



European Network Against Racism
Réseau européen contre le racisme

PRESS STATEMENT

Increasing minorities' representation in the European Parliament: Time to act!

Brussels, 17 October 2013 - ENAR organised a debate today in the EU Parliament in Brussels on an issue that should be a priority in the 2014 European election campaign: the low level of political participation and underrepresentation of ethnic and religious minorities. ENAR reminds that political participation is a fundamental right in democracies. Moreover, in order to tackle the social exclusion of millions of people from ethnic and religious minority backgrounds, it is vital that they are part and parcel of the political decision-making processes and policies affecting them.

Currently, only 15 out of 766 Members of the European Parliament have ethnic minority backgrounds. Although the number of MPs with ethnic minority backgrounds has increased in countries like the UK and Germany, their numbers remain low, around 5%. In France, less than 2% of the MPs belong to ethnic minority groups. Yet ethnic minorities represent at least 10% of the population in the UK, while estimates for France and Germany range between 15 and 20%.

Ahead of the European elections in 2014, ENAR thus calls on political parties to:

- 1) Recognize the underrepresentation of ethnic minority politicians and political candidates and consider that minority voters can determine election outcomes
- 2) Increase the number of ethnic minority candidates on electoral shortlists so that the lists reflect the ethnic diversity of European societies
- 3) Eliminate informal barriers to voting that disproportionately affect ethnic minorities, for instance lack of registration and personal identification documents, and combat structural discrimination in parties
- 4) Start collecting disaggregated equality data to measure progress on political representation and participation over time.

ENAR Chair Sarah Isal said: *"It is imperative to increase the level of political representation and participation of ethnic minorities as a means to give them power to end discriminatory policies that prevent their right to equality and full inclusion in European societies. If governments and the European institutions are to be truly representative, they should reflect the make-up and cultural diversity of society as a whole. Concretely, that would mean having at least 76 ethnic minority candidates elected into the European Parliament in next year's election. It is time for political parties to address this challenge up front!"*

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Notes to the editor:

1. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR aisbl) stands up against racism and discrimination and advocates for equality and solidarity for all in Europe. We connect local and national anti-racist NGOs



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throughout Europe and act as an interface between our member organisations and the European institutions. We voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.