



JOINT PRESS STATEMENT

EU equal treatment law: we've been waiting too long!

Brussels, 6 November 2014 – As high-level EU Member States' representatives meet today to discuss how to make equality a reality for all, equality and anti-discrimination organisations¹ call on them to show a *real* commitment to equality by finally adopting an EU law on equal treatment.

In 2008, the European Commission proposed a directive on equal treatment, which would ensure lesbian, gay and bisexual people, persons with disabilities, religious minorities, youth and older people are protected from discrimination in several fields of life such as goods and services, education, housing and health across the EU. So far, EU law only protects these groups against discrimination in employment and occupation, but not in other areas.

Six years later, the proposed Directive is still stuck in negotiations at the Member State level, due to strong resistance from a few countries and a general lack of political will.

The Directive is needed as we are witnessing clear evidence of discrimination across Europe. For instance:

- In many EU countries, there are upper age limits in access to essential financial services such as travel insurance, bank loans and credit facilities, and in access to social protection such as disability allowances, often set at the official retirement age.
- Surveys by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency on Muslims' and Jews' experiences of discrimination shows that high levels of discrimination occur in private services and schools, respectively.
- Young people in schools experience severe school bullying and harassment due to their sexual orientation. Same-sex couples are being denied visiting rights to their partners as some hospital policies only accept visits from legal partners.
- A [survey](#) from the European Youth Forum on youth and multiple discrimination, published today, shows that young people particularly experience discrimination in terms of education and employment/occupation (both in accessing a paid job and in the workplace) as well as when accessing goods and services, including housing.
- 78% of Europeans who participated in the disability survey on freedom of movement said that they would make more use of their right to free movement in the EU if there were no barriers, such as inaccessible goods and services, non-adapted public spaces and discriminatory attitudes.
- In spite of efforts at European level to mainstream gender and diversity, there is a lack of legal remedies on multiple and intersectional discrimination.

We urge all EU governments to show leadership on equality and adopt a strong anti-discrimination Directive with a broad scope of application. By stalling its adoption, EU Member States are sending the message that they don't care about respecting human rights and ensuring protection against discrimination for their citizens.

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¹ AGE Platform Europe; European Disability Forum (EDF); European Network Against Racism (ENAR); European Women's Lobby; European Youth Forum; ILGA-Europe - the European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association; Social Platform.

Notes to the editor:

1. The Italian Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Commission are jointly organising a [High Level Event on Non Discrimination and Equality](#) on 6 and 7 November to stress the importance of equality policies in the European Union.