



Fact Sheet Briefing – Afrophobia in Latvia

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This fact sheet is based on ENAR's Shadow Report questionnaire 2014/2015, answered by Dr. Kristine Dupate, a freelance researcher, including results of qualitative and quantitative research.

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.

There are no official figures on the size of the PAD/BE population in Latvia. Based on the number of persons originating from African countries, holding a permanent or temporary Latvian residence permit: 63 people originate from Nigeria and Cameroon (excluding Northern African countries and South Africa).

Due to a very small PAD/BE population, data and information on this group is very limited.

Key findings and examples

Legal developments

- Latvia amended its Criminal Law by extending the list of aggravating circumstances for a criminal offence with national, ethnic or religious motivation in addition to 'racist' motivation. Under the new provision, penalisation of incitement to hatred no longer depends on whether the offender acted intentionally or not.

Civil society

- There is no civil society organisation dealing with the protection of PAD/BE. The only NGO, *AfroLat*, that operated for a short period of time from 2003 ceased work due to the lack of financial resources.

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

Criminal justice system

- Interviews with PAD/BE residing in Latvia, NGOs and scholars show low-level trust of the police by PAD/BE. This results in under-reporting of racially motivated attacks.

Education

- It is reported that the Latvian curriculum includes racist content.²

Housing

- No discrimination cases of PAD/BE have been identified specifically. However, there is a high rate of discrimination cases related to a person's ethnic origin in the private property rental market. Racism is targeted at certain ethnic groups, for example, Roma and possibly against persons of different race, such as students from India or Africa. However the discrimination in this area is also linked to social status.

Public sphere

- Latvians refuse to acknowledge racism is a problem within the society; declaring it as an issue of former colonial powers such as France or Britain.
- According to interviews with PAD/BE, racism is experienced most significantly when individuals become 'visible', such as in the arts or politics.
- Racism in Latvia is most apparent online and in particular on news website. In 2015, for example, Aminata Savadego a Latvian singer whose father is from Burkina-Faso represented Latvia at the Eurovision Song Contest. News articles reporting on the event received a large amount of racist remarks and comments directed at Aminata.
- The "migration crisis" and associated discussions is reported to have had a negative impact on levels of racism within the society.

Key recommendations

- Review the curriculum and in particular the content of education materials at schools in order to eliminate any racist content or content indirectly raising prejudice against persons with different cultural background.
- Include educational programmes and mandatory modules on human rights law with sociological perspective on diversity, non-discrimination on all levels - starting from schools and universities and ending with special training programs for professionals in various fields.
- Recognize PAD/BE as a group affected by racism by making funds available to projects set up to advance the interests of PAD/BE in Latvia.

² Interview with assist.prof. Aivita Putniņa, Ph.D (*Cantab*), head of Department of Anthropology, Faculty of Humanities, University of Latvia (9 October 2015); see also ECRI 3rd Report on Latvia, 12 February 2008. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/pdfid/47b1ac913ad.pdf>