



## EUROPEAN COMMISSION - PRESS RELEASE

### **"Discrimination hampers development" – Commissioner Piebalgs launches a new initiative to fight discrimination in developing countries**

Brussels, 01 June 2012 - EU Commissioner Piebalgs today unveiled the launch of a new €20 million package to help fight against any kind of discrimination - whether based on gender or sexual orientation, religion or belief, race or ethnic origin, or disability - which affects millions of people around the world.

The announcement was made during an event at the European Commission. High level speakers exchanged views on how to move ahead towards tolerant democracies as well as the added value of non-discrimination and the promotion of human rights to unlock sources of development and enable inclusive growth.

The EU announced that this new package will be available for NGOs and civil society groups to tackle incidences of any kind of discrimination on the ground.

European Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs, said: "It is clear that no country can develop in the long term when some minorities face serious threats, intimidation and even violence because of who they are. Since I took office, I have put the promotion of human rights and human development at the core of EU development policy. The new package launched today is a clear signal of the EU's determination to help civil society and willing partners to make diversity acceptable and an asset of our societies".

Member of the European Parliament, Michael Cashman, said: "This new call to combat discrimination is part of a shared global agenda for tolerant democracies. The European Commission is right to put so much effort into equality as part of the EU's development strategy, and we in the European Parliament wholeheartedly support this. Soon we will have to approve the second revision of the Cotonou Agreement. We are sincerely committed to this in partnership with ACP governments and civil society."

Participants exchanged points of views but also good practices and testimonies from the ground, both within the EU and abroad. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Navanethem Pillay, Ernst & Young partner, Ms L. Bingham, as well as NGOs such as "Sexual Minorities Uganda" and Coalition Advocating for the Inclusion of Sexual Orientation (CAISO) from Trinidad and Tobago, participated.

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### **A new support package**

€20m euros will be available in the new funding package announced today. It is the first funding specifically set up for the purpose of non-discrimination under the current EIDHR. The funding will be launched through the Commission's Call for Proposals in 2013.

Through its European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), the EU is also active in combatting racism and supporting minority groups, for example through the provision of funding to support civil society projects in this area.

The EIDHR has just funded a project to help to improve conditions for the Roma community in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example. The Roma population suffers a legacy of discrimination in these countries, resulting in widespread poverty, unemployment, homelessness and lack of access to education. The €90,000 funding through the EIDHR aims to help Roma groups achieve greater political representation, promoting the inclusion of minority group's rights in the national constitution through a series of training sessions, national debates and workshops to encourage Roma to become politically active, as well as campaigns to raise awareness of the importance of voting. As a result of the project, 90% of the Roma voted in local elections.

The EIDHR also supports Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (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. Around 80 countries still criminalise same-sex relations, and in seven of these it is still punishable by the death penalty.

### **For further information**

Website of DG Development and Cooperation – EuropeAid

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/index_en.htm)

Website of the EU Development Commissioner, Andris Piebalgs

[http://ec.europa.eu/commission\\_2010-2014/piebalgs/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/piebalgs/index_en.htm)