

Racism violates children's rights: Eurochild's response to the EU Anti-Racism Action Plan Report



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Eurochild welcomes the report on the EU Anti-racism Action Plan 2020-2025 adopted by the European Commission. Racism violates children's rights and entrenches inequities that impact health, education, and well-being. Combating racism requires comprehensive EU action and stronger anti-discrimination efforts.

The impact of racism on children's rights

Whether conscious or unconscious and manifested in both subtle and overt forms, racism perpetuates systemic inequities that disproportionately affect racialised communities, leading to multiple children's rights violations. As outlined by the [Committee on the Rights of the Child](#), racism thrives "where there is ignorance, unfounded fears of racial, ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic or other forms of difference, the exploitation of prejudices, or the teaching or dissemination of distorted values." **Racial discrimination is compounded by intersecting factors, including socioeconomic status and access to resources.** Racialised children are more vulnerable than the rest of the population to experiencing violence, higher levels of poverty, inadequate housing, and food insecurity, alongside increased risks of chronic illnesses.

Racism and international relations

Racism is also linked to the "othering" and media portrayal of children. This often reduces complex issues to oversimplified stories, further entrenching stereotypes and biases, and can lead to a lack of empathy for groups perceived as "different." The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Francesca Albanese, speaking in front of the United Nations General, noted that "Empathy has evaporated from this room. Is it possible that after 42,000 people were killed, you cannot empathise with the Palestinians?" Such "othering" heavily influences how we frame conflicts and social issues, deepening divides and perpetuating stereotypes.

Another risk is the persistence of perspectives shaped by colonialism, where perceptions of equality are often framed in ways that ignore the rights and individuality of children and families, treating them instead as recipients of charity. In such cases, aid may be provided, but the sustainable development of a country is not supported. These attitudes have contributed, for example, to the rise of orphanages that focus on separating children from families rather than supporting family preservation. Recognising the lingering influence of colonialism and recontextualising children's rights locally is essential to addressing these ingrained biases.

Addressing racism in the treatment of children on the move

The plight of migrant children exposes the racial and discriminatory dimensions of Europe's immigration systems. According to the [International Organization for Migration](#), at least 3,000 migrants, including children, have died while crossing the Mediterranean. These tragedies reflect a broader, systemic issue: policies that prioritise border control over humanitarian needs.

Significant shortcomings exist in how each EU Member State treat unaccompanied children. These include documented cases of systematic [beatings and pushbacks](#). The racist and discriminatory

aspects of these practices are undeniable and must not be overlooked. The 2024 [Migration and Asylum Pact](#) risks normalising the arbitrary use of immigration detention, including for children and families, and increasing racial profiling. By invoking “crisis” procedures to justify pushbacks and returning individuals to so-called “safe third countries” where they might face risks of violence, torture, and arbitrary imprisonment, the Pact could perpetuate discrimination and human rights violations. Such practices may entrench injustices rather than protect the rights and well-being of migrant children.

Highlights from the implementation of the EU Anti-racism Action Plan

[The EU's first Anti-Racism Action Plan \(2020-2025\)](#) provides a comprehensive framework to promote non-discrimination, equality, and diversity across member states. It outlines measures to tackle racism in law enforcement, education, employment, housing, and health, emphasising the need for stronger legal protections against hate speech and discrimination.

On the 25th of September 2024, the EU released its [report](#) assessing the implementation of the Plan, revealing that 61% of Europeans believe discrimination based on skin colour is widespread, with nearly half of the individuals of African descent experiencing racial discrimination—an increase from 39% in 2016 to 45% in 2022. Alarming, only 9% of victims report incidents of discrimination, highlighting a significant gap in awareness and reporting mechanisms, as well as the inefficiency of the measures taken when people report racism.

This highlights that the quality of life for racial and ethnic minorities has not improved in recent years. Discrimination in employment and education perpetuates socioeconomic disparities. Health outcomes for minorities are more likely to be poor, with many facing inadequate housing conditions and social segregation. These challenges disproportionately affect minority and racialized children, including Roma and migrants, impairing children’s development and limiting access to quality education and employment opportunities.

Eurochild’s role in fighting discrimination and racism

The rise of anti-rights movements in Europe exacerbates existing challenges. Such rhetoric normalises xenophobia and entrenches racism, leading to increased educational disparities for children from migrant backgrounds, including higher rates of school dropout and repetition. Available data, albeit limited, indicates that individual and structural racism remains prevalent. To foster a society free from racism, discrimination, and inequality, the European Commission, in collaboration with Member States and relevant stakeholders, must intensify efforts to address all forms of racism. In the [Political guidelines for the 2024-2029 mandate](#), the new European Commission committed to supporting national efforts towards achieving a Union of Equality. Fighting racism is essential to this mission.

Eurochild’s core mission is to ensure that the rights of all children are upheld and no child faces discrimination. We support this through our advocacy efforts and projects, including through [ICAM](#), a 2019-2022 EU-funded initiative to improve the inclusion in schools and ensure the rights to quality education for all Children who have been Affected by Migration. In 2023, we launched a project to leverage EU influence in creating positive change for families facing adversity. This initiative monitors the impact of EU funds and gathers evidence on the importance of investing in family preservation to prevent the separation of Roma families and vulnerable children. A core objective is to establish accountability mechanisms for EU policy and spending.

Eurochild welcomes the report on the implementation of the EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025 and on national action plans against racism and discrimination. **We are eager to share the knowledge of our members and the lived experiences of children and provide insights to the upcoming EU Anti-Racism Action Plan, to be adopted after 2025, to ensure that no child faces discrimination and racism.**

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