

racism
fascism
nationalism

Anti-racist telephone hotlines

What do you do when you suspect the outcome of your job interview was clear as soon as the interviewer saw the color of your skin?
Your house is covered with racist graffiti, what can you do?

Anti-racist organisations deal with similar problems every day. In many European countries legislation exists that should punish discrimination and racism. In many of these countries however, implementation is not exactly effective or successful. Practical help for the victims of racism and discrimination is badly needed. This sometimes includes help in asylum procedures, foreigner detention and resisting deportation as well as help in human rights violations by police or prison officials against black and ethnic minorities.

One of the ways of making help available to as many people as possible is the use of special telephone lines. We have called this special working method the **anti-racist telephone hotline**.

What is an anti-racist telephone hotline?

An anti-racist telephone hotline needs to be more than just a telephone number. A strong anti-racist organisation needs to back up the hotline.

A hotline is best defined by its functions:

- Helping victims
- Political campaigning
- Mobilising / engaging the community
- Giving out information and referring
- Reporting and monitoring

This information leaflet is the result of the UNITED-conference "Anti-racist Telephone Hotlines in Europe: Experiences, Working Methods, Co-operation", June 26-28/1998 Wien (A), co-organised with Helping Hands - koordinationsbüro für Flüchtlingshilfe. During the conference delegates from 45 organisations from 17 countries initiated closer cooperation. This leaflet is sent to the conference participants as well as 2000 groups in Europe.

More than just a number to call!

HELPING VICTIMS OR POLITICAL CAMPAIGNING?

What should be your priority? Helping the victims of racism, or political campaigning aiming to make the situation better for all potential victims of racism?

An anti-racist telephone hotline will normally see **helping victims as its first priority**. However, the anti-racist organisation behind the hotline may well use the information of the hotline to campaign with.

No hotline should be so short-sighted that it does no longer recognise the **structural problems** behind the separate cases. Helping each individual case can seem pointless if the situation causing the problems is not dealt with.

Any anti-racist organisation should keep in mind, however, that the people with the complaint are the ones determining the course of action. Many may not want any publicity about their case, fearing repercussions.

Specific individual cases may not be very well suited for political campaigning, but reports resulting from careful monitoring of many of these cases are easy to use.

MOBILISING AND INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

One of the keywords in anti-racist work with so-called victims is "**empowerment**". It means to make people discover their own abilities and strengths. Social workers in the United States in the 80s started to call their clients no longer "victims", but "survivors". The reason was that victims are passive. We don't want the people we deal with to be passive. Ideally they should play an active role in the solution of their own problems, which would leave them stronger in the end.

An important step in empowering people is by **involving the whole community** in anti-racist work. When struggling against this evil is everybody's task, there is no longer a division between victims and the rest of society. Local people can be trained by an outsider, but eventually they will become trainers themselves.

Callers may find people from their own community more trustworthy than outsiders.

Besides, if the anti-racist hotline is a real part of the community, it will be much easier to refer people to the right people or institution, as all of them are actively involved.

INFORMATION AND REFERRALS

Any anti-racist hotline needs to fall back on the help of many other NGOs, institutions, governmental bodies, medical services, legal services, interpretation services, etc. etc. Before the hotline starts its work, there should be an address list of useful addresses in the office, as well as relevant legal texts and standard educational material. It needs to have knowledge of where to refer people to, not just the address but also the reputation of the place. Callers need to know that they can call back to the hotline if they don't find the solution offered satisfactory.

REPORTING AND MONITORING

The work of an anti-racist hotline produces a big amount of useful information on the nature and amount of racism in society. By monitoring your cases and reporting about them, empirical information becomes available that is hard to ignore. It can be used to pressure the authorities into taking appropriate action.

Keep the following in mind when monitoring your calls:

- Use a standard lay-out/form to which other information can be attached (it should list at least time and date of the complaint, name and contact address of the caller, short note of the complaint, category of the complaint, what you will do about it, space to write down if you did and what the reaction was);
- Consult existing hotlines about their system of monitoring and reporting: it may well be unnecessary to invent the wheel all over again!

In the Netherlands a standard form is used by all anti-discrimination offices. It is now being translated in German, English and French. If you would like a copy, contact:

- LBR (Landelijk Bureau Racismebestrijding), Postbus 517, NL-3500 AM Utrecht,

phone +31-30-2331421, fax +31-30-2328294, e-mail lbr@xs4all.nl, <http://www.aric.nl/lbr.htm>

- Keep your information both on paper and on the computer as computers are known to fail from time to time;

- Make sure that the personal data of people are kept safe and are deleted before sharing statistical information;
- Monitor so-called parasite calls too. It might be interesting to know how many hang-ups you get, how much racist abuse, etc. Consider reporting this to the police, either to make them do something about it or to make them aware of the seriousness of the problem.

TECHNICS

Opening hours: how to be reachable

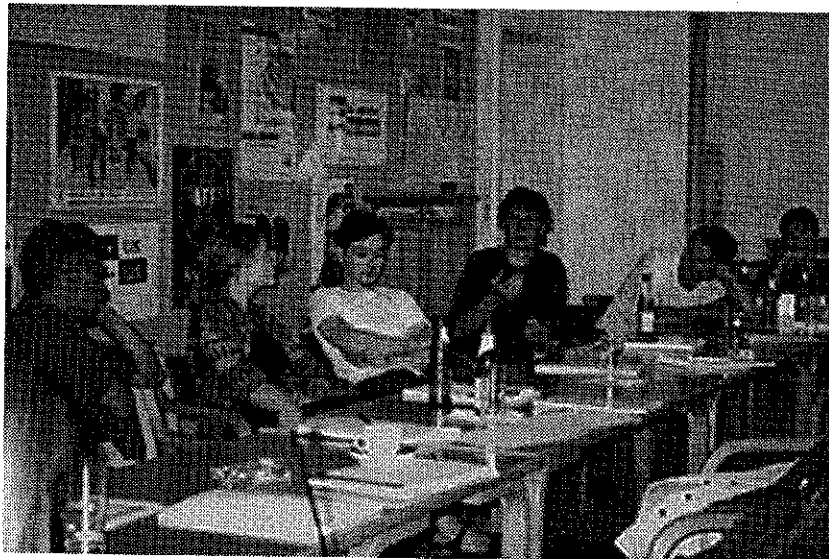
Most hotlines have found out over the years, that the number of calls outside of office hours is small. This is due to the fact that callers expect the hotline to be open during office hours. Outside of office hours, several technical solutions can help to fulfil the need of callers:

- Relaying telephone calls

In Switzerland a system has been operative since some time in which telephone calls that come in outside of office hours are relayed by the telephone company's central to the home number of one of the hotline workers. The workers have arranged their personal schedules in such a way that there is always someone on call.

- Answering computer

In Austria the hotline workers found out that many of the calls have to do with issues on which information can be found at other organisations, or questions to which there is a standard answer. They have installed a telephone answering computer. A caller can choose out of different menus and will receive information on several standard issues. By pressing a button they can also receive it by fax on their fax number. The information is regularly up-dated and is in several languages.



Discussion in plenary

- Mobile phones

In Finland the hotline number is answered by an answering machine that gives the emergency mobile phone number. The co-ordinator of the hotline carries his mobile phone with him all the time, or gives the phone to another available worker.

Free phone numbers

In Belgium the anti-racist hotline is a free number. This can be arranged with the telephone company, but it costs a lot of money. Most hotlines have found that the cost of the call is not a real obstacle for those who use the phone service.

Translation

An anti-racist hotline will have many callers that do not speak the language of the country fluently. In complicated cases it may be useful to have someone on call to translate. Most of the time it would be more useful to make an appointment in the office with a translator present.

Sponsoring

Most telephone companies are not eager to sponsor NGOs that are involved in something that might be considered political. However, appealing to their sense of morality you might be able to get them to support a free line, a telephone computer, an answering machine, a mobile phone or (part of) your subscription. Other targets for sponsoring might be wealthy members of the local community. You could invite them to a dinner and present them with your work, while asking them to make a sizeable donation. Make sure you get the dinner sponsored too.

PROMOTION

Avoiding raising false hopes

Promotion material should give accurate information about the services callers can expect from the hotline. Although it may be useful to publish information in the languages that are most used by the migrant and ethnic minority communities in the country, this may raise false hopes when there are no services available in those languages. Opening hours should be realistic. It might be smart to start with short opening hours first, extending towards full office hours later.

Crisis Cards: Know your rights

Several organisations in the United Kingdom and Germany have produced small credit-card sized cards with information for foreigners, migrants and refugees as well as black and ethnic minorities. The card lists the number of the hotline, the basic laws on identification, "stop and search" and arrest as well as the law against discrimination (if it exists). Everyone can carry the card in their wallets.

STAFF AND VOLUNTEERS

Back-up network

You get a call that a woman is in the police station. She wants to press charges against the racist behaviour of one of the police officers. She is alone and getting scared. In many cases, there is only one person on the hotline. It is essential that this person has backup. There needs to be an organised network of volunteers or staff that can help e.g. by going to a person in need or by organising protest. A hotline is a huge responsibility, the organisation needs to be able to act quickly if needed.

Voluntary professionals

In this leaflet we speak sometimes of staff, sometimes of workers. The reason for that is that hotlines do not necessarily need to be run by professionals. But they need to be run in a professional manner. Volunteers need training. They should be able to count on the back up of a professional in difficult cases.

TRAINING

A hotline ideally works with experienced people. To make sure they know what they are doing, they need training. Training could be provided by professionals or by experienced staff or by outsiders from other anti-racist NGOs.

Legal training

Ideally all legal questions should be answered by the lawyer on the staff of the anti-racist organisation. Most NGOs do not have the means to have a lawyer on call permanently. This means that many of the standard questions will be answered by the person who answers the phone, regardless of his/her background. As many legal questions determine someones future (e.g. asylum matters, family reunion, job-related matters) they cannot be dealt with lightly. Legal training should be given by a professional, who is specialised in these matters. It should be repeated regularly, e.g. every year or every two years, as legislation changes.

Role playing

One method that confronts people with unexpected situations and makes them confident in dealing with them is role playing. Role playing is also a way of trying to understand the situation of the other and to analyse ones own position. During the training daily situations are recreated. One participant will play a difficult caller, or a caller with an especially difficult case and the other person plays himself. Ideally such a training is done by a (semi) professional trainer, but any individual with some experience in the field could do it.

Active listening

Active listening is a technique that has been developed both in social work and in conflict prevention and resolution. Active listening makes the person that is speaking feels secure and confident. When trying to get the full story on the telephone, such an atmosphere of trust is very important. A few of the things an active listener does: summarising what the caller is saying, confirming that he/she is heard, asking for details, asking to explain what is unclear, asking for what the caller wants done, respecting the emotions of the caller, sympathising.

Follow-up meetings

Working on an anti-racist hotline can be exhausting. Not all problems can be solved, which is frustrating. Callers can be rude, demand unrealistic things or can be threatening. It is important to make sure that experienced and inexperienced staff/volunteers have the opportunity to share their fears and frustrations. Regular follow-up meetings may help alleviate tension and can help prevent 'burn-out' syndrome.

WHAT COULD GO WRONG: DO'S AND DON'TS

Do's

- This work is political, do think about the structures behind racism.
- Do educate people: part of the hotlines work lies in education of the general public
- Do get in contact with the perpetrator: the perpetrator might be persuaded to change his attitude.
- Do try to make sure you are seen as trustworthy, effective, etc.
- Do involve professionals (but try to get them to give their time freely): you will need the help of a lawyer, and a counsellor or social worker would help too.
- Do provide training for the staff: your staff should feel confident in their work, whether they are professionals or not.
- Do find a balance between the interest of the victims and using the gathered information for political propaganda.

Dont's

- Be aware of victimisation. Don't make people feel powerless instead of empowering them.
- Don't take over prejudice, assuming things instead of listening with an open mind.
- Don't surrender to work overload: there are limits to what you can do, 'burn-out' does not help your project
- Make sure you don't start accusing the victim: e.g. "Why were you even out there in the middle of the night?"
- Don't consider taking action without investigation: all angles of a case should be looked at.
- Avoid giving the perpetrator a feeling of powerlessness; convince him/her that he/she has the power to change the situation.
- Don't tell the victim to be silent to the authorities: silence gives power to the perpetrator.

(INTERNATIONAL) COOPERATION

The UNITED-conference in Vienna made it clear that there is a need for close (international) cooperation. Hotlines could benefit from several aspects of this cooperation: joint monitoring, reporting and campaigning, emergency cooperation and shared training. At the conference a decision was made to set up a so-called contact point of the "UNITED hotlines against racism" in Vienna.

Monitoring and reporting: political campaigning

By sharing information NGOs can avoid that the only information available is governmental information. They can compare the information and come up with more impressive, comprehensive reports. Anti-racist organisations can campaign on a more solid basis if they have accurate and actual knowledge of the situation in Europe.

Emergency cooperation

A racist embarks on a holiday in a neighbouring country. The human rights of an asylum seeker are being trampled by sending him from so-called safe third country to safe third country. The government is drafting anti-discrimination legislation but is failing to take the short-comings of legislation in other countries seriously. A black kid went into a police cell healthy, but came out dead and you need international protest and pressure. That is when you need emergency cooperation. You need to know who to call and you need it fast. This is what UNITED provides, together with the contact point for hotlines in Vienna (see further on in this info leaflet).

Training, information, solidarity and support

The cooperation between anti-racist NGOs involved in helping victims of racism, and more specifically with an anti-racist hotline can benefit enormously from sharing and exchanging experiences. Experts from one hotline can train the staff and/or volunteers of another. Information on the outcome of legal cases can help others with similar problems. Besides these practical benefits, it is also helpful to know that there are others out there, doing the same work and having the same troubles. A shared sense of solidarity is a good basis to work from.

Governmental institutions

No anti-racist NGO is the same. Some would like to work together with governmental institutions, some refuse to come even close to them. The material that hotlines gather could be of use to the governmental bodies that are in charge of monitoring racism.

One of the recent developments in the **European Union** is the creation of the "Monitoring Centre Against Racism". This governmental institution has been given the task to monitor the situation of racism in Europe and to advise the European Union about the actions it sees fit to take against it. Many NGOs have their doubts about its use and effectiveness, as well as its virtually non-existent independence. However, many have the opinion that the Monitoring Centre should not have the excuse of not knowing, and they will supply the Centre with all the material they have.

The **Council of Europe** monitors its Member States' actions against racism and the inequality of black and ethnic minorities. Its European Committee against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) publishes regular "country-by-country" reports detailing the situation in the different countries. It has recently made it known that it wishes to work more closely with NGOs on that point.

The **United Nations** have also a body that monitors the state of racism in the world: the Committee for the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD). This Committee has proven in the past to be a harsh critic of states that are failing in protecting their inhabitants against racism of all sorts.

Contact addresses:

- CERD (Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination),
c/o UN Centre for Human Rights, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Genève 10,
phone +41-22-9173917, fax +41-22-9170099
- ECRI (European Commission against Racism and Intolerance),
c/o Conseil de l'Europe, F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex, phone +33-38-8412348, fax +33-38-8413987,
e-mail webmaster@www.ecri.coe.fr, <http://www.ecri.coe.fr>
- European Monitoring Centre Against Racism,
Renngasse 5, A-1010 Wien, phone +43-1-531154123, fax 43-1-531154236, e-mail atbdk007@ibm.net

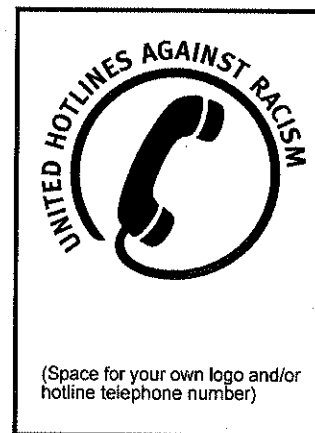
UNITED HOTLINES AGAINST RACISM

At the Vienna conference a firm basis was laid to set up cooperation between all organisations that work with the victims of racism, especially those that work with an anti-racist hotline. Participants from more than thirty NGOs from all over Europe have committed themselves to work together, share experiences and learn from each other in this specific field.

A common logo has been developed, which can be used by all participating organisations. A special e-mail discussion list will make it possible to communicate easily and ask practical questions to experienced colleagues in other countries in Europe.

Helping Hands - an Austrian organisation running a successful hotline since 1997 - has taken up the task of being the central contact point for hotlines. Contact:

- Helping Hands - Koordinationsbüro für Flüchtlingshilfe,
Lichtensteinstrasse 13, A-1090 Wien,
phone +43-1-310888010/67 fax +43-1-310888037, e-mail
helping.hands@oeh.ac.at



United Hotlines logo

LIST OF EUROPEAN HOTLINES AGAINST RACISM

Help us to complete this list!!

If you miss your or another hotline you know of please send us the response slip (p. 7)

The addresses are listed in alphabetical order of the country code

- Helping Hands - Koordinationsbüro für Flüchtlingshilfe,
Lichtensteinstrasse 13, A-1090 Wien,
phone +43-1-310888010, fax +43-1-310888037,
e-mail helping.hands@oeh.ac.at
- Centre pour l'Egalité des Chances et la Lutte Contre le
Racisme (CECLR),
155 rue de la Loi - 8ième ét., B-1040 Bruxelles,
phone +32-2-2330611, fax +32-2-2330704,
e-mail centrum@antiracisme.be, <http://www.antiracisme.be>
- Association Romande Contre le Racisme (ACOR),
Case Postale 328, CH-1000 Lausanne 9,
phone +41-21-3118057, fax 3118057, e-mail acor@vtx.ch
- Augenauf,
Postfach 363, CH-3000 Bern 11, phone +41-31-3320235

In Germany many local initiatives run hotlines. Telephone numbers can be requested from Anti rassistische Initiative (ARI) and Anti-Racist Information Centre (ARIC) in Berlin:

- Antirassistische Initiative (ARI), Yorckstrasse 59 HH, D-10965 Berlin, phone +49-30-7857281, fax 7869984, e-mail ari-b@vlberlin.comlink.de, <http://www.berlinet.de/ari>
- Anti-Rassistisch/Interkulturelles Informations zentrum (ARIC) Schumannstrasse 5, D-10117 Berlin, phone+49-30-2807590, fax +49-30-2807591, e-mail aric-berlin@ipn-b.comlink.apc.org, <http://www.ipn.de/aric>
- Büro gegen Ethnische Diskriminierung in Berlin/B (BDB0, Hohenstaufenstrasse 7, D-10781 Berlin, phone +49-30-2168884, fax +49-30-2167926
- Düsseldorfer Appell, c/o Jugendring, Lacombletstrasse 10, D-40239 Düsseldorf, phone +49-211-992000, fax 9920008
- Antidiskriminierungsbüro Stuttgart, c/o IG Ausl. Mitb., Haussmannstr. 6, D-70188 Stuttgart, phone +49-711-2155178, fax 2155330
- Rechtshilfe für AusländerInnen München eV, Daiserstr. 9, D-81371 München, phone +49-89-7257774
- Tamil Refugee International Network (TRIN), c/o Porsvænget 7-2-5, DK-7400 Herning, phone +45-97-125593, fax 125593, e-mail trin@tamil.dk
- SOS Racisme - Spain, Pge de la Pau 10bis Entresol 2º, E-08002 Barcelona, phone +34-93-3010597, fax +34-93-3010147, <http://www.eusnet.org/partaide/sos/>
- Cities Against Racism (IMFE), Divina Pastora 7 y 9, E-18012 Granada
- Black Justice Project, u.3 SYAC Centre, 120 Wicker, GB- Sheffield S3 8JD, phone +44-114-2797272, fax 44-114-2797251
- INSAAF - Justice for Victims of Racial Harrasment, 77 Ellesmere Road, Benwell, GB- Newcastle NE4 8TR, phone +44-191-2724174, fax +44-191-2261088
- Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI), 115 Old Street, GB- London EC1V 9JR, phone +44-171-2518708, fax +44-171-2518707, e-mail jcwj@mcr1.poptel.org.uk
- 'Milaap Project' Youth Organisation, 61 Hucklow Rd, Firth Park, GB- Sheffield S5 6TB, phone +44-114-2811485, fax 2735003

- Multi-Agency Project Racial Harrasment, 9-11 Norfolk Row, Norfolk Chamb., GB- Sheffield S1 2PA, phone +44-114-2039330, fax +44-114-2767732, <http://www.shef.ac.uk/~oip/srec>
 - North of England Refugee Service (NERS), 19 Bigg Market, GB- Newcastle NE1, phone +44-191-2323443, fax 2220239
 - Refugee Legal Centre, Sussex House, 39-45 Bermondsey Str., GB- London SE1 3XF, phone +44-171-8275354, fax +44-171-3781979
 - Tyne & Wear Racial Equality Council, 4th floor, Mea House, Ellison Place, GB- Newcastle NE1 8XS, phone +44-191-2327639, fax +44-191-2325951
 - Martin Luther King Organization (MLKO), Bérkocsis u. 12-14 II/7, H-1084 Budapest, phone/fax +36-1-3038145, e-mail miko@mail.mata.vu
 - Rete Antirazzista Torino, Via Assietta 13A, I-10128 Torino, phone +39-11-5357399, fax +39-11-535739, e-mail cttagliacozzo@hotmail.com
- In the Netherlands around 40 local anti-discrimination offices offer telephone services. They are coordinated by:
- Landelijk Bureau Racismebestrijding (LBR), Postbus 517, NL-3500 AM Utrecht, phone +31-30-2331421, fax +31-30-2328294, e-mail lbr@xs4all.nl, <http://www.aric.nl/lbr.htm>
 - Associação Juvenil "Olho Vivo", Rua do Paraíso, 217 - 3 and. sala 17, P-4000 Porto, phone +351-2-2080860, fax +351-2-2080860, e-mail olhovivo@mail.telepac.pt
 - Anti-Fascist Youth Action - Moskva (AYA), a/ya 37, RUS-Moskva 123154, phone +7-095-1979821, fax 1979821, e-mail liberty@aha.ru, <http://www.aha.ru/~antifa>
 - National Equal Opportunities Network (NEON), Radiokatu 20, SF-00240 Helsinki, phone +358-9-34812070 fax +358-9-34812602, e-mail neon@slu.fi
 - Centre for Anti-War Action/Council for Human Rights, Gospodar Jovanova 44 - PO Box 325, YU-11000 Beograd, phone/fax +381-11-635813, e-mail caa@caa.org.yu
 - Jóvenes por la Igualdad (JPI), Rda Torrasa, 105 3a Pta. E-08903, L'Hospitalet, phone +34-93-4219310, fax 4219310



YES, I WANT TO BE PART OF THE UNITED HOTLINES AGAINST RACISM

Organisation:	
Address:	
Phone:	Fax:
Emergency phone:	E-mail:
Website:	
Does your organisation operate an anti-racist hotline?	
	yes / no
Is it local / regional or national	
Target group: migrants, refugees, black and ethnic minorities, other...	

Send to: UNITED for Intercultural Action, PB 413, NL-1000 AK Amsterdam, fax +31-20-6834582, e-mail united@antenna.nl

More information also at: Helping Hands phone +43-1-310888010/67, fax +43-1-310888037

UNITED FOR INTERCULTURAL ACTION

Racism, nationalism, fascism, discrimination, asylum policies... all of them have a European dimension even though they often look like purely national issues. Reports from all over Europe demonstrate the increasing dangers facing migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. Often these dangers are increased by undemocratic intergovernmental decisions like the Schengen Treaty. Despite their ultra-nationalism, racist and fascist organisations have strong European links from Portugal to Russia, from Sweden to Italy. So should anti-racist organisations. Fortress Europe needs to be fought at local, regional and European levels - it cannot be fought on one level alone.

Linked through UNITED, hundreds of organisations from a wide variety of backgrounds from all European countries, work together on a voluntary basis. They base their on common actions and shared activities on a mutual respect.



Lecture: 'hotlines a practical example'

UNITED is and will remain independent from all political parties, organisations and states, but seeks an active cooperation with all other anti-racist initiatives in Europe.

Through the UNITED network organisations meet each other, work on common actions and share information. European-wide action weeks, campaigns and such are planned and discussed on UNITED conferences. Like-minded organisations find each other on such conferences and work together on specific projects on specific topics. The workers in the secretariat are in constant contact with the network organisations, ensuring that information and proposals for action are transmitted rapidly. Information is received from more than 1650 organisations and mailings are sent out to about 2250 groups in Europe.

If you want to get involved... Discuss the ideas and aims of the UNITED network within your organisation. Let us know that you would like to join or receive information. And add us to your mailing list!



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UNITED for Intercultural Action
European network against nationalism, racism,
fascism and in support of migrants and refugees

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