Action against racism: action plan

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OBJECTIVE: establishing a coherent framework for measures to combat racism at European level.
SUBSTANCE: in the Commission's view, racism continues to present a major challenge for our societies. This is borne out by the continuing high levels of racist incidents and discrimination (33% of those interviewed in the latest Eurobarometer opinion poll described themselves as 'quite racist'). In view of this, the possibility for achieving further progress in this area provided by the Treaty of Amsterdam which includes a general non-discrimination clause the Commission decided to propose an action plan with a genuinely European dimension for combatting racism. This builds upon the very positive achievements of the European Year Against Racism (CNS95355) and the partnership arrangements set up by this initiative (creation of networks seeking to make the public more aware of the dangers of racism etc.). With this action plan, the Commission proposes practical and procedural measures to prepare the ground for future and more ambitious action to combat racism within the framework of the new treaty provisions on non-discrimination. The action plan seeks to draw together all concerned: citizens national or local authorities, non- governmental organizations, social partners, media and sports bodies. The action plan consists of four strands: (1) Paving the way for legislative initiatives: with the inclusion of a general non-discrimination clause in the text of the Treaty of Amsterdam (Article 13) providing new scope for action by the Commission. Pending the ratification of the treaty, the action plan sets out a number of measures to promote non-discrimination in the Union (for example by means of a major conference on the question at the end of 1998). When the treaty is ratified the Commission will be able to submit a legislative proposal seeking to combat racial discrimination (before the end of 1999); (2) Mainstreaming the fight against racism within Community policies and programmes: developing the potential offered by certain sectors of activity in the Community in particular in the areas of employment, the European structural funds, education, training and youth programmes, public procurement policy, research, external relations, information actions and cultural and sports events. An interservice group will be established within the Commission to push this process forward and the Commission will continue to take full account of the principles of non-discrimination in its own recruitment and promotion policies; (3) Developing and exchanging new models, launching a range of private projects to combat racism and promote an exchange of experience at European level. (4) Strengthening information and communication actions: the Commission is seeking to build upon the work initiated during the European Year Against Racism and give this action a clear and recognisable identity (logo, media actions and Internet site, publications and prizes). In addition, initiatives could also be launched in cooperation with various media partners to promote codes of good practice for journalists, editors and advertising bodies.