

Brussels, 1 June 2005

2007 to be "European Year of Equal Opportunities for All"

The European Commission has designated 2007 as 'European Year of Equal Opportunities for All' as part of a concerted effort to promote equality and non-discrimination in the EU. The European Year is the centrepiece of a framework strategy designed to ensure that discrimination is effectively tackled, diversity is celebrated and equal opportunities for all are promoted. The strategy is set out in a Communication adopted by the European Commission today.

European Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities Commissioner, Vladimír Špidla, said: "Europe must work towards real equality in practice. The European Year of Equal Opportunities for All and the framework strategy will provide a new drive towards ensuring the full application of EU anti-discrimination legislation, which has encountered too many obstacles and delays. Fundamental rights, non-discrimination and equal opportunities will remain key priorities for the European Commission."

The four core themes of the European Year proposed by the Commission are:

- Rights – raising awareness of the right to equality and non-discrimination
- Representation – stimulating a debate on ways to increase the participation of under-represented groups in society
- Recognition – celebrating and accommodating diversity
- Respect and tolerance – promoting a more cohesive society

The Year's proposed budget of €13.6 million will cover preparatory actions in 2006 as well as the various activities taking place during the European Year itself in 2007.

The framework strategy on non-discrimination and equal opportunities for all, which accompanies the draft Decision to set up the European Year, aims to ensure that EC anti-discrimination legislation¹ is fully implemented and enforced. The European Court of Justice has already condemned four Member States (Austria, Finland, Germany and Luxembourg) for not adequately transposing EU anti-discrimination legislation. The strategy also looks at what more the EU can do to tackle discrimination and promote equality, beyond legal protection of people's rights to equal treatment.

¹ Directive 2000/43/EC of 29 June 2000 (OJ L 180 of 19.7.2000, p 22) implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin and Directive 2000/78/EC of 27 November 2000 (OJ L 303 of 2.12.2000) p 16) establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation

In addition to the European Year, new initiatives announced by the Communication include:

- A feasibility study to look at possible new measures to complement existing EC anti-discrimination legislation
- The creation of a high-level advisory group to look at the social and labour market integration of minorities, including the Roma

Gender issues will be taken on board in the context of the European Year and the non-discrimination strategy. This will complement the EU's specific efforts on gender equality and sex discrimination, including the proposed Gender Institute and the Communication on gender equality planned for 2006.

The framework strategy and the European Year follow on from a wide public consultation conducted in 2004 on the basis of the Commission's Green Paper *Equality and non-discrimination for all in an enlarged EU*.

More information :

http://europa.eu.int/comm/employment_social/fundamental_rights/index_en.htm