A fair deal for everyone:  
How the EU fights discrimination

Making societies equal for all

All over the world, people still face persecution due to their colour, sexuality, race, disability or gender.

The EU condemns all forms of discrimination and is committed to making sure that everyone can enjoy the same full range of human rights without discrimination or prejudice.

In its recent Agenda for Change - the future of EU Development Policy, the Commission confirmed human rights as one of its priorities.

A new approach to tackling discrimination

A new package of support to help NGOs and civil society groups in developing countries to tackle cases of discrimination in their work has just been announced by the European Commission.

The funding will be launched through the Commission’s Call for Proposals in 2013. €20m will be available in the new package.

Fighting racism worldwide

In all of its work overseas, the EU raises racism and xenophobia-related issues in its political dialogues with non-EU countries.

We also make sure that anti-racism measures are taken into consideration when producing all of our cooperation strategies.

For example, under the European Neighbourhood Policy Action Plans, countries formally commit themselves to combating all forms of discrimination, religious intolerance, racism and xenophobia.

Through its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) the Commission has recently supported a wide range of civil society organisations in some 120 projects to help combat racism (€24 million.)

The EU also supports the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in the implementation of existing international standards on equality and non-discrimination; in particular the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

As part of the EIDHR, a project was set up in Paraguay to give more visibility to disabled people there and their problems of integration into society, by ensuring that they are registered in this year’s census. As part of the project, disabled people have been involved in coming up with the appropriate questions to use to identify disabled people in the census, as well as given training to be pollsters.

The project will follow the census exercise until the analysis of its results at the end of 2012. Press and communication activities will also be carried out, in order to make sure that disabled people’s needs are taken into account in the country’s public policies.

Project in focus - Ensuring disabled people have a voice in the Census, Paraguay
LGBTI rights

Around the world, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) people continue to be subject to persecution, discrimination and gross ill-treatment, often involving extreme forms of violence. Around 80 countries still criminalise same-sex relations between consenting adults, with seven continuing to use the death penalty.

The EU’s action in this area focuses on countries where there is criminalisation (particularly those with the death penalty) and encourages countries to promote equality and non-discrimination, for example by introducing national legislative measures and laws. It also identifies situations where political and financial support would help to make a difference.

The Commission works hard on Monitoring LGBTI rights worldwide; keeping in contact with local authorities, regional organisations and civil society organisations in order to maintain information on individual cases of human rights violations of LGBTI people, as well as issuing public statements, and taking part in specific action on individual cases, through court hearings, prison visits, political dialogues, and EU and MS missions on the issue.

As a mark of this commitment, and to provide EU staff with an operational set of tools to promote and protect human rights for everyone, irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity, in 2010 the EU adopted a “Toolkit to Promote and Protect the Enjoyment of all Human Rights by Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBTI) People”.

Through its EIDHR, the Commission also supports LGBTI groups around the world – monitoring information on LGBTI rights, raising awareness on this issue and supporting individual cases through prison visits and court hearings. It also provides emergency assistance (from psychosocial assistance through to medical care) to the most vulnerable LGBTI people in need of support.

Supporting minority groups

In every region of the world, people belonging to minorities continue to face serious threats, discrimination and racism, and are frequently excluded from fully taking part in the economic, political, social and cultural life available to the majorities in the countries in which they live. The Treaty on European Union explicitly states that the rights of people belonging to minorities are among the values upon which the EU is founded and on which it undertakes to promote this policy in its relations with the wider world.

The Commission continues to use a wide range of financial and technical cooperation instruments, including bilateral cooperation with governments and direct support to civil society, in order to protect the rights of people belonging to minority groups.

Through its EIDHR, the Commission is active in combatting racism and supporting minority groups, for example by providing funding to support civil society projects in this area.

For more information:

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