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## Renewed efforts needed to eliminate racial discrimination, especially in the workplace, say Heads of Europe's human rights organisations

VIENNA/STRASBOURG/WARSAW, 21 March 2019 – Too many people with an ethnic or migrant background are still being held back in the job market. This is despite laws against racial discrimination and for equal opportunities in employment that have been in place for decades, the heads of three European human rights institutions said in a joint statement on today's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Michael O'Flaherty, Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), Jean-Paul Lehners, Chair of the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), emphasised the need for change to ensure respect for the fundamental human rights everyone should enjoy equally across Europe. They call for enforcing international and national antidiscrimination legislation, including tougher sanctions, and amendments to working practices to promote the diversity Europe needs to remain relevant in today's global economy.

"Racism in any form is toxic to the creation of a fair, equal and rights respectful society," said FRA Director O'Flaherty. "We have the laws but too often they fail to deliver. We need to step up our policies and practices to reduce the barriers ethnic minorities face when trying to enjoy their basic right to employment."

He pointed to a [recent FRA minorities' and migrants' survey](#) that underlined the scale of the problem. Almost a third of respondents reported they had been discriminated against when looking for a job. Half of these thought it was because of their skin colour or appearance, while one-third said it was because of their name.

"Access to employment is a key to successful and sustainable inclusion of all people into society," said ECRI Chair Lehners. "Through the recommendations that ECRI addresses to the Council of Europe member states, we aim to motivate all stakeholders to open up even more to diversity and build an inclusive working culture. Employees will benefit from this through an improved working environment, and employers through better results. At the same time, we are active to prevent new discrimination risks that could arise from the use of new technologies such as artificial intelligence."

"A person's ethnicity or skin colour are all too often grounds for discrimination, preventing them from having equal access to the labour market and equality in the workplace," said ODIHR Director Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir. "Roma and Sinti, the largest ethnic minority in Europe, experience high levels of discrimination when seeking employment, and this is a strong factor contributing to economic, social and political exclusion. Governments must make real efforts to counter discrimination against Roma or any group."

Ingibjörg Sólrún Gísladóttir stressed that all OSCE participating States have committed themselves to adopt effective legislation to combat racial and ethnic discrimination in all fields, including employment, and in its Action Plan to Improve the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE area, to create specialised institutions and mechanisms to ensure the implementation of such laws.

Today's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination points to a clear need to tackle pervasive racial discrimination in all areas of life. As it is also the International Decade for

People of African Descent, we should stamp out the widespread and entrenched prejudice and exclusion that too many black people continue to face simply because of their skin colour.

With the rise of automated decision making, policymakers should also be mindful of the risk of built-in biases appearing in computer-based tools used in recruitment or insurance risk assessments, for example.

Positive measures like diversity audits in workplaces, public sector recruitment drives among minorities and anonymised recruiting processes are simple practical measures that can help make a difference.

*The United Nations designated 21 March the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in 1966, in memory of the 69 people killed six years earlier in Sharpeville, South Africa, during a peaceful demonstration to protest the apartheid system.*