



## **Response of the European Network against Racism (ENAR)**

### **ENAR preliminary remarks on the Commission Staff Working Paper: Cohesion Policy and Cities: Urban contribution to growth and jobs in the regions**

**February 2006**

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*The European Network against Racism (ENAR) is a network of some 600 European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU Member States. Its establishment was a major outcome of the 1997 European Year against Racism. ENAR is determined to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European initiatives. Further information is available at: [www.enar-eu.org](http://www.enar-eu.org)*

## **Introduction**

“Cities are... laboratories where new forms of urban citizenship and new ways of living together can be invented. They are an ideal space within which to conduct a struggle against racism that facilitates effective implementation of the various instruments enacted by States.”<sup>1</sup>

Discrimination on a variety of grounds, including ethnic origin, religion, gender, sexual orientation, age or disability, continues to be a barrier to social and economic inclusion. Removing obstacles to employment and training, and ensuring opportunities for all contributes to economic growth and job creation. Consequently fighting discrimination and promoting diversity are core elements of cohesion policies, and the growth and jobs agenda.

Social NGOs have expressed deep concern that the social pillar of the Lisbon agenda has been marginalised. Social policy cannot be defined as a means to an economic end, but rather is an expression of the values upon which Europe is based. Consequently social inclusion and anti-discrimination must be at the heart of the urban contribution to growth, jobs, and cohesion in the regions. As pointed out by Commission Spidla at the European Symposium organised by the Land of North Rhine-Westphalia on 13 February 2006:

“Tackling discrimination and promoting diversity can play an important role in modernising economic and social policy by combining social progress with economic benefit”.

Consequently ENAR welcomes the focus on anti-discrimination in the consultation paper, and the specific reference to targeted initiatives such as financing ethnic minority entrepreneurs.

This brief paper outlines ENAR’s preliminary remarks on the Commission Staff Working Paper on Cohesion Policies and Cities. ENAR is happy to elaborate on these comments or to engage in further discussion on any of the issues raised. Cities have a key role to play in the fight against racism and discrimination and promoting integration. In particular ENAR takes this opportunity to highlight the important role which cities can play in: promoting intercultural dialogue (section 3.4 of the consultation paper); promoting equal opportunities (section 6.1); and encouraging active citizenship (section 7.3)

### **Promoting diversity and cohesion: Why cities matter?**

Most migrants and other ethnic minority communities live in cities and urban centres. Moreover while many decisions concerning migration and integration are taken at the National (and European) level, they are implemented locally. Local actors, including cities, must be supported to proactively engage in the integration agenda if it is to be successful. Truly intercultural cities where diversity is respected and valued are attractive places for everyone to live.

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<sup>1</sup> European Coalition of Cities against Racism, Ten Point Action Plan, available at: [http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL\\_ID=6530&URL\\_DO=DO\\_TOPIC&URL\\_SECTION=201.html](http://portal.unesco.org/shs/en/ev.php-URL_ID=6530&URL_DO=DO_TOPIC&URL_SECTION=201.html) (16.02.06)

As the consultation paper points out, cities are the centre of change. As urban centres with dense populations cities are often the setting for experiences of discrimination by minority ethnic communities, both direct and indirect. However they are also centres of innovation when it comes to the fight against racism, and often good practice initiatives are based in urban centres.

Racism and discrimination are at the heart of social and economic exclusion of ethnic minority communities. The experience of ENAR members demonstrates that in cities and urban environments racism can manifest in many ways, including: direct discrimination in service provision, structural barriers to equal opportunities such as geographical segregation, racist graffiti, and racist violence.<sup>2</sup>

Cities ‘encompass significant disparities in economic and social opportunities’ and it is frequently those groups who are vulnerable to racism which occupy the most marginalised positions on the spectrum of opportunity. Consequently policy aimed at promoting social cohesion in cities must include a specific focus on ethnic minority communities. The success of such policies should be measured by their impact on those communities who most need them.

## **Culture**

As the consultation paper points out culture can be a valuable tool for promoting intercultural dialogue. Promoting intercultural societies is a complex task which comprises of many elements, including: fighting discrimination, promoting inclusion, combating prejudice, providing responsive public services, and promoting a positive conception of the value of diversity in European societies. Consequently the Commission proposal to designate 2008 as European Year of Intercultural Dialogue is an important opportunity to contribute to this vision.

- *The potential of the proposed European Year of Intercultural Dialogue in 2008 Year should be realised in the implementation of the Cohesion Policy.*

## **Promoting social inclusion and equal opportunities**

ENAR welcomes the recognition in the paper that the presence of migrants and minorities in cities represents an opportunity. However these groups often experience barriers to employment and along with the factors mentioned by the Commission paper, discrimination is one of the most serious.

The paper focuses on the need to promote integration. In particular ENAR has welcomed the elaboration of a European Framework on Integration [COM(2005) 389]. This Communication builds on the recognition in the 11 Common Basic Principles that integration is a two-way process. A key imperative is that cities not only promote integration of migrants and minorities, but also engage in active discussion about the nature of integrated societies, and the role of the majority population and official bodies in promoting such societies.

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<sup>2</sup> See ENAR Anti-Racism in the European Union, 2004, available at: [www.enar-eu.org](http://www.enar-eu.org)

- *Cities should be supported to promote open dialogue regarding the inclusion of ethnic minority communities, and the impacts of the process of creating integrated societies for everyone. ENAR recommends that this dialogue take place in the context of developing local action programmes against racism.*

### **Citizen participation**

Citizen participation has been identified as a democratic imperative. However it is not necessarily useful to actively link participation and citizenship too closely. Citizenship does not necessarily entail active participation, and non-citizenship does not necessarily preclude such participation.

ENAR welcomes the recognition that community involvement often requires a degree of capacity building, and such projects should be encouraged to reach out to those groups most vulnerable to exclusion. It is essential that the needs of ethnic minority communities are mainstreamed in local development strategies.

In particular the integration of third country nationals can be encouraged through access to civil and political rights at the local level. For example in some EU member states migrants have the right to participate in local elections.

- *ENAR has recommended that the concept of European citizenship based on residence should be explored in order to promote active participation of everyone, including third country nationals.*
- *Local development policies aimed at enhancing the capacity of community groups should be encouraged to target those groups who are most vulnerable to discrimination, including ethnic minority communities.*