



Eurodiaconia  Connecting faith and social justice through action

Briefing for Members

A Union of Equality: EU Anti-Racism Action Plan

2020-2025

Eurodiaconia is a European network of churches and Christian NGOs providing social and healthcare services and advocating social justice.

Mission

Eurodiaconia is a network of churches and Christian organizations that provide social and health care services and advocate for social justice. Together we work for just and transformative social change across Europe, leaving no-one behind.

Vision

Driven by our Christian faith, our vision is of a Europe where each person is valued for their inherent God-given worth and dignity and where our societies guarantee social justice for all people, including the most vulnerable and marginalized.

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What is the Anti-Racism Action Plan?

Launched in September 2020, the European Commission's [Anti-Racism Action Plan](#) represents a clear recognition and response to persistent racial discrimination and structural racism across the European Union (EU). Eurodiaconia welcomes the action plan and the commitment that it brings. As social service providers, our members represent and work with individuals and communities from a wide variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds and confront racial discrimination in their work.

Although the action plan is a non-binding instrument, it is meant to affect the policies and practices of Member States and brings together different initiatives and proposals at the European, national, and local levels to combat racism and seeks to lift the voices of people with a minority racial or ethnic background. It demonstrates an acceptance that existing models need new impetus, as well as an effort to keep pace with growing public awareness and understanding.

Individual & Structural Racism

The action plan acknowledges that there are many different forms of racism and that these can intersect with other forms of discrimination.

The Commission uses two categories in the action plan – racism by individuals and structural racism.

- **Individual Racism** - an individual's racist assumptions, beliefs or behaviours that inform their interactions with others.
- **Structural Racism** – racist ideas and behaviours that are embedded in social, financial and political institutions.

This represents the first time that the EU has explicitly acknowledged and sought to directly address structural racism¹.

Existing Legal Framework

The Anti-Racism Action Plan builds on the established EU legal framework for tackling racism, which is built on the Racial Equality Directive², the Treaty of the European Union, the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, the general principles of non-discrimination and equality, as well as the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The Racial Equality Directive was published in 2000 and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of race and ethnic origin and establishes a minimum standard of protection for people. It covers the areas of employment, vocational

¹ [Action Plans Against Racism - European Network Against Racism \(enar-eu.org\)](#)

² [Racial Equality Directive \(EUR-Lex - 32000L0043 - EN - EUR-Lex\)](#)

training, social partners, social protection, education, and access to goods & services. Under this directive, all member states are obliged to have specialised bodies for promoting equal treatment on the grounds of race and ethnic origin (Equality Bodies).

Contents of the Action Plan

Throughout the Action Plan, the European Commission commits to actions aimed at addressing racial discrimination and actively promoting more inclusive societies and formulates concrete recommendations for Member States. These actions range from complementary initiatives to funding mechanisms. A key focus for the Commission is that any approach taken should recognise the intersectional nature of discrimination and enhance the voices of people from racial or ethnic minority backgrounds. It also prioritises the acknowledgement and remembrance of racist ideologies and atrocities, as important aspects of cohesion and understanding, in combatting structural racism.

Data Collection

The European Commission states that reliable and comparable data is crucial for policymakers and the public to understand and assess the scale and nature of discrimination, as well as for monitoring the efficacy of policy interventions. There is hesitation in some Member States to

collect data disaggregated by ethnicity because of concerns that it might be utilised to further stigmatise racial and ethnic minorities or because of misconceptions that such data collection does not comply with legal provisions, such as the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). However, under GDPR, it is manifestly possible to collect such data given that the motive and method are both transparent and robust.

- The Commission calls for the development of standardised methodologies that can be applied to data collection across Member States. [The Guidance Note on the Collection of Equality Data](#) outlines comprehensive safeguarding measures and principles for developing strong equality data collection methodologies.

Law Enforcement

The Commission recognises widespread reports of racial discrimination by law enforcement authorities, in particular unlawful police profiling and police action. Member States are urged to step up their efforts to prevent widespread discriminatory attitudes within law enforcement authorities and to boost the credibility of law enforcement in the eyes of minority racial or ethnic communities.

Education

Strengthening inclusive education is a priority for the EU and will be an emphasised dimension of the [European Education Area](#). The

Commission is clear in stating that teachers must be trained to work with all children and sensitive to the needs of children from different backgrounds - schools should be safe and free from racism. The following initiatives already include anti-racism priorities:

- The [Strategy on the Rights of the Child](#) includes specific actions tackling racism and discrimination.
- [Erasmus+](#) funding for individuals, organisations and institutions in support of people from minority racial & ethnic backgrounds.
- [The European Solidarity Corps](#) Promotes solidarity activities for young people (18-30) aimed at fighting racism & discrimination.

Employment

Discrimination on the grounds of racial and ethnic origin is widespread in the workplace and on the job market. This represents a profound challenge to ideas of social fairness and equality of opportunity. Equal access to upskilling opportunities is also crucial to ensuring that people can navigate economic transitions.

- The Commission has recently adopted a [European Skills Agenda](#) that prioritises social fairness and anti-discrimination. The Skills Agenda is aimed at ensuring access to education, training & lifelong learning to support people through green and digital transitions.

- This is reinforced by a [Council Recommendation on vocational education and training](#) (VET Programmes) that promotes the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including people with a minority racial or ethnic background.

Health

The COVID/19 pandemic has deepened existing health inequalities³ suffered by minority racial or ethnic communities. The Commission is committed to addressing this by promoting the engagement of people with minority backgrounds in healthcare prevention and intervention strategies.

- [Horizon Europe](#) funds research driven projects on the socioeconomic determinants of health from a racial perspective and inclusion of racial & ethnic minorities in healthcare strategies

Housing

Residential segregation and housing poverty are issues that disproportionately affect racially discriminated communities. These issues have knock-on effects across other areas of people's lives including education and employment. The European Commission's proposed solutions to the issues are currently limited to funding opportunities, primarily [Cohesion Policy Funds](#) and [Next Generation EU](#).

³ [European Network Against Racism \(ENAR\) COVID-19 Impact Policy Paper](#)

- [Cohesion Policy Funds](#), managed by national & regional authorities, are the key funding tool supporting non-segregated housing & ensuring access to high-quality public services.
- [Next Generation EU](#) is a funding package to support member states in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Role of Member States

In the Action Plan, the Commission highlights different points of action for Member States, including fully transposing EU anti-racism legal frameworks into national legislation; stepping up efforts to prevent discriminatory practices amongst law enforcement; tackling racist extremist groups; the development and implementation of National Action Plans Against Racism (NAPAR); the development and enhancement of equality bodies and enabling strategic litigation.

This briefing will focus on the latter three – NAPAR, equality bodies and strategic litigation.

National Action Plans Against Racism

NAPAR are foreseen as a way for Member States to address racial discrimination in country-specific contexts. As of April 2022, only 15 Member States have initiated NAPAR. The Commission calls upon Member States to

develop National Action Plans Against Racism by the end of 2022 and has published a set of [“Common Guiding Principles”](#) to support Member States to:

- Recognise and encourage diversity, equity & equality;
- Ensure that EU legal and policy frameworks are fully embedded at the national level;
- Identify and tackle manifestations of structural racism;
- Set specific and achievable objectives;
- Establish holistic measures for tackling racism;
- Ensure that engagement, participation and transparency are core principles;
- Collect and use equality and hate crime data to inform evidence-based policies;
- Ensure proper monitoring and/or evaluation.

The Commission will issue a report on the implementation of NAPAR by the end of 2023.

- The [Citizens, Equality, Rights & Values Programme \(CERV\)](#) issues specific funding calls with objectives aimed at combatting discrimination, racism & xenophobia.
- [Next Generation EU](#) funding will support work that encourages long-term economic & social resilience and cohesion by combatting racial discrimination.

Equality Bodies

[Equality bodies](#) are public organisations that assist victims of discrimination, monitor and report on discrimination and advocate for social justice and equality.

- The Commission issued a Recommendation in 2018 [on standards for equality bodies](#) to improve their implementation across the EU.
- The Commission will examine the need for new legislation to strengthen the role of equality bodies.

Strategic Litigation

The European Commission strongly encourages Member States to enable strategic litigation at a national level. Strategic litigation serves a vital role in raising public awareness of issues of discrimination and establishing norms that clarify and protect human rights.

What is Eurodiaconia doing?

At the EU level, Eurodiaconia is part of a coalition of NGO and CSO partners that is consulted by the Commission on the anti-racism action plan and the annual [anti-racism summit](#). Eurodiaconia also engages in advocacy efforts to the Commission's Coordinator on Combatting Racism and the Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup in the European Parliament.

In September 2021, marking one year since the adoption of the action plan, Eurodiaconia co-signed a [joint civil society statement](#) with recommendations including that the Commission ensures Member States deliver their NAPAR proposals by the end of 2022 and that a revised Racial Equality Directive should extend to law enforcement and hate crime committed by law enforcement agents.

Eurodiaconia, together with members, is also monitoring the implementation of NAPARs and forthcoming anti-racism legislative and policy developments. Ensuring that anti-racism is mainstreamed across policy and legislative areas is a key component of Eurodiaconia's advocacy work across thematic areas.

Consultation Addressing Possible Gaps in the Racial Equality Directive

Eurodiaconia has been involved in the European Commission's consultation process aimed at identifying possible gaps in the Racial Equality Directive, which concluded on April 11th, 2022. Eurodiaconia's submission is summarised below:

- There needs to be a move away from focusing on incidences of racism and toward structural and intersectional racism in both EU and Member State policies.
- Standardised methodologies and disaggregated data on discrimination are crucial

for developing better policies and assessing the true scale of racial discrimination.

- Racism should be addressed across all relevant areas such as migration, gender, health, climate, employment, social inclusion and digitalisation.
- There should be clear repercussions for educational segregation and concrete desegregation measures.
- Labour and housing market discrimination must be tackled by combatting profiling and exclusion based on racial or ethnic origin.
- The disproportionate impact of crises on ethnic minorities must be addressed through effective anti-discrimination laws and targeted support for communities.

What can Eurodiaconia members do?

The opportunities for Eurodiaconia members to engage in supporting the principles and actions of the plan could both include targeted actions against racism and discrimination or embedding anti-racism into existing work. Many Eurodiaconia members have been involved in developing and implementing projects focusing on the underreporting of racially motivated hate crime, intersectional discrimination, discrimination in education and housing poverty, for example.

EU funding programmes will be mobilised to advance the aims of the action plan and support

projects which aim to tackle racial discrimination. Eurodiaconia can support members in identifying funding opportunities and developing project proposals that meet the criteria of EU programmes, such as those highlighted throughout this briefing:

- [Erasmus+](#)
- [The European Solidarity Corps](#)
- [Cohesion Policy Funds](#)
- [Horizon Europe](#)
- [Citizens, Equality, Rights & Values Programme \(CERV\)](#)
- [Next Generation EU](#)

The development and implementation of National Action Plans Against Racism are the cornerstones of the Commission's strategy to combat racism moving forward. NAPARs can be a gateway for Eurodiaconia members to engage at a local and national level by taking steps to engage in both the development and implementation of national plans. This could involve:

- Reaching out to relevant government ministries and local authorities to provide recommendations on the contents of the NAPAR.
- Informing national policymakers on social service providers' perspectives on what is needed to address racism across different policy areas (mainstreaming), and what gaps exist on the ground in the implementation of the action plans.

Members can play a role in highlighting and bringing forward cases of racial discrimination for strategic litigation. This [handbook](#) provides an overview of what strategic litigation is, how to select cases and what the risks are.

Eurodiaconia also offers opportunities for our members to gather and exchange experiences and best practices, which can be used to support one another in developing anti-racist approaches to our work. Eurodiaconia's annual Roma inclusion and migration network meetings are good platforms for discussing the implementation of the action plan and what gaps remain. Feedback from members will guide Eurodiaconia's advocacy on this topic.



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