



Malta-EU Steering & Action Committee

# JUSTICE & HOME AFFAIRS (Supplement) MIGRATION



**27.04.2009**

## European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS)

**The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) has released results of the first ever EU-wide survey on immigrant and ethnic minority groups' experiences of discrimination and racist crime. The survey reveals that discrimination, harassment and racially motivated violence are far more widespread than recorded in official statistics. The results suggest a sense of resignation among ethnic minorities and immigrants who appear to lack confidence in mechanisms to protect victims.**

The Commission welcomes the publication of the first set of results of the survey made by the Fundamental Rights Agency on the experiences of immigrants and minorities with racist crime and discrimination, which it will study carefully.

It is concerned however that results show that discrimination, racism and xenophobia are still persistent phenomena in the EU, that they affect the lives of members of ethnic minorities in the EU and of immigrants, and that they can hamper their integration into our societies.

The Commission has repeatedly condemned any manifestation of racism and xenophobia. These phenomena are incompatible with the values that the European Union is based upon. The results of this survey reaffirm the need for the European Union and its Member States, each within their respective sphere of



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competence, to strengthen their common fight against discrimination, racism and xenophobia.

55% of migrants and minorities surveyed by the FRA think that discrimination based on ethnic origin is widespread in their country, and 37% say that they have personally experienced discrimination in the past 12 months. 12% personally experienced a racist crime in the past 12 months. However, 80% of these did not report the incident to the police. When asked for the main reason for not reporting discrimination, 63% of respondents said that they believed nothing would happen or change if they reported the incident. At the same time, 80% did not know of any organisation that could offer support or advice to victims of discrimination. This reveals an urgent need for better information, but could also reflect a real absence of support services in some Member States.

The Survey also shows the negative impact of the current levels of under-reporting of racist crime and of discrimination experiences, together with lack of awareness about rights. The Commission will ensure that EU funding is used to raise awareness on these issues.

The survey also provides clear and recent data on the perception by members of minorities of ethnic profiling in the EU in the context of counter-terrorism activities, law enforcement, immigration policies, customs and border control. The Commission will study carefully those data. Unjustified or unnecessary ethnic profiling is prohibited and it is contrary to the fundamental values of the EU.

There is currently a debate on whether there is a need to collect and process statistical data to have a better understanding of the situation of the members of minorities in the EU. These data can be useful to improve the design of policies targeting specific needs.

### *... from the Parliament*

## **Europe must deliver a common immigration policy**



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**The European Parliament approved a report on European immigration policy. The report recognises the importance of legal immigration, in the face of Europe's ageing population and declining workforce, but also urges Member States to jointly tackle the problems caused by illegal immigration. They also propose to reinforce migrant's rights, by allowing them to vote in local elections.**

MEPs describe immigration as "one of the foremost challenges that Europe is currently facing", and believe that it will remain a significant challenge for the coming decades. Furthermore, a common approach to immigration is vital as shared European borders mean that action or inaction by one Member State has a direct impact on others and on the EU as a whole. If migration is poorly managed, it will not only have a negative impact on the countries of destination but also to the countries of origin and the migrants themselves.

The European Parliament adopted an own-initiative report drafted by Simon Busuttill (EPP-ED, MT) on Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> April, by 485 votes in favour, 110 against and 19 abstentions.

[\*\*\(CLICK here to read the full report\)\*\*](#)

**[COM \(2008\) 359](#) - A Common Immigration Policy for Europe: Principles, actions and tools**

#### **Past and future impact of migrants in Europe**

Migrants have always played a vital role in the development of the EU, and the report stresses the importance of recognising their past and continuing contribution. Therefore, Europe should continue to be a welcoming environment for migrants; especially as, according to Eurostat statistics, the European working age population is expected to fall by 50 million workers by 2060. Well managed immigration could help to provide crucial economic stimulus to the EU in the coming years.

However, MEPs are concerned about the effect of the 'brain drain' on third countries, and are therefore recommending that a "cycle of exchange of knowledge" should be encouraged, through programmes of temporary migration. They are also proposing a scheme to facilitate training in countries of origin "in order to preserve occupations in key sectors", and are urging Member States to refrain from actively recruiting workers in these sectors, such as health and education, in countries which are already suffering from a lack of workers.



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Statistics presented by the Commission suggest that by 2050, the EU will need 60 million migrant workers, which clearly shows that channels for legal migration need to be improved.

MEPs regret that so far little has been done to encourage this, and calls on Member States to establish a coordinated approach, taking into account the demographic and economic situation of the EU.

### **Integration**

Integration should be a key part of EU legislation on immigration. The report supports integration efforts by Member States, to help immigrants to learn the language of their host country and to develop an understanding of the values of the EU and its Member States.

However, MEPs also recognise that integration is very much a two-way process, and also requires adjustments on behalf of the population of the host state. The report also supports the view that immigrants from third countries should be granted the right to full mobility in the EU after a period of five years' legal residence in a Member State. A further recommendation from MEPs suggests that democratic participation is crucial to integration they are therefore calling for migrants to be allowed to vote in local elections.

Successful integration also requires cooperation with third party countries, which regrettably, has so far not achieved sufficient results. The one exception to this is Spain's successful cooperation with third countries, such as Senegal and Mauritania which in 2008 helped to reduce arrivals in the Canary Islands by 70%.

### **Common European border strategy**

MEPs are calling for the replacement of national Schengen visas with universal European Schengen visas, and for a joint consular service for visas to be set up on a gradual and voluntary basis. The report also calls on the Council and Member States to adopt arrangements based on solidarity to share the burden of border policing amongst Member States.

The European Parliament is particularly shocked by the "human tragedy caused by illegal migratory sea routes." Mr Busuttil states that in 2008, more migrants lost their lives at sea than in the war in Gaza. Therefore, the report is calling for urgent action to stop this tragedy, and to reinforce co-operation with countries of origin. MEPs are concerned that illegal immigration organised by criminal networks has so far proved to be more effective than common European



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actions, and urges Member States to take action in "the fight against organised crime, human trafficking and smuggling."

FRONTEX, the Warsaw based EU agency designed to co-ordinate border security co-operation between Member States, should be reinforced and have its powers extended. The report suggests that FRONTEX should be provided with adequate funding and resources so that it has the potential to acquire its own equipment. MEPs are calling on the Commission to investigate the possibility of "upgrading FRONTEX operations at sea into an EU coast guard, without undermining Member States' control of their borders."