

**Friday 15 November 10:00-12:00CET**

Online Meeting (Zoom) with interpretation in English and French

## Event Report

### **Consultation on Meaningful, Inclusive and Safe Participation of People of African Descent in Public Affairs**

#### **Background**

The Office of United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Regional Office for Europe (OHCHR) and the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) through the DisQo Stakeholder Network, aim to ensure health is central to the EU's Union of Equality Strategies. Through a series of civil society consultations, six main recommendations on discrimination, racism and health have been formulated and handed over to the office of the European Commission's Coordinator on combating racism. Through the partners in the DisQo Network, this narrative is continually expanded to ensure comprehensive anti-racism and anti-discrimination policy.

This event focused on recommendation number 2 on **social participation**; the **meaningful involvement of affected communities, academics, experts, international organisations and all other relevant stakeholders**. Putting this recommendation in action, this consultation brought together civil society organisations that are directly concerned with anti-racism and anti-discrimination policy.<sup>1</sup> The result is a comprehensive list of considerations and recommendations relevant to strengthening social participation of affected communities and individuals in the development of Union of Equality policy.

#### **Opening**

The event was opened by **Mila Paspalanova**, the **Anti-Racial Discrimination Advisor for OHCHR-Brussels**. Introducing the purpose of the consultation, she called particular attention to the **Guidance Note for People of African Descent on implementing the right to participate in public affairs** as relevant to the roundtable. Combined with the **DisQo recommendation** on social participation, presented by **Tomas de Jong**, **Policy Manager at EPHA**, the scene was set for the roundtable.

#### **Challenges in and recommendations for social participation of People of African Descent**

Under Mila Paspalanova's moderation, the first round of interventions focused on **challenges and guidance** in the context of **meaningful, inclusive and safe participation of people of African descent in public affairs**. The following overarching issues and suggested solutions were shared:

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<sup>1</sup> The identity of the speakers is not disclosed for privacy reasons

- Challenge: Institutional racism leads to legal and financial barriers in **community organisation** for People of African Descent (PAD), preventing active involvement in the system  
*Recommendations:*
  - Remove **restrictions** in countries that legally prohibit organising around specific groups
  - Reverse **funding cuts** and remove **limitations** for civil society and community organisations
  - Fund and support **independent movements** for collective inclusion
  - **Map associations** representing PAD to facilitate engagement
  - **Combat sense of exclusion** through targeted projects
  - Address and/or criminalise **racial profiling** in policing
- Challenge: It is difficult to identify **political candidates** representing PAD interests, including on the community level and in public services  
*Recommendations:*
  - Share stories of **PAD working in institutions** – rather than focusing just on politicians – to foster **representation** at the decision-making level
  - Prevent **tokenism** of PAD in politics, particularly when they are forced to adhere to party lines rather than their principles
  - Remove barriers for PAD to engage in **local policy** by countering feelings of **fear**
  - **Include PAD in DisQo consultations** to get a grasp of why progress is lacking
- Challenge: There is a lack of education and knowledge on **education material** focusing on **racialisation** and **colonialism**  
*Recommendations:*
  - Counteract **negative mental health impacts** by developing such materials
  - Strengthen the **right to understand** the history of the country of residence and the country of origin
  - **Empower children to act** by helping them understand their history
  - Pair **state apologies** for slavery with **educational plans** on this history
- Recommendation: Collect **good quality data** that reflects the **current reality**, rather than the popular narrative

## Recommendations on social participation in the EU Anti-racism Action Plan

Under the moderation of Tomas de Jong, the second round of interventions focused on social participation of PAD in the context of the **EU Anti-racism Action Plan** (EU ARAP). The following recommendations and suggested solutions were shared:

- Ensure the EU Anti-racism Action Plan is **transparent** and includes an **accountability framework**
- **Embed intersectionality** in the EU Anti-racism Action Plan to ensure a comprehensive approach
  - Call for an **EU Housing Equity Directive** to break the vicious circle of the inability to find a house
  - Combat discrimination in **digital spaces**
- Include **health** as part of an intersectional approach to discrimination and racism in the EU ARAP, recognising both **physical** and **mental health**
  - Focus on healthcare access, including **curricula** for and **training** of healthcare workers

- Counter the **stigmatisation of traditional and cultural practices**
- Create and publish a **list of professionals** who can provide tailored care for PAD
- Recognise and create understanding of **intergenerational trauma** and **cultural sensitivity**
- Create **safe-spaces** through community-based services
- Monitor policy through **good quality equality data**, including European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) data, community data and national level data collection
  - Utilise existing data to **act now**, as a lack of data cannot be a reason not to act
- Strengthen **civil society engagement** and civil participation
  - **Reduce pressure** on communities and drive action from the member state level, rather than relying on civil society
  - Include the **voices of young people**, particularly through **intergenerational dialogue**
  - Foster the **right to social participation** as a means to increase **societal awareness**
  - Facilitate strong representation of PAD in the institutions concerned with the EU ARAP, as well as across society to foster **inclusive craftsmanship**

## Conclusion

This consultation is a case-in-point on the importance of creating policy with the people that are concerned with and impacted by it. The discussions underline the importance of ensuring a strong **social participation component** to the post-2025 EU Anti-racism Action Plan.

More importantly, they add another layer of considerations on specific challenges and barriers, and how they may be overcome. Barriers specific to national contexts, difficulties in political organisation, the importance of education, and direct action based on data that is already available shows the priorities identified thanks to social participation.

This was further concretised through comments on how the post-2025 EU ARAP can be more transparent and implement a stronger accountability mechanism, take a true intersectional approach, foster higher-quality equality data collection, strengthen engagement with civil society, while also ensuring that both physical and mental health are part of a comprehensive strategy.

The DisQo Stakeholder Network will keep expanding its recommendations based on these consultations, ensuring this message is translated in the EU ARAP, but also in the other Union of Equality Strategies. Social participation and an inclusive approach to health based on intersectionality are relevant to all these strategies. As such, joining with the full range of social inclusion civil society organisations is key, especially in the policy renewals starting in 2025. This creates an opportunity for a real step forward on anti-racism and anti-discrimination.