



European Network Against Racism
The voice of the anti-racist movement in Europe



Fact Sheet Briefing – Afrophobia in Greece

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This factsheet is based on ENAR's Shadow Report questionnaire 2014/2015, answered by Natasa Chanta-Martin, ANASA-African Cultural Center, 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." 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.

The latest national population census conducted in 2011 by the Hellenic Statistical Authority (EL.STAT.) estimated that there were 25,850 permanent residents from Africa living in Greece. However, due to more recent high numbers of migrants reaching Greece, the number is believed to be significantly higher.

Key findings and examples

Legislative developments

- In 2014, there were significant legislative policy developments, namely the transposition of the EU Directive that recognises the racist motive behind criminal actions. Law 4285/2014, enacted on 9th September 2014, implements the European Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA within the Greek legal order. An addition to the criminal code makes sentences for hate motivated offences committed on the grounds of race, colour, religion, descent, national or ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability more severe.¹
- The same law also provides for more severe penalties when the perpetrator is a public official or servant.
- Alongside the legislative developments, the *Department for Tackling Racist Violence* was created within the Hellenic Police Force.

¹ I. Tourkochoriti, 'The New Regulation against Hate Speech in Greece: Strengths and Weaknesses', *CritCom* (20 February 2015). Available at: <http://councilforeuropeanstudies.org/critcom/the-new-regulation-against-hate-speech-in-greece-strengths-and-weaknesses/>

- The Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights has included the fight against racism and racist violence in its Human Rights National Action Plan 2014-2016.
- Despite Greek equality bodies' active involvement in awareness raising, there remains longstanding concerns regarding the independence of the Commission for Equal Treatment (CET). The Commission and all other equality bodies are governed by a single head and one out of five members of the collegiate board of the CET is a central government representative. In addition, three of the four Greek equality bodies reported having no financial independence.

Political participation

- As in several other European countries, the right to vote in Greek elections is very much linked to citizenship. It can be difficult to obtain Greek citizenship due to the particularly restrictive rules and requirements. A large number of Greek young people of migrant descent are entitled to Greek citizenship but they do not go through the voting procedures due to the overly bureaucratic processes, and as a result are excluded from political participation.

Employment

- PAD/BE in particular are vulnerable to racial abuse, harassment, attacks and bullying in the employment sector. The abuse is directed in some cases at high status Black professionals. For example, Mrs. Adebayo's (pseudonym) promotion from General Secretary to matron in an Athens hospital was delayed for over two years. The head of the hospital could not accept that a Black person could occupy such an important position in the hospital's hierarchy.
- It is reported that first generation African migrants who came to Greece to study, might find better jobs as they speak the language. This is crucial regarding employment opportunities. However this is not always the case, for example a Black job applicant reported that an available position she had asked about over the phone, was suddenly not vacant once she appeared for the interview.
- Black people are reported to occupy 'backstage jobs' in the kitchen at restaurants or as babysitters and domestic workers. This is in contrast with other migrant populations who might be accepted as workers in supermarkets, gas stations, and other jobs that require communicating with customers.
- Given that there are significant barriers to employment for Black people, self-employment or working within tight ethnic networks is a viable option for Black people in Greece, hence a significant number of the PAD/BE community in Greece is employed in African hair salons, African food markets, or services shipping goods to Africa.

Learning for Female African Migrant Solidarity (LeFAMSol) is a project that aims to empower and improve the employability of African women. More specifically LeFAMSol is a curriculum development project for hard to reach target groups of adults, oriented towards cultural mediation and peer training. In its pilot phase, the project has focused on Female African Migrant Groups, including sex workers, aiming initially to create a pool of human resources that can operate gender/ethnically delineated "Self-Help Desks". Therefore, knowledge building and sharing is geared towards self-sustainability, capitalising upon ethnic networking to achieve a multiplier effect.

Policing and hate crimes

- PAD/BE are often treated as perpetrators by the police when they are in fact the victims of crimes or innocent bystanders. For example, a Black migrant reported to a police officer from Operation

Xenios Zeus that he witnessed a robbery and he was treated as a potential suspect and brought to court as a defendant.

- Incidents of racist crimes that target people of African descent have been linked to the far-right political party *Golden Dawn*.
- According to Andriana Mardaki, a Greek lawyer who focuses on/specialises in human rights, a major issue is the higher sentences given to Black people due to racial profiling in court.
- According to various reports, police violence takes place particularly towards Black people and there have been several deaths in police custody. For example, a 21 year old Guinean died in police custody due to lack of health care in the detention centre of Corinth.
- A very common illegal activity is the informal return strategies (also known as 'push backs') attempted by police officers near the Greek borders, which put newcomers' lives at risk and can result in deaths.

Recommendations

- In partnership with civil society organisations, and according to data protection principles, equality data must be collected annually to 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.
- Improve local employment office practice in order to better match jobseekers to relevant positions.
- Strengthen rules and practices regarding labour inspections to combat the exploitation of migrants and reinforce complaint mechanisms for fair and unbiased access to legal redress for irregular and undocumented migrants.
- Ensure that national legislation and police guidelines prohibit ethnic profiling and establish a requirement for reasonable suspicion for all police stops. In addition the performance appraisal systems for law enforcement officers must sanction the use of ethnic profiling. Carry out regular training of judges and law-enforcement agents on unconscious bias.
- Raise awareness and sensitivity of the police regarding past abuses of Black people perpetrated by the police.
- Establish clear and truly independent oversight mechanisms to monitor all actions that impact on rights and freedoms such as counter-terrorism measures, raids, surveillance and arrests.