

**The Struggle against Racism and Xenophobia  
in Central and Eastern Europe:  
Trends, Obstacles and Prospects**

by Nils Muiznieks

Director, Latvian Center for Human Rights and Ethnic Studies

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## **Introduction**

Conventional wisdom has it that the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are more susceptible to the scourge of racism and xenophobia than older market democracies. Indeed, one does not have to look hard to discover glaring signs of intolerance in the region: anti-Semitism without Jews, communists becoming “national communists” in an attempt to salvage a shred of legitimacy, a “democratic opposition” often drawing inspiration from interwar extremist nationalism, real and symbolic walls separating Roma from the majority population, not to mention ethnic cleansing and a government willing to destroy its own cities in order to “save” them from “terrorists.”

Polish journalist Konstanty Gebert has described the dangers of the transition from communism with an elegant metaphor: “When you translate from the language of communism into the language of democracy, you need to change both the vocabulary and the grammar. It is a very difficult and complicated task. However, if you want to translate from the language of communism into the language of nationalism, all you need to change is the vocabulary. The grammar remains the same. The type of mental structures that the new system builds up are based on the foundation that already existed under communism. It is us versus them [...] and violence as a legitimate way of achieving [...] goals.”<sup>1</sup>

While the dangers of transition are real, comparative research suggests caution in drawing quick conclusions about racism and anti-democratic trends in contemporary Central and Eastern Europe.<sup>2</sup> As Richard Rose, the dean of survey research in the region, has pointed out, in all ten Central and Eastern European countries applying to join the EU, “there has been at least one change of government through the ballot box, and often two.” Moreover, “voters have consistently rejected undemocratic alternatives.”<sup>3</sup> Research on social tolerance (measured by responses to questions on homosexuality, prostitution, abortion and divorce) does suggest that most former communist states are at the low end of the scale compared to older democracies (see Table 1). However, surveys also bely the impression of nationalism run amok: while 31 percent of respondents in the region claim to identify primarily with their nation state, around 20 percent put either “Europe” or their locality as a first or second preference (see Table 2). Moreover, over the past decade fewer and fewer respondents in most Central and East European countries perceived ethnic minorities as a threat (see Table 3).

Thus, the conventional wisdom of a region prone to racism, xenophobia and related pathologies should be taken with a grain of salt. The purveyors of this wisdom often overstate the degree of tolerance in older democracies and the divergence in values between Western and Eastern Europe, while ignoring change in the region. However, I submit that the Central and Eastern European countries do face particular challenges in coping with racist speech and behavior. Moreover, it will take some time

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<sup>1</sup> Cited in Mark Thompson, “Communicating Fear,” Index on Censorship (Volume 28, No. 5 September/October 1999): 182.

<sup>2</sup> The survey results cited below are compiled and analysed in Giuliano Amato and Judy Batt, The Long-Term Implications of EU Enlargement: the Nature of the New Border (Florence: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and Forward Studies Unit, European Commission, 1999): 19, 24, 79, 86–7.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Rose, “Another Great Transformation,” Journal of Democracy Vol. 10, No. 1 (January 1999): 52.

before the impact of traditional remedies, such as legal sanctions and education, will be felt. At the same time, the Central and East European countries are already being confronted with new challenges related to EU expansion and globalization that threaten to compound existing problems.

### **Coping with Hate Speech in the New Democracies**

One of the undisputed achievements in the Central and Eastern European countries since the fall of communism has been the consolidation of freedom of expression. Thus, it is not surprising that political elites in the region have been loathe to set limits on this freedom by punishing those who incite national, racial or religious hatred or advocate racial discrimination or violence. The dilemma facing the region has been well described by Andras Sajo: “Unrestrained speech [...] may endanger social stability. Restricted speech, on the other hand, may immobilize nascent civil society, limit fundamental freedoms, and stifle the lively criticism of government so essential to democracy.”<sup>4</sup> Thus far, the governments have sought to skirt the dilemma posed by hate speech by prosecuting rarely, if at all.

In the almost ten years since it regained independence, Latvia has not prosecuted a single case of hate speech, for which it recently received criticism from the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.<sup>5</sup> In Romania, as of October 1999, only one person had been sentenced to a two-year suspended term on the basis of Article 317 of the Penal Code on incitement to racial hatred. In 1997 and 1998, head of the Romanian Department for the Protection of National Minorities Gyorgy Tokay urged the prosecutor to start proceedings in a number of hate speech cases, but to no effect.<sup>6</sup> Hungary’s Constitutional Court ruled in 1992 that the misdemeanor of incitement against a community established by the Criminal Code was unconstitutional, as it violated freedom of expression. A number of felony incitement cases in the late 1990s resulted in acquittals because, as the government recently claimed in its report on compliance with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, “the prohibition of racist remarks is to be considered as a restriction of the freedom of expressing an opinion.”<sup>7</sup>

In some countries, politicians of a certain stripe have exploited reluctance to place limits on expression and have themselves engaged in hate speech. For example, in September 1999, the Slovak parliament decided not to strip immunity from former chairman of the radical right-wing Slovak national party and current MP Jan Slota so that he could face prosecution for insulting both the Hungarian and Roma minorities at a pre-election rally and urging Slovaks to attack Budapest.<sup>8</sup> Slota had earlier

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<sup>4</sup> Andras Sajo, “Hate Speech for Hostile Hungarians,” East European Constitutional Review Vol. 3, No. 2 (Spring 1994): 82.

<sup>5</sup> “Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Latvia.” (CERD/C/55/Misc. 39/Rev. 4).

<sup>6</sup> See Gabriel Andreescu, “Shadow Report” to the government’s report to the monitoring body under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, October 1999, [www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/romania/romania\\_NGO.htm](http://www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/romania/romania_NGO.htm).

<sup>7</sup> See Hungary’s official report to the monitoring body under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 21 May 1999, at [www.humanrights.coe.int/minorities...state-reports/1999/hungary](http://www.humanrights.coe.int/minorities...state-reports/1999/hungary).

<sup>8</sup> See International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region: the Balkans, the Caucasus, Europe, Central Asia and North America, Report 20000 (Vienna: IHF, 2000): 337.

distinguished himself by claiming that “the only way to deal with Gypsies is with a big whip and a small yard.”<sup>9</sup>

According to a recent report by the Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, the government of Bulgaria “is in fact the main source of instigation of hatred and even violence towards some ethnic and religious minorities.” No administrative sanctions for violation of hate speech laws have ever been applied in Bulgaria “despite the fact that a number of radio and TV operators were instigating, some systematically, ethnic and religious hatred.”<sup>10</sup>

Outlawing or punishing hate speech is dangerous territory, as often, the very provisions designed to protect minorities have been used against them. “Free speech” defenders (mostly in the United States) believe that the only appropriate response to hate speech is a free debate and educational work. Moreover, those in favour of such debate have argued that there is no inherent link between racist speech and racist behavior.

Critics of “letting 100 flowers bloom” point out that aggressive hate speech actually stifles debate and that the first to suffer on such a so-called level playing field are minorities and women. Moreover, numerous international human rights instruments (e.g. the International Convention on the Elimination of All Form of Racial Discrimination, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights) call for prohibiting hate speech. While adjudicating such cases is difficult, an active policy of punishing hate speech can defend individuals, groups and society as a whole from aggressive attacks, as well as lay down standards according to which all members of society must coexist.<sup>11</sup>

In the aftermath of the slaughter in former Yugoslavia, the line between hate speech and violence has become very blurred. There, as well as in the genocide in Rwanda, the media played a critical role in instigating violence and promoting conflict.<sup>12</sup> For the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, locating democratic guideposts for dealing with hate speech is quite difficult. West European practice is quite diverse and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights is not a particularly useful guide. In the key decision of *Jersild v. Denmark* in 1994,<sup>13</sup> the Strasbourg court found that a Danish TV journalist had been unjustly punished for airing a clip about extremists. The ruling suggested that journalists cannot be punished for reporting on extremists, especially if they distance themselves from their subject matter, but did not provide any guidance on where the line between protected and unprotected speech should be drawn for others.

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<sup>9</sup> Cited in F. Cibulka, “The Radical Right in Slovakia,” in S. Ramet, ed., The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe Since 1989 (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1999): 126.

<sup>10</sup> Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, “Report Submitted Pursuant to Article 25 Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities,” September 1999, [www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/bulgaria/bulgaria\\_NGO.htm](http://www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/bulgaria/bulgaria_NGO.htm).

<sup>11</sup> The landmark study, still unrivalled, is Sandra Coliver, ed., Striking a Balance: Hate Speech, Freedom of Expression and Non-Discrimination (Article XIX, London, and Human Rights Centre, Essex, 1992).

<sup>12</sup> See Svetlana Slpasak, The War Started at Maksimir: Hate Speech in the Media (Belgrade: Media Center, 1997); Mariana Lenkova, ed., “Hate Speech” in the Balkans (Athens: ETEPE, the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, 1998). For an analysis of Slovenia, see Tonci A. Kuzmanic, Hate Speech in Slovenia: Slovenian Racism, Sexism and Chauvinism (Ljubljana: Open Society Institute – Slovenia, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> European Court of Human Rights, *Case of Jersild v. Denmark* (36/1993/431/510), Strasbourg, 23 September 1994.

Clearly, this is an area that requires not only some hard thinking on the part of legal experts, but also more hands-on monitoring of the media and research on the links between racist speech, public attitudes and racist acts. Fortunately, a comparative study covering not only hate speech legislation, but also legal practice and voluntary codes of conduct adhered to by media outlets in the Council of Europe countries will soon be published by the NGO Article XIX in conjunction with Minority Rights Group. This should prove a good starting point for further work.

### **The Challenge of Racially Motivated Crime and Extremist Organisations**

Since the collapse of communist rule, the Central and East European countries have witnessed a burgeoning crime rate and the appearance of a new type of crime well known in older democracies – racist crime. Often, such crime, including harassment and violent attacks, is committed by organised extremist groups. While some governments in the region have outlawed Communist Parties, they have often hesitated to ban other extremist political groupings. Given the communist practice of forbidding freedom of association and assembly, such reluctance is understandable. However, countenancing all manner of organized activity in civil society, no matter how anti-social or uncivilized, also holds distinct dangers.

To understand the scope of the challenge, one need only note a few statistics from the region. One caveat is in order: statistics on racially motivated crime, if available at all, are often hotly disputed. The figures often just reflect the state of record-keeping in a given country. However, all signs point to a rapid increase in the rate of such crime. While the Slovak government reported 15 cases of racially motivated crime in 1997,<sup>14</sup> the official figure had more than doubled to 33 cases in 1998.<sup>15</sup> From 1994 to 1996, the Czech Republic saw a six-fold increase in the incidence of crime motivated by racism.<sup>16</sup> From 1991 through 1997, NGOs documented an estimated 1,250 racially motivated incidents resulting in the deaths of 10 Roma, one Turk mistaken for a Rom and a Sudanese student.<sup>17</sup> The Bulgarian Helsinki Committee has claimed that the “Roma are often subject to physical violence by both law enforcement officials and mobs” and documented numerous cases to back up this claim.<sup>18</sup>

Facing down racist crime and extremists has been rendered difficult by the transnational nature of many of the new groupings in the region. The activities of Jean-Marie Le Pen’s French National Front in Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Serbia and Croatia have been well-documented.<sup>19</sup> The French right-wing group has

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<sup>14</sup> See Slovakia’s official report to the monitoring body under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 4 May 1999, at [www.humanrights.coe.int/minorities...state-reports/1999/slovakia](http://www.humanrights.coe.int/minorities...state-reports/1999/slovakia).

<sup>15</sup> Slovak Helsinki Committee, “Report on the Implementation of the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe on the Protection of Minorities in Slovak Republic,” September 1999, [www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/slovakia/NGO/slovakia\\_NGO.htm](http://www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/slovakia/NGO/slovakia_NGO.htm).

<sup>16</sup> “Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Czech Republic. 30/03/98 (CERD/C304/Add.47).

<sup>17</sup> Claude Cahn, “No Port in a Storm,” *Index on Censorship* Vol. 27, No. 1 (January/February 1998): 42.

<sup>18</sup> Bulgarian Helsinki Committee, “Report Submitted Pursuant to Article 25 Paragraph 1 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities,” September 1999, [www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/bulgaria/bulgaria\\_NGO.htm](http://www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/bulgaria/bulgaria_NGO.htm).

<sup>19</sup> See Mark Hunter, “Nationalism Unleashed: Jean-Marie Le Pen’s Right-Wing Push to the East,” *Transitions* Vol. 5, No. 7, July 1998: 18-28.

provided allies in the East not only with moral support, but with material and sometimes military assistance as well. Russian neo-Nazi groups, particularly Russian National Unity (followers of Aleksandr Barkashov), have recently spread into Latvia and Belarus.<sup>20</sup> Local affiliates of Russian ultra-nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy's "Liberal Democrats" have cropped up in Latvia, Estonia and Bulgaria.<sup>21</sup> Recent news reports suggest that German neo-Nazis are growing increasingly active in Hungary and the Czech Republic. The transnational nature of many of the region's extremist groupings means that international cooperation among law enforcement agencies must be high on the region's anti-racist agenda.

### **Legal and Quasi-Legal Measures to Fight Racism and Discrimination**

An important tool for addressing racism and discrimination is the law. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe already possess at least a rudimentary legal framework to combat racism.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, as most of the countries of the region aspire to EU membership, they will soon be required to adopt and implement the emerging anti-discrimination *acquis* – the new directives intended to address discrimination on the basis of racial and ethnic origin and in the occupational realm.<sup>23</sup> Implementing the *acquis* could lead to far-reaching legal changes in the region, as the directives contain a number of new departures: the concept of indirect discrimination, shifting the burden of proof in some cases, and providing greater opportunities for NGOs to bring cases on behalf of discrimination victims.

However, those who seek to harness law to promote equality and punish intolerance in Central and Eastern Europe face a formidable task. Dmitrina Petrovna, Director of the European Roma Rights Center, has outlined the numerous obstacles to the development of public interest law in the region: the past degradation of law in the communist era, weak judiciaries, restrictions on standing, judicial review and the right to legal assistance, lack of access to information, poor records, and a deficit of appropriately trained lawyers.<sup>24</sup>

One way to compensate for a weak or inaccessible legal system is to establish the office of an ombudsman or ombudsman-like body. Ombudsmen can review complaints by the public against state bodies, initiate investigations and promote human rights awareness. Since the revolutions of 1989, such bodies are becoming increasingly common. As they will invariably be given the task of tackling the increasingly acute problem of discrimination, a quick overview of the institutional landscape in the region is warranted.

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<sup>20</sup> International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, 75 and 238.

<sup>21</sup> See Michael Shafir, "Radical Politics in East-Central Europe, Part V: (Mis)placing in Boxes: Radicals Full Stop, D) ... And Then, There is Zhirinovskiy (Part II)," RFE/RL East European Perspectives (Vol. 2, No. 10, 24 May 2000): 2.

<sup>22</sup> See Swiss Institute of Comparative Law, Legal Measures to Combat Racism and Intolerance in the Member States of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg: European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance, 1998).

<sup>23</sup> See the Commission of the European Communities, Proposal for a Council Directive "Implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial and ethnic origin" (COM 1999 566 final) and "Establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation" (COM 1999 565 final), Brussels, 25.11.1999.

<sup>24</sup> Dmitrina Petrova, "Political and Legal Obstacles to the Development of Public Interest Law," East European Constitutional Review Vol. 5, No. 4 (Fall 1996): 62-72.

The only country in the region with a specialised Minority Ombudsman is Hungary, where the post was established in 1995. Poland and Romania have ombudsmen with more general mandates, though they frequently deal with complaints from minorities, especially Roma.<sup>25</sup> Since 1995, Latvia has had a National Human Rights Office whose mandate is similar to that of a general purpose ombudsman.<sup>26</sup> A law establishing an ombudsman came into effect in the Czech Republic in February 1999, but as of mid-June 2000, parliament had not yet appointed anybody to the post. The Slovak Republic, for its part, is scheduled to create an ombudsman in September 2000.<sup>27</sup> Lithuania has several state controllers (sometimes called ombudsmen) with limited powers to investigate the activities of officials.<sup>28</sup> Estonia, for its part, has only a Legal Chancellor whose task is to monitor the constitutionality and legality of national and local legislative acts.<sup>29</sup>

While strengthening weak institutions and legislation to cope with racism and discrimination is important, so is political will. Combating discrimination implies the willingness to share power with minorities. For many of the political elites in the region, the idea of sharing power with minorities is still quite foreign, as national elites only recently assumed power in newly sovereign states. For example, the Estonian and Latvian political elites, backed by large nationalist constituencies, spent most of the 1990s resisting international pressure to liberalise citizenship provisions, as rapidly expanding the electorate to include the sizeable Russian-speaking immigrant minorities would invariably change the domestic balance of ethnic power.<sup>30</sup>

### **Educational and Civil Society Initiatives Against Racism and Intolerance**

It is undeniable that “no society can guarantee equality of opportunity if the educational system exacerbates discrimination or, worse still, is instrumental in fostering it.”<sup>31</sup> Unfortunately, this is precisely what many of the educational systems in Central and Eastern Europe did during the communist era. Similar to the

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<sup>25</sup> On Poland’s ombudsman, see Ewa Letowska, “The Ombudsman and Basic Rights,” East European Constitutional Review Vol. 4, No. 1 (Winter 1995): 63-5 and Slavomir Lodzinski, Shadow Report on “The Protection of National Minorities in Poland” for the Helsinki Foundation for Human Rights, [www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/poland/NGO/poland\\_NGO.htm](http://www.riga.lv/minelres/reports/poland/NGO/poland_NGO.htm). For Romania, see, e.g. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, “Report on Romania,” 6 March 1998, at <http://www.ecri.coe.int/en/02/02/05/e020205130.htm>.

<sup>26</sup> See, e.g., 1996 Annual Report (Riga: the Latvian National Human Rights Office, n.d.).

<sup>27</sup> Personal communication to the author by Marta Miklusakova, head of the secretariat of the Human Rights Committee of the Government of the Czech Republic, and Michaela Lezakova, Section of Human Rights and Minorities, Office of Government of the Slovak Republic, Riga, 13 June 2000.

<sup>28</sup> See International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Annual Report 1999 (Vienna: IHF, 1999): 163.

<sup>29</sup> See, e.g. Heiki Loot, “Country Report: Estonia,” unpublished presentation at the Third UNDP International Workshop on Ombudsman and Human Rights Institutions, 9-11 June 1997, Riga, Latvia.

<sup>30</sup> See Vello Pettai, “Emerging Ethnic Democracy in Estonia and Latvia,” and Boris Tsilevich and Aina Antane, “The Problem of Citizenship in Latvia,” both in Magda Opalski, ed., Managing Diversity in Plural Societies: Minorities, Migration and Nation-Building in Post-Communist Europe (Ontario: Forum Eastern Europe, 1998): 15-32 and 33-50. See also Hanne-Margret Birckenbach, Preventive Diplomacy through Fact-Finding: How international organisations review the conflict over citizenship in Estonia and Latvia (Hamburg: Schleswig-Holstein Institute for Peace Research, 1996).

<sup>31</sup> Antonio Perotti, Action to Combat Intolerance and Xenophobia in the Activities of the Council of Europe’s Council for Cultural Co-operation, 1969-1989 (Strasbourg, Council for Cultural Co-operation, 1992): 5.

manipulation of law, the communist regimes also misused history and the other social sciences for ideological purposes.

The legacy of communist rule in education cannot be overcome in a year or two. To understand the path that must still be walked, one need only note the length of time the Council of Europe has been grappling with these issues in Western Europe. As early as the mid-1950s, the Council of Europe was already addressing the problem of bias in West European history books. Moreover, intercultural and human rights education has been on the Council of Europe's agenda since the late 1970s.<sup>32</sup> In most countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the reform of history teaching and the introduction of civics and human rights education began only after the revolutions of 1989 and often only in the mid-1990s.<sup>33</sup>

Throughout the 1990s, the Council of Europe engaged in numerous educational activities involving the Central and East European countries, promoting exchanges and reforms. A project entitled "Democracy, Human Rights and Minorities: Educational and Cultural Aspects" included a series of seminars, conferences, pilot projects, and publications. A large initiative called "Education for democratic citizenship" involved research, training, and production of teaching materials. Finally, several projects involving history teaching took place, including production of joint history texts by regional teams, including a history of the three Baltic states, a history of the Black Sea states, and a history of the Caucasus.<sup>34</sup>

Both the United States government and U.S.-based educators have also been extremely active in developing civic education in Central and Eastern Europe. One important initiative was a regional teacher training programme run by the Poland-based Foundation for Education for Democracy and funded by the National Endowment for Democracy. Another was direct grant-making activity of the United States Information Agency to local civic educators. A third was the Civitas International Exchange Program in which a consortium of American centres linked up with partner sites in Central and Eastern Europe to develop interactive methodologies, learner-centred approaches, methods of teaching controversial issues and so forth.

The Council of Europe, other international organizations (e.g. UNESCO), and bilateral partners have expended enormous amounts of energy and resources with partners in the region to equip teachers and schools to teach the knowledge, values, attitudes, and skills needed for life in multicultural democracies. Despite the high quality of much of the work, nagging questions persist about the impact of it all. Are students any more tolerant now than they were ten years ago? A core problem is that the lessons learned in classrooms are often quickly unlearned in the local communities. Hence, the importance of civil society.

Extremely important anti-racist educational work has been conducted by NGOs in the region. While space constraints prohibit anything resembling a comprehensive overview, several actors and initiatives deserve mention. First, the network of philanthropies set up by George Soros in the region has been a catalyst for activity and a major source of funding not only for education reform, but also for civil society groups engaged in anti-racist work. A joint programme organized by the Soros network with Belgium's King Baudouin Foundation in the mid-1990s focussed on the

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<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-34.

<sup>33</sup> See, e.g., Michel Charriere, *History Teaching in the New Europe* (Strasbourg: Council for Cultural Co-operation, 19 February 1993).

<sup>34</sup> See European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, *Activities of the Council of Europe with Relevance to Combating Racism and Intolerance* (Strasbourg: ECRI, 1999): 35-43.



promotion of inter-ethnic dialogue.<sup>35</sup> Among the most significant NGOs engaged in monitoring, advocacy and educational work, one must mention the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights and the network of Helsinki committees, the European Roma Rights Centre and Minorities Rights Group.<sup>36</sup> Finally, the Council of Europe has supported activities aimed at promoting inter-ethnic co-operation throughout the region in its Confidence-Building Measures Programme. The core weakness of the NGO activities has been their sporadic, and thus, often non-cumulative nature.

### **New Challenges and Prospects**

Most of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe can be said to be making significant progress in “catching up” to Western Europe in terms of anti-racist work, as the legal systems are slowly being strengthened, teaching and textbooks are undergoing reforms and civil society is consolidating its role. However, a number of new challenges have already appeared that threaten to compound existing problems. Foremost among these new challenges are making the shift from being countries of emigration to countries of immigration and asylum, making the painful changes needed for accession to the EU, and dealing with racism in an era of new information technologies.

During the communist era, in the rare instances in which the countries of Central and Eastern Europe admitted refugees, these were political decisions, ungoverned by international norms, rules or principles.<sup>37</sup> Since the revolutions of 1989, most of the countries of the region have become subject to the international refugee regime. The first country to accept refugees was Hungary, which witnessed a mass influx of ethnic Hungarians from Romania in 1987 and a wave of East Germans in 1989.<sup>38</sup> As can be seen in Table 4, most other countries in the region began to receive significant numbers of refugees, mostly from the Yugoslav wars, starting in 1992.

The Baltic states of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania became subject to the international refugee regime only in the late 1990s. Given the history of mass immigration to the Baltic area from other parts of the Soviet Union during much of the post-war era, the reluctance of the Baltic governments to receive refugees is understandable. For example, by the end of 1999, Latvia had granted refugee status to a total of only 6 persons.<sup>39</sup> As economic development proceeds and the countries of the region approach membership in the EU, however, they will invariably be faced with the prospect of having to absorb increasing numbers of refugees and immigrants. This, in turn, will undoubtedly challenge policy-makers and could provoke a xenophobic backlash similar to that which recently took place within the EU itself.

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<sup>35</sup> See, e.g., Luc Tayart de Borms, ed., Improving Inter-Ethnic Relations in Central and Eastern Europe, a joint programme of the King Baudouin Foundation and the Soros Foundations in collaboration with the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and the European Cultural Foundation, (Brussels: King Baudouin Foundation, 1997).

<sup>36</sup> See Minority Rights Group, Skills-Exchange Workshop Series (London: MRG, December 1999).

<sup>37</sup> Natalie Zend, “Hungary’s Migration Policy, 1987-1996: External Influences and Domestic Imperatives” in Opalski, ed., Managing Diversity in Plural Societies, 208.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 212-15.

<sup>39</sup> International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights, Human Rights in the OSCE Region, 239.

Membership in the EU, the overriding policy goal of most of the countries in the region, could well provoke the further growth of extreme right parties. As Cas Mudde has argued, “To meet all the requirements for acceptance into the EU, the countries that are now on the accession list [...] will have to make cuts in social services and subsidies that will cost many people their jobs and sense of security. Mainstream politicians will defend these measures by pointing to pressure from the EU, which will in turn open the door to a nationalist backlash from extremists from the left or the right.”<sup>40</sup>

Another transnational challenge that has only recently appeared on the agenda is that of racism on the internet. If attempts to regulate hate speech in traditional media are fraught with difficulties, the task is all the more daunting on the internet. The scope of the challenge is hinted at in the 1999 report on extremists by Germany’s internal security service. Germany witnessed an increase in the number of rightwing extremist internet home pages from 200 in 1998 to 330 in 1999. Many sites use North American service providers outside of European jurisdiction. Moreover, new technologies, such as short message services on mobile phones and internet enabled WAP handsets will provide extremists opportunities to mobilise more quickly and effectively than in the past.<sup>41</sup> Fortunately, the internet and new technologies are also being used by those seeking to analyze and combat racism and extremist activity and to promote minority rights.<sup>42</sup> The battleground of racism and xenophobia is moving to a new technological plane for which the governments of Central and Eastern Europe are ill-prepared, at least for the moment.

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<sup>40</sup> Cas Mudde, “The New Roots of Extremism,” *Transitions* Vol. 5, No. 7 (July 1998): 47.

<sup>41</sup> For a summary of the report, see Haig Simonian, “Skinheads blamed for east German racial attacks,” *The Financial Times*, 5 April 2000.

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, the new “Standing Group on Extremism and Democracy” and its electronic newsletter at <http://www.bath.ac.uk/Departments/ESML/ps/Ex&Dem.html>. See also the new Consortium of Minority Resources at <http://www.osi.hu/lgi/comir>.

**Table 1, Tolerance Towards Others (In Percent)\***

<b>Country</b>	<b>Tolerant</b>	<b>Mixed</b>	<b>Dogmatic</b>
West Germany	45.3	37.1	17.6
Sweden	39.7	49.3	11.0
East Germany	34.9	38.1	27.0
Switzerland	31.6	43.5	24.8
Spain	23.4	43.5	33.1
Norway	21.7	45.8	32.5
Croatia	21.6	42.3	36.1
Slovenia	20.1	38.8	41.1
Finland	19.9	44.0	36.1
Australia	18.5	46.8	34.6
Bulgaria	14.5	41.7	43.9
USA	8.9	35.6	55.6
Latvia	8.3	50.2	41.5
Estonia	4.8	46.1	49.1
Yugoslavia	4.5	39.4	56.1
Poland	4.5	30.3	65.2
Belarus	4.1	34.5	61.4
Bosnia-Herzegovina	3.4	25.8	70.7
Russia	3.3	31.7	64.0
Ukraine	3.3	31.7	65.0
Lithuania	3.0	27.4	69.6
Armenia	2.9	29.4	67.8
Moldova	2.7	26.0	71.3
Macedonia	2.0	28.5	69.5
Georgia	0.5	21.3	78.2

\*“Tolerance” was measured by responses to questions on homosexuality, prostitution, abortion and divorce.

*Source:* World Values Survey, 1995-97. In Giuliano Amato and Judy Batt, The Long-Term Implications of EU Enlargement: the Nature of the New Border (Florence: Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies and Forward Studies Unit, European Commission, 1999): 79.

**Table 2, Multiple Identities in Central and Eastern Europe:  
Local, National, European**

Q. With which of these do you most closely identify yourself? And Second? Europe, country (names), region, city or local community, other, don't know. (% choosing 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup>.)

	<b>Europe</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Region</b>	<b>Local</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>DK</b>
Bulgaria	15	83	20	47	6	18
Czech Republic	19	72	27	69	3	8
Slovakia	20	61	28	69	8	13
Poland	17	64	39	65	5	9
Romania	18	56	44	62	1	18
Slovenia	22	63	31	48	10	27
<b>CEE mean</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>
Croatia	24	48	24	55	8	41
Yugoslavia	19	72	15	52	15	24
Belarus	18	60	20	47	10	44
Ukraine	14	61	30	55	6	34

*Source:* R. Rose and C. Haerpfer, *New Democracies Barometer V: A 12-Nation Survey* (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1998): 23.

**Table 3, Ethnic Minorities: A Diminishing Threat  
in Central and Eastern Europe**

Q. Do you think that ethnic groups or minorities in our country pose a big threat, some threat, a little threat or no threat to peace and security in this society?

<b>% perceiving big or some threat</b>				
	<b>1993</b>	<b>1995</b>	<b>1998</b>	<b>Change</b>
Slovakia	53	49	43	-10
Romania	60	33	32	-28
Bulgaria	46	36	29	-17
Czech Republic	44	14	25	-19
Hungary	26	15	19	-7
Poland	35	8	17	-18
Slovenia	13	20	10	-3
<b>CEE mean</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>-15</b>
Croatia	57	42	39	-18
Ukraine	24	15	15	-9
Belarus	30	14	14	-16

*Source:* R. Rose and C. Haerpfer, *Trends in Democracies and Markets: New Democracies Barometer 1991-98* (Glasgow: Centre for the Study of Public Policy, University of Strathclyde, 1998): 41.

**Table 4, Indicative Number of Refugees  
in Central and Eastern Europe, 1989-1998**

	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
Belarus	-	-	-	-	-	1,800	-	30,500	50	80
Bulgaria	-	-	-	220	90	1,100	50	1,400	390	240
Czech Republic	-	-	690	9,400	240	1200	2,700	2,300	1,700	1,800
Hungary	27,000	45,100	73,800	32,400	3,000	2,900	11,400	7,500	5,900	5,400
Poland	-	-	170	2,700	810	390	600	600	840	900
Romania	-	-	650	520	1,200	1,200	220	270	630	990
Russia	-	-	-	17,100	44,700	50,200	42,300	205,500	237,700	128,600
Slovakia	-	-	-	-	1,500	160	1,900	1,400	690	420
Ukraine	-	-	-	-	-	5,200	5,200	3,600	4,600	6,100
Lithuania	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	--	10	30

*Source:* United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, 1998 Statistical Overview, at [http://www.unhcr.ch/statist/98oview/tab1\\_4.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/statist/98oview/tab1_4.htm).