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Action programme to combat discrimination (2001-2006)

1) OBJECTIVE

Support and supplement the Member States' action to combat all forms of discrimination.

2) COMMUNITY MEASURE

Council Decision of 27 November 2001, establishing a Community Action Programme to combat discrimination (2001-2006).

3) CONTENTS

Following the entry into force of the Amsterdam Treaty, the European Union is empowered to take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation (Article 13 of the EC Treaty).

Community measures to promote equality between men and women were first adopted in the 1970s. On the basis of the experience gained in this area in the field of legislation and practice, the Commission is proposing a broader action programme aimed at combating all forms of discrimination referred to in the Treaty, other than discrimination based on sex, which is still the subject of a specific action.

This programme includes a raft of initiatives designed to establish common principles for combating discrimination. A Communication [COM(1999) 564 final] sets out the general framework for Community action and, besides an action programme, includes a legislative strand consisting of two directives designed to ensure equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and in relation to employment and occupation .

Definition

A person or group of persons may be discriminated against if they are treated less favourably on the grounds of the characteristics indicated in the Treaty (race, religion, disability, age, sexual orientation, etc.) or if the application of an apparently neutral provision is liable to adversely affect this person or group for the same reasons.

Objectives

The goal is to encourage concrete measures to combat discrimination and to supplement the activities (mainly legislative) of the Community and the Member States. The Community wishes:

- to improve the understanding of issues related to discrimination through the evaluation of the effectiveness of policies, legislation and practice
- to develop the capacity of target actors (local authorities, independent bodies, social partners, NGOs, etc.), through exchange of information and good practices and the creation of European networks which can anticipate and tackle discrimination;

- to promote and disseminate values and practices underlying the fight against discrimination (a particularly important aspect with an eye to enlargement).

Actions and method

The Community supports the following transnational actions:

- analysis of factors linked to discrimination (assembly of statistics, studies, evaluation of the effectiveness of policies and dissemination of results);
- transnational cooperation between the target actors and creation of European networks of NGOs;
- awareness-raising as regards the European dimension of the fight against discrimination.

These actions are being carried out thanks to active cooperation between the Commission, the Member States and civil society. A regular exchange of views between NGOs and the social partners on the design, implementation and follow-up of the programme is organised by the Commission.

An advisory committee composed of representatives of the Member States and chaired by the representative of the Commission assists the Commission in preparing general guidelines for implementation of the programme, the budget and the annual plan of work.

The Commission must, in co-operation with the Member States, ensure overall consistency with other Union and Community policies, instruments and actions relating to research, employment, equality between women and men, social inclusion, education, training and youth policy and in the field of the Community's external relations. Together with the Member States, it coordinates the actions undertaken under this programme and under the Structural Funds and the Community Initiative EQUAL .

The EFTA/EEA countries and the applicant countries are free to participate in the programme.

Particulars on the implementation of the programme are contained in the annex.

The Commission will present by 31 December 2005 at the latest, an evaluation report on the implementation of the programme. The budget for the period 2001-2005 is EUR 98.4 million.

4) DEADLINE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGISLATION IN THE MEMBER STATES

01.01.2001

5) DATE OF ENTRY INTO FORCE (if different from the above)

02.12.2000

6) REFERENCES

Official Journal L 303 of 02.12.2000

7) FOLLOW-UP WORK

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