

Speaking Points for EU-MIDIS Press Conference

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome. Today we present to you results from the first ever EU-wide survey of ethnic minorities' and immigrants' experiences of discrimination and crime – the European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (in short EU-MIDIS).

To give you the bad news first: The survey shows that discrimination, harassment and racially motivated violence is far more widespread than recorded in official statistics.

During 2008, the Agency conducted this major representative survey, which was executed by GALLUP, on selected ethnic minority and immigrant groups in all 27 Member States of the EU. You can find the groups listed in the document called “EU MIDIS at a glance” (on page 16). They represent some of the largest minority groups in the EU.

23,500 people from these selected ethnic minority or immigrant groups were randomly sampled and interviewed face to face, usually in their own homes.

They were all asked the same standard questions – up to 150 questions in total,

- about their personal experiences of discriminatory treatment in many different areas,
- about having been victims of a crime that was racially motivated,
- about encounters with police officers and border guards,
- and finally about their awareness of their rights and of mechanisms for redress if they had been discriminated against or a victim of a crime.

What are the key messages emerging from the survey?

First, the survey reveals that **racist crime and discrimination are both grossly underreported** in the EU. The results demonstrate that official data only show the tip of the iceberg. To varying degrees, in all EU countries there is a very large 'dark figure' of incidents that never get reported to any competent body or the police.

The mainstay of minority groups surveyed in EU-MIDIS considered that discrimination on the basis of ethnic or immigrant origin is widespread in the Member State where they were interviewed. More than a third of the ethnic minority and immigrant persons surveyed stated that they had been personally discriminated against in the past 12 months. 12 percent experienced a crime that they felt was racially motivated, with 4 % experiencing a - racially motivated - physical assault or threat of physical violence.

The survey shows that the overwhelming majority does not report these incidents to any competent body or to the police. The findings indicate that thousands of cases of racist crime and discrimination go unreported across the EU every year. [As a matter of fact, in most EU Member States the levels of officially recorded racist crime are very low. In some Member States there are no officially recorded racist crimes at all.] This means that perpetrators get away with impunity, victims do not obtain justice, and policy-makers are unable to take the appropriate action to prevent such incidents from occurring.

My second key message is that the survey suggests a high degree of **resignation among minorities and immigrants in the EU**. The main reason given for not reporting experiences of discrimination or crime was that respondents lacked confidence that anything would change if they reported the incident.

A high number of respondents furthermore indicated that they avoid certain places for fear of becoming victims of discrimination or racist crime. This feeling of resignation and marginalization does not bode well for social inclusion and integration efforts vis-à-vis minorities and migrants in the EU. In addition, the survey presents worrying evidence of the extent to which groups who are most vulnerable to discrimination in the EU are uninformed about where to turn to for assistance, if they have been discriminated against. 80 percent of the respondents did not know of any organisation that could offer support or advice to victims of discrimination. This demonstrates an urgent need for better information, but could also reflect a real absence of effective support services in many Member States.

My third key message concerns the **Roma**. Of all the groups surveyed, they emerge as the **group most vulnerable to discrimination**. We have therefore devoted the first in a series of data in focus reports to this group. The survey reveals a very bleak picture for the estimated 12 million Roma in the EU. Discrimination and racist crime appear to be a very frequent experience for the Roma, and yet they are the group for which protection mechanisms seem to work the least. There is very little confidence in justice structures among the Roma, and they are the group that is least aware of their rights. Member States should ask themselves what more they can do to enhance confidence and rights awareness among Roma, and how they can deal with the issue of Roma discrimination and social inclusion in a comprehensive manner.

Before getting to your questions, my colleague, Jo Goodey, will present to you a couple of slides that illustrate these three points through some figures from the survey.

[JO to present three charts on reasons for not reporting discrimination experiences, example of percentage of respondents who did not report discrimination by private services, and the Roma as experiencing the most discrimination for all groups surveyed]

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When looking at these charts, we must remember that behind these figures and statistics there are human stories, experiences that have been very painful – sometimes tragic - for the individuals concerned.

What do these figures tell us about the life of ethnic minority people in the EU today?

Taking the Roma as an example, I asked our statisticians to draw a picture of the experience of the “average Roma person” with racism.

This is how the past 12 months would have been for you, if you had been born as a Roma in one of the EU countries we surveyed:

- You would have been discriminated against 5 times.
- These incidents would have most likely happened when you were looking for work or at a shop, or being denied service at a restaurant, café or bar.
- You would not have reported these cases to any organisation because you felt that nothing would have changed by reporting, or because you did not know how or where to report.
- In addition, you would have been a victim of 1 in-person crime in the past 12 months.

- This would have most likely been a case of serious harassment or an assault, which you felt was because of your ethnic background and was perpetrated by members of the majority population.
- Even this crime, you would have not reported to the police because you felt that the police would not do anything about it.
- Your friends and family members, including your children, experienced similar stories.

I find this picture utterly disturbing. It is a challenge to our vision of a European Union where all members of society are treated with respect, where they can access their right to equality, and where they can feel safe.

The survey we are presenting today raises serious concerns about the extent of racism in the EU. At the same time, it provides very extensive quantitative data, which the EU did not have before. Today, you have in front of you the first results of this survey and more data on the different minority groups or on different topics will be published in the coming months. This data will help us to better understand what is needed to change the situation for the better. Because it is only when we know the extent and the nature of a problem that we can start to address it in a targeted and effective way. Policy-makers can use this data in many ways:

- First, it can assist them in **developing effective policy responses**, which address discriminatory and racist practices and improve support structures for victims. This also includes investing resources to make those who are vulnerable to discrimination aware of where they can turn to for support and advice.
- Second, it highlights the need to encourage **reporting and improve recording of racist crimes and discrimination cases**. As long as only few

racist incidents get reported to the police or other public authorities, crimes go unpunished, victims do not obtain justice, and no preventive action can be taken.

- And finally, it helps in **targeting support measures and funds** at those groups that need it the most; for instance, to end the discrimination and social exclusion faced by the Roma.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With this body of evidence, based on EU-wide data, it is abundantly clear that discrimination and racist crime are significant problems throughout the EU. Problems that we can no longer ignore because of claims of lack of evidence.

Thank you. I look forward to your questions