

STATEMENT BY THE EUROPEAN UNION AT SESSION I OF THE OSCE SUPPLEMENTARY HUMAN DIMENSION MEETING

Vienna, 19 and 20 April 2012

The European Union (EU) attaches great importance to combating all forms of discrimination, whether they be based on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origins, genetic characteristics, language, religion or beliefs, political views or any other opinion, belonging to a national minority, a person's financial situation, birth, a disability, age or sexual orientation.

This principle is inscribed in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has the same legal force as the founding treaties of the EU.

The legal framework of the European Union for combating discrimination was established in 2000 and consists specifically of three directives on the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, on the labour market and outside the workplace.

The institutions and authorities of the Member States and of the Union are assisted by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights in the implementation of EU legislation on combating discrimination. Lastly, financial aid is provided for under the programme entitled Progress 2007–2013.

Combating racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination is one of the goals of the European Union within the OSCE. In this regard, the EU hopes that the OSCE will take full account of the manifestations of hatred and intolerance based on sexual orientation or gender identity. The EU welcomes the action taken by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights and by the Personal Representatives of the Chairperson-in-Office for combating discrimination.

Sport can be a means of transmitting positive values and of combating discrimination. This presupposes that sport sets a good example. Unfortunately, violence or manifestations of racism, xenophobia and intolerance at sporting events remain a worrying problem.

The European Union, specifically through the programmes undertaken by the European Commission, promotes and facilitates dialogue with Member States, international organizations, sporting bodies, law enforcement agencies and other stakeholders (such as supporters' associations and local authorities) to ensure that sport remains a positive force in promoting tolerance and diversity.

The Supplementary Human Dimension Meeting on Combating Racism, Intolerance and Discrimination in Society through Sport provides an excellent opportunity to discuss the positive role that sport can play this year, marked as it will be by the organization of several major sporting events, notably the Olympic Games in London and the Euro 2012 Football Championship in Poland and Ukraine.

The acceding country Croatia, the candidate countries the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Iceland and Serbia, the countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the member of the European Free Trade Association Norway, as well as Andorra, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and San Marino align themselves with this statement.