PRESS STATEMENT

ENAR meets with key representatives of the Greek government to discuss the fight against racism in Greece

Athens, 22 November 2013 - The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) is holding its annual meeting of national coordinators in Athens to show solidarity and support for the whole population of Greece, including migrants and ethnic and religious minorities, in these times of deep economic crisis and rising racist violence. In that context, ENAR has met with officials from the Ministry of Public Order; with Mr Athanasiou, Minister of Justice, and with Mr Georgiadis, Minister of Health, to prepare the upcoming European Presidency of Greece, starting in January 2014.

ENAR recognises the valuable efforts made by the Greek government, despite its dire financial situation, to (1) improve the protection of vulnerable groups from hate speech and violence, notably through the proposal of new anti-racism law brought to the Parliament on 20 November, and (2) to launch a conversation on the conditions of access to health services for third country nationals, in particular in detention facilities.

ENAR however has underlined the urgency of tackling the blatant denial of the basic Human Rights of migrants and ethnic minorities in Greece, including:

1. **The lack of support for Greek citizens and third country nationals to seek justice in cases of racist abuse.** While the law provides for means of redress, it is not implemented by the judiciary and victims are not informed adequately about redress measures. Furthermore, the widespread distrust in State authorities prevents victims from bringing complaints to the Prosecutor in charge of hate crimes. ENAR calls on Greece to fully implement its anti-racist legislation.

2. **The huge cuts in public spending for Human Rights based and equality measures.** Greece has substantially reduced funding for Human Rights and minority NGOs, their Human Rights Ombudsman, the public health system, etc. The severe consequence of the cuts is that a substantial portion of the population is unable to enjoy basic support to live in dignity. This has led to an aggravation of physical and mental health problems, which have already impacted the ability of Greece to recover from the crisis and benefit from a healthy and dynamic population. Financial support for Human Rights based measures is crucial for dynamic democracies and economies. ENAR urges Greece to increase its social spending to at least the pre-crisis level.

3. **The spread of responsibilities for tackling racism in its various forms between different Ministries (Public Order, Justice, Health, Finances, Foreign Affairs…) has created a general lack of ownership in dealing with racism by the various administrations, leading to chaotic service delivery, impacting both Greek citizens and third country nationals.** ENAR calls for improved collaboration and exchange between the different administrations.

ENAR Chair Sarah Isal said: “ENAR has come to Greece to offer its expertise and to advise the Greek government to further develop the good initiatives currently undertaken during these extremely difficult times. We hope to see Greece improve its track record ahead of the EU Presidency for the benefit of all its residents, and we are glad that Ministers Athanasiou and Georgiadis accepted our offer to work together. We will keep providing expertise and support in the coming months. Civil society has a crucial role to play in making Greece and Europe a better place to live in”.

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 act as an interface between our member organisations and the European institutions. We voice the concerns of ethnic and religious minorities in European and national policy debates.