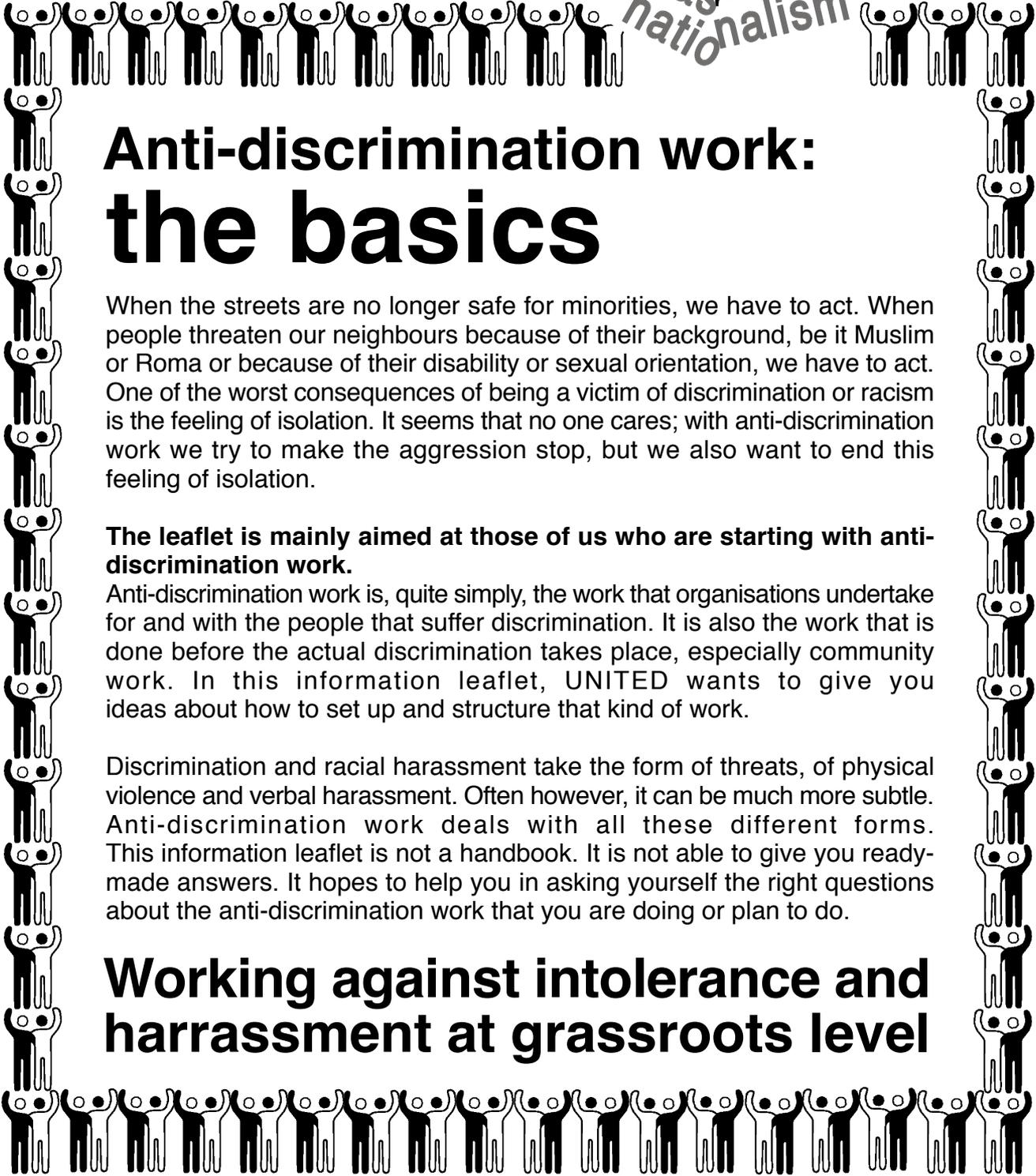


racism
fascism
nationalism



Anti-discrimination work: the basics

When the streets are no longer safe for minorities, we have to act. When people threaten our neighbours because of their background, be it Muslim or Roma or because of their disability or sexual orientation, we have to act. One of the worst consequences of being a victim of discrimination or racism is the feeling of isolation. It seems that no one cares; with anti-discrimination work we try to make the aggression stop, but we also want to end this feeling of isolation.

The leaflet is mainly aimed at those of us who are starting with anti-discrimination work.

Anti-discrimination work is, quite simply, the work that organisations undertake for and with the people that suffer discrimination. It is also the work that is done before the actual discrimination takes place, especially community work. In this information leaflet, UNITED wants to give you ideas about how to set up and structure that kind of work.

Discrimination and racial harassment take the form of threats, of physical violence and verbal harassment. Often however, it can be much more subtle. Anti-discrimination work deals with all these different forms. This information leaflet is not a handbook. It is not able to give you ready-made answers. It hopes to help you in asking yourself the right questions about the anti-discrimination work that you are doing or plan to do.

Working against intolerance and harassment at grassroots level

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1. The most important principle of anti-discrimination work is that you **respect the wishes of victims and their families**. You should not assume that you know what is best for them. You can tell people what their options and choices are but let them tell you what they think should be done.
2. The second principle is that you should know what is going on. You should be informed of both possibilities and dangers. Going into an unknown situation can be dangerous. **Be safe, be informed.**
3. The third principle is **cooperation, on all levels**. You can be more effective when you work with local, national and international contacts. They can help you with their experiences, help you put pressure on authorities, etc.

ANALYSING THE SITUATION

Before taking action, you need first to analyse the situation. Ask yourself the following questions:

- **Targets:** who is being targeted by the attacks, discrimination, threats?
- **Origin of the threat:** who are the people that discriminate and threaten others?
- **Possibilities for action/solution:** what are your possibilities as an organisation, what possibilities are there for cooperation, what kind of action would be supported by the community, by the people living in the area?
- **Support expected:** sometimes it is possible to cooperate with the 'authorities' in combating discrimination. Think about the police, the housing company, the churches... Is there a possibility to get support there?

BASIC COMMUNITY / GRASSROOTS WORK

When no known racial attacks are taking place it does not mean that there never will be any and it does not mean that low level racial or other harassment is not occurring. In such a case it might be a good idea to think about setting up the following structures/ activities:

- **Community work:** In most communities where racial harassment and other forms of direct discrimination take place the inhabitants are not very close. When people get to know each other, they are less likely to attack each other.
- **School education:** Schools are the places where most children develop their friendships and get their basic education. To prevent problems later on it is good to talk about racism and discrimination in the classroom. Children should have a possibility to talk about problems with a teacher or someone else they trust.
- **Monitoring:** Be sure to stay informed on what is happening in the community, i.e. you know about it if a racist band plays in the area, if pub owners do not serve to black customers etc. This approach requires that you are available to the community: your activities and phone number should be known and there should be someone to answer the phone. If you have an answering machine it should be checked often.
- **Equal opportunities:** When there is no immediate action needed, it might be a good time to lobby local businesses and organisations to set up an equal opportunities policy. That means that the business thinks of its policies for employing people, its atmosphere, the possibilities of complaining about discrimination, etc., and concretely puts on paper what it does in those areas to ensure equal opportunities for ethnic minorities, women, disabled people, etc. This would apply also to schools, care facilities and other institutions.

WHEN RACIAL HARASSMENT OR ATTACKS ARE TAKING PLACE

There are three main areas in which you can take action when racial attacks or racial harassment are taking place:

- support for the victims

The support victims need is on the one hand to be heard and on the other hand to have the feeling that someone wants to help. Another part involves giving them information on where to get help. Lots of times you will not be able to provide them with all the help mentioned below on your own, but you can point them to a good lawyer, doctor, etc.

- *legal aid:* give information about the law, organise contacts to specialised lawyers, help in providing the means to go to court...
- *physical help:* sit with the victims, help them to secure their house, provide a temporary place to stay...

- *psychological help*: listen to the victims and their families, get them into contact with people to whom the same thing happened, end the isolation...

- community action

- *"Multi Agency Group"*: try to combine the forces of different institutions in the area, like the housing company, the school, the church, that can all help in their own way.
- *community meetings*: people that are under attack feel isolated, you can try to break the isolation through meetings in which you or the victims give information and in which you try to get more people involved.
- *monitoring and gathering evidence*: if you need to go to court, you need evidence and witnesses, you will not be able to be everywhere at once. Get the community to help you monitor the situation.
- *setting up a help line, an alarm line, giving out legal advice cards*: communication is vital in a situation that is critical. Be sure that people know where to call and what to do when something happens. If possible, set up a 24hrs phone line where people can call when being threatened or when witnessing an attack. It might be a good idea to design little cards that people can keep in their wallet with information on their rights, and the phone number they can call for help.

- campaigning

- *publicity and press work*: It is important to make people aware of what is happening. But be sure to take into consideration what the victims want!
- *political representation and pressuring authorities*: It is clear that something should change in a situation like this. One way of changing things is to make politicians listen to what you have to say. You can do that yourself, but you can also try to get a trustworthy politician to help represent your interests.
- *aiming at the general public*: There are a lot of myths around racism and discrimination. If you are campaigning, take into account what people say and think about the ethnic minority. One way to combat prejudice is by spreading the truth. You can do that by posters, leaflets, etc. Make sure that you have the right information.

ACTION AGAINST RACIST POLITICAL ACTIVITY

- **monitoring/observation**: keep in contact with people in the community and observe the activities of racist organisations/parties, collect leaflets/posters.
- **investigation/research**: get as much background information about the organisation and the activists as possible, use (newspaper) archives, international contacts with other anti-racism organisations, collect material on the history of the organisation.
- **political activities against the racists**: you can picket the meeting places, put up posters, try to unite the other parties to form a united front against the racist party (e.g. by signing a statement and by excluding the party from political forums).
- **cooperation**: as said before, cooperate on all levels. Don't be afraid of admitting that some things are not your specialty and you need specialised help from local, national or international organisations, institutions or from experts.
- **publicity**: if you have discovered something interesting, or you organise a spectacular or important counter-action, be sure that you organise press work. One way is to let the press come to you, but you can also think about ways of going to the press yourself. Think about writing good press releases and complete feature articles. Find out if you can get into the 'Opinions' section of the papers.

CHECKLIST FOR THE SETTING UP OF A CAMPAIGN

- | | |
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What does the campaign aim to achieve? • What change do you want (short AND long term) • Do you really need a campaign? • Who is the target of the campaign? Who needs to change and how? • Who do you need on your side? • What publicity do you need? • Try and have a planning committee that consists at least partly of the people concerned, the people living in the area | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose the most appropriate method: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - direct action (non-violent protest actions) - political lobbying - public demonstrations/festivals/manifestations - education - media • Delegate responsibilities • Make a time table for the campaign and check it regularly |
|--|--|

TO FIND CONTACTS:

In UNITED's European Address Book Against Racism and on www.unitedagainstracism.org you can find the addresses of organisations that are active in the field of anti-racism in your area. The addresses below can also help you to find contacts, when you experience discrimination or want to act against it.

European Disability Forum (EDF)
39-41 rue du Commerce
B-1000 Bruxelles, Belgium
phone +32-2-2824600, fax +32-2-2824609
secretariat@edf-feph.org, www.edf-feph.org

International Lesbian and Gay Association (ILGA)
17 Rue de la Charité
B-1210 Bruxelles, Belgium
phone +32-2-6095419, fax +32-2-5022471
information@ilga.org, www.ilga.org

European Roma Rights Center (ERRC)
Postafiók 906/93 - Nyár utca 12
H-1386, Budapest 62, Hungary
phone +36-1-4132200, fax +36-1-4132201
office@errc.org, www.errc.org

Center for Expertise on Age and Society
Postbus 19238
NL-3501 DE Utrecht, Netherlands
phone +31-30-2662000, fax +31-30-2662837
redactie@leeftijd.nl, www.leeftijd.nl

WHAT IS UNITED?

Racism, nationalism, fascism, discrimination, asylum policies... all of them have a European dimension even though they often look like pure national issues. Reports from all over Europe demonstrate the increasing dangers facing migrants, refugees and ethnic minorities. Often these dangers are increased by undemocratic intergovernmental decisions like the Schengen Treaty. Strangely enough, racist and fascist organisations have strong European links from Portugal to Russia, from Sweden to Italy. Fortress Europe needs to be fought at local, regional and European levels - it cannot be fought on one level alone.

Linked through UNITED, hundreds of organisations from a wide variety of backgrounds, from all European countries, work together on a voluntary basis. They base their cooperation on common actions and shared activities on a mutual respect. UNITED is and will remain independent from all political parties, organisations and states, but seeks an active co-operation with other anti-racist initiatives in Europe.

Through the UNITED network organisations meet each other, work on common actions and share information. Europe-wide action weeks, campaigns and such are planned and discussed on UNITED conferences. Like-minded organisations find each other on such conferences and work together on specific projects on specific topics. The workers in the secretariat are in constant contact with the network organisations, ensuring that information and proposals for action are transmitted rapidly. Information is received from more than 2000 organisations and mailings are sent out to about 2500 groups in Europe.

If you want to get involved... Discuss the ideas and aims of the UNITED network within your organisation. Let us know that you would like to join or receive information. And add us to your mailing list!

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