

Copenhagen, May 7th, 2008

To:

José Barroso, President of the European Commission
Prime Minister Janez Jansa, President of the Council
Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament

Subject: Principle of equal treatment also outside of labour market on grounds of age, disability, religion, belief and sexual orientation.

Dear Sirs,

We are writing this letter on behalf of Danish anti-discrimination NGO's to voice our disappointment of the recent news that the Commission is intending to propose a directive that only will cover discrimination on the ground of disability outside of employment and occupation. This commitment to the ground of disability is important and necessary. However, a commitment to legislation on the ground of disability alone is inadequate. It will reinforce a hierarchy across the grounds. It will not enable the necessary response to the issue of discrimination and to the experience of so many European citizens in this regard.

Our hopes were high when we read the Commissions Annual Policy Strategy for 2008, where it was announced that the Commission intended to "... propose new initiatives designed to prevent and combat discrimination outside of labour market – based on gender, religion, belief, disability, age and sexual orientation." Because it goes without saying that EU's anti-discrimination legislations have been a determining factor for Denmark to have laws, regulations and bodies that protect its citizens from discrimination. However, since EU legislation is limited in

its scope of protection, so is the Danish, as Denmark only implements the bare minimum in accordance with the directives.

Denmark's reluctance to provide legislation to protect all its citizens against discrimination beyond the required by EU was illustrated when the Prime Minister, in a letter responding to our request for a general provision against discrimination, stated that the Danish State had no intention to extend the scope of protection against discrimination outside of labour market to cover discrimination on the grounds of religion, belief, disability, age and sexual orientation because it was not required by EU legislation.

As national NGO's we have been extremely happy with the development in EU on the promotion of the principle of equal treatment ever since the adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty article 13, the so-called "Race equality" and "Employment framework" directives. We have also benefited from the different EU initiatives. The most recent initiative being the 2007 European Year for Equal Opportunities for All. Then why not make use of the momentum and build further by adopting new legal initiatives to protect all people from all forms of discrimination?

We have to recognise that the work to secure equal opportunities for all in Europe is only partly completed. We therefore call on you to ensure that the work to protect all against discrimination gets carried on by proposing a clear directive to broaden the scope of anti-discrimination for all grounds and policies.

Yours sincerely,

Søren Laursen

Equal Treatment Committee

On behalf of:

- Stig Langvad, President of the Disabled Peoples Organization Denmark
- Holger Kallehauge, President of The Danish Association of Polio- and Accident Victims (PTU)
- Randi Iversen, President of the Women's Council in Denmark
- Fakhra Mohammad, President of The Documentation- and Counseling Center Against Racial Discrimination
- Bashy Quraishy, President of ENAR – European Network against Racism
- Ove Christiansen, President of The Danish Association of Senior Citizens
- Lissi Rasmussen, President of the Islamic-Christian Study Centre
- Kristoffer Petterson, President of The Danish National Association of Gays & Lesbians