Volksunie) agreed to join an “Action Committee against granting foreigners the right to vote (Actiecomité tegen stemrecht voor vreemdelingen) set up by the Vlaams Blok after the adoption of this measure by the Senate and headed by a former liberal MP, Ward Beysen.<sup>53</sup> This in itself was an unprecedented breach of the quarantine agreement and entailed intervention by the Chairman of the VLD, Karel de Gucht, and the Chairman of the CD&V, Yves Leterme, to punish the culprits.

In this context it was very tempting to try to outgun rival parties in order to give the impression of a shift to the right among the ruling parties. On 30 January 2004, the Chairman of the Flemish Liberal Party (VLD), Karel de Gucht, used an expression that plays an important part in the vocabulary of xenophobia, speaking in the debate held by the Chamber of Representatives’ Domestic Affairs Committee on the bill conditionally granting the right to vote to foreigners living in Belgium.<sup>54</sup> To restrict the scope of the measure, he backed an amendment denying the right to vote to foreigners who had unsuccessfully applied for naturalisation, and threatened the government with withdrawing his party from the coalition if the measure was adopted. In support of his views, Karel de Gucht, who cannot otherwise be suspected of racism and is against any alliance with the Vlaams Blok, cited cases of foreign offenders and drew applause from the Blok MPs. These remarks can only be understood in context – that of the party’s forthcoming congress (5-7 February 2004) at a time when the party was riddled

53. Beysen then set up his own party, Appel Liberaal.

54. The Minister of the Interior, Patrick Dewael, also opposed this measure, without using any xenophobic arguments, in an interview on the RTBF radio station’s programme *Matin Première* on 21 October 2003. He said, “During the previous Parliament we really made it easier for people to become Belgian and in my view that is the best way to integrate foreigners. If they become Belgian – and that’s very easy for them to do – they obtain all political rights: not just the right to vote, but also the right to be elected. So personally, I believe giving foreigners the right to vote is not the best way to go about it”. However, in an opinion column published by the daily *Le Soir* on 28 November 2003, he said that in his view the Belgian Government should reverse the decision to halt immigration taken in 1974.

with internal strife and threatened both on the left and on the right by the Vlaams Blok and the “Liberaal Appel” dissidents; that of pressure from the Young Liberals in Antwerp, who were overtly campaigning against granting the right to vote to non-Community foreigners and had collected the 1 000 members’ signatures required to ensure that the issue of foreigners’ right to vote, which the French-speaking parties and the Flemish Socialists (SPA) supported, was put before the VLD congress; and lastly, that of polls in the run-up to the regional and European elections, forecasting poor results for the VLD, with the Vlaams Blok close behind it. This last point in particular explained the party Chairman’s choice: he feared that giving foreigners the right to vote would mean more votes for the far right, to the detriment of the VLD. Essentially, de Gucht said that “granting foreigners the right to vote, against the will of the great majority of Flemish people, would be a dangerous precedent”. He added that in adopting this measure, “the French speakers are making a serious mistake, for which they will pay sooner or later”, and asked, “why are they conducting an ideal pre-campaign for the Vlaams Blok?”.<sup>55</sup> The Liberal leader paid a heavy price, since the Federal Prime Minister, Guy Verhofstadt, dismissed him from his post as Chairman of the VLD on 12 February. In July 2004, however, he appointed him Minister for Foreign Affairs.

The Vlaams Blok’s legal difficulties were another major campaign issue and the Blok spotlighted the question of freedom of expression throughout the campaigns both for the European elections and for the regional parliaments. On the face of it this may seem irrelevant to the concerns of the present report. However, it is important to see the matter in context so as to understand that it is directly relevant to the Flemish far-right party’s power to spread racist and xenophobic ideas. Following three complaints lodged on 10 October 2000 by the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Action against Racism against satellite associations of the party (Nationalistische Omroepstichting, Nationalistisch Vormingsinstituut and Vlaamse Concentratie) on the grounds that they had distributed leaflets supporting the Vlaams Blok’s 70-point platform against immigration, the Ghent Court of Appeal, ruling on the merits,

55. Wire from the news agency Belga, on 30 January 2004.

sentenced these associations to a fine of 12 400 euros each on 21 April 2004 for contravening the law against racism; the Court also awarded 5 000 euros in damages to the Centre for Equal Opportunities and Action against Racism (CECLR) and 2 500 euros to the Dutch-speaking branch of the Human Rights League, both of which had claimed damages in the proceedings. This judgment is of crucial importance because it allows the Belgian Government to deprive the party of the subsidies to which it is entitled as part of the public funding of political parties. The Law of 12 February 1999 on the funding of political parties provides that parties which display racist views or infringe human rights may lose part of the subsidies they receive from the government. Moreover, the party's actual survival is now at stake because Vlaams Blok lost its case before the Court of Cassation on 9 November 2004: the Court upheld the judgment of the Ghent Court of Appeal sentencing the Blok to a fine on the grounds that its propaganda constituted "permanent incitement to segregation and racism". On 14 November, in order to be able to pursue its activities, the Blok therefore changed its name to Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest). It also altered its programme, dropping the demand for "large groups of non-European immigrants to be returned to their countries" and confining the demand for deportation to immigrants who "reject, deny or combat our culture and certain European values such as separation of the Church and State, freedom of expression and equality between men and women". This is a standard case of what judicious use of the law can do to restrict the use and political exploitation of xenophobic discourse.<sup>56</sup>

The party, which aims to establish an independent Flemish republic, considered that the judgment had dealt it a death sentence, but said it was convinced that under its new name it would see the death of Belgium, as its Chairman Frank Vanhecke put it. While the Blok tops the polls in Flanders, the French-speaking parties have voiced a

positive response. The CDH Christian Democrats have asked Parliament to adopt legislative measures that will make it possible to abolish public funding of extremist and freedom-hating parties, which would definitively eliminate the Blok and its successor. For the moment, the bill to that effect is stuck in the Senate. Also, immediately after the regional elections, the Vlaams Blok's score put a question mark over the survival of the "quarantine agreement". Controversy first broke out over the decision by Yves Leterme, who had been appointed to form the Flemish Government, to meet the Blok's leaders, even though he clearly stated at the close of the talks that "a coalition with the Vlaams Blok is impossible [...] because it bases its discourse on confrontation and on a conflictual model". Rik Daems, leader of the Liberal Party (VLD) in the Chamber of Representatives, described the talks as a "waste of time". The Liberal Deputy Mayor of Antwerp, Ludo Van Campenhout, considered them inadvisable, saying that "there is a fine line between talking and negotiating". Conversely, Roland Duchâtelet, Chairman of the Vivant party, an ally of the VLD, asked the Christian Democrat Party, the CD&V, to form an alliance with the Vlaams Blok, which in his view "will continue to progress as long as it is not given a share in government". The youth branch of the N-VA, the former Volksunie, a moderate Flemish nationalist party allied to the CD&V, also called for the "quarantine agreement" to be dropped.

56. On the French-speaking side, the Electoral Expenditure Audit Board of the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate unanimously decided to suspend the Front National's subsidy for three months. The Board members criticised Daniel Féret's FN for failing to submit a financial report for 2003. Meanwhile, the FN submitted a document stating that its only income was its subsidy, a donation of 1.50 euros and membership fees from forty or so members. The Board considered that this document was in no sense a financial report and therefore unanimously ordered the far-right party's subsidy to be suspended for three months.

## Case study No. 2: Ireland

I have chosen Ireland because on 11 June 2004 the Irish voted both in the European elections, in local elections and in a referendum designed to amend Article 9 of the Constitution so as to tighten requirements for obtaining Irish nationality, putting an end to the acquisition of nationality by birth on Irish territory. The Irish case is also of interest because Ireland has no far-right

parties and racist views are very rarely heard in the political arena: when this happens, it is due to verbal excesses by elected representatives of the traditional parties. The latest recorded case occurred during the campaign for the 2002 general election, when the MP for Cork Noel O'Flynn described immigrants as "spongers" and "freeloaders".<sup>57</sup> On the fringes of the political

scene, the tiny Christian Solidarity Party, a traditionalist Catholic party, fielded a few candidates in the local elections and one in the European elections, just exceeding 1% of the vote.<sup>58</sup> A grouping was formed on the sole subject of immigration: the Immigration Control Platform, which fielded three candidates in the elections for Dublin, Cork South Central and Dundalk city councils. But Pat Talbot and Ted Neville scored 1.65% and 1.44% respectively in the first two cities – in other words, immigration issues do not appear to command voters' support in local elections.

However, at a very late stage, in March 2004, the Irish Government decided to hold a referendum on access to nationality. This was against the background of tougher legislation on foreigners – a decision of the Supreme Court in 2003 empowering the government to deport foreigners who have Irish-born children, and the adoption of the 2004 Immigration Act, which came into force on 13 February 2004. In brief, the referendum concerned the following issue: a “yes” vote meant that henceforth only persons who at birth had at least one parent of Irish nationality, or one parent entitled to become an Irish citizen, would have a constitutional right to obtain Irish nationality. The “yes” vote also empowered Parliament to change the law which currently provides that anyone born in Ireland is Irish.<sup>59</sup>

The first point to note is that even in a referendum-type ballot on a particular issue, participation was low (59.95%), which on the face of it proves that the issue did not arouse the electorate's interest. However, the voters who went to the polls voted “yes” by a large majority (79.17%) whereas the “no” vote scored only 20.83%.<sup>60</sup> As regards the manner in which the issues of immigration and right of asylum were presented during the referendum campaign, the latter in fact revolved around a straightforward argument: is it true that women of foreign nationality travel to Ireland on purpose in order to give birth there so that their child

will automatically acquire Irish nationality and the attendant benefits for the child and its family? Marginal groups used an overtly racist line of argument, which was also publicised in the local elections. The Immigration Control Platform claimed that immigration is a local problem, in the words of Ted Neville's campaign leaflet, which continued, “Services that affect you have to bend over backwards to take account of the extra applications due to an unplanned and unwanted influx of immigrants. [...] Nearly 1 000 foreign households in Cork city and county receive a rent allowance, while many workers are struggling to become house owners and are financing this additional burden out of their taxes”. The ICP also took the view that “90% of asylum applications are sham” and attacked the government's alleged intention of taking in 20 000 Chinese students a year, asking, “Will the government make sure they go back to China, or will they be getting in through the back door?”<sup>61</sup> In Dublin the independent candidate Paul Kangley campaigned for a yes vote in the referendum, otherwise we won't have enough maternity hospitals for all the foreign women who want to give birth here”, untruthfully claiming that “there are officially almost 200 000 people who call themselves refugees and live in new houses and flats”.<sup>62</sup>

Neither the government nor the mainstream parties used racist discourse. The government's justification for tabling the constitutional reform bill was a loophole in the current Constitution warranting measures to avoid “citizenship tourism” and alleviate the workload of already “overburdened” hospitals.<sup>63</sup> Prime Minister Bertie Ahern took care to repeat that he supported a “liberal” law on the right of asylum and immigration (27 May). Nevertheless, the very idea that “citizenship tourism” exists on a large scale, or at any rate on a scale sufficient to require revision of the Constitution, may be considered questionable. Also debatable is the wisdom of referring, as the Minister for Foreign Affairs Brian Cowen did, to “genuine migrants” (the *Irish Times*, 4 June), which suggests that there are “false” migrants. And lastly, one wonders whether it was judicious to encourage the electorate to vote in the European elections by displaying a poster in the streets portraying a

57. See the *Irish Times* of 31 January 2002.

58. In the local elections, Paul O'Loughlin scored 1.69% in Dublin Inner City and Conor O'Donogue 1.02% in Limerick 1. In the European elections Barry Despard scored 1.27% in Dublin. The traditionalist Catholic MEP Rosemary Scallon, who scored 13.52%, was not re-elected in the North-West constituency.

59. For further information see [www.refcom.ie](http://www.refcom.ie).

60. For a map of the results, which do not correlate with the presence of foreigners, see [http://www.ireland.com/focus/referendum2004/results\\_map.html](http://www.ireland.com/focus/referendum2004/results_map.html)

61. See <http://www.immigrationcontrol.org/elections2004.htm>

62. *Ibid.*

63. *Metro Eireann*, 4 July 2004.

woman breastfeeding her baby, which might suggest a link with the referendum on nationality (1 June). However, it would be particularly unfair to hold only the ruling parties responsible for these ambiguous remarks when a man as clearly above suspicion of racism as Nobel Peace Prize John Hume (of the Northern Ireland SDLP party) said he wanted the Irish Government to award a “certificate of Irishness” to all those across the world who are of Irish origin,<sup>64</sup> which amounts to an ethnically-based view of nationality.

The main problem with the government’s line of argument was that it was based from the outset on strongly disputed figures (for births by foreign mothers who had come to Ireland specially for the purpose) and on facts which do not appear to be proven.<sup>65</sup> Thus, it was said to be the Dublin Masters of the Hospitals who had alerted Justice Minister Michael MacDowell to the need to change the law to prevent the influx of foreign mothers.<sup>66</sup> Then, when the Masters of the Hospitals stated that they had made no such request, which the minister himself admitted on 13 March, the argument turned into the idea that the large number of foreign mothers posed a problem for the hospital system’s capacity<sup>67</sup> and that there was genuine and systematic abuse of the constitutional right to acquire Irish nationality.<sup>68</sup> The final argument was that the constitutional change would bring Ireland into line with the legislation of the European Union member countries,<sup>69</sup> which is in fact true, apart from the fact that the chosen wording was so that we do not create unintended incentives that are unfair to us or to other EU member states.<sup>70</sup> The concept of unintended incentives tends to lend

64. The *Irish Times*, 10 May 2004.

65. On this point, see the article by Aisling Reidy, Director of the Irish Council for Civil Liberties: “The need for a referendum considered”, at: [www.iccl.ie/constitution/gen/ar\\_tcdspeech04.pdf](http://www.iccl.ie/constitution/gen/ar_tcdspeech04.pdf).

66. Statement by the Minister on 10 March 2004.

67. *Ibid.*, 21 April 2004.

68. Statement by the Prime Minister on 12 April 2004.

69. Statement by the Minister of Justice on 9 April 2004.

70. *Ibid.*

weight to the view that women applying for immigration choose the country where they want to settle on the basis of a sort of cost-benefit ratio, i.e. precisely by doing what some people call asylum-shopping. Other government remarks fuelled controversy, such as the statement made on 3 June by Mary Coughlan, Minister for Social and Family Affairs, that a yes vote in the referendum would end the incentive for pregnant women to put themselves and their unborn children at risk by travelling here from abroad just before birth.<sup>71</sup>

That being said, it is a fact that very few racist incidents occurred during the election campaigns: according to the *Irish Times*, a candidate of Nigerian origin in Galway lodged a complaint after receiving racist telephone calls. Lastly, it must be pointed out that in 2002 the Irish Government set up a National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI), which included special articles on the National Action Plan Against Racism and on countering myths about asylum-seekers in the first issue of its newsletter *Spectrum* (November 2002). In the face of broad opposition from the Churches and human rights organisations (which criticised it for exploiting racist feeling to boost its scores in the local and European elections), as well as from the opposition parties Labour and Sinn Fein, the Irish Government simply exercised its legitimate right to decide how one becomes a citizen. The newly introduced requirements are no more restrictive than those in force elsewhere in the European Union. However, it is regrettable that the reasons for the hurried referendum were not clearly stated and that a generalisation was made about foreigners in spite of the official statistics showing a 10% drop in the number of births by foreign mothers in Dublin’s maternity hospitals between 2002 and 2003.<sup>72</sup>

71. A “yes” vote would end the incentive for pregnant women to put themselves and their unborn children at risk by travelling here from abroad just before birth.

72. *Metro Eireann*, 4 July 2004.

### Case study No. 3: Latvia

The main problem in Latvia is that of relations between the Latvian majority (57.6% of the population) and the Russian minority (29.6%). A genuine and long-standing feeling of hostility may be said to exist towards the Russian minority, as reflected in standard terminology by the fact that the

period when the country was part of the Soviet Union is referred to as the Russian rather than the Soviet occupation.<sup>73</sup> In recent years this prejudice has chiefly been voiced with regard to the issues of language and access to nationality. The prime evidence for this feeling includes the 1989 lan-

guage law, which makes Latvian the only national language, requires proper names to be latvianised and abolishes the teaching of Russian in universities, and the 1994 nationality law, which makes naturalisation subject to passing an examination in Latvian language, history and law, widely regarded as difficult and discriminatory, with the result that by 30 September 2004 only 78 540 naturalisations had been granted. This means that almost 20% of Latvia's residents are not citizens, cannot take part in elections and do not have access to a number of jobs, especially in the public service. However, the picture is not entirely negative: in September 2002 Latvia adopted a new law on the right of asylum, and in May 2003 a new law on immigration, both of which the United Nations Committee against Torture recognised as incorporating significant advances.<sup>74</sup> It must also be acknowledged that the Russian minority is free to express itself politically, which enables it to be represented in the European Parliament by the coalition For Human Rights in United Latvia (FHRUL), a party incorporating numerous former officials of the Soviet Communist Party. The fact remains, however, that Latvia has not ratified the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, while Estonia and Lithuania have.

According to Kaspars Zalitis, co-ordinator of the European Week of Action against Racism and the National Council of Latvian Youth, "the media don't talk about racism".<sup>75</sup> Yet racism is a feature of daily life: for example, and contrary to Zalitis' view, the much publicised case of George Steele, a black American citizen living in Latvia since 1994, has proved that insults and harassment make coloured people's lives difficult; there is also the case of the racist TV advertisement for Brivibas Partija (Freedom Party),<sup>76</sup> which was convicted for it in September 2003.<sup>77</sup> This party must not be confused with the LNNK (Apvienba Tzvemei un Brvbai/LNNK), an ultra-nationalist party comparable in some respects to the far right

which voices anti-Russian feeling based on deep-seated anti-Communism.<sup>78</sup> Brivibas Partija's advertisement, broadcast during the campaign for the October 2003 general election, portrayed two black musicians belonging to a well-known group. One of them, dressed as a soldier, was shown kissing a Latvian woman in front of the monument to freedom in Riga. The accompanying voice-over said, "Today he's defending your country, tomorrow he might be your son-in-law". The court judgment given in response to a complaint lodged by the musicians and George Steele is a first in Latvia, paving the way for the courts to pay closer attention to racist offences.

The main problem during the run-up to the European elections, however, was the reform of the education system, which was adopted in February 2004 and came into force on 1 September. An appeal has been lodged before the Latvian Constitutional Court against the law, which provides that 60% of subjects must be taught in Latvian, including in Russian-speaking schools. The latter are thus threatened with extinction (in theory, the law also applies to schools run by other minorities). In January 2004 the bill sparked a wave of protest among the Russian-speaking minority, culminating in a demonstration by 30 000 people in Riga on 1 May, in response to a call from several organisations: a moderate wing (Lashor – Association of Russian Teachers) and a more hardline wing (Shtab – Centre for the Defence of Russian Schools), both of which are often accused by the press and government of being manipulated by Russia.<sup>79</sup> A number of slogans seen during the demonstration, such as Russian is more than a language, could in fact be construed as expressing a form of refusal to integrate, or even of anti-Latvian feeling,<sup>80</sup> while the slogan Stop apartheid in Latvia is clearly an exaggeration.<sup>81</sup>

The law also triggered a political crisis: in May 2004 the National Harmony Party (Tautas Saskaņas Partija), which supported the government of Prime Minister Indulis Emsis (who took office on 9 March 2004

73. For example, the Latvian Academic Information Centre's Website refers to the 1940 "Russian occupation". See [www.aic.lv/HE\\_2002/HE\\_LV/factsheets/hist.htm](http://www.aic.lv/HE_2002/HE_LV/factsheets/hist.htm).

74. Report CAT/C/CR/31/3 of 5 February 2004.

75. Article of 27 March 2003 on [www.policy.lv](http://www.policy.lv).

76. For the party's platform, see: [http://web.cvk.lv/pub/?doc\\_id=28214](http://web.cvk.lv/pub/?doc_id=28214).

77. On these two points, see the interview with George Steele at [www.policy.lv/index.php?id=102518](http://www.policy.lv/index.php?id=102518) (7 January 2003).

78. In the European Parliament after the June elections, for example, LNNK tabled a draft resolution upheld by MEP Girts Valdis Kristovskis with a view to retrospectively condemning the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact.

79. See *Le Monde* of 25 October 2004.

80. Reported by the *Baltic Times* of 6 May 2004.

81. Reported by *EU-Observer* of 12 June 2004 in connection with the demonstration of 12 June.

and resigned on 28 October), gave the government an ultimatum, demanding that it take action on minority rights and the reform of the education system. At the same time, a right-wing party called for the resignation of the Minister for Social Integration, Nils Muiznieks (a member of the Latvia First party), on the grounds that he had given too much of a free rein to minority demands. Many commentators viewed this demand as a ploy by a party suffering from a decline in the polls and internal dissent to boost its image. The issues of minority rights, reform of the education system and tuition in the Latvian language, together with that of asylum-seekers, prompted a debate among the left-wing parties: the Tautas Saskaņas Partija headed by Janis Jurkans made its support for the government conditional on the latter resolving the education problem, preferably without amending the existing law; and For Human Rights in United Latvia went still further, organising student demonstrations, calling on pupils to boycott the start of school on 1 September and demanding closer ties between the European Union and Russia – an argument which is of course unlikely to convince the majority of Latvians of the Russian minority’s willingness to integrate. On the government side, the main argument in favour of the law is integration: Russian speakers would have to speak fluent Latvian in order to be able to find a decent job. The argument is acceptable provided that it is not presented in a form as dubious as that used by President Vaira Vīķe-Freiberga, who said that the law was designed to ensure that Russian-speakers “become Latvians of Russian origin”, adding that “if they want to be Russian, they can go to Russia”.<sup>82</sup> This view is apparently shared by politicians in the other Baltic countries: the former Lithuanian President Vytautas Landsbergis, for example, no doubt believing there were too many Russian speakers in Latvia, asked a newspaper, “How would the Germans feel if they suddenly had 60 million Turks in their country?”, while the former Estonian Foreign Minister Toomas Ilves told the same newspaper, Moscow uses the [Russian speakers] rather like Hitler used the Sudeten Germans.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, one cannot take a balanced view of the issue without considering a number of overtly

82. Quoted by the *Baltic Times*, “Unique elections crystallize party differences”, 20 May 2004.

83. Quoted by *EU Reporter*, 23-27 February 2004, p. 14.

anti-Latvian statements made by Russian officials: the Chairman of the Duma’s Foreign Affairs Committee, Dimitri Rogozin, who is a specialist in this area, said in September 2003 that “the Nazis have come to power in Latvia” and described the latter as “a country of hooligans”.<sup>84</sup> As for the ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Jirinovski, he threatened on 1 April 2004 to destroy Latvia, specifying that commandos were ready to leave Russia to bomb the Baltic countries’ capitals.<sup>85</sup>

As regards the forms taken by anti-Russian xenophobic prejudice, it will first be noted that the government does not deny its existence, nor that of racism in general. At a press conference held during the OSCE Conference on Tolerance and the Fight Against Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination (Brussels, 13-14 September 2004), Minister Muiznieks said that on 25 August Latvia had adopted a National Programme for the Promotion of Tolerance. While pointing out that the National Human Rights Office had received very few complaints of racist acts, he admitted that many people belonging to visible minorities (from Africa, the Middle East and Asia) had been subjected to threats or physical attacks, and added that there was widespread prejudice against Roma, as well as deteriorating attitudes towards Muslims, although there are very few of them. He also said that what he called Russophobia was one of the prejudices the programme was designed to eradicate.

A number of incidents and statements are nevertheless worth mentioning. For example, MP Vladimir Buzayev (FRHUL coalition) was suspended for six sessions for taking the floor to talk about the Russian-speaking students’ demonstrations when the agenda concerned the war in Iraq. In November 2003, MP Martijans Bekasovs, then observer to the European Parliament, was deprived of his seat in Strasbourg by the Latvian Parliament, which accused him of betraying his country’s interests after he had circulated a letter to MEPs in September 2003 complaining of the treatment of the Russian-speaking minority. The LNNK party, in particular, campaigned against him, accusing him of anti-state activities and thus reviving the stereotype of Russian speakers’ alleged “treason”.<sup>86</sup> An MEP

84. See Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty report, 10 October 2003, by Kathleen Knox.

85. Reported by the *Baltic Times* on 8 April 2004.

belonging to the Tautas Partija, Rihards Pīks, asked by a journalist whether Latvians should not forgive Russian-speakers for the mistakes committed by the USSR, replied, “the Bible says children must pay for the sins of their parents”.<sup>87</sup> On 28 September 2004 the Latvian Supreme Court upheld a judgment given in April sentencing Vassili Kononov, an 80-year-old, to 20 months’ imprisonment for “war crimes”, in this instance the death of 9 civilians executed during a partisans’ attack on a village in 1944. This verdict perfectly reflects the gulf between the Latvian and Russian views of the war: Latvians regard Kononov as a war criminal, while Russians see him as a hero of the struggle against the Nazis, since the executions took place as part of an attack against German troops and their local collaborators.<sup>88</sup> Lastly, I would draw attention to a statement reflecting the old Soviet habit of classifying Jews as an ethnic minority

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86. Reported by *EU Observer* on 5 November 2003.

87. *EU Reporter op. cit.*

88. Agence France Presse, 28 September 2004.

rather than as citizens. The government spokesman on educational reform, Sergeys Ancupovs, apparently said in response to a question about MP Jakov Pliners, a member of the FHRUL coalition, “He isn’t Russian, he’s Jewish”.<sup>89</sup>

To conclude this case study, I would say that there are tensions, verbal excesses and attempts to revive prejudice on both sides. It is not as such discriminatory to ask a minority to master the majority’s language and make entry into the public service, for example, conditional on fluent knowledge of that language. A state is even perfectly entitled to require people wishing to acquire its nationality to be fluent in the national language. On the other hand, the Latvian majority undoubtedly has difficulty visualising Russians as full citizens, no doubt on account of past disputes which have not been settled.

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89. Quoted by the British Helsinki Human Rights Group in its report “Latvia: double standards in the Baltics”, 2004.

## General conclusion

To conclude this overview, which is by no means intended to be exhaustive, a few trends can be identified in political parties’ use of xenophobic, racist and antisemitic discourse. Firstly, the rise of the far right as such is no longer comparable in scale to a political “groundswell” and seems to have largely stabilised in some countries (Austria, France), though it is giving more cause for concern in others (Belgium). Consequently, this end of the political spectrum is no longer the only one that spreads racist discourse, but one may wonder whether its comparative decline does not sometimes go hand in hand with an ideological victory – that of having succeeded in imposing its xenophobic agenda on some democratic political movements which are keen to outdo their rivals or quick to believe, in terms of political tactics, that using the far right’s language helps to win back its electorate or prevent it from emerging. In this sense, the crucial problem as of now is the need for democratic parties to avoid this “contamination”, and the main threat to democracy lies in the use of this type of discourse by mainstream parties rather than by the far right. Secondly, it is quite clear that in the eyes of both extremists and a small proportion of democratic parties, the issue

of Turkey’s entry into the EU and that of the future of Islam in Europe have become arguments as important as immigration and the right of asylum. There, the danger lies in reducing Islam to a single dimension and wrongly assimilating it to its most radical and violent form. The “clash of civilisations” theory is undoubtedly gaining ground, as is anti-muslim prejudice, whether one calls it “Islamophobia” or rejects that term on the grounds that it is misused by fundamentalists. Thirdly, minority rights remain a decisive issue in central and eastern Europe. While the forms of xenophobic discourse associated with territorial disputes have virtually disappeared, the general idea persists that nationality is first and foremost a matter of heredity, language, religion and ethnic group, rather than of a civic decision to live together. Roma and Russian-speaking or Hungarian minorities, for example, are rarely referred to as full citizens in the socially dominant discourse, although substantial progress has been made in various countries (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary) in terms of the authorities’ growing awareness of the discriminatory status assigned to Roma in particular and the steps to be taken to remedy it. Fourthly, it is essential not to underestimate

the disturbing resurgence of antisemitic acts and statements by traditional players (the far right), but also new players (Islamists) and even a fraction of the left and far left; among the latter, criticism of the Israeli Government's actions that can be considered legitimate sometimes turns into querying or denial of Israel's right to exist as a state, or even into truly antisemitic remarks under cover of antizionism. Generally speaking, the fact of transposing the terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict into the national political debate in some countries (particularly in France), the growing media coverage of mutual accusations of anti-semitism and Islamophobia exchanged by representatives of the Jewish and Muslim communities and the debate on the issue of whether to make Islamophobic and anti-zionist discourse a criminal offence do much to undermine integration, social cohesion and secularism. Special attention must be

paid to these new forms of xenophobic and antisemitic discourse, both in legal terms and in terms of education for tolerance. In almost all the countries mentioned, the basic reason for the use of xenophobic discourse and antisemitism is obviously the fear aroused primarily among socially or economically vulnerable people by the transformation of societies which are comparatively homogeneous in ethnic and religious terms into societies that will inevitably have to move towards multiculturalism. Accepting this kind of society, coping with the conflicts it engenders through a policy of integration and striking the necessary balance between respect for individual or group characteristics and citizenship are the main challenges posed by the existence of an enlarged Europe and, more generally, the globalisation of exchanges.



## **IV. Appendices**



# Programme

Public presentation on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse  
Paris, Council of Europe Office, 21 March 2005

## **2.30 p.m. Opening**

by Mr Terry Davis,  
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

## **2.45 p.m. Presentation of the study on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse**

by Mr Jean-Yves Camus, political scientist  
and author of the study

## **3.00 p.m. Presentation of ECRI's Declaration on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse**

by Mr Michael Head,  
Chair of ECRI

## **3.15 p.m. The role of politicians in combating racism, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance**

by Ms Tana de Zulueta,  
member of the Parliamentary Assembly  
of the Council of Europe

## **3.30 p.m. Discussion with the participants (including questions from the media)**

## **5.30 p.m. Close**



# Participants

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Responsible for relations with civil society, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance

□ **ecretariat**

# ECRI Declaration on the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse

(adopted on 17 March 2005)

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), being firmly convinced that tolerance and pluralism are at the foundation of genuinely democratic societies and that diversity considerably enriches these societies:

— Condemns the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic elements in political discourse

— Stresses that such discourse is ethically unacceptable

— Recalls Europe's history, which shows that political discourse that promotes religious, ethnic or cultural prejudice and hatred considerably threatens social peace and political stability and inevitably leads to suffering for entire populations

— Is alarmed at the consequences that this type of discourse is having on the general climate of public opinion in Europe

— Is deeply concerned that the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic political discourse is no longer confined to extremist political parties, but is increasingly infecting mainstream political parties, at the risk of legitimising and trivialising this type of discourse

— Notes with serious concern that this type of discourse conveys prejudices and stereotypes in respect of non-citizens and minority groups and strengthens the racist and xenophobic content of debates on immigration and asylum

— Notes with serious concern that this type of discourse often conveys a distorted image of Islam, intended to portray this religion as a threat, and that antisemitism continues to be encouraged, openly or in a coded manner, by certain political leaders and parties.

ECRI deplores the fact that, as a result of the use of racist, antisemitic and xenophobic political discourse:

— Ill considered measures which impact disproportionately on particular groups or affect the latter's effective enjoyment of human rights are being adopted

— The long term cohesion of society is damaged

— Racial discrimination gains ground

— Racist violence is encouraged.

Faced with this situation, ECRI stresses that political parties can play an essential role in combating racism, by shaping and guiding public opinion in a positive fashion. It suggests the following practical measures:

— Self-regulatory measures which can be taken by political parties or national parliaments

— The signature and implementation by European political parties of the Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society which encourages a responsible attitude towards problems of racism, whether it concerns the actual organisation of the parties, or their activities in the political arena

— Effective implementation of criminal law provisions against racist offences (including those establishing racist motivation as an aggravating circumstance) and racial discrimination, which are applicable to all individuals

— The adoption and implementation of provisions penalising the leadership of any group that promotes racism, as well as support for such groups and participation in their activities

— The establishment of an obligation to suppress public financing of organisations which promote racism, including public financing of political parties

ECRI calls on political parties to formulate a clear political message in favour of diversity in European societies.

ECRI calls above all for courageous and effective political leadership which respects and promotes human rights.



# Charter of European Political Parties for a Non-Racist Society

(Utrecht, 28 February 1998)

**W**e, the democratic political parties of Europe,

Having regard to the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by our European Union Member States, in particular to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination,

Having regard to article 1 of this Convention, which defines racial discrimination as "... any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural of any other field of public life ...",

Having regard to the preamble to the Single European Act in which the Member States of the European Community declare to work together to promote democracy on the basis of the fundamental rights recognised in the constitutions and laws of the Member States, in the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the European Social Charter,

Having regard to the Treaty of Amsterdam which enables the European Community to "... take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on ... racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief ..." and facilitates police and judicial cooperation in the framework of the European Union in preventing and combating racism and xenophobia,

Recognising that the fundamental rights as enshrined in the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by the EU member states include the right to free and uninhibited political speech and debate,

Mindful that according to these same international human rights instruments one's political freedoms are not absolute in view of the equally fundamental right to be protected against racial discrimination and that therefore political freedoms cannot be allowed to be abused to exploit, cause or initiate prejudice on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin or nationality or for the

purpose of seeking to gain the sympathy of the electorate for prejudice on such grounds,

Being aware of the special tasks and responsibilities of political parties as actors in a democratic political process, defending, articulating and bearing witness to the basic principles of a democratic society; providing a platform for discussion on issues where there may be differences of opinion, integrating different views into the process of political decision making, thereby enabling society to solve conflicts of interest and of opinion between various social groups through dialogue rather than through opting out and conflict; selecting representatives at various levels for active participation in the political process,

Convinced that free use of one's political rights can and must go hand in hand with firmly upholding the principle of non-discrimination and is inherent in the democratic process itself,

Being convinced furthermore that representation of ethnic minority groups in the political process is properly an integral part of the democratic process, since political parties are or should strive to be a reflection of society,

**C**ommit ourselves to adhere to the following specific principles of good practice:

- To defend basic human rights and democratic principles and to reject all forms of racist violence, incitement to racial hatred and harassment and any form of racial discrimination.
- To refuse to display, to publish or to have published, to distribute or to endorse in any way views and positions which stir up or invite, or may reasonable be expected to stir up or to invite prejudices, hostility or division between people of different ethnic or national origins or religious beliefs, and to deal firmly with any racist sentiments and behaviour within its own ranks.
- To deal responsibly and fairly with sensitive topics relating to such groups and to avoid their stigmatization.
- To refrain from any form of political alliance or cooperation at all levels with any political party which incites or attempts to stir up racial or ethnic prejudices and racial hatred.

— To strive for the fair representation of the above mentioned groups at all levels of the parties with a special responsibility for the party leadership to stimulate and support the recruitment of candidates from these groups for political functions as well as membership,

And further pledge to take appropriate action to ensure that all persons who work for or associate themselves in any way with any of our election campaigns or other activities will be aware of and at all times act in accordance with the above principles.



