

Translation

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Policies and Strategies to Promote Tolerance and Non-Discrimination

1. Will we ever be able to get rid of all prejudices and stereotypes? Certainly not. What can we therefore actually achieve with education, for example?

We talk about anti-Semitism, racism, Islamophobia, homophobia and transphobia, gender-based discrimination, antiziganism, intolerance against Christians and Muslims, etc. This necessary separation into specific issues and the communication that it gives rise to creates – without us being able to prevent this – the impression that this is not so much an interconnected problem, but is rather about the problems of individual affected groups: black people, Jews, Sinti and Roma, the LGBT community, Muslims, etc.

In spite of this, how can the topic be addressed as a problem that can affect any citizen directly?

How can efforts to counter anti-Semitism, for example, help to tackle antiziganism or homophobia? How can efforts to counter Islamophobia, for example, help to tackle anti-Semitism?

We need an explicitly “more political” concept of prejudices and/or stereotypes for this. Irrespective of the specific people who suffer such discrimination, the pattern, the fundamental problem, is always the same, namely the fact that individual people are **denied their fundamental rights** by being assigned to a group whose purported inferiority is established and considered to be legitimate. This is the degrading process, which variously affects Jews, Roma or Muslims, that discounts individuals with their beliefs and actions and reduces them to their membership of a group over which they have no influence.

How can we communicate this interrelationship as a recurrent cultural practice that takes different forms – as anti-Semitism, homophobia, antiziganism or Islamophobia – better than in the past?

In Germany, the concept of group-focused enmity, which was developed by sociologists from Bielefeld, has come to the fore in this context. However, perhaps it also makes sense to call this phenomenon **modern racism**, a form of racism whose arguments are no longer race-biological, a type of racism that, in our present age, draws on ethnic, religious, cultural, social or gender-specific arguments. What is stopping us from coming up with a more up-to-date working definition of racism that puts this recurrent pattern centre stage?

The link to recurrent racist basic patterns in the specific form of prejudice can, to my mind, help to put the issue of prejudice more into the political spotlight. It can help to create broader coalitions in society who are opposed to any form of disenfranchisement brought about by the definition of inferior groups. A heightened sensitivity to this racist mechanism will also help us to stake out a clear boundary with populist movements. If

politicians use racist arguments – for whatever reason – then they depart from our basis of shared values.

This in no way means that we will cease our efforts to combat or monitor specific forms of racism in a targeted manner. However, it is advantageous that, for example, combating racist thought about Muslims can help to combat anti-Semitism and vice versa.

2. With this in mind, I would like to briefly refer to the following experiences from our funding activities:

In the past, we have enjoyed positive experiences in the area of connecting human rights education with historical learning and focusing this on Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In the course of history, especially in the 20th century, there are a great number of social constellations that demonstrate the fatal consequences of constructing inferior groups in order to deny humans their fundamental rights. Our international youth exchange programme Europeans for Peace facilitates international youth project work on these topics. Let us make questions relating to the mechanisms of racist thought a stronger focus of international youth exchanges than has been the case in the past.

Working with young professionals is a further productive approach. At international summer schools, these young people thematise the holocaust from the perspective of anti-Semitism while at the same time going beyond this. They see the history of National Socialism as an example of a racist social project that also led to the extermination of the Roma community and people with disabilities, and also to the persecution and disenfranchisement of homosexuals, Poles, Russians, Serbs and others. Through becoming acquainted with the mechanisms of racially motivated policies by drawing on historical examples, young professionals are able to develop a heightened awareness for similar practices in the present and counter these persuasively in their respective professional contexts. (I refer here to the international project Humanity in Action).

In Germany and many countries around the world, International Holocaust Remembrance Day on 27 January commemorates the persecution and murder of European Jews. However, we go beyond this and also recall the other victims of National Socialism's racially motivated policy. This international day of remembrance is therefore an excellent opportunity to raise awareness of the fact that every human is at risk of becoming a victim of racist policy in our world. And it is an opportunity to emphasise the fact that the international community formulated the Universal Declaration of Human Rights not least in light of these experiences.

Since 2015, we have been encouraging and supporting NGOs in Central and Eastern Europe to develop projects to combat anti-Semitism and antiziganism in joint formats.

We hosted a Muslim-Jewish conference in Berlin in 2015.

At this year's Roma Day, representatives of the Roma community and the Federal Government, as well as the Central Council of Jews in Germany and the LGBT community spoke out at rally in Berlin that was also attended by the Federal President.

We need more such overarching formats.

- 3. Awareness raising and education are certainly not enough. Progress can only be made if those affected by discrimination are able to assert their rights.** Our experiences show that this requires **permanently financed social structures** (by the state or civil society). Such structures are just as necessary for a society in the foreseeable future as healthcare systems and motorways. In addition to the necessary legal frameworks to achieve equality and training for public prosecutors, judges and police officers, the following structures are required in order to combat discrimination effectively in the long term:
- Permanently funded **counselling structures** for the victims of discrimination
 - **Legal aid funds** in order to instigate and continue legal proceedings through multiple instances
 - Permanently financed **structures for monitoring and raising awareness** among the public

Conclusion: While we cannot get rid of all prejudices and stereotypes in the world, we can perhaps help to prevent them from being mobilised in order to restrict fundamental rights. And that is the crux of the matter.

I therefore recommend the following:

- A stronger focus on overarching cultural patterns of different forms of discrimination, either with the concept of group-focused enmity, with a working definition of modern racism or by taking a different approach
- A stronger connection between historical learning and human rights education than in the past in order to, by drawing on history, identify the mechanisms of racist policy and understand the Holocaust in particular as the product of a gigantic racist social project
- State financing of permanent structures to offer effective support to people who have suffered discrimination and who want to assert their rights