

## **Fighting racial and ethnic discrimination**

The United Nations (UN) General Assembly reiterates “*that any doctrine of racial superiority is scientifically false, morally condemnable, socially unjust and dangerous and must be rejected*”. In this context, the UN places obligations on states and tasks them with eradicating discrimination in the public and private spheres, and requires them to adopt special measures to eliminate conditions that cause or help to perpetuate racial discrimination.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years, many efforts have been made to combat racial and ethnic discrimination. In fact, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) was established in 1993 by the Council of Europe as the official, independent human rights monitoring body in the field of combating racism and intolerance.<sup>2</sup> ECRI carries out necessary measures to combat discrimination on the grounds of race, national/ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language (racial discrimination) and intolerance, sexual orientation, gender identity and sex characteristics. ECRI’s statutory activities cover country monitoring of state parties including Malta, work on general themes and relations with civil society and equality bodies.

Moreover, the EU Race Equality Directive (Directive 2000/43/EC)<sup>3</sup>, adopted 20 years ago, prohibits discrimination on grounds of race and ethnic origin. This Directive covers equal treatment in employment and occupation, vocational training, membership of employer and employee organisations, social protection including social security and health care, education, as well as access to goods and services which are available to the public including housing. This Directive also calls for all EU Member States to have a specialised body for the promotion of equal treatment on grounds of race and ethnic origin. In Malta, the specialised body is the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE).

Yet, in spite of such legal frameworks that prohibit racial discrimination and measures taken at national, European and international levels, racial and ethnic discrimination is still prevalent. Indeed, the 2019 Eurobarometer results showed that 51% of the Maltese consider discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin as widespread in Malta.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, a qualitative

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/en/observances/end-racism-day>

<sup>2</sup> <https://rm.coe.int/leaflet-ecri-2019/168094b101>

<sup>3</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO\\_07\\_257](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/MEMO_07_257)

<sup>4</sup> Special Eurobarometer 493 - Discrimination in the European Union - May 2019

study<sup>5</sup> carried out in 2011 by the NCPE highlighted experiences of racial discrimination and harassment in the fields of employment, housing, healthcare, education and other services.

Moreover, the Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted and exposed underlying structural inequalities, exacerbating racism and racial discrimination.<sup>6</sup> Since the early months of the spread of Covid-19, people of Asian descent have been victim of racist speech online and offline, being blamed for spreading the coronavirus in Europe. There have also been several cases of violent racially motivated attacks against Asian people in Europe.<sup>7</sup> The European Network Against Racism (ENAR) collected data on the impact of Covid-19 on racial groups. It included cases of discrimination against racial groups in a range of key areas, such as denial of access to the healthcare system, denial of access to basic services such as water and electricity, refusal of access to accommodation, and racist violence and speech amongst others.

In Malta the NCPE, as an equality body, investigates complaints on the grounds of race and ethnic origin in employment, education, vocational/professional training, banks and financial institutions, as well as access to and supply of goods and services. To address such discrimination the NCPE provides training on diversity, equality and non-discrimination to any entity, department or organisation which requests it. These sessions raise awareness on equality and related subject matters.

All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights and have the potential to contribute constructively to the development and well-being of their societies. In this regard, the NCPE is committed to combat racial and ethnic discrimination to ensure that equality is truly safeguarded.

*The National Commission for the Promotion of Equality (NCPE) can be contacted on: 2295 7850 or [equality@gov.mt](mailto:equality@gov.mt) or our Facebook page.*

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<sup>5</sup> [https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Projects\\_and\\_Specific\\_Initiatives/Think\\_Equal/te\\_race\\_report.pdf](https://ncpe.gov.mt/en/Documents/Projects_and_Specific_Initiatives/Think_Equal/te_race_report.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19\\_and\\_Racial\\_Discrimination.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Racism/COVID-19_and_Racial_Discrimination.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.enar-eu.org/Evidence-of-the-impact-of-Covid-19-on-racialised-communities-exposes-need-to>