

Our difference is our strength

Discrimination: it's wrong, it's illegal and it's a waste of talent and skills!

Europe's most precious resource is the rich diversity of its people. Yet prejudices and stereotypes often mean that not all people in Europe enjoy the fair treatment to which they are entitled. Many are deprived of equal opportunities because of their sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation.



Discrimination is devastating for the people directly affected. It also has a cost to society at large and to the economy as a whole. If Europe is to meet the challenges of globalisation and create more and better jobs, all of its people must have the same chances and opportunities.

Our difference is our strength. In a recent survey by the European Commission, 83% of companies with diversity policies say they bring real benefits to their business such as tapping into a wider pool of potential employees, improving staff motivation and benefiting from more innovative workforces.

Promoting Equal Opportunities for All: The 2007 European Year



The EU equality laws of 2000 have made it illegal to discriminate on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin or because of someone's sexual orientation, religion, belief, disability or age. These laws build on the extensive provisions at EU level to promote equality between women and men.

Although crucial, laws alone are not enough to put an end to discrimination. Many people remain deprived of equal opportunities, and European societies miss out on their talents.

This is where the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All comes in.

The Year will:

- launch a major debate on the benefits of diversity for European societies;
- make people more aware of their rights to enjoy equal treatment and a life free of discrimination – irrespective of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation; and
- promote equal opportunities for all.

Did you know?

- Most Europeans believe that a person's ethnic origin, religion, disability or age can be an obstacle in finding a job, even when qualifications are equal.
- Women in Europe are still paid on average 15% less than men to do the same job. They still only occupy less than a quarter of parliamentary seats in the EU.
- Older workers have an employment rate of 40% compared to the EU average of 62%. Unemployment among young people is more than double the overall rate in Europe.
- 10% of the EU population has a disability.
- More than half of young lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender Europeans have experienced prejudice or discrimination in school or in their families.
- Migrants and ethnic minorities living in deprived urban areas often face a double risk of being socially excluded – due to where they live and their ethnicity.



Key activities and events

Hundreds of activities are being planned across Europe in all 25 EU countries as well as Bulgaria, Romania, Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein as part of the 2007 European Year of Equal Opportunities for All.

European events will kick off with:

- the first ever "Equality summit" in Berlin on 30–31 January 2007, where EU ministers, trade unions, employers' organisations and non-governmental organisations will officially launch the 2007 European Year;
- a new survey on what Europeans think about discrimination; and
- a pan-European information campaign to promote the benefits of equality and diversity for Europe.

In addition, many activities, conferences and projects will be held in your country, region or city: the Year is not run only from Brussels! On the contrary, each country must select priority areas and national activities to be funded, which could, for example, include awards for companies with strong diversity policies or competitions for schools on the theme of respect and tolerance.

What can I do?

Everyone can play their part in the 2007 European Year. All of us can start by looking at our own behaviour and attitudes. You can also take part in the Year by organising or joining in an event that is taking place near you. Whether it's small businesses, youth groups, NGOs, trade unions or schools, the Year can only be a success when everyone gets on board.

Want to get involved?

Contact the people in charge of the European Year 2007 in your country to find out what is happening in your area!

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See www.ee.europa.eu/equality2007 for details

Keep up to date with the latest events!

Visit our website:

<http://equality2007.europa.eu>

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