

# **Civic citizenship; Social and Civic Participation in the Community**

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On behalf of the European Network Against racism, I wish to thank the organisers for the invitation. This conference is very vital for ENAR because most of the ethnic and religious minorities, we represent, do live in the large cities throughout European continent.

It is in these large cities of Europe, that they found their initial shelter, job opportunities, and social network. It is here that they later brought their families to live permanently.

From my personal experience of living in large cities like Islamabad, Munchen, New York, London, Krakow and finally in Copenhagen, I know that large cities play a crucial role, in absorbing hundreds of thousands of their own citizens who move from rural to urban areas.

Besides it also takes in new arrivals from far away countries who come there as students, refugees, and through family reunions. And in future, it would be in these cities, Blue Cardholders would settle and help to maintain European welfare systems of the future.

I know that many big cities are struggling to cope with a tremendous pressure of providing jobs, housing, education and social activities.  
My heartfelt appreciation for this good work.

Unfortunately, many EU governments including my own country Denmark, do not appreciate the efforts of mayors and political leadership of big cities. They even do not appreciate the contributions of ethnic minorities who work long hours in doing dirty jobs, keep open their small shops day and night and provide services which are necessary to keep big cities functioning.

On top of this sad situation, such areas where ethnic minorities live in great numbers are being dubbed as Ghettos and efforts are being made to spread these visible minorities on the name of integration. I just hope that mayors of big cities would think again before taking such drastic actions.

I am saying this because spreading minority kids in various schools confuses them. Rejecting an accommodation to a minority family, with reference to low income, certain ethnicity or nationality is not only against human rights but also illegal. Besides, no scientific survey has yet proved that spreading people helps the integration. On the contrary, it induces a sense of second class citizenship, anger and isolation. There is no alternative to big city social network for minorities.

Many national politicians do not accept the notion that integration is a two ways street. They still ask the minorities to make all the efforts and if it does not happen, they are putting in place sanctions and even tightening the laws to hinder people to seek asylum or marry from homelands.  
This has simply become majority dictatorship.

I live in Denmark, which has in recent years made its name in doing every thing wrong when it comes to integrating ethnic minorities from outside Europe. ENAR's annual reports from the last 3 years confirm that this trend is taking hold in many other EU

countries. The Danish think Tank set up by the government as well as a recent survey conducted by the British Council and EU commission has given a very low rate of approval to its integration policies. Other EU countries have not done their homework either.

ENAR strongly believes that both majority and minorities must open their mind and eyes. Majority society should provide equal rights and equal opportunities while minorities should do their duty to learn the language, abide by the law of the land, make an effort to adopt local traditions and norms and most important of all - be an exemplary citizen.

Common values and a common vision for the society can only be achieved if the majority and minorities respect each other, work out good proposals and negotiate a middle path. Since majority has the power and money, minorities are very dependent on its goodwill and understanding.

ENAR is doing all it can to co-ordinate NGO efforts, lobby the governments, co-operate with progressive forces, give suggestions and take part in public debates. In many countries, ENAR has joined forces with organisation who are covering other areas of discrimination. This networking has strengthen a common cause.

ENAR is the largest network of grassroots antiracist NGOs in EU. We have more than 600 organisations who are actively involved, in not only fighting discrimination and unequal treatment on local and national level in every EU member state but also act as an advisory body to the EU institutions.

Even though, ENAR was established in 1998 as a direct result of the 1997 European Year Against Racism, there were numerous NGOs who were actively involved in the struggle against racism for decades.

Establishment of ENAR was a great victory for hundreds of small and large anti-racist NGOs who have been for years campaigning to raise awareness in the European societies concerning discrimination and racism but who also were asking the European Community to put in place a judicial mechanism to protect ethnic and religious minorities - both 3<sup>rd</sup> country national as well as EF citizens.

Since 1957 when the foundation of the present EU was laid in Rome Treaty, there was no legal remedy to protect people who were victims of racism. Even Social Charter for workers rights was silent when it came to the rights of migrant workers.

FROM 19986 TO 1996, IT WAS A PERIOD OF GREAT ACTIVITY, DISAPPOINTMENTS AND FEW ACHIEVEMENTS. BUT IN 1996, DURING THE TIME OF CONSULTATIONS FOR AMSTERDAM TREATY, THE STARTING LINE - A LOOSE NGO NETWORK SUCCEEDED IN CONVINCING THE EUROPEAN POLITICIANS TO TAKE AN ACTION TO PUT IN PLACE SOME ANTI-DISCRIMINATION ARTICLES IN THE TREATY. THUS, ARTICLE 13 WAS BORN WHICH LATER BECAME THE SOURCE OF ALL ANTI-DISCRIMINATION DIRECTIVES AND CAMPAIGNS IN EU.

ENAR'S STRUCTURE IS VERY HORIZONTAL. All our NGOs recognize the local dimension to the fight against racism and feel that they have a lot to gain from a network as a forum to share information, and influence policies across the European Union through campaigns.

ENAR is an advisory network for EU Commission, Parliament and work closely with EUMC, ECRI, UNCHR, OSCE and a number of other institution EU and European institutions.

ENAR is determined to fight racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and Islamophobia, to promote equality of treatment between EU citizens and third country nationals, and to link local/regional/national initiatives with European initiatives. The network's mission is to:

- Act against the discrimination and exclusion of people of different racial, ethnic and cultural backgrounds;
- Eliminate racist elements in Europe's migration and integration policies
- Celebrate cultural, ethnic and racial diversity

Our lobby includes, Race directives, religious discrimination, violence or hatred, and access to citizenship, monitoring and mainstreaming.

An other area of work, we are concerned is Roma discrimination, anti-Semitism and increasing Islamophobia.

I know that many ethnic minorities still feel unwelcome in many European societies. They do not know the system, often can not speak the language, have no job, have little social contacts and believe me just one smile from you can change the whole sad day for someone.

In the end, ENAR would like to propose some concrete steps, which this initiative can take. We believe that all large European cities should have;

1. A local integration council made of minority representatives - youth and elderly - as well as municipality politicians and some solidarity NGOs. Besides advising the municipalities on various integration issues, this Council can be a bridge between ethnic minorities and local authorities. But this council should have sufficient financial resources and staff to do a professional job.
2. The complaint possibility must be enhanced against racist and discriminatory practices in public services and job opportunities
3. Anti-racist and minority NGOs should be actively involved in campaigns to raise awareness among the public, of benefits of mutual integration
4. More youth activity centres are needed where young people can spend quality time instead of hanging on the street corners or committing petty crimes
5. Elderly among minorities also need places where they can meet, exchange news, learn about society and feel useful
6. For the general public, activity centres are a must where they can meet with minorities and conduct cultural activities. This would would create cultural diversity. But cultural diversity does not mean eating Donar Kebab, seeing Belly Dance or listening to Rap music. To me diversity whether it is cultural, ethnic or religious is that we celebrate and enjoy the difference as well as similarities. Both majority and minorities should practice it because we live in a globalised world. Internet, e-mail and fast travel has opened the borders, which can not be closed any longer.

Celebrating diversity does not mean that we force the other to accept the way, we do things. It can be only achieved by good examples, co-operation and respect.

I am sure that over the course of these two days, you would discuss the ways to implement your plans. I wish you all the success and bright future.

Contact ENAR, if you need any assistance. We are there for you