

Ojeaku Nwabuzo
Director ENAR

“Recognizing and Addressing Systemic and Structural Racism: A Data Driven and Evidence-Based Approach,” Thursday, 1 June, from 10:00 to 13:00 hrs in room CR-4

Good morning honourable chair, moderator, honourable delegates, distinguished participants.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak on behalf of 150 anti-racist organisations across Europe.

I work within a network of civil society organisations, many of them are doing various data collection on the level of incidents of racially motivated crimes as a way to raise awareness that there is such a phenomenon of racism and discrimination. They advocate for and provide psychosocial support to racialised victims.

This is an important element of what we can see as advocacy purposes and closely related to raising awareness of racial discrimination and perceptions of discrimination within a fundamental rights perspective.

I know many of us in the room, for decades, have undertaken this kind of work whether in civil society, academia or through institutions and so you understand clearly, we need comprehensive and systematic data collection, analysis, leading to evidence-based policy making.

There are examples that I can mention, from a civil society perspective, one specific example within our membership and that's from EOTO. Karen Taylor, ENAR chair was a significant individual behind the concept of the #Afroensus.

#Afroensus is the first comprehensive study addressing the everyday life perspectives and discrimination experiences of Black, African and Afrodiasporic people in Germany.

I work within the EU framework, where there have been developments in terms of both data collection regarding people of African descent. This year we will see the second edition of Being Black in Europe, we have an EU action plan against racism which includes a brief reference to structural racism but this is barely enough.

Not only is there a continuing lack of data on living conditions and discrimination experiences of people of African descent across Europe, the data provided is not sufficient to lead us a racial justice perspective that takes into account structural and systemic racism for people of African descent.

I am here today to speak on how we can move towards undertaking data collection with the purpose of understanding and eliminating the structural and systemic nature of racism and discrimination that takes into account the cumulative nature of systemic racism.

My statement is organised to help us to understand better what we should build upon and what we need.

We can build upon measuring discrimination. The “measurement of discrimination” has been explored by many policy makers, academics and put into practice by various institutions in Europe but it is limited.

- It is difficult to measure structural racism based on individualised understanding of discrimination or survey responses based on people's perceptions of discrimination solely. Meaning that we have not found a way to identify and measure indirect discrimination or the cumulative nature of racism.
- Some academics and statisticians are still stumbling in their ability to measure, for example, how people of African descent born into poverty may suffer from: a nutrient poor diet, complex environmental conditions, overcrowded schooling, live in a geographic area that is over-policed and lacks access to good quality employment opportunities. All these conditions may affect one's life experiences in subtle and indirect ways that just by their nature are difficult to be measured.
- Measuring discrimination can also result in a certain individualised understanding of racism and may guide us to limited anti-discrimination laws and anti-racism training responses that address some sort of bias without understanding the power dynamics that are also at play.
- We see across Europe the rise in right wing and far right political wins and narratives that attack those of us working on racial justice issues. This is not a form of discrimination that has been captured by the current data collection methods used so far.

We need a better understanding the concept of race in Europe

For those of us that have used race related statistics, for example in the UK where I am from, know that we have clear methodologies for collecting and analysing statistics based on race and there are varying demographic categories that ensure that statistical based researchers, policy makers and analysts can extrapolate data and information regarding people of African descent.

- However, if we advocate for this kind of statistics in each member state we might stumble around the standardisation and harmonisation of the data. The question will be, how do we do this on a regional scale across countries, languages and policy contexts.
- Most importantly, we know that for example the concept of race is not recognised in some Member States in Europe. We, ENAR, have advocated for equality data collection in many EU member states and we have been blocked by those Member States that refuse to address racism in their own countries and so this is not just a methodological problem we need to find a solution to this political problem.
- Racial identity in Europe is rather coded in migration status and generations of migration, whether first, second or more. Official statistics and most large-scale surveys collect data on the so-called "migrant background" – a variable that is based on information on citizenship and country of birth. It is not suited to capturing adequately the life perspectives and discrimination experiences of all Black, African and Afrodiasporic persons living in Europe. This lack of data has been criticised in reports of the Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent.

Critical Migration

However, we must think of migration when trying to dismantle the structural racism. Globally, people of African descent on the move today have more than doubled over the last two decades.

Guaranteeing the rights of people of African descent on the move who are stripped of their rights and face countless forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerances, is critical. There is increasing racialised, violent border regimes at borders in Northern Africa and the Mediterranean Latin America, at the US-Mexico borders and in Europe.

What we need

What we need is evidence-based policy-making for dismantling structural racism that requires a more comprehensive data collection and analysis that will allow for looking at the impact of racism not just in terms of discrimination but in terms of equity and racial justice.

We need to ensure that the development of the indicators and the coordination of the measurement takes place beyond the member state level to avoid most member states in the EU that refuse to acknowledge race, yet promote a European way of life underpinned by white supremacy.

It's very notable for us that there appears to be no European Union presence here.

From the Forum

We need a committee to develop and identify indicators for racial justice or racial equity that takes into account some statistical information where that is possible but also has clear targets set in a wider framework for racial justice.

- Any coordination of programmes aimed at the socioeconomic development of communities and people of African descent must ensure that we identify these indicators together and ensure that this will work across regions. I am certain that some within this room have already started this work that might need to be better coordinated.
- The most critical question will be the process for us to collectively agree where we focus our indicators that can work across nation states and across regions. These indicators can be based on work we have already developed, it's important we measure the social standing in Member States with significantly different levels of development or in nation-states that do not even acknowledge race - ie France or have very different categories - ie indigenous people?

Data driven policy-making needs to be able to respond to different challenges and indicate whether the state anti-discrimination laws, action plans, strategies are actually delivering on their stated aims and objectives they were developed for in the first place. For example, we need to be able to see whether the activities outlined in National Action Plans Against Racism within the EU are adequately addressing the needs of people of African descent and if not, what needs to be put into place.

Ethnicity or equality data is not just there to improve existing frameworks or develop new policies but also allow us to see the impact of changing economic and political systems. What I mean by that is not just indicators around anti-discrimination policies but also whether economic policies and migration legislation, for example, have a disproportionate impact on people of African descent.

In conclusion

1. We need harmonised racial justice indicators and targets developed alongside a methodology for each member state and data collection, monitoring and analysis reproduced over years.
2. We need a committee to develop a strategy around data collection and ensure that there is the collection of timely and reliable disaggregated data on people of African descent conducive to the better execution of public policies. The strategy must ensure the data is collected in an ethical and responsible manner and we prevent knowledge extraction during the process of data gathering from peoples of African descent as has been the case for decades.
3. A significant number of people of African descent are on the move, the strategy must include this group and collect their data in a responsible and ethical manner which can promote the protection of migrants and enjoyment of the rights of people on the move. Collecting data on the human rights situation of people of African descent must be based on self-identification transparency, privacy, voluntary participation and have an intersectional perspective.

4. All areas of life must be covered: Employment; Education; Health; Housing and living conditions; Access to goods and services; Hate crime; Institutional violence - police violence and migration laws; Others: Public spaces and leisure time, public authorities, media. In line with the typical areas of measurement, let's also include well-being, mental health - looking to international frameworks such as ICERD, which has a broader understanding of discrimination that could be instrumental for developing a racial justice lens to data collection.
5. Funding and guidance on human rights-based and data-driven approaches to recognising and addressing systemic and structural racism against people of African descent must be done in partnership with organisations that understand the impact of racial injustice and are also advocating for structural changes and can hold policy-makers to account. Collaboration with outreach partners consisting mainly of Black organisations, researchers and individuals is a must.