

**Stepping Stones and Roadblocks  
in the Struggle Against Racism  
3-7 MAY 2000 MELUN (F)**



**A UNITED for Intercultural Action seminar held in the framework of  
"Stepping Stones and Roadblocks"  
a partnership project against discrimination  
of UNITED for Intercultural Action, Mobility International and ILGA-Europe**

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**Article 13, Treaty establishing the European Community**

"Without prejudice to the other provisions of this Treaty and within the limits of the powers conferred by it upon the Community, the Council, acting unanimously on a proposal from the Commission and after consulting the European Parliament, may take appropriate **ACTION TO COMBAT DISCRIMINATION** based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation".

**INTRODUCTION**

This conference was the second one in the framework of the Project ***Stepping-Stones and Roadblocks***. It was based on the achievements of the first conference, organised by Mobility International (12-16 April 2000, Brussels).

As in the first conference, the main aim was to bring together activists from three different backgrounds, to combine and share their experiences on a very practical level. This second seminar was led by UNITED for Intercultural Action, and the struggle against racism was therefore emphasised.

Rather than divide according to the specificity of each movement, it was decided to present the conclusions and demands altogether. Nevertheless when some specific point, important for one of the movements, was tackled, it is presented separately.

Finally it is important to mention that this conference will be followed by a third one, organised by ILGA Europe, which is going to take place on the 21-25 June, in Vienna. Therefore all the work that has been done up to now will continue, the achievements of the present report can still be complemented or, even, changed.

## GENERAL IDEAS

The ideas summarised in this part of the report were brought up during the plenary discussions. They are a direct result of either the speech of one of the speakers or the report of the first conference of this project.

**The general ideas that came up in the discussion were as follows:**

- There are many things in common in the fight of the three movements: they are groups perceived as minorities, to combat fear and prejudice, campaigning against the dominating power, to fight against violence, to demand equality, etc.
- In the USA the gay and lesbian movement was based on the fights of the black people and disabled people, being more recent than the others. This idea must be kept in mind. It is very effective to profit from common experiences and to fight discrimination together;
- We need to be careful about the use of the word diversity: if we see only the cultural dimension, then disabled people, gays and lesbians will be excluded;
- In the UK the definition of "black" people is very much political and inclusive: it's about all those that do not share the culture of the majority;
- Regarding people with an ethnic minority background it was stressed that they always face discrimination in the labour market. Even when people have the same formal skills there exists a huge discrimination: "as a black person you always go to the end of the list!";
- Rather than to form a "ghetto", disabled people do not form a very united group. They tend to become more isolated;

The following **suggestions and recommendations** were presented:

- We need courage and support to fight against discrimination;
- We need self-advocacy and empowerment. Governmental policies disable people;
- Therefore people who suffered from discrimination have to gain power and advocate for their own problems;
- It is important to share information among the different movements;

- We should guarantee the inclusion of the different forms of discrimination in the three different movements;
- It is important to consider discrimination on multiple grounds and to fight against it;
- We need to guarantee the representation of people who suffer from different forms of discrimination, in all structures of the society (trade unions, public administration, etc.);
- It's necessary to build up alliances and partnerships. This is much more effective than to fight alone. Therefore it is desirable to find out what we have in common rather than to focus on our differences. However, first it is necessary to build up a group identity.

### **AWARENESS RAISING**

Regarding **education for diversity**, the following **ideas and recommendations** came up

We should:

- Use creative tools: games, photos, videos, etc;
- When working with children let them build up their own thinking;
- We should evaluate the education sessions;
- Use material that shows why people are forced to come to Europe, and discuss around facts rather than myths;
- Look for parental involvement;
- Change how history is being taught in order to represent the view point of minorities;
- Show and share the experiences of other cultures.

Regarding **how to work with the media**, the following **ideas and recommendations** came up

We should:

- Use the media effectively to campaign in our own advantage: this can be done by making an article and to approach journalists to publish it, having a team in the group to liaise with media and to help with feedback;
- Use creative and provocative methods;
- Build up a news archive, so that all the produced information can be accessed;
- Disseminate information through seminars, newspapers and alternative media;
- Broadcast intercultural sports;
- Get advantage of using student journalists as volunteers;
- Use EU funding to promote topics of European dimension.

**The following** general concerns, **related to both education and media, can be summarised:**

- To pressurise the media and the politicians not to make political use of migrants, since it leads to scape-goating;
- To counteract the negative images of people who suffer discrimination;
- To counteract the misinformation on migrants and refugees;
- To gain knowledge about European funding;
- To empower our own activists and to train them to lead future projects.

## LOBBY AND LEGISLATION

In order to facilitate the discussion on lobby and legislation, two legal instruments have been presented:

### **Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty**

The new article 13 introduced in the Treaty establishing the European Community by the Amsterdam Treaty opened the possibility of taking steps against discrimination within a European framework. The European Commission has elaborated a package of measures to be approved by the Parliament and the Council of Ministers. It includes one directive against racial discrimination and one on discrimination in employment on all other grounds of discrimination mentioned in Article 13. It also includes an action plan against discrimination. A political choice was made to push the so-called "race-directive" forward with more urgency than the rest of the package.

### **Concerning Article 13, some remarks have been made, namely:**

- The article does not have a direct effect;
- It creates a "hierarchy" of discrimination;
- The financial conditions in the Action Programme will exclude small NGOs, with less resources;
- Since the package was divided there is now the risk that it will not be approved in a global manner. This fact can later on reinforce the "hierarchy" in the protection from discrimination;
- The countries of Central and Eastern Europe have been excluded from the preparation and consultation process;
- It is necessary to have a clearer definition of what is discrimination on the grounds of religion;
- Institutional discrimination is largely absent in the proposed measures;
- It is important to lobby for the Article 13 at national level, in order to get results at the European level.

### **European Charter on Fundamental Rights**

The European Charter on Fundamental Rights is a work in progress. In December 1999 a so-called Convent started to work on a proposal for a Charter. It is composed of one representative from each national government and two from each parliament, as well as 16 MEPs and the representative of the president of the European Commission. The idea is to reach as much agreement as possible before the EU Summit in Nice, December 2000.

### **In what concerns the European Charter, some remarks have been made, namely:**

- The Charter can be a useful tool to work on new fields such as genetic manipulation, new technologies, etc.;
- At the moment it is necessary to get more involvement from the civil society so that the text can still be influenced (e.g. the importance to include articles to combat discrimination);
- It is necessary to lobby the Member States, so that the text can be influenced;

- To a certain extent we should give more relevance to the discussion process, than to the final text (all the necessary information is available in the internet);
- A practical effect of this Charter could be the establishment of a European Court of Justice, where individual complaints can be accepted.

The **ideas and recommendations on lobby and legislation** were:

- We need to deal with the different forms of discrimination at the same time in order to change pieces of legislation. However it is necessary to take into consideration that when the law is phrased in a very general manner, it may not be effective;
- We should use the legal basis, as well as the funding available in the framework of the Article 13. The legal basis can be particularly useful because of the lack of anti-discrimination legislation in some Member Countries;
- We recommend making use of the European Charter on Fundamental Rights;
- We have to force the application of the existing laws that protect people against discrimination. The idea is to change some of the discriminatory practices by imposing the law;
- Reversal of the "burden of proof" (e.g. not the victim is in charge of proving that he or she has suffered discrimination, but the one alleged of having discriminated has to prove that there was no discrimination). It is necessary to create some jurisprudence in this field;
- Laws need to be changed in order that gays and lesbians can benefit from the same rights as heterosexuals (e.g. the rights associated to marriages and partnerships);
- A change of the conditions under which disabled people receive their social benefits is needed, so that they are not depending on other people;
- We should identify existing networks and work with them (e.g. lawyers who have already know-how in a certain field);
- A concrete idea could be to make fact-sheets about the context of the various organisations' already monitoring discrimination (e.g. EU monitoring Centre), and to elaborate a guide for lobbying.

Some more **general comments** came up during the discussion on **lobby and legislation**:

- How should we best use, or not use, the word "race"? If we say that "races" do not exist someone could conclude that there is no need for specific legislation to combat racism. However it was concluded that we should stick with "one race, human race";
- We need to combat the exploitation that migrant women suffer: these women are very often exploited as prostitutes and domestic workers. Along with the fact that very often they do not hold a residence permit, this leads to a sort of modern slavery. This situation of exploitation is a result of the fact that these women can not try to defend themselves via the "formal" ways (e.g. going to the police) because they are undocumented and in fear of deportation.

## DIRECT ACTIONS

For direct action, the **recommendations** were:

- To make use of tools such as public actions, demonstrations and networking;
- To profit from the advantages of the internet as far as combating discrimination is concerned, keeping in mind the high number of non-users;
- To have web sites that are clear, accessible and regularly updated;
- To bear in mind that the format and structure of a web site can, for instance, exclude people with visual impairments or learning difficulties. We should promote access and accessibility to the internet;
- To find the ways to counteract the lack of legislation regarding the information available on the internet. There is an enormous quantity of racist information being spread via the internet without real control. However there is funding from the European Commission to do this kind of work and there are NGO's doing it.

## GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

In what regard **comparisons that can be made between the three movements, the following** conclusions can be drawn:

- ILGA and UNITED have traditionally a more political discourse than Mobility.
- Gays, lesbians, bisexual and transgendered people (GLBT) have to find their own identity in their own families: that is not the case of migrants.
- Disabled people and ethnic minorities are often subject to protection and patronising and that is not the case of GLBT.
- UNITED and ILGA-E are conceived or conceive themselves as human rights organisations, but not Mobility.

**How does this affect the cooperation between the three movements?**

- In terms of empowerment, minority groups should be working on their own identity and self-esteem;
- We should join efforts to fight inequalities where access to employment and equal opportunities are concerned;
- We should join efforts to combat discrimination in the field of education (access and integration into "normal" schools, etc.);
- We want to share and exchange as much information as possible.

**The main conclusions of this seminar are:**

(to be added to the conclusions of the 1st seminar, organised by Mobility, 12/16 April 2000, Brussels)

**For each movement:**

- Own focuses should be recognised, priorities kept;
- Diversity must be recognised and needs to be addressed;
- Each movement and its organisations should check whether their work reflects diversity, this is a question of resources and of support allocated;
- Each movement should determine what is good practice and highlight it.

**Between movements:**

- The movements should aim to share resources, also from outside (knowledge of a group of external experts, for instance), to share the added value, for example when lobbying (Art. 13, EU Charter).
- Each movement should work out what information to give to whom (e.g. ILGA-E's report on immigration and asylum will be of interest for UNITED).

**To the European Commission, we should advise:**

- To emphasise discrimination on multiple grounds;
- To include non-EU citizens, so that equal rights can be achieved;
- To enlarge the public debate on the field of discrimination;
- To include small NGOs and small projects in the funding available.

**Participants spoke about what they would take home from this Conference**

They had the individual aim to:

- Liaise with other movements;
- Write an article on this Conference;
- Promote cross-fertilisation and good practice: to work together on immigration and asylum matters, for instance;
- Improve the information sharing;
- Broaden the existing networks and to create new ones;
- Link up (national and transnational) with other organisations in order to guarantee that the different forms of discriminations are addressed by the organisations of each movement;
- They proposed the idea of making use of the already existing Human Rights structures, fact sheets, regular reports and also to hold practical seminars on how to use the existing structures.

**UNITED for Intercultural Action**

UNITED for Intercultural Action

European network against nationalism, racism, fascism and in support of migrants and refugees

Racism, nationalism, fascism, discrimination, asylum policies... all of them have a European dimension even though they often look like pure 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. Strangely enough, racist and fascist organisations have strong European links from Portugal to Russia, from Sweden to Italy. 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 cooperation on common actions and

shared activities on a mutual respect.

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

Through the UNITED network organisations meet each other, work on common actions and share information. Europe-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 2300 organisations and mailings are sent out to about 2500 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!

More information you can find at [www.unitedagainstracism.org](http://www.unitedagainstracism.org) or write to [info@unitedagainstracism.org](mailto:info@unitedagainstracism.org)

The information contained in this publication does not necessarily reflect the position nor the opinion of the European Commission

**UNITED for Intercultural Action**

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