



CONCEPT NOTE

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON ANTI-RACISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

"People of African Descent: Recognition, Justice and Development"

Spain holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU) in the second half of 2023. Within the framework of the Presidency, the Ministry of Equality of Spain, the European Commission, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the EEA and Norway Grants, are organising the international conference: "ANTI-RACISM IN THE EUROPEAN UNION. People of African descent: Recognition, Justice and Development".

The conference will take place on 2 and 3 November 2023, in the city of Barcelona.

The conference concept and programming is aligned with the 2001 Durban Declaration and Programme of Action and the International Decade for People of African Descent (2015-2024). As proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in its resolution 68/2371, the theme of the International Decade is "people of African descent: recognition, justice and development".

Racial discrimination persists as a concern in the European Union, as attested by the Eurobarometer¹ and successive surveys by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), including its latest report 'Being Black in the EU: Experiences of people of African descent'.

The EU has adopted its first EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025², in which it takes an important step by recognising structural racism and pointing out the need for proactive policies to address it.

Individual countries should take actions and develop policies to mitigate the effects of racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, taking into account that, in many parts of the world, people of African descent³ face obstacles as a result of prejudice and discrimination prevailing in public and private institutions. There are also many manifestations of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, as well as violence towards Roma people, Sinti and Travellers, and there is a recognised need to develop effective policies and implementation mechanisms to achieve their full equality. Similarly, anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim hatred remain a concern in various parts of the world. Meanwhile, Asian people and those of Asian origin face obstacles as a result of social prejudice and discrimination prevailing in public and private institutions.

The conference on National Action Plans Against Racism (NAPARs) organised under the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU served to highlight:

¹ <https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/2251>

² COM (2020) 565 final

³ The term "people of African descent" is used as an umbrella term referring to people of African descent, Black Europeans and Africans.

- a. The need to address racism in all its forms and tackle the multiple barriers faced by racialised⁴, communities.
- b. The need for data when planning, implementing and, not least, monitoring and assessing the impact of work against racism.

CONTENTS

The Barcelona conference will have the following objectives:

- a. Raise awareness about structural racism and the need for proactive policies to address it.
- b. Highlight the importance of data collection by ethnicity to formulate effective public policies and evaluate structural racism.
- c. Discuss the representation of people of African descent in public office and in the media.
- d. Explore anti-racist legislation, policies, and action plans to combat racism and racial discrimination.
- e. Propose actions and means to enforce regular reporting on racism in the EU and its Member States to maintain anti-racism high on the political agenda.
- f. European Commission to report on the progress and gaps of implementing the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan.

The agenda for this event has been organised around four main content strands:

A) STRUCTURAL RACISM

The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025 refers, among other key issues, to structural racism since its impact can be as deep and damaging as individual racism, and its existence must be recognised and addressed through proactive policies. Structural racism can be reflected in the way society functions, how power is distributed and how citizens interact with the state and public services. According to the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025, this structural racism perpetuates the barriers placed in the way of citizens solely due to their racial or ethnic origin⁵.

B) DATA COLLECTION DISAGGREGATED BY ETHNICITY IN STATISTICS, STUDIES AND SURVEYS

The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025 notes that accurate, comparable and reliable information is essential for formulating effective public policy. Data disaggregated by ethnicity, is crucial in capturing both subjective experiences of discrimination and victimisation and uncovering the structural aspects of racism and discrimination. The action plan cites the Durban conference and plan of action and its support for the need for disaggregated population statistics, to be collected with the explicit consent of respondents, based on self-identification and consistent with human rights standards that protect privacy.

⁴ [ECRI's opinion](#) on the concept of "racialisation"

⁵ [COM \(2020\) 565 final](#)

The European Commission, through the High Level Group on Non-Discrimination, Equality and Diversity and the Equality Data Sub-Group, has, in collaboration with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), developed a guidance note on the collection and use of equality data based on racial or ethnic origin⁶, which states that "In order to make informed policy decisions to combat discrimination and promote equal treatment, legislators and policy makers need data on people's social position and experiences of racism and racial or ethnic discrimination". It should be borne in mind that no data collection activity should create or reinforce existing discrimination, bias or stereotypes and that the data collected should be used for the benefit of the groups it describes and society as a whole.

The collection of disaggregated statistics is essential for the formulation of public policies aimed at eliminating racial discrimination, assessing structural racism and facilitating the inclusion of population and ethnic groups that are most frequently victims of such discrimination. These statistical data should be disaggregated in accordance with national legislation, respecting the right to privacy and the principle of awareness of personal identity, the explicit consent of respondents, using self-identification as a basis.

C) REPRESENTATION OF PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT IN PUBLIC OFFICE AND IN THE MEDIA

There is a need to highlight and discuss the presence of people of African descent in the structures of the European Union and the Member States. In this regard, recruitment and other HR policies should consider the possibility of positive action measures for those who suffer most from racial discrimination. In many EU Member States, a high proportion of persons belonging to these groups are in sectors of low professional qualification and social prestige.

D) ANTI-RACIST LEGISLATION AND NATIONAL ACTION PLANS AGAINST RACISM

While countering racism requires determined action across many fields, the protection offered by the law is critical. The EU Anti-Racism Action Plan 2020-2025 identifies the need to combat racism and racial discrimination through legislation and also urges Member States to implement National Action Plans against racism. The Directive 2000/43/EC has shaped the legal protection against discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin for over two decades. Furthermore, the Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia by means of criminal law (2008/913/JHA) aims to ensure that serious manifestations of racism and xenophobia are punishable by effective, proportionate and dissuasive criminal penalties throughout the EU. It is complemented by the Victims' Rights Directive (2012/29/EU), which aims to ensure justice, protection and support for victims of racist hate crime and hate speech.

Also the drafting and processing of the Directive on equality bodies 9174/23 is currently discussed between the European Commission and the Member States.

PRESENTATION OF "BEING BLACK IN THE EU" SECOND REPORT

⁶ [Guidance Note on the collection and use of equality data based on racial or ethnic origin \(europa.eu\)](https://european-council.europa.eu/media/e3000000/1/press/162020/162020_0101_en.pdf)



At this event, FRA will present its report '**Being Black in the EU: Experiences of people of African descent**', taking stock of the developments since its last report on the topic issued in 2018. The report shows that people of African descent continue to face racism, discrimination and hate crime in all areas of their lives, on a daily basis.

The report is part of FRA's third EU-wide survey looking at experiences of immigrants and descendants of immigrants across the EU. It analyses the responses of over 6,700 people of African descent living in 13 EU countries: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal, Spain and Sweden. The survey included questions on experiences of discrimination in different areas of life, hate crime, racial profiling, as well as on people's participation and integration in society.

FORMAT

The conference is intended to take the form of thematic sessions (panels; round tables or another format to be determined), as detailed in the provisional programme, with the following objectives:

On 2 November 2023, the aim is to create a space for open debate (live streaming will be available). 200 participants are expected to attend in person (as speakers or attendees), including representatives of EU Institutions and Member States, national Institutions including national equality bodies, representatives of third (non-EU) countries, civil society organisations, international organisations and others.

On 3 November 2023, representatives of the EU Member States, including Governments and National Human Rights/Ombuds Institutions or Equality Bodies, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Members of the European Parliament and the European Commission will discuss what steps to take in response to the situation described on the previous day by analysing the steps taken by the EU institutions and some Member States who will speak as panellists.