European year against racism in 1997: implementation. Report

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PURPOSE : to present a report on the implementation of the European Year against Racism (1997).
CONTENT : In accordance with Article 6 of the Council Resolution announcing the year 1997 as the European Year of Racism (OJ.C 237/96), the Commission presents a report on the Year (refer to procedure CNS/1355/1995). The European Year against Racism clearly illustrated the importance of partnership as a weapon against racism. The focus was on complementarity between the action taken by Member States and that taken at the European level, and close cooperation was initiated to extend this partnership to include all those concerned, notably civil society and the media. At European level, the approach focuses mainly on information campaigns, exchanging experience and supporting cooperation between the various players. The Year created a dynamism, boosted by the fight against racism in Europe, revitalised existing initiatives and gave birth to many others. The information and communication campaign put over a hard hitting message about the danger posed by racism to our societies and focused on certain tried-and-tested solutions, including the portrayal of multicultural societies in a positive light. The Year contributed to a number of major political advances : 1) the insertion into the Treaty of Amsterdam, of a general non-discrimination clause (Article 13) which opened the way to Community action and combat racism at European level; 2) the adoption of the Council Regulation creating the European Monitoring centre on Racism and Xenophobia, charged with following developments in these areas and making recommendations to the European Institutions and Member States; 3) the implementation of a European network of non-governmental organisations active in the fight against racism; 4) the provision of a useful basis for discussion during preparation for the gloal conference on racism to be organised by the UN in 2001; 5) the launch of an action plan against racism, which aims to place the fight against racism at the heart of a number of European policies and it creates a coherent framework for Community action over the medium term. Lastly, this Community action comes under the more general heading of initiatives against discrimination in all its forms, in the context of new provisions in the Treaty and the construction of a Europe of diversity, tolerance and cohesion.