

Analysis

Growing racism in the EU not just a Member State issue

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Ethnic profiling on the basis of security concerns is not new. However, as the European Commission struggles to get the Anti- Discrimination directive adopted and the European Union attempts to upgrade equality standards in all Member States, less attention has been paid to the growing role ethnic profiling plays in European policy-making. Whether at national or EU level, the logic of targeting certain communities to better protect "ourselves" seems to be gaining ground.

Monitoring racism and discrimination in the EU: a bleak picture

The EU has taken initiatives to address discrimination, racism and xenophobia in Europe over the past few years. Several pieces of legislation have been adopted since the early 2000s: the 2000 Racial Equality Directive [1], the 2000 Employment Equality Directive, the 2004 Gender Equality Directive and the 2004 Gender Equality Directives on Goods and Services. In addition, a monitoring and reporting body was created in 1997: the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. This was replaced by the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) in 2007.

The Racial Equality Directive is particularly interesting in terms of its focus on institutional racism. In 2012 the FRA published an evaluation report on the state of play of the directive in the different Member States, *The Racial Equality Directive: application and challenges*. [2] The Directive prohibits direct and indirect discrimination on grounds of racial and ethnic origin that is applicable in the fields of employment; vocational training; social services, including social security and health care; education and access to public goods and services. While the FRA's study mainly concentrated on preparations for the full implementation of the directive in the specific fields it covers, the report also revealed a picture of racism in society. In some new Member States:

[T]here was a tendency [among employers and employees] to question the necessity of the directive because it was considered that discrimination was not actually a significant problem. (p.12)

Many of the causes identified for the incomplete implementation of the Directive were symptomatic of the denial of racism as an issue, and were described by the FRA as a "Failure to recognise and reluctance to report discrimination." (p.22) The following quotation from a trade-union respondent is typical: "We don't see a lot of discrimination here in Lithuania at all... As regards Gypsies, our employers do not like to have workers who are Gypsies." (p.22) Whether this reflects a lack of

awareness of racism or its general acceptance was not established by the study. However, its results reflect a widespread prejudice towards minorities.

In this context, the FRA emphasised the responsibility of law enforcement authorities, and in particular the police, to combat racism and discrimination.

The 2010 FRA report on *Police Stops and Minorities* [3] was based on interviews with over 23,500 immigrant and ethnic minority respondents from across Europe, and it was the first European-wide study "providing evidence about minorities' experience of policing." The survey found very high levels of police stops among many minority groups in the 12 months preceding the interviews. About 30% of the Roma, North-African and Sub-Saharan African respondents had been stopped and an equal number of Roma and North African respondents considered they had been treated disrespectfully or very disrespectfully by the police.(p17)

In Belgium, Germany and France, the percentage of stops of members of minority groups was almost double that of the majority population. Searches were far more extensive when involving minorities, in particular in Belgium, Germany, Spain, France, Italy, Greece and Romania.(p248)

When public order and "security" legitimises institutional racism

Institutional racism and widespread ethnic profiling have often been criticised but are still becoming deeply embedded in police practice. In the UK, the 1999 Macpherson inquiry into the police handling of the racist killing of Stephen Lawrence unveiled disturbing evidence of institutional racism in the police investigation of the murder. [4] Macpherson defined institutional racism as:

"The collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture, or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness and racist stereotyping which disadvantage minority ethnic people."

Examples of continuing discriminatory practices can be found, for instance, in Britain, France and Germany

The recent survey carried out by the London School of Economics and *The Guardian* in the wake of the summer 2011 riots in the UK revealed the gap between the police and some communities, with some rioters explaining they were taking part in "anti-police riots." [5] In particular, racial profiling underpinning "stop and search" operations targeting minority groups have been identified as a major cause for people's frustration and mistrust of British police forces. [6] The use of pre-emptive arrest and the disproportionate use of force against minority groups are not new in Britain, and have resulted in many deaths in custody, with a disproportionately high percentage of fatalities from black communities over the past decades. [7] A 2010 analysis of Ministry of Justice crime statistics by Professor Alex Stevens from the University of Kent revealed that black people were six times more likely than white people to be stopped by the police. [8]

Similar cases in France have been documented over several years. A 2012 Human Rights Watch report, *The Root of Humiliation: Abusive Identity Checks in France*, highlighted "abusive identity checks on minority youth" and the disproportionate use of force by the police based on interviews conducted with young people in three major cities, Paris, Lille and Lyon. [9] In 2011 Amnesty's report, *Families of victims of deaths in police custody wait for justice to be done*, documents the

cases of five individuals of foreign descent each of whom had been arrested, in some cases arbitrarily, and later died in custody. [10] In January 2012 three policemen were found guilty in one of these cases, but appealed their suspended sentence. Four other officers have been under investigation since 26 March 2012 for manslaughter. [11] According to the website "À toutes les victimes des Etats policiers" ("To the victims of police States") [12], 125 people died at the hands of the French police between 1991 and 2012. Judging from the names on this list, the majority of the victims were of foreign descent and belonged to "ethnic minority groups."

In 2009, a report on *Police and visible minorities: identity checks in Paris*, by the New York Open Society Institute [13] concluded that in France, the "permissive legal framework regulating identity checks facilitates appearance based controls," despite such controls "breaching French law…and European law." People from the Arab and black communities were six times more likely than French nationals to be stopped.

On 11 April 2012, 15 individuals challenged police racism before a French court, with the support of the Open Society Justice Initiative.[14] Each of the applicants had been stopped by the police for no reason, sometimes in an aggressive manner. All believe they were identified by police officers as "foreigners", and therefore potential troublemakers. They have lodged a complaint against the then Minister of Interior, Claude Guéant, accusing him of supporting discriminatory practices against minority groups.

Perhaps the most blatant example of this was the former minister's assertion that the propensity of foreigners to commit crimes was two to three times higher than amongst nationals, (he also omitted to mention that his statistics included irregular stays on the territory.) [15] This is not to mention the French authorities' actions against the Roma community, which were widely reported in the media in summer 2010. The government's actions were officially justified as a reaction to a casino robbery involving a member of the Roma community, Karim Boudouda, and the ensuing shoot-out in which he was shot dead by the police. A statement issued by the then Immigration Minister Eric Besson and Interior Minister Brice Hortefeux after the tragic event demonised a whole community as constituting a threat to public security. It stated that the "lawlessness that characterises Roma populations that have come from Eastern Europe" was "unacceptable."[16]

In Germany, police officers have received support for conducting racially motivated identity checks. A shocking administrative court ruling in March 2012 authorised federal policemen to check the identity of foreign-looking passengers on train routes thought to carry irregular migrants. [17] This judgment was strongly criticised by human rights organisations, including the German Institute for Human Rights which considers this decision violates fundamental rights. [18] Should the case be dealt with at a federal level, as it may well be given the uproar it has caused, the issue of racial profiling may arise in the wider debate on the reintroduction of internal border controls in the Schengen area which the German government has been in favour of in recent months. [19]

It is worth noting that in all of these cases ethnic-orientated policing measures were justified by the authorities on "security" grounds.

The EU dimension to ethnic profiling

In 2007, the European Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) published a set of recommendations on combatting racism and racial discrimination in policing. [20] Ethic profiling was defined as:

"The use by the police, with no objective and reasonable justification, of grounds such as race, colour, language, religion, nationality or national or ethnic origin in control, surveillance or investigation activities."

In 2010, the FRA defined ethnic profiling as:

"A situation where a decision to exercise police powers is based only or mainly on that person's race, ethnicity or religion." [21]

We can see here that police racism is condemned by official EU bodies. However, the identification of at risk groups as potential threats to public order seems free from any criticism. The use of security concerns to avoid moral condemnation of what amounts, in reality, to ethnic profiling, is not new. What is new is a growing propensity among EU institutions and agencies to follow this trend.

The recent discussions at a meeting of the EU Law Enforcement Working Party in February 2012 were an opportunity for Europol to *target* Roma and Gypsy communities and to counter the potential threat which itinerant crime represents. [22] The latest Europol *Organised Crime Threat Assessment* report identified the nationality of individuals involved in trafficking activities; while some may argue whether disaggregated data by nationality can be qualified as racial profiling per se, further statements left no doubt about the discriminatory and racist nature of the logic behind such data: "Bulgarian and Romanian (mostly of Roma ethnicity), Nigerian and Chinese groups are probably the most threatening to society as a whole."

In the same vein, the EU's counter-terrorism coordinator expressed interest in collecting information on the North Caucasus diaspora established in EU Member States to investigate its links to terrorist cells based in the North Caucasus. [23] In 2007 Frontex's operation HYDRA officially targeted Chinese irregular migrants. [24]

Racial profiling is encouraged by European authorities, which seem to view its underlying assumptions as tangible and objective facts, despite important methodological and ethical shortcomings. Frontex's latest *Annual Risk Analysis on the Western Balkans* reveals further examples of its use. The Agency presents two waves of asylum applications lodged by Roma people in 2010 and 2011, and concludes that "claiming asylum in the EU is part of Roma overall seasonal strategy for their livelihood." [25] Leaving aside the absence of any similarity between the 2010 and 2011 data that could allow for this assumption, it is worth mentioning that no attention is paid in the report to the situation of the Roma community in the Balkans, on the connection between peaks in asylum applications and forced evictions or persecution in some ex-Yugoslavian countries.

The Polish Internal Security Agency Counter-Terrorist Centre's power point presentation to the EU Working Party on Terrorism in November 2011 on the level of radicalisation of the Caucasian community in Poland is a further example. In a peremptory six-slide presentation illustrated with photographs of young Muslims posing with guns, the argument is made: this community is "not eager to work – relying on social support," is characterised by a "low level of integration and a clan structure" and is "prone to radicalisation." The presentation concludes: "extremely complex picture – terrorist + criminal + intelligence threat." [26]

Racial profiling is being legitimised on the basis that it is meant to identify and counter groups threatening Europe's security. Following the same rhetoric as Member States' labelling specific groups as potentially "at risk" or outcasts and policing them as undesirables, the European Union's

agencies have identified specific categories to monitor and - as the EU's counterterrorism coordinator Gilles de Kerchove told a Polish journalist – "collect data" on. [27]

A 2011 report from the Open Society Justice Initiative on Ethnic Profiling confirmed this trend:

The use of information about religion (or ethnicity, race, or national origin) in assembling a profile is legitimate when linked to solid, timely, and specific intelligence concerning individuals' participation in terrorist activities. But evidence from Europe indicates that police and intelligence agencies are using generalized assumptions about certain religious or ethnic groups' involvement in terrorism, thus crossing the line from legitimate counterterrorism profiling into discriminatory ethnic profiling. [28]

The limits of the Anti-Discrimination Directive

In its 2010 report on police stops and minorities mentioned above, the FRA concluded that the practice provided "evidence for critiquing the apparent limitations of past and ongoing interventions to address discrimination and victimisation against minorities, and provide the context against which EC and national legislation, such as the EC 'Race Directive', can be judged with respect to the realities of discrimination and victimisation on the ground." (p.19)

The so-called Anti-Discrimination Directive was initiated in 2008 to address these shortcomings by creating a "horizontal" anti-discrimination instrument, in particular by including discrimination on grounds of beliefs, religion, age, disability and sexual orientation, which the Racial Equality Directive was not covering.

However, discussions on the forthcoming Anti-Discrimination Directive have been blocked at Council level since 2009. This is mainly because Member States questioned the necessity of further EU legislation, which is perceived as a challenge to their sovereignty. Meanwhile, discrimination continues.

The 2010 European-wide FRA report on Equality confirmed the trend which previous studies had already highlighted in some specific member states. Respondents from visibly different minority groups felt more likely to be stopped by the police than white people, a phenomenon confirmed by the European Network Against Racism's (ENAR) latest *Shadow Report*. [29]

The complete denial of ethnic profiling practices and - even more worrying - policies is reflected in the latest outcome of the Council of the EU's discussion on the Anti-Discrimination Directive in November 2011:

While emphasising the importance of the fight against discrimination, certain delegations have maintained general reservations, **questioning the need for the Commission's proposal**, which they see as infringing on national competence for certain issues and as conflicting with the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality. [emphasis added] [30]

Why is a new anti-discrimination piece of legislation needed when existing frameworks should be sufficient and national policies are able to address the issue?

An interesting finding in the FRA's study on the Racial Equality Directive [italic] confirms this:

Where there is a lack of awareness or recognition that discrimination is a problem, a society may be less likely to generate a demand for regulation in this area. [31]

However, despite numerous reports by civil society organisations and academics, no mention of institutional racism is made in official EU publications or from the Racial Equality Directive and the Anti-Discrimination Directive.

In 2005 however, ECRI stated its concern "that the use of racist, anti-Semitic and xenophobic political discourse is no longer confined to extremist political parties, but is increasingly infecting mainstream political parties, at the risk of legitimising and trivialising this type of discourse". [32]

Despite ECRI's repeated concern at the rise of far-right movements in Europe, European authorities remain tight-lipped when it comes to racial profiling measures advocated in several policy documents. The Anti-Discrimination Directive, which will be discussed by the Council in June 2012, will not help address the issue, especially given the "blanket exceptions" which were exposed by ENAR as being unjustified. [33]

Article 3(5) of the proposed Directive after a first vote at the European Parliament stated:

This Directive does not cover differences of treatment based on nationality and is without prejudice to provisions and conditions relating to the entry into and residence of third-country nationals and stateless persons in the territory of Member States, and to any treatment which arises from the legal status of the third-country nationals and stateless persons concerned. [34]

It can be questioned whether in light of Article 3(5) police stops on trains as suggested by a German court, or border checks directed at specific groups following the recommendation of a Frontex report (e.g. Roma coming from the Balkans), would be considered a legal offence. In some cases such reservations may be interpreted as a green light to police third country nationals in a disproportionate manner.

As ENAR argues:

Derogations and exemptions allowed under existing anti-discrimination legislation have been misused by Member States to evade their obligation to ensure that asylum and immigration laws are neither discriminatory nor have discriminatory effects. It has also been used to evade political commitment to ensure fair treatment of third country nationals, for example regarding access to jobs, social housing criteria, welfare limitations, discretionary controls and detention centres. (p.9)

Article 2(8) is of particular concern as it authorises discriminatory measures "laid down in national law which, in a democratic society, are necessary and proportionate for public security, for the maintenance of public order and the prevention of criminal offences, for the protection of health and the protection of the rights and freedoms of others."

Bearing in mind that the notion of "proportionality" was added by the European Parliament and may be rejected by the Council in June 2012 (the expected date for the second reading of the draft), the article as a whole assumes a particular significance in the light of the above-mentioned examples of institutional racism based on security grounds.

Concluding remarks

James A. Goldston, of the Open Society Justice Initiative, described ethnic profiling as comprising three issues: discrimination, policing and data. In a 2005 essay entitled *Toward A Europe Without Ethnic Profiling*, he warned that:

One major challenge in addressing ethnic profiling in Europe is the absence of a Europe-wide norm which specifically identifies and outlaws the practice [of ethnic profiling]. [35]

It can be questioned, however, if additional legislation will change what, in reality, has more to do with a political agenda very much influenced by security concerns and the increasing categorisation of populations for the sake of ideologies no better than Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations*. Indeed, the absence of any political moves against ethnic profiling within Europe's institutions contrasts with the willingness to oppose racism and discrimination in specific sectors which mostly fall under national policy making. Law making may not necessarily be the answer.

Beyond overt racism, the current situation in Europe is symptomatic of a mounting acceptance of discriminatory policies amongst EU and national decision makers. There is a real danger that Europe may embrace the 'legal use of racial profiling' (Harcourt, 2011) as some states in the USA already have. [36]

Endnotes

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