



## Fact Sheet Briefing – Afrophobia in the Netherlands

March 2016

This fact sheet is based on ENAR's Shadow Report questionnaire 2014/2015, answered by Mitchell Esajas and Jessy De Abreu from *the New Urban Collective*, 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."<sup>1</sup> 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, however experts estimate that they form approximately 5.4% of the population. The estimate is based on those registered as living in the Netherlands from Africa and the former Dutch colonies. According to official figures, 626,581 originate from Africa (although two thirds of them coming from North African countries which is not generally included in the term of PAD/BE) and 295,000 people originate from Surinam, Dutch Antilles and Aruba.

### Key findings and examples

#### Legislative and policy developments

- There is a National Action Plan against discrimination but whilst women and LGBT people are mentioned as specific vulnerable groups, PAD/BE are not.
- Despite the Dutch government's efforts to combat discrimination and racism, it is reported there is insufficient activities in preventing it.<sup>2</sup> In addition, there have been significant cuts in funding of various civil society organisations, equality bodies and anti-discrimination bodies working to help eradicate racism.
- The CERD report stated that the Netherlands' Municipal Anti-discrimination Services Act, which requires every municipality to provide its inhabitants with access to anti-discrimination services, is lacking financial resources and necessary expertise to treat all discrimination cases in an efficient way.
- In 2015 the International Decade for People of African Descent was launched and in response the Dutch government is planning some activities within the framework of the decade - recognition, justice, and development.

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<sup>1</sup>UN 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

<sup>2</sup>The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights(NIHR), Submission to the Eighty-seventh Session of the CERD on the Examination of the combined nineteenth to twenty-first Periodic Reports of the Netherlands, June 2015

## Employment

- The high profile court case of Jeffrey Koorndijk brought attention to the discrimination Black people face in employment. Koorndijk, a young Afro-Surinamese man, applied for an internship but accidentally received an email containing racist remarks: *“I looked, it’s nothing. First of all it a dark colour nigger (neger). And on his résumé little experience with computers etc.”*
- According to a study published in 2014, most discrimination takes place in the lower-skilled jobs; however, even amongst highly education Dutch citizens with a non-Western background the unemployment rate is higher in comparison to their White Dutch counterparts.<sup>3</sup>

*In May 2015 an action plan to combat labour market discrimination with the slogan ‘Discrimination doesn’t work!’ was introduced. The action plan stressed the importance of victims’ willingness to report discrimination and highlights how stereotypes can lead to discrimination in recruitment as well as the need for proper training and education to combat prejudice and stereotyping; within this framework, the NIHR<sup>4</sup> developed the training “Selection without prejudice” (Selecteren zonder vooroordelen) to train recruiters and managers about stereotypes in recruitment and retention practices. [www.mensenrechten.nl/training-selecteren-zonder-vooroordelen](http://www.mensenrechten.nl/training-selecteren-zonder-vooroordelen)*

## Education

- In some cases racism and related discrimination is expressed through prejudices of teachers resulting in an under-evaluation of migrant students. In 2015 for example, a pupil of African descent, despite scoring highly on the CITO test, was under-evaluated by teachers and the school advice was to send the pupil to a lower level of education. It has also been reported, that PAD/BE students have been criticized for not having the ‘right’ behaviour despite higher scores in the CITO test.<sup>5</sup>
- Since 2011 public discussions of the negative and racialized stereotype character Black Pete, has revealed the lack of historical perspective and limited collective memory regarding the Dutch colonial past. This continues to impact on the current lives of people of African descent.
- Dutch history books that depict historical events relating to slavery and colonialism inappropriately portray black people as essentialised characters that are: racialized, strong, violent and lacking humanity. The ethnically White Dutch are, on the other hand, portrayed as good traders and businessman.

## Housing

- There is strong evidence of spatial segregation along ethnic lines within larger cities, often because social housing is concentrated in these areas. Almost half of the Surinamese community and a third of the Antillean community live in these neighbourhoods.

<sup>3</sup> Statistics Netherlands. 2014. Jaarrapport Integratie 2014. Available at: <http://www.cbs.nl/nl-NL/menu/themas/dossiers/allochtonen/publicaties/publicaties/archief/2014/2014-b61-pub1.htm>

<sup>4</sup> The Netherlands Institute for Human Rights(NIHR)

<sup>5</sup> de Abreu, Jessica. 2013. The Pathway to Postsecondary Education: A study of lower socioeconomic students achieving access to post-secondary education and striving for academic success in Dutch society. Available at: <http://www.ean-edu.org/assets/pathwaytopostsecondaryednetherlands%28deabreu%29.pdf>

## Media

- The media plays a crucial role in the (re-)production of racism: for example in the debate around Black Pete, the media has become an outlet for racist remarks, hate speech and racial/colonial imagery as black facing.
- Complaints Bureau for Discrimination report that in the area of Amsterdam they collected 1701 complaints (2014); of these complaints, people with Surinamese background were the second largest group to report discrimination in the field of employment and education.<sup>6</sup>
- There is also a lack of ethnic diversity in editorial boards of Dutch media. News media coverage is almost entirely produced by White Dutch people and others with a Western background. Only 3% of the journalists of the 9 major news editors has a non-Western background. This is not representative of the diversity in the Dutch population.<sup>7</sup>

## Criminal justice system and racial profiling

- Although there is no government statistics on stop and search practices of the police, various surveys and reports prove that this practice takes place. The documentary “Our Colonial Hangover” (aired December 2014) showed an experiment where three young men of the same age, one Black, one White, one Moroccan, nonchalantly tried to break open the lock of a bicycle in the middle of the day in one of the most popular parks of Amsterdam. The police reacted by questioning the Black and Arab young men in ways that assume they may be stealing the bicycles whilst treating the White man in a very friendly way, even offering him help to open the lock. The experiment showed how PAD/BE are ethnically profiled and criminalized by the police.

## Recommendations

- In partnership with civil society organisations, and according to data protection principles, collect equality data to annually monitor people of African descent/Black Europeans’ outcomes in key social indicators in employment, health, education and housing and develop policies in response to persistent racial inequalities develop and implement specific measures and affirmative action policies to eliminate racial profiling and discrimination faced by PAD/BE and to increase the participation of PAD/BE in public office and higher positions of political responsibility.
- Undertake public education campaigns to ensure that the society is informed of the complex history of people of African descent in the Netherlands including the periods of slavery and colonization as well as racial discrimination faced by people of African descent in present day society.
- Strengthen and implement specific measures to increase the level of educational achievement of children of People of African descent and black children.
- Take an active stance on eliminating all racist stereotypes from public spaces even deeply-rooted cultural traditions which are not meant to harm or hurt others such as Black Pete.

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<sup>6</sup> Meldpunt Discriminatie Regio Amsterdam (MDRA). 2014. Jaarverslag 2014. Available at: [http://www.mdra.nl/sites/default/files/MDRA%20Jaarverslag%202014\\_0.pdf](http://www.mdra.nl/sites/default/files/MDRA%20Jaarverslag%202014_0.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Takken, Wilfred. 2015. ‘Nieuwsredacties zijn voor 3 procent niet-westers’ 3 februari 2015. Available at: <http://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2015/02/03/nieuwsredacties-zijn-voor-3-procent-niet-westers/>