PRESS RELEASE

Racism(s) in Europe: the end of inhibition

Brussels, 8 March 2013 – Racism in Europe takes many forms, new and old. More worryingly, an uninhibited form of racism has emerged, using freedom of expression and ‘white victimhood’ as justifications for promoting exclusion and discrimination. A new publication by the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) explores how racism manifests itself today and how we can counter racist and xenophobic attitudes and discourses.

In today’s Europe, freedom of expression is increasingly used to justify the ‘right to offend’ ethnic and religious minorities and incite hatred against others, thus legitimising racism in the name of this right. For instance, in the Netherlands, some native Dutch people aggressively defend the tradition of the racist ‘Zwarte Piet’ figure, regardless of the hurt it causes to others.

In parallel, an ideology of ‘white victimhood’, or ‘reverse racism’, has been developing across Europe, whereby minorities and people from other cultures are portrayed as endangering the ‘native’ population, who would have become a ‘minority’ in its own society. In Eastern Europe, paramilitary groups are resurging, claiming to defend the ‘fatherland’ against minorities, in particular the Roma. In Southern Europe, the view that the ‘natives’ are victims of ‘uncontrolled migration’ is more and more widespread, whereas in Western Europe, it is the notion that the majority citizens’ rights have been eroded by excessive attention to the rights of minority communities.

As a result of these interlinked developments, manifestations of racism(s) have become more assertive and politically acceptable. Yet European states and political leaders have not taken their responsibilities to respond to and counter these trends, due to a misguided fear of losing part of their electorate despite the fact that two-thirds of Europeans support policies in favour of equality and justice.

In this light, ENAR calls for concerted action, in particular by courageous political leaders, to actively delegitimise current racist and xenophobic discourses in Europe by proposing an alternative and inclusive project for Europe, fostering equality for all by making sure everyone can access a well remunerated and quality job. Work at the local level is also essential to develop a new, positive sense of shared belonging in local communities where racist discourses resonate strongly.

ENAR Chair Chibo Onyeji said: “We had hoped that after the Breivik tragedy, leaders would wake up and things would change for the better. But two years on, the situation is only getting worse. It’s time for all actors in society to sit up and finally act to ensure we all can live in a society where we are treated equally and are fully included. If they don’t know how to do it, we know. And we are there to help.”

For further information, contact:
Georgina Siklossy, Communication and Press Officer
Tel: +32 (0)2 229 35 70 - E-mail: georgina@enar-eu.org - Website: www.enar-eu.org
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 throughout Europe and voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.
2. The publication ‘Recycling Hatred: Racism(s) in Europe Today’ is available on ENAR’s website: http://www.enar-eu.org/Page_Generale.asp?DocID=15295&langue=EN