

## Standing up against racism

In the EU, one in three black people experience racial harassment, and four in ten state that nothing would have changed by reporting the experience. This data taken from the 2019 [report](#) of the [European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](#) (FRA) shows that racism is still very much widespread and present in our daily life, even in our country.

Experiences of racist harassment most commonly involve offensive or threatening comments, threats of violence, offensive or threatening e-mails or text messages (SMS), and online offensive comments.

Discrimination on the ground of race is included in the NCPE's remit and as such alleged cases are investigated by the Equality Body. In fact, sometime back, the NCPE Commissioner concluded an investigation which determined the occurrence of discrimination in the access to housing on the basis of race and ethnic origin. On calling to ask about the monthly rent of an apartment, the complainant was asked about her nationality and informed that the apartment was only available to Maltese persons.. The complainant said that she had been asked a number of questions that were intended to determine her race and/or ethnic origin.

During the investigation, it was noted that while the respondent did not recall having the conversation with the complainant, she admitted in a general manner to asking about lessees' nationality as she deemed foreigners to be more problematic to trace for unpaid dues. However, it was found that such questions are discriminatory and should not be levied onto potential lessees. There are other ways to determine whether a potential lessee can pay the rent, such as by asking for proof of employment. Moreover, the deposit paid by lessees is aimed precisely to cater for such situations. It was thus established that there was direct discrimination under Article 4(1)(d) of the Equal Treatment of Persons Order, Legal Notice 85 of 2007.

Besides cases of alleged discrimination on race and ethnic origin in the access to and supply of goods and services as the example given above, the NCPE is also empowered to investigate complaints in employment, education, banks and financial institutions.

In the past five years, 18 complaints were lodged with the NCPE on the basis of race and ethnic origin, five of which were ex-officio investigations. Should the Commission become aware of any alleged discriminatory act, practice or malfunction obstructing equality in various spheres of society, investigations are initiated on any such matter falling within the [NCPE's remit](#).

Another main responsibility of the NCPE is the promotion of equality and informing different stakeholders of their rights and responsibilities before the law. This is mainly carried out through training, awareness-raising campaigns, research, and input and contributions to policies and legislation.

In the coming months, a new set of initiatives based on race and ethnic origin will be launched through the 'Strengthening of Knowledge on Integration and Non-Discrimination' (SKIN), an EU co-funded project which seeks to identify the needs of and discrimination faced by migrants and Muslims. Through such activities, the NCPE will continue strengthening visibility and trust with these target groups, thus endeavouring to tackle underreporting.

Moreover, in 2022, the NCPE collaborated with the HRD in providing input to the Anti-Racism Action Plans being drafted by ministries as part of the first-ever Anti-Racism Strategy for Malta (2021-2023), to eliminate racism in all its forms and support intercultural inclusion. To support these efforts to foster equality, the NCPE has regularly participated in the Inter-Ministerial Committee meetings working on the implementation of the Strategy. In collaboration with the HRD, the NCPE is also currently drafting an Anti-Racism Policymaking Tool for use by the ministries.

In addition, the NCPE actively participates in the seminars held for equality bodies by the [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)](#), a human rights body of the Council of Europe, composed of independent experts, which monitors racism, xenophobia, antisemitism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds such as race, national/ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion and language. This participation enhances the work of the NCPE to combat discrimination and achieve equality in practice for all members of society.

Tackling racism is a global concern requiring a [universal effort](#). Policymakers, educators and families as well as civil society must work together to promote equality and non-discrimination to ensure that society is free from racism and discrimination.

As [António Guterres](#), United Nations Secretary-General said, *“wherever we see racism, we must condemn it without reservation, without hesitation, without qualification.”*

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**19<sup>th</sup> April 2023**