



Equality and Anti-racism



Posted by: **European Network Against Racism (ENAR)**



Equality Demands for the 2014-19 European Parliament

The EU has a strong mandate to combat racism and related discrimination. The European Union Treaty includes equality and non-discrimination as core values for the EU. There is solid legislation at EU and national levels when it comes to combating racism. However some legislative gaps remain and structural barriers to proper implementation of these laws leave many European residents unprotected against discrimination. This is all the more worrying as the political and social context has got worse for ethnic and religious minorities since the 2014 European elections, amid terrorist attacks, a rise in racist crime and speech, and increasing violence targeting migrants.

The European Parliament has a crucial role to play when it comes to reducing inequalities and violence faced by EU citizens and residents with an ethnic or religious minority background. Ahead of the 2014 European elections, the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) asked candidates to commit to

advance equality and fight racism in the EU if elected to the European Parliament. 44 candidates endorsed our 'Equality Demands', including the three 'top candidates' Ska Keller, Guy Verhofstadt and Martin Schultz.

Since 2014, the European Parliament has made some progress on promoting equality and fighting discrimination, but there is still work to be done in a number of areas.

Tackle all forms of racism

The European Parliament organised a first hearing on the fight against Antisemitism and Islamophobia in 2015. The Civil Liberties committee also adopted an oral question to the Commission, explicitly asking whether the Commission envisages asking Member States to adopt specific national strategies to combat Antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of racism. The need to recognise and adopt strategies to combat specific forms of racism was also included in a number of EP reports (on the situation of fundamental rights in the EU, and on the implementation of the Employment Equality Directive). In 2017, the European Parliament co-organised a joint action day on Islamophobia and Antisemitism and adopted a parliamentary question on the consequences of the European Court of Justice ruling on wearing the headscarf at work. The European Parliament adopted a Resolution on combating Antisemitism in 2017.

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In 2015, the European Parliament also adopted a Resolution on **Antigypsyism in Europe and EU recognition of the memorial day of the Roma genocide during World War II**, calling on the European Commission and EU Member States to take action on this. It also organised an EU Roma Week in 2017 to raise awareness of the issues Roma face, including different debates on Antigypsyism. An own-initiative report on Antigypsyism is also currently being drafted.

However, there has so far been **little action to combat Afrophobia** in the European Union, apart from a round table organised by the EP's Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup in 2015. However, some individual MEPs have committed to take this issue forward within the European Parliament in 2017.

Step up efforts against racist violence

There has so far not been much progress on reinforcing the EU legal basis to tackle hate crime. However, a letter by members of the Anti-Racism and LGBTI Intergroups was sent to the President of the European Parliament asking to commission a study on the legal basis of a new EU legislation on hate crime.

Promote diversity and equality at work

The European Parliament adopted a report on the implementation of the EU Employment Equality Directive, which included the need to combat religious discrimination in employment, including the specific situation of Muslim women, and the need for equality data collection.

Proactively react against racist elements in political discourse

An important development in this regard was the adoption of new European Parliament rules of procedure in December 2016, which strengthen sanctions for racist speech by MEPs within the chamber. However, no sanctions have been applied to date despite several occurrences of racist speech by MEPs.

Establish an Intergroup on anti-racism and diversity

The European Parliament has re-established a strong Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup in the European Parliament and its Bureau has hired a dedicated coordinator to ensure the smooth and effective running of the Intergroup. The activities of the Intergroup, including meetings, voting recommendations, letters and press statements, have ensured that the fight against racial discrimination and racism remain high on the European Parliament's agenda.

Next steps and looking towards 2019

Over the next two and a half years, particularly in light of the upcoming 2019 European elections, MEPs must continue to push these topics.

A major gap has been the complete lack of action to ensure participation of ethnic and religious minorities and migrants in decision making processes. This is particularly concerning in a context where only fewer than 20 out of the 751 MEPs are thought to be from an ethnic minority background and where most ethnic and racial diversity is represented by UK MEPs and staff who will no longer be present after the 2019 elections. Worryingly, the European Commission recently published an internal diversity strategy which completely omits to include measures on ethnic and racial diversity.

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The European Parliament must show leadership and adopt specific measures

to ensure racial and ethnic diversity in its workforce, and publish a yearly monitoring report on the racial and ethnic make-up of the EP's workforce, as it currently does for gender diversity.

European political parties should also ensure participation of ethnic and religious minorities and migrants in the next 2019 elections, by increasing the number of candidates from these groups on voting lists and by introducing quota systems in political parties' decision-making structures.

In addition, there are several racism-related issues on which there has so far been no progress in the European Parliament and which require urgent attention:

- Initiate debates and a Resolution on the need to **combat Afrophobia** in the European Union, especially in light of the United Nations Decade for people of African descent launched in 2015.

- Initiate debates on the need for Member States to **measure equality** as part of their positive duty to combat racial discrimination, especially in the context of the updated equality data handbook recently published by the European Commission.

- Develop an official **monitoring mechanism for racist speech** by MEPs, in order to ensure transparency and strong recording of racist speech incidents.

- Call on the European Commission to launch infringement proceedings against those Member States whose legislation and practices breach existing EU legislation on **racist crime**.

- Monitor the **impact of security and counter-terrorism policies** and practices on human rights and non-discrimination.

- Develop and implement a strong **strategy to improve the diversity of the European Parliament's administration**, in particular on the grounds of ethnicity, colour and religion, in parallel with gender, age, disability and sexual orientation.

