

**Speech**  
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***2022 European Anti-Racism Summit***  
***Opening Session***  
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In the face of an aggressive war provoking thousands of civilian casualties and devastating the country while driving millions of people out of Ukraine, in particular women and children, one can only hope that humanitarian diplomacy will prevail for the war to stop as soon as possible and that the way Europeans opened up their arms to welcome those in despair will revive our common European principles and values, in particular, our solidarity for all, regardless of national or ethnic origin, skin colour, religion or citizenship. All those fleeing conflicts, from Ukraine and anywhere else, should be protected, cared for and have access to their basic rights, including health care, housing, education and employment.

The European Union and the Council of Europe were both built on the promise of peace in Europe, greater unity between member states and shared values of equal rights. With war at the doors of the European Union and the expulsion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe last week, time has come to give once again meaning to the *raison d'être* of our Organisations. Ultra-nationalism and racism, which are often the two sides of the same coin, are the enemies of peace, the enemies of unity and the enemies of equality.

If racism and racial discrimination are left unaddressed, hatred and prejudice will spread, leading to more violence, and undermine the cohesion of our societies and potentially the cohesion of the whole of Europe. It is time for decisive action.

Through its intergovernmental work, the Council of Europe has engaged together with member states in setting new, comprehensive and operational standards on combating racist and other forms of hate speech and hate crime.

These standards will have a huge added value in the context of EU legislative work aimed at extending the list of “EU crimes”, namely categories of particularly serious crimes with a cross-border dimension, to hate speech and hate crime. They will also supplement the Council of Europe’s existing legal arsenal in this area, including the Additional Protocol to the Cybercrime Convention, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems.

The case law of the European Court of Human Rights and the findings of monitoring bodies like ECRI show how urgent it is to take measures against any form of structural or institutional racism, including in the area of policing.

There is no lasting solution against racism without the involvement and commitment of the younger generations. This is why it is crucial that youth NGO partner structures contribute in a meaningful way to the fight against racism in the years to come.

When we speak of youth, we often think of education. Education is of the utmost importance to tackle racism at its roots, in and through schools. It must help the younger generations and all of us to face up to our past, including the dark side of it, through history teaching. In this context, the newly established Council of Europe's Observatory on History Teaching in Europe, which hosted its first annual conference in December 2021, will definitely be of great support.

In this connection, it is important to look at the challenges various communities faced in the past and may still be facing today through the lens of the concept of "racialisation". In the context of ECRI's work, we were bold enough to adopt an opinion on racialisation, defining it as the process of ascribing characteristics and attributes presented as innate to a community and of constructing false social hierarchies in racial terms. ECRI is convinced that the proper use of this concept can help in better understanding the processes underpinning racism and ensure that the voices of racialised groups are heard and taken into account.

Europe has a historic duty to prevent and combat racism in all its forms, be it anti-Black racism, antigypsyism, antisemitism or anti-Muslim racism. Fighting against antisemitism and anti-Muslim racism have been amongst the Council of Europe's top priorities over the last two years, as shown by ECRI's recent publication of two new general policy recommendations aimed at addressing these scourges as well as by the activities of a Special Representative of the Secretary General dealing specifically with antisemitic and anti-Muslim hatred.

To prevent and combat the various forms of racism effectively, we must remain united in our goals, distinct in our roles. Close cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe, with the valuable input of European civil society organisations, is key. Such cooperation has produced strong synergies in policy-making and institutional cooperation in particular, to name just a few:

- the Council of Europe's participation in the EU High-Level Group meetings on combating racism and discrimination and its contribution to the preparation and implementation of the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan;
- the EU work on National Action Plans against Racism, drawing on Council of Europe expertise;
- the EU Commission's and EU Fundamental Rights Agency's extensive contribution to Council of Europe monitoring, standard-setting and cooperation activities;
- the work of the European Parliament, through its Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup (ARDI), and of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, via its Equality and Non-Discrimination Committee and its General Rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance.

Over the last two years, the health crisis has taught us to work better together. The security and humanitarian crisis that the greater Europe is going through today should teach us to work ever closer together. The future of Europe as we know it is now at stake.