

Open Letter to President Ursula von der Leyen: The European Commission must prioritise addressing police violence and structural racism in the EU

[News](#), [Inclusion and Equality](#), [Anti-racism](#), [Intersectionality](#)

ILGA-Europe, [ENAR](#) and 150 organisations across Europe co-signed this open letter to European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen to raise our serious concerns regarding the lack of reaction of EU leaders regarding police brutality against people of colour in Europe as well as institutional and structural racism.

Dear Ms. von der Leyen,

As organisations working for an equal and inclusive Europe, we would like to raise our serious concerns regarding the lack of real reaction of EU leaders regarding police brutality against people of colour in Europe as well as institutional and structural racism, following the killing of George Floyd in the United States and ensuing solidarity protests in Europe and across the world. We were appalled by the statement by EU Commissioner Schinas which delegitimises the public outcry against police brutality and institutional racism in Europe.

On 3 June 2020, Commissioner Schinas was [quoted in the Financial Times](#) as saying that events such as the killing of African-American man George Floyd in Minneapolis, and the wave of demonstrations against it, were “not likely?..?to happen in Europe at this scale”. “I do not think that we have issues now in Europe that blatantly pertain to police brutality or issues of race transcending into our systems. But we do have an issue in Europe, which is the issue of inequalities and income distribution — making the best for everyone of what we have.”

As an EU Commissioner, Mr. Schinas should have shown empathy with the victims of widespread racism in the EU. Instead his reckless statement has denied racialised communities across the EU the recognition of the oppression they are subjected to on a daily basis.

His statement is a blatant denial of the existence of police brutality and discriminatory policing in Europe, despite evidence of this reality, including from EU bodies themselves, such as the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, which [found](#) that one quarter of all persons of African descent surveyed were stopped by the police in the five years before the survey, and among these, 41% characterised the most recent stop as racial profiling. In France, young men perceived as black or Arab are [20 times more likely](#) to be controlled by police than others. In the UK, [data shows](#) that the proportion of black and ethnic minority deaths in custody as a result of use of force or restraint by the police, is over two times greater than it is in other deaths in custody. Roma people across Europe also [experience](#) racial profiling and police violence. This is not a new issue. For decades, ENAR and anti-racist organisations on the ground [have been reporting](#) what racialised communities experience at the hands of the police across the European Union: discriminatory stop and search, abuse, violence and even death. So far, however, there has been little visibility and no public response.

EU and member state leaders pointed fingers at the United States for the killing of George Floyd and police brutality, while maintaining a deafening silence on the situation in their own countries, going as far as denying that

police violence is an issue in Europe. This lack of reaction reflects a denial of long-standing existence of systems of oppression in European societies, of historical injustices and persistent racial inequalities in areas of housing, healthcare, employment and education, as well as repeated experiences of state violence and impunity.

The bare minimum that EU leaders should do is acknowledge the existence of and publicly condemn discriminatory and violent police practices, in particular when it results in death. But most European political leaders were not even able to do that.

There is an urgent need to ensure fair and effective policing practices for all communities. EU member state governments must adopt measures to combat and prevent racism in law enforcement. This includes severe sanctions in cases of police violence, ensuring fair and independent investigations, prohibiting racial profiling, and increasing racial diversity and trainings within the police force. The EU and its Member States should also collect equality data to make visible where racial profiling, disproportionate use of force and deaths following an interaction with the police are happening. Such data should enable intersectional cross-analysis, for example to identify specific experiences of racialised women.

Twenty years ago, the European Union was at the forefront of the fight against racial discrimination when it adopted landmark laws to prohibit discrimination based on race or ethnic origin. In a time of rising racist violence, persistent discrimination and racial inequality, the European Commission must have a stronger, more public commitment to address police violence and structural racism in Europe.

We would be happy to meet you to discuss our concerns in more detail and propose solutions, and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

Karen Taylor, Chair of the European Network Against Racism

Co-signed by:

1. ABVV-ACOD Cultuur, Belgium
2. ACLI-Vlaanderen vzw, Belgium
3. Aditus Foundation, Malta
4. Africa Solidarity Centre, Ireland
5. African and Caribbean Diversity, United Kingdom
6. African Media Association, Malta
7. AGE Platform Europe
8. AIF+ – Actieve Interculturele Federatie vzw, Belgium
9. AKAZ – Kazumba Association, Portugal
10. Alliance Citoyenne, France
11. Altera, Italy
12. Andalucía Acoge, Spain
13. ANTIGONE – Information and Documentation Centre on Racism, Ecology, Peace and Non-Violence, Greece
14. Anti-Racist Forum, Finland
15. Apna Haq, United Kingdom
16. Arciragazzi Portici, Italy
17. ASKV Refugee Support, Netherlands
18. Asociación Musulmana por los Derechos Humanos (AMDEH), Spain
19. Asociación Nacional Presencia Gitana, Spain
20. Asociación Rumiñahui, Spain
21. Association of African Students in Europe (AASE)
22. ASTI asbl – Associations de soutien aux travailleurs immigrés, Luxembourg
23. Ba Omar, Ecowasflanders, Belgium

24. Balbriggan Integration Forum, Ireland
25. BAMKO-CRAN asbl, Belgium
26. Ban Ying Koordinations- und Beratungsstelle gegen Menschenhandel e.V., Germany
27. BePax, Belgium
28. Café Congo, Belgium
29. CCME, the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe
30. CEJI-A Jewish Contribution to an Inclusive Europe
31. Center for Equality Advancement, Lithuania
32. Center for Intersectional Justice, Germany
33. Center for Migration, Gender and Justice, Germany
34. Central Council of German Sinti and Roma, Germany
35. Centre de Médiation des Gens du Voyage et des Roms, Belgium
36. Centre for Peace Studies, Croatia
37. Centre Régional de Verviers pour l'Intégration, Belgium
38. Centre Régional d'Intégration de Charleroi, Belgium
39. Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en Belgique (CCIB), Belgium
40. Collectif Contre l'Islamophobie en France (CCIF), France
41. Collectif féministe Kahina, Belgium
42. Collectif Mémoire Coloniale, Belgium
43. Confédération des Syndicats Chrétiens (CSC), Belgium
44. Conseil Représentatif des Associations Noires (CRAN), France
45. Counsellor Sanchia Alasia, London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, United Kingdom
46. Discrimination Law Association, United Kingdom
47. Dokumentations- und Beratungsstelle Islamfeindlichkeit & antimuslimischer Rassismus, Austria
48. Each One Teach One e.V. (EOTO), Germany
49. Een Andere Joodse Stem (EAJS), Belgium
50. ELLA vzw, Belgium
51. EMCEDO, Netherlands
52. ENAR Belgium
53. Equal Opportunities Initiative Association, Bulgaria
54. European Council for Refugees and Exiles (ECRE)
55. European Forum of Muslim Women (EFOMW)
56. European Network of Women of African Descent (ENWAD)
57. European Network On Religion and Belief
58. European Roma Grassroots Organisations Network
59. European Roma Information Office (ERIO)
60. European Roma Rights Centre
61. European Women's Lobby
62. Federation of Roma Associations in Catalonia – FAGiC, Spain
63. FMV vzw, Belgium
64. Forum of European Muslim Youth and Student Organisations (FEMYSO)
65. Foundation for Shelter and Support to Migrants, Malta
66. Fundación Al Fanar para el Conocimiento Árabe, Spain
67. Furia, Belgium
68. Generation 2.0 RED, Greece
69. Greek Forum of Migrants, Greece
70. Grupo EducAR – Anti Racist Education, Portugal
71. Hand in Hand tegen racisme, Belgium
72. Hart Boven Hard, Belgium
73. Help Refugees, United Kingdom
74. Human Rights League (Liga za ľudské práva), Slovakia
75. IDB Initiative für ein diskriminierungsfreies Bildungswesen, Austria

76. Il Razzismo è una brutta storia, Italy
77. ILGA-Europe
78. In IUSTITIA, Czech Republic
79. Inequalities Research Network, University of Leeds, United Kingdom
80. InMenteltaca, Italy
81. Instituto de Asuntos Culturales – IACE, Spain
82. Integratipact vzw, Belgium
83. Integro Association, Bulgaria
84. Intercultural Dialogue Platform, Belgium
85. Irish Network Against Racism, Ireland
86. Jesuit Refugee Service Europe
87. Jesuit Refugee Service Malta
88. [Job@Ubuntu](#), Belgium
89. Kaneza Karen, former ENAR board member, Belgium
90. KARAMAH EU
91. Killion Munyama, Polish MP
92. King Brenda, ACDiversity, United Kingdom
93. KISA – Action for equality, support, anti-racism, Cyprus
94. Kopin – Koperazzjoni Internazzjonali, Malta
95. Kreativ Research Association-Center for Media Studies and Social Research, Romania
96. La Voix des Roms, France
97. Lallab, France
98. Le Monde des Possibles, Belgium
99. Ligue des droits humains, Belgium
100. Malta Emigrants' Commission, Malta
101. Merhaba, Belgium
102. Migrant Tales, Finland
103. Migrant Women Association, Malta
104. Minderhedenforum, Belgium
105. MOC, Belgium
106. Movimento di Cooperazione Educativa di Torino, Italy
107. MRAX ASBL, Mouvement contre le Racisme, l'Antisémitisme et la Xénophobie, Belgium
108. Muslim Association of Greece, Greece
109. Mwindi Kitoko vzw, Belgium
110. Netzwerk Rassismus und Diskriminierungsfreies Bayern e.V., Germany
111. Nevo Parudimos Association, Romania
112. NiLi, Network Italiano dei Leader per l'Inclusione, Italy
113. Objectif, mouvement pour l'égalité des droits asbl, Belgium
114. ORBIT vzw, Belgium
115. Pan-African Movement for Justice, Sweden
116. Platform for International Cooperation on Undocumented Migrants (PICUM)
117. Por Ti Mujer, Spain
118. Quaker Council for European Affairs
119. Queer Base – Welcome & Support for LGBTIQ Refugees, Austria
120. Rainbowhouse Brussels, Belgium
121. Red Acoge, Spain
122. Red Española de Inmigración y Ayuda al Refugiado, Spain
123. Refugee Rights Europe
124. Reghif Mouhad, Bruxelles Panthères, Belgium
125. Regional Roma Educational Youth Association – RROMA, North Macedonia
126. Rete21marzo, Italy
127. REVIBRA Europe – European Support Network to Brazilian women in Europe

128. Roma Active Albania
129. Roma Community Centre, Lithuania
130. Roma Education Fund
131. Roma Entrepreneurship Development Initiative REDI
132. Roots vzw, Belgium
133. Samenlevingsopbouw, Belgium
134. SEER vzw, Belgium
135. SHARE Forum, Belgium
136. Siempre-Making Latin Women Visible, Belgium
137. Slovo 21, Czech Republic
138. SolidarityNow, Greece
139. SOS Malta, Malta
140. Stichting OCAN, Netherlands
141. Stichting voor mensen zonder verblijfsvergunning – STIL Utrecht, Netherlands
142. Tayush, Belgium
143. Uganda Association of Ireland, Ireland
144. UNESCO Inclusive Policy Lab – People of of African Descent and the SDGs e-team
145. Union des Progressistes Juifs de Belgique (UPJB), Belgium
146. Vaiya Alfiaz, former coordinator of the EP Anti-Racism and Diversity Intergroup
147. Victoria Deluxe vzw, Belgium
148. Vie Féminine, Belgium
149. Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, Kosovo
150. Waterford Integration Services, Ireland
151. WoW e.V., Germany
152. CeRAIC, Belgium