



Fact Sheet Briefing – Afrophobia in Belgium

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This fact sheet is based on ENAR's Shadow Report questionnaire 2014/2015, answered by Narcis Ulric Bangmo from *Cercle des réflexions économiques, politiques et sociales (CRESPOL)*, including qualitative and quantitative data.

Defining 'People of African Descent (PAD)/ Black Europeans (BE) population' is no easy task and indeed various definitions and descriptions exist for the group. The UN Working Group on people of African descent proposed that: "People of African descent may be defined as descendants of the African victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (...) Africans and their descendants who, after their countries' independence, emigrated to or went to work in Europe, Canada and the Middle East."¹ The term 'Black Europeans' is used here to refer to Black people born or raised in Europe or with an EU citizenship. In some places the term 'Black people' is used to refer more broadly to all those individuals, groups and communities that define themselves as 'Black'. Accordingly, 'Black' does not necessarily refer to a skin colour so much as a sociologically constructed identity.

In Belgium, estimates from 2012 state that people of Sub-Saharan origin represent about 6.3% of all migrants, the Democratic Republic of Congo being the main country of origin.

Key findings and examples

Political participation

- In contrast to other European countries, the PAD/BE population has higher levels of political participation in local politics. This is partly due to compulsory voting and complex regional and political dynamics between the Flemish and French regions in Belgium, which ensures competition for new migrant votes and representation in politics.

Hate speech, policing and the criminal justice system

- Case studies show that Black people suffer from racist abuse perpetrated by the police, for example a police officer in Ghent uploaded two pictures on Facebook in August 2015, comparing Black people to monkeys and stating "[...]we can still learn something from the monkeys but not from the black people of the jungle".²
- Police complaint procedures lack transparency as well as clarity and professionals reportedly struggle to use the tools available to respond appropriately to people's complaints.

MRAX, the Movement against Racism, Anti-Semitism and Xenophobia, offers training to (PAD/BE) immigrants on their rights and duties as well as providing briefings to the government in a range of areas including racist crime.

¹UN Working Group on People of African Descent, Identification and Definition of People of African Descent and How Racial Discrimination Against them is Manifested in Various Regions, E/CN.4/2003/WG.20/WP.3

² *La Dernière Heure*, DH.be (25 August 2015). Available at: <http://www.dhnet.be/actu/faits/un-policier-gantois-compare-les-noirs-avec-des-singes-55dc69503570b546537a39e7>

Employment

- There is a significant gap between the national average employment rate (66%) and people originating from “other African countries”³ (39.7%)⁴. The national average unemployment rate is three times lower than for people of African origin. In addition, PAD/BE are over-represented in the low income sector.
- The Interfederal Centre for Equal Opportunities Unia (formerly CIEC) opened 1,670 files in 2014, of which 392 dealt with discrimination in the labour market. Almost half of them were linked to access to employment, which has been identified as a problem for PAD/BE.
- It is reported that PAD/BE are treated as ‘inferior’ within the workplace and are given more workloads than colleagues and/or need to put in more effort to keep their jobs.⁵

Education

- There is limited data to show racial discrimination within the education system, however anecdotal evidence suggests that people of African descent receive lower grades than their White peers.
- It is reported that there is a very low-level representation of Black people in the teaching profession within universities.

Recommendations

- In partnership with civil society organisations, and according to data protection principles, collect equality data and monitor the outcomes of people of African descent/Black Europeans in key social indicators in employment, health, education and housing and develop policies in response to persistent racial inequalities.
- Develop ethnic and racial categories in the census, in consultation with civil society organisations and other stakeholders, and allow for self-identification.
- Establish public equality duties to increase the diversity within all public institutions, bodies and universities and in particular develop special measures and traineeships for people of African descent/Black Europeans so that ethnic minorities are able to gain entry and access into the roles that currently lack diversity.
- Ease and ensure the process of recognition of foreign qualifications and practical experiences.
- Establish clear and truly independent oversight mechanisms to monitor all actions of law enforcement agents that impact on rights and freedoms such as counter-terrorism measures, raids, surveillance and arrests.
- Integrate human rights education into education curricula to combat racial prejudice and intolerance in teachers and children and develop and implement anti-racism policies in all schools and universities that include internal remedy procedures and the establishment of a complaint mechanism to assist victims.

³ This figure excludes the Maghreb countries but includes South Africa

⁴ S. Van Doosselaere, S. Pinilla, *Discrimination des jeunes immigrés sur le marché de l’emploi en Belgique* (2015). Available at: <http://www.diversite-europe.eu/sites/default/files/publications/files/na-2015-discrimination-immigres.pdf>

⁵ N. Bangmo, *Programmés pour plonger, Mémoires des étudiants perpétuels*, Edilivre (2015)