PRESS STATEMENT

EU Member States are still refusing to ensure full protection from discrimination to their citizens

Brussels, 2 July 2013 – Five years ago today, the European Commission proposed a law to ensure lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex people, persons with disabilities, religious minorities, youth and older people are protected from discrimination in accessing goods and services such as education, housing and health across the EU. Yet five years later, the proposed Directive is still stuck in negotiations at the Member State level. The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) calls on EU political leaders to finally make equality a reality for all of their citizens.

To this day, not all discrimination grounds are legally protected in the same way in EU countries: EU law only protects against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation in employment and occupation, but not in other areas. In some countries, if you are Muslim, disabled, old or lesbian, you are very likely to be discriminated against in education and services or refused access to healthcare or housing, and not have any way of being protected by law. For people with multilayered identities, such as a disabled Black woman or a gay Christian, the gaps in protection are even wider.

The proposed Directive is crucial because it provides for real protection where there is clear evidence of discrimination. Reports by the European Fundamental Rights Agency on anti-Semitism demonstrate the need for such protection with some of the highest levels of discrimination occurring in private services (at a bar, restaurant, shop, by a landlord, when trying to open a bank account, etc.). Other FRA surveys show that in Italy, 1 in 3 Muslim North Africans experienced discrimination in shops, cafes, restaurants or bars, while 1 in 4 experienced discrimination in banks.

ENAR’s new Chair, Sarah Isal1, said: “It is urgent, especially in the current climate of dismantling social protections, growing intolerance against minorities, and a general decline in human rights concerns, that all EU governments show leadership on equality and adopt a strong anti-discrimination Directive. 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. That’s the wrong message to send when support for the EU is plummeting among European populations.”

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1 ENAR has a new Board of Directors. It is composed by Sarah Isal (UK – Chair), Nicoletta Charalambidou (CY – 1st Vice-Chair), Jallow Momodou (SE – 2nd Vice-Chair), Andreas Hieronymus (DE – Treasurer), Eyachew Tefera (SL – Board member), Julia Kovalenko (EE – Board member), Niels-Erik Hansen (DK – Board member), Rokhaya Diallo (FR – Board member), Adla Shashati (GR – Board member), Karim Saafi (FR – Board member) and Valentin Gonzalez (SP – Board member).
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.