

Dignity and respect for ALL

ENAR messages for the European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity in 2012

The 2012 European Year for Active Ageing and Intergenerational Solidarity encourages reflection on the situation of older ethnic minorities and migrants in Europe. This group, also part of the EU's ageing population, is a growing population, who face specific challenges in accessing care, the labour market, as well as pension and other social entitlement programs.

Considering current demographic trends and continued migration to Europe, Europe's ageing population, including significant numbers of ethnic minority people and migrants will continue to grow. In the United Kingdom, **one in three ethnic minority people will be aged over 50 by 2028**. Yet governments across Europe continue to consider migration as a temporary phenomenon, failing to take migrants' needs seriously, evident by inadequate social services, healthcare, housing, etc.

Specific measures need to be provided for older ethnic minorities and migrants, so that their needs can be accommodated and their rights upheld.¹

¹ Joint AGE-ENAR position paper, 'Older ethnic minorities and migrants: promoting their participation in employment, involvement in the

The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) welcomes the European Year 2012 for Active Ageing and Solidarity between Generations as a unique opportunity to influence national and European policy makers and all other relevant actors to address the challenges faced by older ethnic minorities and migrants, and develop targeted measures to improve their situation in Europe.

In this context, ENAR expects 2012 to:

1. Raise awareness on the specific challenges faced by older ethnic minorities and migrants in Europe

For the 2012 European Year to have a decisive impact on the lives of *all* older people, it must address the **intersectional discrimination** faced by older ethnic minorities and migrants. While older ethnic minorities and migrants face similar challenges as other older people, their situation can be compounded by dual or even multiple discrimination on the basis of

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age, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, disability and gender and by their life course.

Older migrants face challenges, including **premature ageing** due to pressures of self-employment and harsh working and housing conditions, as well as a loss of command of their host country language, particularly if they suffer from dementia/Alzheimer's. Additionally, long term **care facilities are often not adapted to the cultural, religious or linguistic needs** of older migrants and ethnic minorities.

With regard to employment, older migrants and ethnic minorities may face the same problems of access and opportunity as any older worker, but these are **compounded by:**

- **discrimination;**
- **lack of access to training and lifelong learning;** and/or
- **non-recognition of qualifications** obtained in their home country.

Moreover, retired migrants often live in sub-standard conditions and tend to **lack pension contributions** because of incomplete employment records. Older migrants and ethnic minorities are also more likely not to have savings and not to claim welfare benefits due to lack of awareness or cultural considerations. A related challenge is the lack of information available on discrimination and other exclusionary processes experienced by older ethnic minorities and migrants.

ENAR hopes the European Year will enable comparative EU research and projects on the situation of older migrants and ethnic minorities in regard to poverty and access to services. In this regard, **ENAR encourages Member States to collect**

disaggregated data on the situation of older migrants to enable a better assessment of their situations and design adequate policy responses.

Furthermore, **awareness-raising should focus on social solidarity by highlighting and disseminating good practice examples of creative initiatives and projects targeted at older ethnic minorities and migrants.** Throughout the year, it is important that migrant and ethnic minority organisations are consulted and targeted when promoting good practice examples and when designing active ageing and intergenerational solidarity initiatives at EU level.

ENAR expects the Year to promote equality and solidarity. Older migrants, like all other older people, should be accorded respect, equality and human dignity. It has been reported² that older migrants and ethnic minorities often feel to be perceived as a burden. They ought to be seen as an asset (e.g. by providing family guidance, grandparenting care, support and wisdom). Denial of equality and respect, whether covert or explicit, not only has a negative effect on individuals concerned, but also deprives societies of the richness that older migrants can offer to civic, political, social, cultural and economic life.

2. Generate policy change and targeted measures to address the shortcomings of current policies and infrastructures

Older ethnic minorities and migrants have specific concerns and needs, which are not always effectively met through the

² Runnymede Trust, Older BME People & Financial Inclusion event, 2011

infrastructures in the countries in which they live. Economic and social policies, as well as migration and integration policies need to be developed to take sufficient consideration of this group's needs and to take specific steps for facilitating social and economic inclusion. At European and national levels, policies and strategies tend to address ageing, racism or poverty, but not the combination of issues many minority ethnic older people face. ENAR puts forth two key recommendations to counter this trend.

➤ **Consider EU policies and strategies in responses toward older migrants and ethnic minorities**

ENAR hopes the European Year will provide momentum to generate policy change that will have a real impact on fighting inequalities, particularly in the framework of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU Agenda for Integration, and the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies. To ensure that the concerns and fundamental rights of older ethnic minorities and migrants are effectively considered, the objectives of inclusion, non-discrimination and anti-racism need to be mainstreamed in all relevant EU strategies and policies, including in health, housing, and education.

ENAR calls on the European Union and its Member States to ensure that links are established with the EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies and the EU Agenda for Integration, and to also ensure adequate responses to an increasingly diverse ageing population. The EU needs to offer all migrants and ethnic minorities, regardless of their age, the same social and economic rights as the populations of the countries in which they

reside. Migrants and ethnic minorities in Europe have greatly contributed to European society as workers and deserve consideration as they grow older.

The Europe 2020 objectives³ can be instrumental in promoting a more cohesive European society, free from discrimination, as long as National Reform Programmes (NRPs) address the issues and challenges related to better participation of older ethnic and religious minorities in implementing labour market and education strategies⁴. So far, the NRPs submitted have been disappointing. **ENAR calls on the EU and its Member States to make use of the NRPs and the renewed social OMC to address the social integration and inclusion of older migrants, who face difficulties in accessing employment and training or lifelong learning. Healthcare needs should also be addressed through the renewed social OMC to ensure affordable health care services and eligibility to social protection systems.**

➤ **Implement specific policy actions to address the needs of older ethnic minorities and migrants, including the following actions⁵:**

³See:

http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/index_en.htm

⁴ The Europe 2020 strategy is implemented through the Open Method of Coordination. Member States undertake reforms at the national level based on National Reform Programmes.

⁵ Many of the listed actions are taken from AGE-ENAR's joint position paper on older ethnic minorities and migrants, December 2011. For further details see: <http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/policy/Joint%20AGE.pdf>

- **Improve the quality and adequacy of social services by providing better support and information in different languages and by being more responsive to individual needs**
- **Strategise ways to provide free language interpretation services, especially for the very old, at primary care clinics, hospitals and social services in areas where a significant number of ethnic minorities live**
- **Sensitise health workers of cultural differences and develop a clear policy framework for service development especially for older ethnic minorities and migrants**
- **Implement programmes to address the low level of pensions granted to ethnic minorities and migrants, and counter other forms of financial exclusion**
- **Facilitate and support migrant and ethnic minority communities to develop and expand intergenerational projects. Involving them in the design and implementation of projects to promote active ageing and intergenerational solidarity among migrant and ethnic communities**
- **Conduct awareness raising activities on fundamental rights, targeting older migrants and ethnic minorities**
- **Provide accommodation in attractive areas; do not place ethnic minorities in socially deprived areas**
- **Allow for family solidarity by enhancing family reunification opportunities beyond the current scope of the family reunification directive**
- **Finance comparative EU research projects on the situation of older migrants**

To conclude, ENAR strongly believes that a new social vision of how to best advance the well-being of all in our diverse societies must take into account the needs and experiences of all communities across Europe that are vulnerable to racism and discrimination. As part of ENAR's work on articulating a progressive narrative on equality and diversity, ENAR advocates for more social cohesion and promotes the benefits of a racism-free Europe. This is critical for realising a vibrant European society and economy. This naturally includes the inclusion and well-being of older minorities and migrants.