Equality – driving forward regional and local development
Stop Discrimination Newsletter

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This newsletter provides information about the policies and activities conducted by the European Commission to fight discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.


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This edition of the Stop Discrimination Newsletter focuses on the Fifth Equality Summit, which is taking place on 14-15 November 2011 in Poznan, Poland. This year’s Summit will look at how equality policy is being implemented at regional and local levels across the EU. This emerging topic will be explored by participants so that ideas, experiences and examples of good practice can be shared.

We also speak to Lina Papamichalopoulou, head of the team working on non-discrimination policies at the European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice, about her role, the theme of the Summit and what she thinks are the main challenges for the coming years in the field of equality and anti-discrimination.

You can also learn more about the EU’s PROGRESS programme, as well as find out about the latest activities, publications and events taking place across the EU to fight discrimination and promote diversity.
How can regional development strategies address equality issues in an effective way? Can different partnerships between stakeholders working in equality be forged at regional and local level? And how can European funding mechanisms be used to help people experiencing inequality and discrimination?

These are some of the questions that will be discussed at the Fifth European Equality Summit, ‘Implementation of Equality at the Regional and Local Level’, which takes place in Poznan, Poland on the 14-15 November 2011. This year’s event is organised by the Polish Presidency of the Council of the EU in cooperation with the European Commission. About 250 delegates are expected to attend, including representatives from the European Institutions, Member States, Candidate Countries, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), international organisations, equality bodies and social partners.

The Summit’s theme centres on finding ways to bring regional and local levels more into play when fighting discrimination and promoting equality. The issue is crucial as it is at the regional and local levels that European and national policies are implemented and programmes delivered. They are also the levels at which communities experiencing problems tend to organise themselves, find their voices and express their needs. This means regional and local actors against discrimination and inequality can drive social change, especially if they are given adequate help and support. Attempts to promote equality regionally and locally must also draw a new range of stakeholders into the European level, including municipal government bodies, small business networks and grassroots NGOs.

Given this context, the Summit will assess policies and practices that have been developed to advance equality and fight discrimination at regional and local levels. Efforts will also be made to identify the tools and mechanisms that have proved effective in dealing with equality issues. The Summit also aims to map out future courses of action that different stakeholders can pursue in order to improve the way inequality and discrimination are handled regionally and locally.

Plenary sessions will explore the latest developments and potential initiatives to advance equality and combat discrimination at regional and local levels, as well as the challenges and opportunities relating to delivering effective equality policies, which will be discussed by a panel of speakers from regional and local authorities.

Participants will have the opportunity to further debate these issues during workshops that will analyse the issue of equality as a factor in regional development, examine how to increase regional and local partnerships, and look at how to successfully use EU funds at regional and local levels for implementing anti-discrimination policies towards minorities, including Roma communities. Findings and recommendations drawn from the workshops and a stakeholder panel will be presented to all participants during the final sessions of the Summit. The closing plenary will see the baton passed from Poland to Cyprus, which will be the next country to organise an Equality Summit under its Presidency of the Council of the EU in autumn 2012.

Background

Equality summits are organised every year with the aim of advancing equality for everyone in the EU, and to exchange knowledge and experience that can be used to develop new ways of combating discrimination. The summits began during the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, with the first edition taking place at its opening conference in Berlin. Paris hosted the second summit, where delegates focused on issues of diversity and reflected on progress made by during the European Year. The third summit was held in Stockholm and concentrated on building cooperation for equality between different stakeholders and different levels of civil society, while the last summit was organised in Brussels in 2010 with equality and diversity in employment as its theme.

> Fifth Equality Summit
http://pl2011.eu/en/content/5th-european-equality-summit-0
Fighting discrimination at European level
Lina Papamichalopoulou, European Commission, Directorate-General for Justice

You have been working for the European Commission in Brussels since 2005, both at the former DG Justice, Freedom and Security and now at DG Justice since its creation on July 1 2010. Could you tell us a little more about your experience?

Lina Papamichalopoulou: I come from Cyprus and my background is in law. I have worked in a number of different areas and also internationally in diplomacy, law enforcement, finance, budgeting and taxation. Before joining the European Commission, I worked for the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the EU both during and just after the negotiation period for the country’s accession to the EU. I have also worked with the World Customs Organisation, an international intergovernmental organisation. Since joining the European Commission, I have been head of a number of units dealing with general justice issues and e-justice, as well as providing financial support for justice, rights and citizenship. This range of experience has given me a broad understanding of the sensitive topics tackled within the Directorate-General (DG) for Justice.

You have been Head of the Non-discrimination policies and Roma coordination Unit since May 2011. How do you see your role?

I am very pleased to lead the Non-discrimination policies and Roma coordination Unit. The Unit’s job is to develop and implement an effective community policy to combat discrimination, in particular on the grounds of racial and ethnic origin, religion and belief, age and sexual orientation. We also coordinate policy developments in respect to the non-discrimination of ethnic minorities, in particular the Roma. These are very challenging issues and there is a lot to be done! Fortunately, I work with a motivated team made up of 16 very committed people. Our mission includes supporting actors such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), social partners and equality bodies who work to fight discrimination, raising awareness among citizens about their rights and responsibilities, supporting the development of equality policies at national level and encouraging the exchange of good practices between EU countries. We also provide support to organisations that promote national diversity charters which encourage businesses to implement diversity policies.

Last but not least, the Unit is in charge of coordinating the Commission’s work to help integrate Roma people. This involves, for example, supporting the implementation of the EU Framework for national Roma integration strategies and the work of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion.

I should add that all these activities necessitate close coordination work with a number of other DGs (regional policy, employment, culture, etc.) as well as inside DG Justice itself.

The Equality Directorate (which includes the Non-discrimination policies and Roma coordination Unit) moved from DG Employment to DG Justice in January 2011. Did this move bring with it any changes to the anti-discrimination policies that the Unit deals with?

The Unit continues to develop anti-discrimination policies both in the workplace and in society in general, as it did before moving to DG Justice. However, the change strengthens our work in fighting discrimination as we now have closer contact with the EU’s activities in the field of fundamental rights. At the same time, we continue to work with key players, including trade unions and business, to promote equality in the labour market. This cooperation was an integral part of the Unit’s activities at DG Employment.

The 2011 Equality Summit, which will take place in Poznan, Poland on 14-15 November, will focus on how to implement equality policies at regional and local level – why is this issue so important?

Firstly, let me say that the Unit has been co-organising these high level events since 2007 together with the country that holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU at that time. Equality summits bring together delegates representing the EU Member States, candidate and European Economic Area.
countries, international organisations and EU-level NGO networks, as well as social partners, business, media and academia. They aim to promote equal rights and opportunities for all in the EU and to help share knowledge and experiences. In this way, they help to develop more effective ways of fighting all forms of discrimination. In the second part of 2012, we will co-organise the Sixth Equality Summit in Cyprus together with the Cypriot Presidency of the Council of the EU.

The topic we are addressing in 2011 is crucial as non-discrimination policies are often implemented by regional and local actors. And European and national policies are of course carried out at regional and local levels. Moreover, equality and non-discrimination are a factor of regional development, provided that local stakeholders receive the appropriate support (for example, information, funding and partnership opportunities). The issues at stake are how to reinforce regional and local partnerships and better use the EU and national funds available for putting into practice relevant policies. We will certainly follow up this topic in 2012 and introduce other activities related to governance.

What are the key challenges for the coming years in the field of non-discrimination?

Since the adoption of the Equality Directives in 2000 (the Racial Equality Directive and the Employment Framework Directive), progress has been made in the fight against discrimination. However, more needs to be done to continue advancing equality and fighting against stereotypes. This is especially important because of the complex political and economic situation we are currently experiencing due to the social and economic crisis. The crisis is exacerbating negative stereotypes and contributing to an increase in discriminatory behaviour. To combat this, closer collaboration is needed between all actors, namely the EU Institutions, national authorities, social partners and NGOs. And despite the crisis, we have to make sure that there continues to be a strong political commitment to anti-discrimination policies, in particular concerning the Roma people.

To give you a glimpse of some topics that will keep us busy next year, let me just mention two of them: discrimination on the grounds of age and religion. Firstly, we will be taking part in the European Year of Active Ageing 2012. Our aim will be to stress the significant contribution that older people can make to society and the importance of fighting against age discrimination. These and other issues will be examined further in an upcoming report. Secondly, discrimination on the grounds of religion and belief in employment, which is prohibited by the Employment Equality Directive, is an extremely complex and not yet sufficiently explored issue. There is currently a high level of interest in religious diversity in Europe and policies on the integration of migrants are often linked to the challenges posed by religious diversity. We are planning to organise a good practice exchange seminar on this topic and to ask our network of socioeconomic experts in the field of discrimination to examine related policies in the EU countries.
A recent report* on PROGRESS, the EU’s programme for employment and social solidarity, found that, despite often working in closely related fields, only 50% of all actors involved were familiar with the current legal protection against discrimination.

The PROGRESS programme supports the development and coordination of EU policy in the areas of employment, social inclusion and social protection, working conditions, anti-discrimination, and gender equality. It has a budget of around EUR 700 million and will run until 2013.

So, how much do you know about PROGRESS and its participants? Use the questions and answers below to test your knowledge.

How many events were organised under PROGRESS in 2010?

Over 250 information and communication events took place thanks to funding from the programme, plus over 400 training sessions, peer reviews and mutual learning events.

What impact did these events have?

Some 89% of participants stated that they have gained a better understanding of the EU’s policy objectives by participating in PROGRESS-funded events. Over four-fifths of those taking part also agreed that the events contributed to strengthening their relationships with relevant stakeholders/organisations.

How many publications were produced under PROGRESS in 2010?

Over 200 reports either identifying good practices or monitoring or assessing the implementation of EU law and policy were produced in 2010 alone.

Why does PROGRESS also support non-governmental organisations?

PROGRESS provides funding to EU-level networks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working in fields related to its areas of work so that through these organisations citizens, such as people experiencing poverty or Roma people, are involved in the policymaking process. This approach has proved effective with 94% of participants working in the field of anti-discrimination reporting that NGOs and EU-level networks are a useful source of information on the implementation of EU law and the needs and expectations of the different groups concerned.

Did you know that only half of all those taking part in the PROGRESS programme are familiar with the anti-discrimination laws that exist in the EU?

* Progress Annual Performance Monitoring Report 2010

> Summary of report
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=987&langId=en&pubId=6607&type=2&furtherPubs=yes

> Progress in action: the EU programme for employment and social solidarity 2007-2013
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=987&langId=fr&pubId=6608&type=2&furtherPubs=yes
The role of the regional and local levels is often not sufficiently stressed when it comes to combating discrimination and promoting equality. However, it is at these levels that European and national policies and programmes are implemented. And it is at regional and local levels where communities come together to express their needs and set out the problems they face.

These factors mean that it is essential that regional and local stakeholders – both private and public – play a significant role in reducing discrimination and inequality. They must also be provided with the right support if they are to help their communities in an effective way.

The Fifth Equality Summit will address key issues surrounding the role of the regional and local levels in fighting discrimination, namely equality as a factor in regional development, the need to increase regional and local partnerships, and how to use EU funds most effectively to help groups that often experience discrimination.

**Equality and regional development**

The regional level is vital for the planning and implementation of development strategies, which usually aim to achieve a set of economic, social, political and cultural goals. Often the framing of such strategies draws in a variety of stakeholders, such as political assemblies, public authorities, business networks and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Equality can make a significant contribution to regional development, even if it is not always an end in itself. It can play key role in improving social cohesion and well-being; it can help businesses become more successful by contributing to improved morale and productivity; and it contributes to economic growth by ensuring that everyone’s talents are used to their full potential.

Regional development is certainly important when it comes to taking equality and anti-discrimination to the
regional and local levels. Development plans, polices and programmes are created and implemented with the needs of communities in mind and make significant impact on people’s lives. Therefore, they can and should take on board the diversity of target groups and their needs.

But how can we ensure that equality is properly addressed in regional development? Perhaps new mechanisms are required to make sure that equality and anti-discrimination are properly considered in the regional planning process. In addition, regional policies and programmes should follow a ‘dual strategy’ where equality is mainstreamed while specific actions and initiatives are formulated to help certain groups that are experiencing inequality.

It is also important to remember that organisations implementing regional development strategies must be capable of promoting equality and combating discrimination – in fact, it should be integral to their work.

**Boosting partnership**

Partnership has an important role to play in developing and implementing equality policies at the regional and local levels. The most effective partnerships have to involve a wide range of actors including decision makers, public authorities, employers, trade unions and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).

Such bodies are especially valuable to the partnership process if they are used to representing or assisting those experiencing inequality and discrimination on the grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, age, disability, and sexual orientation.

If effective equality policies are to be produced at the regional and local levels, partnership should play a key role in planning, policymaking, policy implementation, and policy monitoring and evaluation.

Partnership can bring many benefits including:
- the pooling of talent, knowledge and experience between different stakeholders;
- helping stakeholders feel that they have ownership of and commitment to plans, policies and programmes;
- making sure that key regional and local programmes actually reach the communities that are experiencing inequality and discrimination; and
- building inter-disciplinary relationships, which are required for the development of effective equality policies at regional and local levels.

If partnership is to work well, trust must be developed between the different stakeholders, who must also be willing to listen to and take on-board a range of viewpoints.

Capacity building must not be forgotten either – this is required to ensure that all stakeholders participate effectively and on an equal footing. In addition, partnership needs well-designed institutional processes and structures which can get the most from all stakeholders when it comes to making decisions in the planning, policymaking and policy implementation processes.
Making the most of EU funding

The EU has a number of funding mechanisms that focus on boosting regional and local development and that require equality to be a consideration when they are used. The main funds are:

- the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), which supports regional development, economic change, enhanced competitiveness and territorial cooperation throughout the EU;
- the European Social Fund (ESF), which seeks to reduce differences in prosperity and living standards across EU Member States and regions and, in this way, to promote economic and social cohesion. The ESF has a particular remit to fight discrimination against women, older workers, minorities and immigrants – groups that tend to experience discrimination in the labour market and in the workplace; and
- the Cohesion Fund, which is designed to help poorer Member States whose gross national income per inhabitant is less than 90% of the EU average.

Member States also have access to other European funding channels, which specifically support efforts to tackle discrimination. These include the PROGRESS programme, which aids the development and coordination of EU policy in the areas of employment, social inclusion and social protection, working conditions, anti-discrimination and gender equality; and the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme, which mainly focuses on combating racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and the fight against homophobia.

These funds can be harnessed to encourage, support and implement equality policies at the regional and local levels. Equality issues are mainstreamed within plans, policies and programmes that may have a range of objectives.

EU funds are also used to advance equality and anti-discrimination for minority groups. In fact, specific activities and projects are funded to support certain groups and to address particular needs. The funds can be deployed to develop infrastructure and to stimulate capacity building in NGOs and equality bodies.

Helping the EU's Roma population to fully participate in society is currently a major policy priority which is supported by EU funding mechanisms. One example is the ERDF-funded URBACT Roma-Net project, through which 10 partner cities from different EU Member States come together to share expertise and good practice in order to improve the way local policies are developed to help Roma communities. The project also aims to build stronger links between Roma people and their city neighbours. In addition, the EU-Roma network which comprises a group of 12 EU Member States that cooperate on Roma issues, has been established to improve the use of EU structural funds for the social inclusion of Roma people.

> An introduction to the EU's main funding mechanisms
http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/thefunds/index_en.cfm

> The PROGRESS programme
http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=327

> The Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme

> The ESF – fighting discrimination

> URBACT Roma-Net

> EU Roma – European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds
http://www.euromanet.eu/
CONFERENCE ON ‘BUSINESS INNOVATION AND CREATION THROUGH DIVERSITY’, 30 NOVEMBER 2011, BRUSSELS, BELGIUM

As part of its EU-level exchange platform between organisations promoting and implementing national diversity charters, the European Commission is organising a conference to explore the use of diversity charters in promoting diversity in the workplace. The one-day event will examine in particular the role of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), public authorities and business in driving diversity initiatives forward. Around 80 participants from diversity charter organisations, business and public authorities, as well as experts in the field of diversity management are expected to attend. A brochure, produced in the framework of the exchange platform, will also be available during the conference.

> EU-level exchange platform on diversity charters

SPEECHES FROM CONFERENCE ‘EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN’ NOW ONLINE

The European Commission organised a conference to exchange ideas on the most effective way to make progress on the main priorities of the ‘Strategy for equality between women and men (2010-2015)’ on 19-20 September 2011. Speakers included experts from the European Institutions and national ministries, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, the International Labour Organization, the European Trade Union Confederation and employers’ organisations. All speeches are now available on the DG Justice website.

> Conference ‘Equality between women and men’, 19-20 September 2011

> Compendium of practice on Non-discrimination/Equality Mainstreaming

LEGAL SEMINAR ON GENDER EQUALITY AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW, 4 OCTOBER 2011

DG Justice’s Annual Legal Seminar on Gender Equality and Anti-discrimination Law took place on 4 October 2011. The one-day event brought together representatives of national governments, equality bodies, experts from the networks of independent legal experts on non-discrimination and gender equality, representatives of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and European Commission officials. Discussions focused on the theme ‘Approaches to equality and non-discrimination legislation inside and outside the EU’. The seminar aims to provide an opportunity for participants to exchange experiences and examples of best practices from the different EU Member States, as well as to explore current legal developments and future proposals in the area of anti-discrimination and gender equality.

> Annual Legal Seminar on Gender Equality and Anti-discrimination law
http://www.non-discrimination.net/seminar

ACCESS CITY AWARD 2012

The winner will be announced at the award ceremony which will take place in Brussels, Belgium on 1-2 December 2011 during the annual conference to mark the European Day of Persons with Disabilities. This year’s conference, which is entitled ‘Europe’s way out of the crisis: the disability rights perspective’, will explore in particular the contribution of the Europe 2020 flagship initiatives and EU funding to inclusive growth.

> Access City Award 2012

INFORMATION AND OTHER EVENTS ON EQUALITY

INFORMATION AND OTHER EVENTS ON QUALITY

A compendium has been produced to promote the use of non-discrimination/equality mainstreaming in the policy processes of the EU Member States. Available in English, French and German, this publication provides practical guidance and presents examples of non-discrimination/equality mainstreaming taking place at national, regional and local levels across the EU.

> Compendium of practice on Non-discrimination/Equality Mainstreaming
NEW BROCHURE ON EU FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ROMA INTEGRATION STRATEGIES

A new brochure which explains the EU Framework to regional and local decision makers has been produced. Available soon in 22 EU languages, the publication presents the key elements of the EU Framework and highlights existing good practices and tools that can provide support and help orientate policymaking at national, regional and local levels.

The national Roma integration strategies and the role different stakeholders can play in their development will be an issue on the agenda of the sixth meeting of the European Platform for Roma Inclusion which will be held on 17-18 November 2011 in Brussels.

NEW ISSUE OF EUROPEAN GENDER EQUALITY LAW REVIEW PUBLISHED

The latest issue of the European Gender Equality Law Review has been published. This issue includes articles on the place of gender equality in European equality law by Hélène Masse-Dessen, on the gender pay gap by Petra Foubert, and on the Equality Act in the United Kingdom by Catherine Barnard. It also features a review of recent developments in gender equality law in 33 European countries as well as the latest information from the EU, the European Court of Human Rights and the United Nations. Printed copies are distributed by the European Network of Legal Experts in the field of Gender Equality and an electronic version is available on the DG Justice website.

PUBLICATIONS ON ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LAW NOW AVAILABLE

The publication ‘Developing Anti-Discrimination Law in Europe’, which provides a comparative analysis of different experiences from around Europe, and the twelfth issue of European Anti-Discrimination Law Review are now available on the DG Justice website.

REPORT ON GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN PENSIONS NOW AVAILABLE

A report ‘Direct and indirect gender discrimination in old-age pensions in 33 European countries’ has been published on the DG Justice website. Available in English, the report was prepared by the European Network of Legal Experts in the field of Gender Equality and written by Simonetta Renga, Dora Molnar-Hidassy and Genoveva Tisheva.

Last word

The crisis is exacerbating negative stereotypes and contributing to an increase in discriminatory behaviour. To combat this, closer collaboration is needed between all actors, namely the EU Institutions, national authorities, social partners and NGOs.

Lina Papamichalopoulou, Head of the Non-discrimination policies and Roma coordination Unit, European Commission, DG Justice