

## ECRI Seminar with Equality Bodies

### European Public Health Alliance, DisQo Stakeholder Network

Date: 18 October 2024

**Estimated length: 8 minutes**

#### 1. Introduction: EPHA and DisQo Stakeholder Network

Good morning to everyone, and many thanks to the Council of Europe's European Commission against Racism and Intolerance for the invitation to set the scene for the discussion today. My name is Tomas de Jong, and I am a Policy Manager for Health Equity at the European Public Health Alliance (EPHA). For those of you who may not have heard of EPHA before, we are a Brussels-based membership organisation advocating for good health in Europe. We represent patient groups, health professional public health researchers and a wide range of civil society actors with an interest in public health. On their behalf, we advocate on the full range of public health topics in Europe, particularly in the European Union policy context. I am here today to speak about the work we do on **racism, discrimination and health**, which has developed significantly in the past two years.

EPHA coordinates the so-called **DisQo Stakeholder Network: anti-discrimination & health equity**. This network was officially founded in October 2022 on the European Commission's 'EU Health Policy Platform'. It organised a series of webinars, culminating in a joint statement signed by the organisations of the network. It bases itself on the recognition of racism and discrimination as **fundamental determinants of health**. This concept is important, as it also relates to the social determinants of health (non-medical determinants that influence our health access and health outcomes). This means that, though we focus on health, we are acutely aware that structural inequities mean that we must look beyond the healthcare sector if we want to work towards effective health equity.

The Network has since been upgraded to an established stakeholder network, consisting of organisations from the local up to the international level, across a range of sectors, all with an interest in the effects of racism and discrimination on health outcomes and healthcare access.

The advocacy work we do through the DisQo Stakeholder Network focuses on anti-racism and anti-discrimination policy in Europe, ensuring that it includes as specific focus on health-related topics, while we also join a wider range of anti-racism and anti-discrimination civil society organisations. In addition, we have been cooperating closely with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as Equinet, and the Dutch Equality Bodies from Discriminatie.nl.

My goal today is to give you an idea how we have been cooperating to realise anti-racism policy in Europe, the progress we have made on this so far, and to hopefully give you an idea on how the work you do contributes to that work.

#### 2. DisQo Network Founding principles

The work we do on anti-racism and anti-discrimination in health was founded on the December 2022 Lancet Commission Series on racism, xenophobia, discrimination, and health which provide an in-depth overview on how structural discrimination and racism cut through society, causing structural health inequities. Crucially, they define **racism and discrimination as fundamental determinants of health**. We base our work on this principle, and approach

the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights General Comment No.14 on ***The right to the highest attainable standard to health*** and the commitments this creates for states in Europe.

We know that these principles create obligations for governments in Europe, but we also know that this right is not being fully realised. To drive policy action to counteract racism and discrimination in health, we focus in particular on anti-racism and anti-discrimination policy in the EU. To do so effectively, our first step was developing a joint statement in cooperation with a wide range of stakeholders (number over 80 organisations at this point). In 2023, we published a joint statement with five priorities. We have since expanded this to six principles in a consultation report handed over to the European Commission in August this year. In short, these six principles are as follows:

1. **Recognising** racism and discrimination as determinants of health;
2. **Meaningful participation** of affected communities, experts, academics and other relevant stakeholders;
3. **Respectful** and **inclusive** language (clarity and consistency of key definition);
4. Collection of disaggregated (health) **equality data**;
5. **Breaking down silos** and boosting policy mainstreaming;
6. Addressing racism and discrimination in **healthcare** and **science**.

### 3. From principles to action

These **six principles** inform our advocacy in the EU; to drive anti-racism policy which leads to concrete action on the national, regional and local level. Our main angle of action takes place through the EU's **Union of Equality Strategies**. We have had a particular focus on the **EU Anti-racism Action Plan**, but are also interested in the other strategies (such as the Gender Equality Strategy, EU Roma Strategic Framework, LGBTIQ Equality Strategy and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities). Though we focus largely on the EU Anti-racism Action Plan, **intersectionality** is a cross-cutting concept, which means that we address inequity in all of its forms.

We have had a very pleasant cooperation with the office of the Commission's Coordinator on combating racism, Michaela Moua, as well as with the Roma Coordination Team of DG JUST at the European Commission.

By organising events, stakeholder consultations and developing clear messaging, we have been trying to bring the civil society voice directly to these European policy makers in hopes of strengthening these Union of Equality Strategies, to inform action at the national level.

This is relevant in particular, because Ursula von der Leyen has instructed the Commissioner-designate for Preparedness and Crisis Management and Commissioner-designate for Equality with the mission to relaunch all these Union of Equality Strategies, including the Anti-racism Action Plan. This means that we are at the perfect moment to inform this Action Plan directly. We have been advocating on this through a number of events in cooperation with OHCHR, Equinet and Equality bodies with international, European, national and regional stakeholders in attendance. This includes a November 2023 conference on racism, discrimination and health, a June 2024 conference on health of People of African Descent, a June 2024 event on women's health and a joint Equinet/OHCHR/EPHA in September on monitoring Effective Access to Quality Healthcare for Roma and Racialised Communities.

### 4. Equality data and equality bodies

To repeat, we focus on **six guiding principles** which are all equally relevant. One of those topics which may be of particular interest to our discussion today, is the one on **equality data collection, monitoring and indicators**. One of the most important topics highlighted by the DisQo members was the collection of disaggregated equality data and how this informs monitoring frameworks for national-level policy, as well as how indicators are developed for these frameworks. The work of equality bodies has been crucial for our work on this, given that equality bodies to some degree already collected data on racist or discriminatory incidents, within but also outside of the healthcare setting. An excellent example of how this is relevant was covered in our conference in June this year.

Our Dutch equality body partners from Discriminatie.nl presented an **almost real-time dashboard**

- **Monitoring and Indicators**  
*Briefly cover the two DisQo Conferences, focus on the coverage of monitoring and indicator frameworks, related to data collection during both days and how it is relevant to the health and equity-related policy.*
- **Equality bodies**  
*Relate to the work of equality bodies on collecting data/instances of discrimination/racism, focus on healthcare settings, but also adjacent social settings, highlight the key role of equality bodies in DisQo's work so far. End on this note to set the stage and encourage discussion on the topic, highlight the opportunity for change with the currently created momentum.*