



## FACT SHEET 36

### **Report on the High Level Advisory Group of Experts on the Social Integration of Ethnic Minorities and their Full Participation on the Labour Market**

**April 2007**

#### **Background**

The European Commission's Framework Strategy for tackling discrimination and promoting equal opportunities - set out in a policy communication in June 2005<sup>1</sup> - highlighted the need for special attention to positive and innovative approaches which would overcome systemic obstacles faced by disadvantaged ethnic minorities and called for the establishment of a high level experts group.

In the Framework Strategy the Commission acknowledges that one of the biggest challenges facing the European Union is to promote the social and labour market inclusion of ethnic minority communities. Very importantly, it draws attention to the fact that 'the EU needs to develop *appropriate responses to the different needs* of new migrants, established minorities of immigrant origin and other minority groups'. The situation of the Roma is highlighted as an issue of particular concern.

Furthermore, the Commission points out that despite existing initiatives severe forms of discrimination continues and the challenge remains to maximise the effectiveness of the tools on the table.

The high level advisory group was set up following the recommendations of the Framework Decision and to promote policy developments on the social and labour market integration of 'disadvantaged ethnic minorities'.

With the participation of ENAR's former chair, Bashy Quraishy, a limited number of eminent personalities came together in 2006 under the presidentship of Professor Rita Sussmuth<sup>2</sup>, and represented their findings at a closing conference in December 2007.

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<sup>1</sup> Commission Communication on Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities for all – A Framework Strategy, COM(2005) 224 final,

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/public/pubst\\_en.htm#Commission](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/public/pubst_en.htm#Commission)

<sup>2</sup> Other members of the HLAG include: Jarmila Balazova, Ilze Brands Kehris, Jose Manuel Fresno Garcia, Lee Jasper, Andrzej Mirga, Louis Schweitzer, Istvan Serto-Radics, Tarja Summa. For more

## Mandate of the HLAG

Set up in January 2006, the High Level Advisory Group (HLAG) was tasked to examine the integration of ethnic minorities in the labour market and:

- ‘to analyse how to achieve better social integration of ethnic minorities and their full participation in the labour market within the European Union,
- to submit, before the end of the ‘2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All’, a report containing recommendations on the policies to be implemented in this connection’<sup>3</sup>

As Professor Sussmuth put in her foreword to the report, their primary aim was *not* analysing the reasons for existing inequalities in the labour market but to pull together good practices across public and private initiatives and submit recommendations on this basis.

Their lead questions were:

- Which actions have been undertaken with a view to reduce social, cultural, economic and political exclusion; what was successful; what has not been achieved?
- How can the non-discrimination policy be evaluated?
- Is it the most effective approach to reduce unequal access and to improve integration in the labour market?

## Overview of the Report

In line with its mandate, the group identified barriers, which prevent members of ethnic minorities to achieve full social and labour market inclusion and identified good practices in the public and private sphere targeted to overcome those barriers.

In addition to regular meetings of the HLAG where members discussed and identified relevant policy areas, working papers and hearings with external experts, the work of the group was supported by an independent study of the Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit (IZA): ‘Study on the Social and Labour Market Integration of Ethnic Minorities’.<sup>4</sup>

### **1. Minorities in Europe**

The practice of promotion and protection of specific minority rights is highly diverse in Member states and lack a clear foundation in community law, and consequently there are no EU benchmarks. For political, legal and practical reasons the HLAG did not consider minority rights and their implementation but employed a progressive approach and concentrated on the overlap between membership in an ethnic minority and being socially disadvantaged. The heterogeneity of the term ‘ethnic minorities’ have been acknowledged just like the heterogeneity of the problems and outcomes individuals belonging to the target group face in different countries.

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information on the members see:

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/pdf/hlg/hlginfo\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/pdf/hlg/hlginfo_en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Decision 2006/33/EC of 20 January 2006, Art. 2.

<sup>4</sup> K. Zimmermann et al., (2007) available at: [www.iza.org](http://www.iza.org)

Nonetheless the HLAG stated that similarities can be drawn up between the barriers and possible solutions for immigrants and for ethnic minorities of non-immigrant background and also in comparison to the problems of socially disadvantaged members of the majority.

The HLAG also stated that members of ‘visible minorities’ (including all people who are visibly different from the majority populations regardless of their citizenship status) may be exposed to greater risks of discrimination and thus to be socially and economically excluded.

## **2. Barriers**

Due to lack of data and the widely disparate definitions of categories related to ethnicity in the available statistics across Europe, comparisons on the situation and conclusions about the outcomes of ethnic minorities in individual Member States is difficult. After studying the relevant literature based on social research literature and the IZA study however, the group is supportive of the following hypotheses:

- there is an *ethnic wage gap* which differs from Member State to Member State and from ethnic group to ethnic group
- the membership in an ethnic minority in most cases is a social disadvantage *per se*

***The HLAG defined 14 barriers which prevent members of ethnic minorities from fully participating in the labour market:***

- (1) lack of education and training
- (2) lack of language skills
- (3) lack of recognition of skills and qualifications
- (4) lack of access to professions
- (5) lack of access to citizenship
- (6) lack of integration policies
- (7) stereotypes, prejudices and negative attitudes
- (8) lack of mobility and concentration in certain areas
- (9) industrial change
- (10) disincentives through welfare systems
- (11) discrimination
- (12) lack of information
- (13) labour market competition
- (14) undeclared work

## **3. The situation of the Roma**

Discussed under the chapter on barriers, the situation of the Roma is highlighted as being comparable with the position of other ethnic minorities but at the same time running a much higher risk of being excluded.

The issues identified to particularly concern the Roma community are the following:

- to an even greater extent than other minorities, the Roma are unskilled or poorly qualified
- the stereotypes are even more entrenched and more negative than with other minorities
- direct but also indirect discrimination is facilitated by the fact that the Roma are visibly different from the majority population in many European countries where there are otherwise few people from ‘visible minorities’
- most countries where large Romani populations live – those of new Member States, but also Southern Europe – non-discrimination policies are weak and do not have a long tradition
- Multiple discrimination is a common experience affecting Roma women but also middle-aged Roma workers

#### **4. Towards an Inclusive Society**

According to the report, ‘only the mutually reinforcing application of all three elements – *non-discrimination policies, policies on equal opportunities and diversity management* – will lead to tangible results’ and towards an inclusive society, which aims to bridge the gap between formal and real equality and provides equal opportunities for all of its members and actively promotes diversity.

Discrimination, while not being the only reason for the social and economic inclusion of ethnic minorities, is the most important one. EU non-discrimination legislation, equality bodies and the third sector all have a major role to play in developing knowledge of, raising awareness and implementing equality laws. The group warns however, that if the sole application of equality laws leads only to formal equality and not to real equal opportunities. Positive action and targeted policies must be developed and implemented to close this gap.

Building on the longer US tradition of diversity management, successfully applied diversity management policies can also have a tangible impact for the benefit of the members of minority communities themselves and for businesses.

#### **5. Good Practice in Enterprises**

The group has identified a number of good practices in enterprises which adopted strategies for more ethnic diversity. Reasons for introducing such policies range from compliance with non-discrimination legislation to realising the ‘business case for diversity’ – the economic interest in attracting talented people for their work force, becoming more profitable in a global market or acquiring a better reputation.

According to the report, a successful implementation of diversity policies which focus on ethnicity and on other diversity grounds needs to be based on organisational change and change of the corporate culture.

These include:

- ‘setting the scene’ – the company’s decision why and how it wishes to elaborate its commitment for a broader ethnic mix of its personnel. Here the practice of the French equality body, HALDE is a good example, which in collaboration with big enterprises develops diversity strategies
- building of commitment – at the level of top-management and middle and regional management

- a thorough SWOT analysis of the business and a reflection about its issues and needs including an analysis of market opportunities, the needs of customers and the reputation of the company
- elaboration of business policies and/or business charters
- implementing structures and tools going beyond human resources development and building essential part of the general business strategy
- recruitment policy and human resources development
- demanding suppliers to follow the same principles of diversity management and principles of social responsibility
- communicating principles on ethnic diversity towards staff, potential applicants, customers and stakeholders
- a reflection of broader ethnic mix in the composition of own staff

Business charters for diversity are also effective tools for enhancing the efficiency of a business and for improving its social relationships.

This section of the report also considers ethnic minority self-employment and states that the positive contribution of ethnic minority businesses to the European economy cannot be overestimated – they are tax payers, business partners, and job providers.

## **6. Good practice in Public Policy**

Based on an analysis of Member States' integration policies the report highlights examples in the following areas:

- Protections of rights
  - Access to citizenship: best practice in terms of permission of dual citizenship in Belgium, France, Ireland and the UK
  - Non-discrimination legislation and policies: best practice as regards concepts and the application of non-discrimination law in Finland, Portugal, Sweden and the UK, and Portugal, Ireland and the Netherlands as regards enforcement
  - Fight against racism and xenophobia: the French NGO movement 'SOS Racisme' triggered a good reaction by public authorities
- Political and social participation is possible through and openness of the political class in France, through specific constitutional and legal provisions in Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia and through political liberties (e.g. right to vote and stand in local elections) in the Nordic countries
- Education, training, development and recognition of skills and qualifications: integration courses with language training are preconditions for successful integration. Good examples include the Hungarian law against school segregation and the increasing acknowledgment that change of identity is not an element of integration policies.
- Access to employment and self-employment
  - Labour market integration and the removal of barriers: Sweden and Spain are in the forefront of providing chances for non-EU citizens to change jobs or become self-employed
  - Access to public services is important as they are amongst the biggest employers in many Member States. The UK is quoted to have open recruitment policies.
  - Access to self-employment: Swedish, Slovenian and Portuguese practice represents a pragmatic way to launch a start-up

- Social inclusion and fight against poverty: In the context of the last cycle of national strategies Germany, Netherlands, and Denmark focus on the specific needs of ethnic minority women, while Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the Czech Republic put a special focus on education and living conditions.

Initiatives outside of the EU and by international organisations are also referred to as good practices, like the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 and the OSCE Action Plan with the participation of 56 countries. The report underlines however that despite of many initiatives and programmes the Roma are still suffering serious disadvantage in most areas of life and that change has been slow. The HLAG calls for specific and targeted approach for Roma inclusion.

## 7. Recommendations

***The HLAG recommends on the basis of identified barriers and the assessment of good practice in both public policy and enterprises the European Commission, the other European institutions, the Member states' authorities at all appropriate levels, social partners and organisations of civil society to:***

- (1) Make the inclusion of members of ethnic minorities into the society, in particular into labour market, a priority of the political agenda
- (2) Pursue equality mainstreaming and gender mainstreaming
- (3) Identify and address specific barriers to inclusion of members of ethnic minorities
- (4) Establish a sustainable long-term policy for inclusive labour markets, using a targeted, but not ethnically segregated approach
- (5) Mobilise all relevant actors, making use of opportunities and value the contributions from members of ethnic minorities to the society
- (6) Allocate all necessary resources
- (7) Support mutual learning by highlighting good practice, developing knowledge and strengthening the analytical tools
- (8) Focus specifically on the implementation of policies to improve the situation of Roma in terms of education, employment, health and housing

### Follow-up of the Report

The European Commission is due to publish a Communication on the follow-up to the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All, which is currently expected to include the Commission response to the Report of the High Level Group on social and economic inclusion of disadvantaged ethnic minorities.

ENAR will monitor the follow – up on the Report, its findings and recommendations closely and seek to influence its elaboration in order to ensure that it contributes to, and supports, the social and labour market inclusion of ethnic minorities and thus fight against racism and discrimination in Europe.

## Useful links and key documents

Framework strategy - Expert group to promote inclusion of ethnic minorities in the EU

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/policy/hlg\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/fundamental_rights/policy/hlg_en.htm)

Commission Communication on Non-Discrimination and Equal Opportunities for all – A Framework Strategy, COM(2005) 224 final,

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/public/pubst\\_en.htm#Commission](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/public/pubst_en.htm#Commission)

Proposal for a Decision on the European Year of Equal Opportunities for All (2007) Towards a Just Society, COM(2005) 225 final,

[http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment\\_social/fundamental\\_rights/public/pubst\\_en.htm#Commission](http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/public/pubst_en.htm#Commission)

Forschungsinstitut zur Zukunft der Arbeit (IZA)

<http://www.iza.org/>

ENAR Fact Sheet 21: European Commission proposal for a European Year of Equal Opportunities for All 2007 (August 2005),

<http://cms.horus.be/files/99935/MediaArchive/pdf/fr/fs21%20-%202007%20year%20-%20august%202005%20-%20fr.pdf>

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*ENAR is a network of some 600 European NGOs working to combat racism in all EU Member States. Its establishment was a major outcome of the 1997 European Year against Racism. 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.*



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