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**COVER NOTE**

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From: Secretary-General of the European Commission, signed by Ms Martine DEPREZ, Director

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To: Ms Thérèse BLANCHET, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union

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Union of Equality: Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030

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Delegations will find attached document COM(2026) 12 final.

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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN  
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL  
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

**Union of Equality: Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030**

## INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) stands for unity, democracy, and respect for human rights. The diversity of the people living in the EU is one of its greatest strengths, as acknowledged by the founding treaties. The EU is a [Union of Equality](#) ‘founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of people belonging to minorities’<sup>1</sup>. This foundation of the EU legal order implies an **environment free from racism, where everyone can thrive and contribute to the prosperity of their societies**. At times when these values are put into question, the EU stands by its people, their rights and freedoms, and there is no acceptance in the EU of any form of racism or discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin.

In 2020, the Commission adopted the [EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025](#), marking an ambitious new phase in the EU’s effort to comprehensively fight racism. The action plan was a groundbreaking initiative that contributed to protecting everyone in the EU from racism and racial discrimination. It proposed numerous anti-racism measures to be implemented at EU, national, regional and local level, including legislative initiatives to strengthen protection from racial discrimination<sup>2</sup> and increased support for anti-racism Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), through the [Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values \(CERV\)](#) programme.

Furthermore, the Commission has continued to build a strong anti-racism framework by strengthening partnerships with counterparts, appointing the [Commission’s first Coordinator on combating racism](#), and establishing dialogues with CSOs and Member State experts. The action plan resulted in **14 Member States adopting stand-alone national or regional action plans against racism**. As highlighted in the [Report on the implementation of the EU anti-racism action plan](#), significant progress has been made since the adoption of the plan, notably in addressing structural racism, adopting an intersectional approach to policymaking that integrates different forms of discrimination, and by introducing anti-racism considerations into several policy areas, for example in education, employment and health policies.

The EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 has helped to put racism at the heart of public debates on pluralism, equality and non-discrimination and has fostered greater awareness of the threat that racism poses to Union values enshrined in Article 2 of the [Treaty on European Union \(TEU\)](#). Nonetheless, with **almost two out of three Europeans still perceiving racial discrimination to be widespread in their EU country in 2023** (61% based on skin colour, up 2 percentage points from 2019, and 65% based on being Roma, up 4 percentage points)<sup>3</sup> there is a need to do more.

Building on the past achievements and recognising the work that remains to be done, President Ursula von der Leyen announced **an Anti-Racism Strategy** in her [political guidelines 2024-2029](#). This initiative reflects the **European Parliament’s call to continue the work of the anti-racism action plan beyond 2025** by developing a fully-fledged EU strategy<sup>4</sup>. **Member States have welcomed the announcement of an Anti-Racism Strategy** and have stated their strong commitment to fighting racism and all forms of hatred<sup>5</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> [Treaty on the European Union \(TEU\), Article 2](#)

<sup>2</sup> See: [Implementation Report on the Anti-racism action plan](#) for further details

<sup>3</sup> [Eurobarometer](#) – Discrimination in the European Union 2023

<sup>4</sup> [European Parliament Resolution of 10 November 2022: Racial justice, non-discrimination and anti-racism in the EU \(2022\)0389](#)

<sup>5</sup> See for example [Council Conclusions on combating racism and antisemitism, European Council Conclusion 18 December 2025](#), exchanges at [Justice and Home Affairs Council \(Justice\) - Consilium](#) and [Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs Council](#)

This strategy responds first and foremost to the imperatives to **uphold EU values, strengthen a Union of Equality**, and ensure that EU societies remain open, pluralistic and inclusive. Furthermore, **combating racism is a security interest<sup>6</sup> and a strategic investment in boosting the EU's competitiveness**. According to a recent [OECD study](#) racial or ethnic discrimination is estimated to cost the EU up to EUR 12.7 billion in lost GDP each year.

Unlocking the potential of people affected by racism and racial discrimination as workers, entrepreneurs, and leaders is therefore essential for growth and stability. To fully achieve prosperous economies and cohesive societies, the persistent challenge of racism must be confronted head-on. The journey towards a true [Union of Equality](#) demands ambitious and sustained action to ensure equal rights and opportunities for all. This strategy is driven by the objective of **combating racism in all its forms, including anti-Black racism, antigypsyism, antisemitism, anti-Asian racism and anti-Muslim hatred**. It tackles racism at large, with specific actions combatting discrimination.

Consistent with all Union of Equality strategies, the Anti-Racism Strategy is based on an **intersectional policy approach to address the complexity of the inequalities experienced by individuals who face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination<sup>7</sup>**. It is closely aligned with current and forthcoming EU equality strategies, as well as other important Commission initiatives<sup>8</sup>.

This strategy is based on the results of a broad consultation process<sup>9</sup> and includes both targeted measures and actions to mainstream anti-racism into all EU policies. In particular it flanks the work of the Commission Coordinators on combating racism, on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, on combating anti-Muslim hatred, as well as the Commission's work on Roma equality, inclusion and participation, on the protection of fundamental rights and on combating hate offences. The strategy further aligns with the findings of the [European Citizens' Panel on Combating Hatred in Society](#) that made recommendations aimed at combating hatred in all its forms and fostering mutual respect.

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<sup>6</sup> Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Art 67(3): The Union shall endeavour to ensure a high level of security through measures to prevent and combat crime, racism and xenophobia [...].

<sup>7</sup> Discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin may intersect with discrimination related to other characteristics or identities, such as sex, disability, age, religion or belief, sexual orientation, gender identity, socio-economic background/status, compounding disadvantages. Anti-migrant hatred also frequently intersects with and reinforces racism.

<sup>8</sup> Including on [Roma people](#), on [combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life](#), on [gender equality](#), on [LGBTIQ+ equality](#), on [rights of persons with disabilities](#), on [Combating Anti-Muslim hatred](#), on [combating hatred](#), on [integration and inclusion](#), on [the rights of the child](#) as well as on [affordable housing, quality jobs, anti-poverty, civil society](#).

<sup>9</sup> [Have your say: Anti-racism Strategy](#) Call for evidence and Public consultation. Young people and youth civil society were consulted in the framework of the Commission Youth Check process.

## CHAPTER I – TACKLING STRUCTURAL RACISM

### *Understanding structural racism to tackle it effectively*

Racism is defined as ‘belief that a ground such as “race”<sup>10</sup>, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin justifies contempt for a person or a group of persons, or the notion of superiority of a person or a group of persons’ by the [Council of Europe’s European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)](#). For people affected by racism, the effects of such contempt are often experienced when searching for housing, looking for a job, at work and in access to education<sup>11</sup>. It may lead to discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin.

**Racism experienced over a lifetime accumulates and poses barriers.** This persistent form of racism is often referred to as ‘structural racism’. Its impact can be more harmful than isolated instances of racial discrimination, as it denies access to equal opportunities and can persist through generations<sup>12</sup>. Studies from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) outline the barriers and their impact on the lives of people affected by racism and racial discrimination<sup>13</sup>. For instance, the life expectancy of Roma/Traveller women and men in the EU is, respectively, 7.4 and 8 years shorter than those of women and men in the general population. Further, while most people of African descent in the EU are in paid work (71%), almost half of them (46%) are overqualified for their job. Also, Muslim households in the EU are three times more likely to face severe material deprivation (19%) than households in the general population (6%). Racism can be a significant factor contributing to such inequalities.

This is being addressed by Member States in the context of their work at national level against racism. In this context, **the Commission proposes to facilitate the development by Member States of a working definition of structural racism, in the expert group on the national implementation of the EU anti-racism action plan**<sup>14</sup>.

In line with the [EU strategy on Combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish Life](#), the Commission and all Member States are committed to **tackling all forms of antisemitism** and denounces each form equally. The Commission and all Member States use the definition of antisemitism by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA)<sup>15</sup>.

In line with the [EU Roma Strategic Framework for equality, inclusion and participation](#) the Commission and all Member States are committed to implementing effective policies to achieve the targets set in **combatting antigypsyism**, and in improving the socio-economic inclusion and participation of Roma people.

To **address anti-Muslim hatred** in the EU, the Commission will conduct a comprehensive study of how this manifests itself and will propose actions to tackle it, as well as facilitate Member States’ and experts’ efforts to develop a working definition of anti-Muslim hatred to improve shared understanding and raise awareness.

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<sup>10</sup> Reference to ‘racial and ethnic origin’ is made in line with EU and international legal terminology. The Commission emphasises, however, the common understanding that ‘races’ are purely based on socially constructed ideas and it rejects the notion of biological ‘races’.

<sup>11</sup> [FRA 2023: Being Black in the European Union](#)

<sup>12</sup> [OECD 2025: Monitoring and Assessing the Impact of National Action Plans Against Racism](#)

<sup>13</sup> [FRA 2025: Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries](#), [FRA 2023: Being Black in the European Union](#), [FRA 2024: Being Muslim in the European Union](#)

<sup>14</sup> Consisting of experts from Member States and observers i.e. EU Fundamental Rights Agency, Council of Europe’s European Commission Against Racism, Norway. This expert group is a Subgroup under the [High-level Group on combating hate crime and hate speech](#) and the [High-level Group on non-discrimination, equality, and diversity](#).

<sup>15</sup> IHRA definition of antisemitism can be retrieved at <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>.

### ***Remembrance, education, and awareness-raising***

Remembrance plays a key role in combating structural racism, empowering people impacted by racism, and raising awareness of exclusion and stereotypes. **EU institutions support the observance of commemorative days** related to racism and the history of groups impacted by racism and racial discrimination<sup>16</sup>. The Commission will continue to support projects exploring the legacy of Europe's global history, including of colonialism, and its impact on societies, for instance under the CERV programme.

Slavery<sup>17</sup>, genocides and the Holocaust are embedded in European history and have profound consequences for societies today, where education and historical knowledge are needed to understand the roots of racism. Building on work addressing racism and antisemitism in education, jointly undertaken with UNESCO<sup>18</sup>, **the Commission will launch in 2026 a joint project with UNESCO to strengthen anti-racism education** aligned with the priorities of the [European Education Area strategic framework](#), and the [EU Youth Strategy](#). The aim of the project will be to promote anti-racism education at national level, through the educational dimension of national action plans against racism and antisemitism.

The role of the media is crucial in shaping the portrayal of people who may be impacted by racism. **The Commission will organise a cycle of seminars dedicated to countering racism in the media, including social media**, bringing together journalists, CSOs and representatives of communities impacted by racism. The Commission will also launch an EU-wide **communication campaign on the Union of Equality** to engage the public, in promoting inclusion and combating discrimination.

### ***Knowledge building and evidence-based policymaking***

Academic research plays a crucial role in countering racism by providing the evidence base needed for effective anti-racism policies. The [European Research Area Policy Agenda 2025-2027](#) aims to make the European research and innovation system more inclusive. The Commission will **develop guidelines on implementing an intersectional approach in research and innovation policy** to ensure that research is sensitive to the needs of people affected by racism. Furthermore, the European Universities alliances are working to develop strategies and initiatives to foster diversity and inclusion<sup>19</sup>.

The Commission's Joint Research Centre will carry out a study on the role of social media in the forming of young people's attitudes to ethnic diversity and will launch a foresight exercise to understand possible future trends, including how racism and racial discrimination might continue to impact the EU and the development of effective countermeasures.

Programmes such as [Horizon Europe](#) will continue to support projects promoting social cohesion, equality, and inclusion, and in particular its [Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions](#) which will continue to encourage diversity and inclusion within the research community. In parallel, **the Commission encourages Member States and higher education institutions to integrate anti-racism education and research into higher education**, fostering inclusive mindsets and equipping future professionals with the skills to recognise and address racism and discrimination in their respective fields.

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<sup>16</sup> E.g. [International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#), [European Day Commemorating the Abolition of the Slave Trade](#), [International Holocaust Remembrance Day](#), [European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day](#).

<sup>17</sup> [Declaration of the EU-CELAC Summit 2023](#)

<sup>18</sup> [Addressing Antisemitism through education](#)

<sup>19</sup> [Report on the Outcomes and transformational potential of the European University Initiative](#)

### *Improving the collection of equality data*

Reliable equality data is essential for addressing racism and effectively integrating anti-racism considerations into EU, national, regional and local policies. Eurostat's equality and non-discrimination statistics task force is developing EU-level guidelines to improve the comparability of statistical standards and methods for collecting data on groups at risk of discrimination. In this context, **Member States are encouraged to enhance the collection and coordination of harmonised equality data** through their national statistical offices.

The [subgroup on Equality Data](#) of the [EU High-Level Group on Non-Discrimination](#) helps Member States improve the collection and use of equality data<sup>20</sup>. **The Commission will continue to work with EU agencies, such as the FRA, the [European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions](#), and the [European Institute for Gender Equality](#), to provide technical assistance** in the collection of equality data, including on intersectional discrimination.

**The Commission will also prepare a recommendation to improve the collection, analysis and use of disaggregated equality data**, in line with national legal frameworks and taking any additional administrative burden into account. The Commission will further develop tools to track and monitor progress for achieving a Union of Equality and in implementing equality strategies, including through data on discrimination based on racial and ethnic origin. The Commission will organise a High-Level European Round Table on Equality Data, bringing together key stakeholders to further promote the collection and use of equality data, in line with national legal frameworks.

The FRA will conduct a fourth [survey on immigrants and descendants of immigrants](#) to extract comprehensive data on persons at risk of racial discrimination, as well as a survey on the situation of Roma, supporting the work on the strategy and the [EU Roma Strategic Framework](#). To boost data collection, **the Commission will also publish a new Eurobarometer on discrimination in 2027.**

#### **The Commission will:**

- implement a joint project with UNESCO to strengthen anti-racism education;
- carry out a comprehensive study of the manifestations of anti-Muslim hatred;
- launch a broad Union of Equality communication campaign, engaging people across the EU to promote inclusion and combat discrimination;
- develop guidelines on implementing an intersectional approach in research and innovation policy, with the aim that research is sensitive to the needs of people affected by racism;
- prepare a recommendation to improve the collection, analysis, and use of disaggregated equality data, in line with national legal frameworks;
- publish a new Eurobarometer on discrimination in 2027.

#### **Member States are encouraged to:**

- support the integration of anti-racism education and research in higher education;
- improve the collection of harmonised equality data through national statistical offices.

<sup>20</sup> See [Guidance Note on the collection and use of equality data based on racial or ethnic origin](#).

## CHAPTER II – ENFORCING ANTI-DISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION AND STEPPING UP PROTECTION AGAINST RACIAL HATRED

- *Over half of people in the EU say discrimination on the basis of being Roma (65%), skin colour (61%), and ethnic origin (60%)<sup>21</sup> is widespread.*
- *96% of Jews say they had faced antisemitism in the past year and 80% feel that it has been getting worse in recent years<sup>22</sup>.*
- *Almost half of people of African descent in the EU face racism in their daily lives<sup>23</sup>.*

Racism may lead to discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin. Protection against racial or ethnic discrimination is enshrined in the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) and in **EU anti-discrimination law**. ‘Discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin’, which occurs when persons, based on their racial or ethnic origin are treated less favourably or put at a particular disadvantage compared with other persons, is prohibited by the [Racial Equality Directive](#). The [Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies](#) were adopted to better enforce anti-discrimination rules.

With regard to criminal offences, a key piece of legislation is the [Framework Decision on combating certain forms and expressions of racism and xenophobia](#) by means of criminal law. Certain serious manifestations of racism and xenophobia<sup>24</sup> must constitute an offence in all EU countries and be punishable by effective, proportionate and dissuasive penalties.

Everyone in the EU should be able to enjoy their rights fully and equally. However, incidents of racial discrimination and racist harassment and violence occur and often go unreported<sup>25</sup>. **Enforcement of the relevant EU laws and national legal frameworks must be strengthened** to prevent this. Protection against racist hatred must also be ensured, including online, through coordinated actions by the judiciary, police and prosecutors.

### ***Strengthening the enforcement of EU anti-discrimination legislation***

A Commission priority is to ensure that the EU’s robust anti-discrimination legal framework is applied effectively so that equality is achieved across all Member States.

Evidence shows that effective sanctions against discrimination<sup>26</sup> are crucial mechanisms to tackle barriers to employment, social protection, education, and the supply of goods and services, including housing. In this vein, the **Commission report in 2026 on the Racial Equality Directive will analyse application in Member States** and serve as a basis to consider how to **strengthen their national sanction regimes**.

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) increasingly informs the decisions and policy directions, it is crucial to capitalise on its potential as well as to mitigate risks of perpetuating racial bias. The Commission report on the application of the Racial Equality Directive will **analyse the application of anti-discrimination laws to cases of algorithmic discrimination**.

The [AI Act](#) prohibits certain particularly harmful AI practices which are incompatible with EU values (e.g. manipulative AI systems incentivising hatred or violence against protected

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<sup>21</sup> [Eurobarometer 2023: Discrimination in the European Union](#)

<sup>22</sup> [FRA 2024: Jewish People’s Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism](#)

<sup>23</sup> [FRA 2023: Being Black in the European Union](#)

<sup>24</sup> For instance: public incitement to violence or hatred directed against a group of persons or a member of such a group defined on the basis of race, colour, descent, religion or belief, or national or ethnic origin.

<sup>25</sup> FRA reports: [Addressing Racism in Policing](#); [Being Muslim in the EU](#); [Jewish People’s Experiences and Perceptions of Antisemitism](#)

<sup>26</sup> [Study on sanctions for discrimination on racial-ethnic-religious grounds](#)

groups or AI systems inferring racial origin from biometric data). The Commission will provide guidelines and other support tools to effectively implement the AI Act, concerning the prohibitions and the requirements for high-risk AI systems. The Commission will continue to facilitate exchanges on the impact of AI on people at risk of racial discrimination, and support Member States in enforcing and implementing EU law to prevent and redress potentially discriminatory AI facilitated decisions.

The [Directives on Standards for Equality Bodies](#) establishes clear and binding standards to guarantee their independence and effectiveness. The Commission will adopt implementing acts to establish indicators on the functioning of equality bodies and will monitor the effective transposition of both directives into national legislation by June 2026.

The [Directive on combating violence against women and domestic violence](#) acknowledges that victims of intersectional discrimination, including women with a minority racial or ethnic background, may face a higher risk of gender-based violence. Supporting Member States in the process of transposition, **the Commission will pay attention to the challenges faced by victims who face intersectional discrimination due to their racial or ethnic background.**

### *Protecting people from hate crime and hate speech*

Protecting people from hate crime and hate speech is at the heart of the EU's anti-racism agenda. The Commission has launched infringement proceedings to secure the full and correct transposition of the [Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia](#)<sup>27</sup>. The Commission will continue to monitor transposition and support the exchange of good practices in the [High-Level Group on combating hate crime and hate speech](#). The Commission encourages Member States to improve data collection on hate crime, and to expand training for judicial authorities and police on hate offences, including on racial bias.

To strengthen the EU's criminal law framework against hate offences, the Commission proposed a [Council Decision adding hate speech and hate crime to the list of 'EU crimes'](#). This decision would enable the Commission, in a second stage, to strengthen the legal framework on tackling hate speech and hate crime. Given the absence of progress, **the Commission is considering a legislative initiative based on the existing areas of crime covered by [Article 83\(1\) TFEU](#) to harmonise definitions of online hate offences.** This would respond to a recommendations of the [Citizens Panel on tackling hatred in society](#).

The Commission is also helping to improve responses to incidents of hate crime and hate speech, by supporting the authorities in Member States responsible for safeguarding public spaces, including places of worship, in line with the [Protect EU internal security strategy](#).

Victims of racist hate crimes show trust deficits, that require support and empowerment measures to tackle underreporting and to ensure legal redress. The European Parliament and the Council reached a **political agreement on the proposal for the revision of the Victims' Rights Directive**<sup>28</sup>. It will further strengthen victims' rights, including for those targeted by racially motivated hate crimes, with easier crime reporting, better assessment of victims' needs, and improved psychological support and physical protection. Further, the Commission will adopt a revised [EU Strategy on Victims' Rights](#).

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<sup>27</sup> [Infringement cases in the EU](#)

<sup>28</sup> [Victims' rights in the EU - European Commission, Commission welcomes agreement on stronger EU rules ensuring victims' rights](#)

The risk of online hatred is equally often a reality for racial or ethnic minorities. The [Digital Services Act](#) (DSA) requires digital services to tackle illegal content and safeguard fundamental rights through robust 'notice and action' mechanisms, and thorough risk assessment and mitigation obligations. The Commission will continue to monitor and enforce the DSA and, together with the Digital Services Board and relevant stakeholders, regularly **monitor and support the implementation of the voluntary [Code of Conduct on countering illegal hate speech online](#)**.

As part of the [Digital Education Action Plan](#), the updated [Guidelines for teachers and educators on tackling disinformation and promoting digital literacy](#) will provide **practical guidance on how best to foster tolerance and inclusion in the online world**. The Commission will also continue to foster societal resilience through media literacy support actions and through working with the signatories of the [Code of Conduct on Disinformation](#) to improve its implementation and reduce the spread of viral disinformation including related to racism and online hatred.

In parallel, the Commission is addressing hate speech in sport, working closely with the Council of Europe and assisting Member States through the ongoing open method of coordination on the fight against hate speech in sport under the [EU Work Plan for Sport](#).

### ***Countering racial bias in public administration***

Effective public administration is the foundation of good governance, public trust and social cohesion. Countering racial bias in public administrations and justice systems is essential to address racism. Cooperation between public authorities and communities supports trust-building and shapes the sense of common responsibility<sup>29</sup>. **The Commission encourages Member States to provide comprehensive training programmes to help civil servants recognise and tackle racial bias**, while fostering greater cultural awareness and sensitivity. It will continue to provide support for this purpose to national authorities, including under the CERV programme.

Accountable law enforcement that ensures equal protection and fair treatment for all is a key pillar of democracy and the rule of law. Yet, the findings of the FRA report '[Addressing Racism in Policing](#)' illustrate that racism in policing includes discriminatory profiling practices, inappropriate racist communication and excessive use of force<sup>30</sup>. The stakeholders consulted for this strategy underlined the need for comprehensive training programmes for law enforcement authorities and greater transparency and accountability within law enforcement agencies<sup>31</sup>. To provide further guidance to Member States, **the Commission will compile a compendium of good practices to prevent discriminatory profiling practices**.

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<sup>29</sup> See for example: [European Centre of Crime Prevention: Community-Oriented Policing in the European Union](#)

<sup>30</sup> [FRA – Addressing racism in policing](#)

<sup>31</sup> [Open Public Consultation: Anti-Racism Strategy](#)

**The Commission will:**

- support the implementation of the Racial Equality Directive, including by publishing a report with a focus on its enforcement and application in cases of algorithmic discrimination;
- support the implementation of the AI Act to address risks of racial biases and discrimination;
- consider a legislative initiative to harmonise definitions of online hate offences;
- support the transposition and implementation of the revised Victims' Rights Directive, strengthening victims' rights including those targeted by racially motivated hate crimes;
- compile a compendium of good practices to prevent discriminatory profiling practices.

**Member States are encouraged to:**

- better enforce EU legislation on hate offences and non-discrimination, including by strengthening the sanction regimes;
- step up efforts to counter hate offences online, including those motivated by racism;
- introduce comprehensive training programmes to help civil servants recognise and tackle racial bias;
- ensure fair and evidence-based policing practices, backed by accountability measures.

**CHAPTER III – STRENGTHENING SOCIAL EQUALITY AND COHESION**

- *More than 3 in 10 Europeans mentioned a candidate's skin colour (39%) or ethnic origin (34%) as a main factor in putting job applicants at a disadvantage<sup>32</sup>.*
- *Every second Roma/Traveller child (46 %) is educated in a school where all or most of the pupils are Roma/Travellers<sup>33</sup>.*
- *40% of Muslims in the EU live in overcrowded housing, which is more than twice the rate for the general EU population (17%)<sup>34</sup>.*

People impacted by racism may face discrimination in fundamental areas of life, including education, employment, housing, healthcare, and social protection. This cumulative impact of racism has a negative effect on access to equal opportunities over a person's lifetime<sup>35</sup>. This goes against EU values as enshrined in the Treaties and the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#), which promotes an inclusive society and a competitive social market economy that secures jobs, fair working conditions and social protection for all.

***Inclusive education and culture as a catalyst for social equality and competitiveness***

The [Union of Skills](#) aims to support education and training systems to provide equal opportunities for everyone, regardless of their background. Investment in a well-educated population and workforce is an investment in the EU's competitiveness, economic and inclusive growth, social and territorial cohesion.

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<sup>32</sup> [Eurobarometer 2023: Discrimination in the European Union](#)

<sup>33</sup> [FRA 2025 - Rights of Roma and Travellers in 13 European Countries](#)

<sup>34</sup> [FRA – Being Muslim in the EU](#)

<sup>35</sup> [OECD 2025: Monitoring and Assessing the Impact of National Action Plans Against Racism](#)

Education plays a key role in fostering social mobility and can be a powerful equaliser of opportunities. The foundation begins with acquiring basic skills – literacy, mathematics, sciences, digital skills and citizenship education. Introducing citizenship education from early age is key for shaping open mindsets of young learners to appreciate diversity and develop mutual respect, in line with core European values. Art, culture and sport are also important for mobilising society against racism and promoting respect, inclusion, and equality.

Students belonging to racial or ethnic minorities can encounter segregation and barriers in accessing quality education, with a negative impact on their educational success and transition into the labour market<sup>36</sup>. That is why equity and inclusion are at the heart of the [European Education Area strategic framework](#), to promote inclusive educational environments that capitalise on diversity to harness Europe’s talent and strengthen labour markets. The **European teachers and trainers agenda** will address teacher training and professional development on diversity and inclusion, as well as promoting diversity in the teaching profession itself.

The Commission will continue to support Member States’ inclusive education reforms and to promote equity and inclusion. Programmes like [Erasmus+](#), [European Social Fund Plus \(ESF+\)](#) and [Horizon Europe](#) bolster these efforts by promoting equal access to quality and inclusive education, **funding teacher training, school cooperation, learning mobility projects, and research focused on inclusive education.**

### ***Fighting racism through inclusive employment, housing and health policies***

In the area of employment, racism and racial discrimination hinder equality. Applicants with names perceived as foreign often face obstacles in accessing the labour market<sup>37</sup>, resulting in lower levels of economic security. The [Action Plan on Integration and Inclusion](#) aims to support the sustainable labour market integration of migrants and EU citizens with a migrant background, encouraging Member States to raise awareness of discrimination in recruitment and in the workplace, and to reinforce anti-discrimination measures. Increased labour market integration is also an important policy lever to address labour market shortages and skills needs to boost the EU’s competitiveness.

The Commission is committed to promoting diversity in employment and fostering more inclusive workplaces, and **will continue to work closely with the EU Platform of Diversity Charters** to share good practices on diversity and inclusion initiatives, including on ethnic diversity. **The Platform will also facilitate dialogue and provide guidance, for instance, on inclusive hiring practices.**

Access to affordable and decent housing is key to individual and family well-being and social cohesion. People belonging to racial or ethnic minorities often face discrimination and barriers in the housing market, including unequal conditions for tenants or buyers, hurdles in access to loans. They disproportionately experience overcrowding, poor living conditions, homelessness and segregation<sup>38</sup>. These challenges can be more pronounced in rural and remote areas, with limited housing options<sup>39</sup> and limited public services.

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<sup>36</sup> [New issue paper: Tackling prejudice and discrimination in and through education and training | European Education Area](#)

<sup>37</sup> [Susanne Veit, et al. In your face: a comparative field experiment on racial discrimination in Europe. Socio-Economic Review](#)

<sup>38</sup> [OECD 2025: Monitoring and Assessing the Impact of National Action Plans Against Racism](#)

<sup>39</sup> [Highlights Report | Good Practice Webinar: ‘Rural Housing’ | Rural Pact Community Platform](#)

To better understand how discrimination creates barriers to affordable housing, **the Commission will publish a study on discrimination in the area of housing**, including analysis of existing national and local practices. As a deliverable of the [European Affordable Housing Plan](#) and in the context of the forthcoming Anti-Poverty Strategy, the Commission will put forward a proposal for a **Council recommendation on fighting housing exclusion** to support vulnerable persons in precarious housing situations and to prevent and address homelessness.

The [Urban Agenda for the EU](#), an intergovernmental initiative bringing together actors from all levels of governance, and the [EU Agenda for Cities](#), aim to promote inclusive and diverse neighbourhoods, and reduce social and territorial disparities. In addition, funding from [the European Regional Development Fund](#) and the ESF+ can play a central role in improving access to quality housing and basic services for groups at risk of discrimination and in developing desegregation measures<sup>40</sup>.

Healthcare disparities are another key challenge in the fight against racism. People affected by racism often report poorer health outcomes and a lack of access to quality care. Particular attention should be paid to the gender dimension, as migrant women have worse outcomes in diabetes, mental health, sexual and reproductive health, and report that they face greater discrimination by healthcare professionals than male migrants<sup>41</sup>.

The Commission encourages Member States to tackle racial discrimination in health<sup>42</sup> and to shape equitable health policies, by engaging with communities to co-design healthcare services. An [EU support package tackling stigma](#) was presented in 2024 and under the [EU4Health programme](#) **the Commission will continue to support Member States in implementing health policies that address racial bias**, including by improving the collection of equality data, in line with national legal frameworks.

### ***Embedding anti-racism in social protection and rewarding local actions***

Social protection systems must provide effective support to all individuals. It is equally important in areas where people with a minority racial or ethnic background may face additional barriers to accessing social services and opportunities due to remoteness, lack of infrastructure or fewer service providers<sup>43</sup>.

To promote an **inclusive approach to social protection**, the Commission encourages **Member States to consider the situation of racial or ethnic minorities** when designing and implementing policies addressing social exclusion. Further, the first [EU Anti-Poverty Strategy](#) will seek to address the root causes of poverty and exclusion and strengthen support services, regardless of geographical location.

Moreover, the Commission encourages Member States to deliver on the [Council Recommendation on the European Child Guarantee](#), taking into account, wherever appropriate, specific disadvantages experienced by children with a migrant background or minority ethnic origin, and to deliver on the [Council Recommendation on Adequate Minimum Income](#).

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<sup>40</sup> Toolkit "Social housing and beyond"

<sup>41</sup> Gender equality and health in the EU: <https://www.saage-network.eu/sites/default/files/media/publication/DS0320880ENN-en.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> WHO: [Tackling structural racism and ethnicity based discrimination in health](#)

<sup>43</sup> [European Commission Communication A long-term vision for EU's rural areas](#)

The Commission will continue to promote diversity and inclusion initiatives, such as the [European Capitals of Inclusion and Diversity Award](#), which gives visibility to good practices of local authorities for diverse and inclusive environments. To further prompt EU cities to combat racism, **the Commission will designate a category to champion anti-racism policies.** It will complement the [EU Diversity Month](#), celebrated each May to raise awareness of the benefits of inclusive environments and workplaces, encouraging all types of organisations to take concrete action to foster diversity.

**The Commission will:**

- present a European teachers and trainers agenda, support school cooperation and learning mobility projects, as well as research focused on inclusive education;
- support Member States' measures for inclusive employment, education, culture and sport;
- conduct a study on the housing situation of groups at risk of discrimination and put forward a Council recommendation on fighting housing exclusion;
- support Member States in implementing health policies that eliminate racial bias, including by improved collection of health equality data, in line with national legal frameworks.

**Member States are encouraged to:**

- put forward policy initiatives that improve access to education and training and employment opportunities for marginalised people;
- consider racism as a general determinant of a person's overall state of health and to shape healthcare policies accordingly;
- consider the situation of racial or ethnic minorities when designing and implementing policies to address social exclusion.

## CHAPTER IV – FOSTERING KEY PARTNERSHIPS

Achieving a truly inclusive and fair EU requires a whole-of-society approach and the active engagement and cooperation of all stakeholders: Member States, EU institutions and agencies, CSOs, international partners, regional and local authorities, the private sector, and communities affected by racism. The Commission will consolidate its cooperation with stakeholders and ensure that diverse voices are included in the policymaking process.

### *Coordinating the fight against racism at EU level*

The [European Commission's Coordinator on combating racism](#) will continue playing a **central role in the work on combating all forms of racism**, facilitating structured dialogues with communities impacted by racism, thereby enhancing democratic legitimacy and safeguarding fundamental rights. The Coordinator will work closely with the Coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred, the Coordinator on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life, the Coordinator for victims' rights, as well as the EU Youth Coordinator.

Addressing racism effectively requires the meaningful participation of CSOs that represent those most affected. **The Commission will renew the [Anti-Racism Civil Society Forum](#) through a call for expressions of interest and develop an annual work programme to guide the Forum's activities.** This will be an opportunity to diversify the Forum's membership, incorporating new perspectives and expertise from national and local organisations.

Beyond the on-going policy dialogue on anti-racism with CSOs, the Commission recognises the crucial role played by CSOs and the need to strengthen civil space, as highlighted in the [EU Strategy for Civil Society](#), in a context where CSOs fighting racism increasingly face disinformation campaigns and regularly pressure. As announced therein, **the Commission will set up a broader Civil Society Platform, which will provide a regular and structured framework for dialogue on protecting and promoting EU values.** This will enhance the resilience of CSOs, including organisations dedicated to combating racism.

To ensure all EU policies contribute to the fight against racism, the Commission will also continue to consider racism as part of its work on equality mainstreaming. These efforts are led by the Commissioner for Equality and supported by equality contact points in cabinets and a **Task Force on Equality**, which brings together equality coordinators from all Directorates-General.

### ***Promoting anti-racism at the global level***

The EU's anti-racism policies are deeply embedded in the international human rights framework. The EU will continue to advocate for the universal ratification of the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(ICERD\)](#) to which all EU Member States are party, and will support the [Durban Declaration and Programme of Action \(DDPA\)](#), the UN's global framework to combat racism. These commitments are reinforced by the [European Court of Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#) and the [Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)](#), which provides important policy recommendations and country-specific reporting. The EU continues to assume a global leadership role by backing international initiatives<sup>44</sup> using all the tools at its disposal under the Common Foreign and Security Policy.

**It is envisaged that an international roundtable will be set up to deepen cooperation with relevant UN, Council of Europe, and other multilateral bodies.** This should include regular discussions on the implementation of ICERD's and ECRI's recommendations and closer collaboration with the [UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism](#).

**The EU will continue to use its diplomacy and human-rights tools at bilateral and multilateral level** to promote its anti-racism and anti-discrimination policies, including with strategic partners in the framework of human rights dialogues, ministerial meetings and summits. Through the [Pact for the Mediterranean](#), the EU will enhance educational, cultural and sports cooperation with partner countries, fostering mutual understanding and inclusion. At bilateral level the EU will continue implementing its [Guidelines on Non-discrimination in External Action](#) and other guidelines on human rights.

There will also be close work with Commission Representations in Member States and EU Delegations in third countries to advance anti-racism globally.

The EU remains committed to supporting human rights defenders and CSOs globally, notably in the [EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy](#), in particular for those defending the rights of indigenous peoples, minorities, and marginalised groups facing racial or ethnic discrimination. Moreover, the EU will remain engaged in the analysis and countering of Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference activities which diffuse racist and hatred messages.

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<sup>44</sup> such as the [UN International Decade for People of African Descent](#), the [UNESCO Global Alliance Against Racism and Discrimination](#)

In its election observation missions, the EU will continue to monitor to what extent racial or ethnic minorities such as national minority populations and indigenous peoples enjoy the right and opportunity to participate in public affairs and elections on an equal basis<sup>45</sup>.

With regard to candidate countries and potential candidates for EU accession, the EU will continue to promote their progressive alignment with EU legislation on preventing and combating racism and racial discrimination. The [Commission's annual enlargement package](#) will continue to monitor the human rights situation and the implementation of non-discrimination and measures combating racism, xenophobia, hate crime and hate speech.

**The Coordinator on combating anti-Muslim hatred will organise a Coordination Group**, bringing together Member States, the EU institutions, international organisations, partner countries and CSOs<sup>46</sup> to discuss how to best to tackle anti-Muslim hatred.

### *Tackling racism at the national level*

Efforts to tackle racism must be addressed first and foremost at the national, regional and local level. The Commission will support Member States through **mutual learning workshops designed to coordinate national policies with this strategy**. The Commission will **update and strengthen the mandate of the group for the national implementation of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan**<sup>47</sup>, encouraging all Member States to actively engage in it and invite candidate countries for EU accession to join. Through the expert group, the Commission will facilitate exchanges on good practices and host expert discussions<sup>48</sup>.

**The Commission encourages all Member States to develop national action plans against racism** and will support them in developing and implementing such action plans via the CERV programme. **The Commission also encourages the development of local anti-racism action plans in regions, cities, schools and community centres**<sup>49</sup>. Some Member States have appointed national coordinators with responsibility for anti-racism and coordinators combating anti-Muslim hatred and antisemitism to further strengthen their national commitment and accountability. The Commission encourages all Member States to follow a similar approach.

### *Supporting anti-racism and anti-discrimination initiatives*

The Commission is committed to supporting CSOs, grassroots activism and advocacy against racism, especially since their funding is increasingly being reduced<sup>50</sup>. This is done primarily through the [CERV programme](#). Equality and non-discrimination are also addressed in the Commission's proposal for the next [Multiannual Financial Framework](#) 2028-2034. As part of the new AgoraEU programme, the Commission has proposed a budget of EUR 3.6 billion for the Democracy, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV+) strand, more than doubling the budget of the CERV programme.

The Commission verifies that beneficiaries of EU funding respect EU values in the implementation of projects financed by the Union budget, in accordance with the Financial Regulation. The Commission conducts rigorous checks before awarding grants. These rules are enforced through the [Early Detection and Exclusion System \(EDES\)](#). The Commission

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<sup>45</sup> Reports 2023-2025 of election observation missions [EU Election Observation Missions | EEAS](#)

<sup>46</sup> [Press release - Coordination Meeting on Combating Anti-Muslim hatred | European Commission](#)

<sup>47</sup> Subgroup of [High-level group on non-discrimination, equality, diversity](#) and [High-level group on combatting hate speech and hate crime](#).

<sup>48</sup> Such as the [Common guiding principles for national action plans against racism and racial discrimination](#)

<sup>49</sup> [Common Guiding Principles for the Development of National Action Plans against Racism](#)

<sup>50</sup> [European Policy Centre 2025: Securing Europe's civic space; FRA 2024: Summary of key findings from FRA's civic space consultation covering 2024; Civil Society Europe 2025: Contribution to the 2025 Annual Rule of Law Report](#)

will continue to explore the best way of making full use of the toolbox, including when selecting potential beneficiaries.

In granting EU funding, the Commission will continue to ensure that Member States fulfil the [Horizontal Enabling Conditions](#) on the effective implementation and application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights, as regulated by the [Common Provisions Regulation](#). Member States must have effective mechanisms in place to ensure that fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter are respected in the implementation of the Cohesion policy programmes.

Under the next Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034, the Commission proposes that the [National and Regional Partnership Plans](#) incorporate robust safeguards to ensure compliance with the Rule of Law and the effective application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The Member States and the Commission will need to take appropriate steps to prevent any discrimination based on racial or ethnic origin during the preparation, implementation, monitoring, reporting and evaluation of the Plans.

**The Commission will:**

- renew the Anti-Racism Civil Society Forum and develop an annual work programme to guide its activities;
- organise workshops with Member States to support national efforts to tackle racism at national/regional level;
- update and strengthen the mandate for the expert group for the national implementation of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan, and invite EU candidate countries to join;
- prepare the setting up of an international roundtable to deepen cooperation with relevant UN, Council of Europe, and other multilateral bodies;
- provide support through relevant EU spending instruments to support projects and organisations combating racism and racial discrimination.

**Member States are encouraged to:**

- develop national action plans against racism and appoint national anti-racism coordinators;
- support the development of local anti-racism action plans in regions, cities, schools and community centres.

## CHAPTER V – LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Promoting diversity and inclusion is essential to ensuring an equitable and effective workplace, as well as to attract talent. When staff members feel represented across all levels, including in leadership positions, it strengthens their sense of belonging and confidence. The Commission remains committed to upholding a zero-tolerance policy toward all forms of discriminatory behaviour.

### *Promoting diversity in recruitment at the European Commission*

Europe's ethnic, cultural, and linguistic diversity should be reflected in the EU institutions. In its [Human Resources \(HR\) strategy](#), the Commission committed to 'lead by example in inclusiveness and diversity'<sup>51</sup> to better reflect the diversity of European society. Building on the results of the [survey on diversity, inclusion and respect at the workplace](#), the [Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace Action Plan \(2023-2024\)](#) provided the framework to deliver on the strategy's commitments, with targeted actions for a zero-tolerance approach to any type or form of discrimination, including on the ground of racial or ethnic origin. In 2025, the survey was repeated and its findings will support **an updated Action Plan to increase diversity through outreach actions and revised recruitment guidelines**.

Targeted recruitment strategies aim to increase the visibility and accessibility of EU careers for underrepresented groups. The [European Personnel Selection Office \(EPSO\)](#) has **implemented targeted outreach strategies to attract candidates from all ethnic backgrounds, for instance through diversity fairs, or partnerships with civil society and community organisations**. Data on diversity has been collected through anonymous and voluntary surveys of former candidates of EPSO's competitions to identify and tackle any issues that reduce the diversity of the pool of candidates.

Regarding the **Blue Book Traineeship Programme**, the Commission has applied a specific diversity and inclusion strategy, through targeted promotional materials to increase the diversity of candidates (for instance on social media). Additionally, the Commission is revising the Decision on the rules governing the traineeship scheme, and is considering opening up the traineeship to candidates who completed vocational education and training, and to implement some positive actions for underrepresented groups.

To support evidence-based policymaking, also regarding its own human resources, **the Commission will continue collecting equality data in the workplace** on a voluntary, anonymised, and rights-compliant basis.

### *Improving capacity building*

**The Commission continues to provide and encourage training, mentoring and coaching programmes for all its staff**, including managers. Training on unconscious bias and ethical behaviour are complemented by modules on racial bias and microaggression. These initiatives aim to enhance awareness, reduce discriminatory behaviours, and strengthen the Commission's capacity to address racism.

As part of its efforts, the Commission updated its [anti-harassment framework](#) to better address all forms of discrimination in the workplace, applicable to racism related harassment or any other improper behaviour. **Support services, including Mediation and Counselling Services, the Chief Confidential Counsellor and a network of confidential counsellors**

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<sup>51</sup> [Diversity and inclusion - European Commission](#).

**provide guidance and assistance to staff affected by discrimination.** To enforce the effectiveness of the anti-harassment framework, the Investigation and Disciplinary Office also handles cases of racial discrimination or harassment.

**The Commission will:**

- update the Diversity and Inclusion in the workplace Action Plan in 2026;
- offer and encourage targeted equality training, mentoring, and coaching to all its staff;
- ensure a working environment free from discrimination and rigorously implement its zero-tolerance harassment strategy;
- continue to implement targeted outreach strategies to attract candidates from all ethnic backgrounds;
- gathering equality data, including through surveys to monitor staff diversity and their experiences in the workplace.

**Member States are encouraged to**

- implement zero tolerance harassment policies for the public sector;
- systematically offer anti-bias and diversity training course for all public servants.

## **CONCLUSION**

This Strategy is a decisive step towards a genuine Union of Equality where everyone can live, lead, and thrive without being exposed to racism, be it anti-Black racism, antigypsyism, antisemitism, anti-Asian racism or anti-Muslim hatred. The Strategy provides a comprehensive framework to combat all forms of racism, interpersonal and structural racism, racial discrimination, hate offences and violence and puts forward concrete measures to be implemented at European, national, and local level.

In presenting this Anti-Racism Strategy, the Commission commits to combatting racism in a holistic manner, by mainstreaming anti-racism across EU policies and by regularly engaging with stakeholders. Achieving progress requires a united effort at every level. European institutions and agencies, Member States, regional and local authorities, equality bodies, the private sector, and civil society need to actively engage and take concrete action.

Racism goes against the fundamental values on which the EU is founded, and it is detrimental to its socio-economic cohesion. By ensuring that all individuals, regardless of their background, have equal access to equal opportunities in education, employment, and social participation, the EU maximises the potential of everyone. Diverse and inclusive environments foster innovation, creativity, and problem-solving, which are key to economic growth. Additionally, promoting equality and combating racism helps to attract investments and talent, enhancing the EU's ability to compete in an increasingly interconnected and diverse global marketplace.

The Commission invites the European Parliament and Council to support the implementation of this Strategy. In addition, the Commission calls on the European Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee to bring together local and regional authorities, social partners, and civil society to discuss how to advance the fight against racism.

The Commission will monitor the implementation of the measures presented in this Strategy and report at mid-term.