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Europe Accuses Russia of Ignoring Advice on Fighting Racism

By The Moscow Times

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The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has criticized Russia for not fulfilling any of their key recommendations on fighting racism in almost three years, the RBC news website reported Tuesday.

In October 2013, the ECRI had urged Russia to simplify the process of obtaining Russian citizenship, to revise its definition of extremism, and to create a national program promoting tolerance.

In their latest report, the organization said that authorities were not doing enough to help residents of the former Soviet Union who were left without citizenship when communism fell. Those who wish to obtain Russian citizenship still face a large number of obstacles, the ECRI said.

The commission is also concerned about Russian anti-extremism legislation, claiming that law could be used against "unfavorable organizations" and even human rights activists.

In 2013, the ECRI recommended that anti-extremism legislation should apply only to “serious cases related to hatred and violence.” The law has instead been amended several times to increase the maximum penalties for the violations, the commission reported.

ECRI experts also criticized supposed tolerance-boosting projects funded by the Russian authorities. Although the Kremlin gave out more than 50 grants in 2015, the majority of programs focused on patriotic education, the report found.

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