



European Network Against Racism  
Réseau européen contre le racisme  
Europäisches Netz gegen Rassismus

## PRESS RELEASE

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### International Day Against Racism: The economic crisis must not become tantamount to racism

On 21 March the world will celebrate “International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination”<sup>1</sup>. This year, ahead of the European Parliament elections and in a context of economic crisis, this Day takes on even more significance: politicians at both EU and national levels must mitigate the impact of the crisis on ethnic and religious minorities and ensure Europe’s social cohesion.

Racism remains a deep-rooted problem and with the increasing insecurity that people feel about their future it is likely to increase in the coming period. In addition, Roma, Traveller and Sinti communities, vulnerable migrant communities and the diverse Muslim community are among those who are most likely to be deeply affected by the consequences of the economic crisis.

Politicians must therefore show leadership in prioritising social objectives in this context of increasing inequalities and persistent discrimination. They should in no event use the current crisis to promote messages fuelling xenophobic and racist attitudes and undermining the EU values of equal treatment and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

ENAR Director Pascale Charhon said: “The principles of the Charter of European political parties for a non-racist society, signed by the main EU political groups in 2001, must be upheld, including the commitment ‘to refuse to endorse in any way views and positions which stir up or invite hostility or division between people of different ethnic or national origins or religious beliefs’.”

This is all the more important as ENAR’s 2007 shadow report on racism in Europe shows a rise in political parties expressing racist sentiments, not only on the margins of politics but increasingly within the mainstream, as well as a worrying trend towards increasing racist violence in a number of EU member states.

ENAR President Mohammed Aziz said: “We urge national and European political parties to be a strong force in the fight against racism. In particular in the current context of economic downturn, the fight against racism and discrimination requires consistent and ongoing commitment. Instead of falling into the easy ‘trap’ of xenophobia, politicians should convey the message that equal access to jobs, accommodation, schooling are crucial to build a prosperous and cohesive society.”

*The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is a network of NGOs working to combat racism in all EU member states and represents more than 600 NGOs spread around the European Union. ENAR aims 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.*

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<sup>1</sup> On 21 March 1960, 69 Black demonstrators were killed at a peaceful protest against apartheid laws in South Africa. As a result, 21 March was declared “International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination” by the UN in 1966.