

## MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release

### **European Parliament's message to the European Commission is clear: end hierarchy of rights and protection in the EU!**

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR), the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA-Europe) and the Amnesty International EU Office (AIEU) welcome the clear and strong message issued by the European Parliament today to put "an end to the hierarchy of protection against different grounds of discrimination."

In the resolution adopted today, the European Parliament calls on the Commission to adhere to its commitment to propose a "comprehensive directive" to combat all forms of discrimination outside employment.

**Mohammed Aziz**, President of ENAR, said:

"We are very happy that the European Parliament has shown once again that it is a consistent supporter of comprehensive anti-discrimination legislation. The Commission cannot ignore this strong call for legislation covering *all* discrimination grounds. There is clear evidence of the need to fight religious discrimination in Europe. It is only by fighting for comprehensive protection against all grounds of discrimination that we will achieve equal opportunities for all in jobs, accommodation, schools, etc."

**Martin K.I. Christensen**, Co-Chair of ILGA-Europe's Executive Board, said:

"This is very positive and encouraging news. We are thankful to the Parliament for standing up for non-negotiable equality and ending a current embarrassing hierarchy of rights and protections. The people of Europe spoke today through their representatives to say that Europe should no longer tolerate the situation where some groups are left unprotected and without redress from discrimination. Now it is all up to the Commission to deliver on its promise and propose one directive covering all grounds of discrimination in all areas of life."

**Dr Nicolas Beger**, Director of AIEU, said:

"Discrimination is still wide spread in Europe. The Commission must fight it with measures that leave no one behind."

Several MEPs took the floor during a debate in plenary to say that it would not "make sense to outlaw discrimination in one area whilst allowing it in another".

Sophia in't Veld, MEP, said today during the debates:

*"In 2004, this European Commission got the green light of the European Parliament only upon the solemn promise to be the champion of fundamental rights. But paying lip-service to*

*equality is not good enough. EU citizens must get the legal instruments to defend their rights in court. Now, the European Commission is frantically looking for excuses to avoid a general ban on discrimination, such as that more study is needed – as if we cannot all see that there is discrimination all around – or that there is no consensus in the Council – well, that never stopped the European Commission from pushing its proposals in other areas such as energy policy. And let us not forget that discrimination is already forbidden on the basis of the Treaties, but if we do not legislate the courts will do it for us. So I expect the European Commission to take its own responsibility and stand for the rights of European citizens, because if the horizontal directive must fail, then let it fail in Council and not in the Commission.”*

This latest statement from the European Parliament in favour of a ‘comprehensive directive echoes the calls for a directive covering all the grounds of age, disability, sexual orientation, religion and belief made by numerous social and human rights NGOs, trade unions, equality bodies and businesses.

ENAR, ILGA-Europe and AIEU urge the European Commission to respond to the calls and honor its commitments to bring equality for all in all areas of life.

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**Notes for editors:**

(1) ILGA-Europe is the European Region of the International Lesbian and Gay Association and works for equality and human rights for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people in Europe: [www.ilga-europe.org](http://www.ilga-europe.org)

(2) The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states and represents more than 600 NGOs spread around the European Union: [www.enar-eu.org](http://www.enar-eu.org)

(3) Amnesty International is a world wide campaigning movement that works to promote all the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international standards: [www.aieu.be](http://www.aieu.be)