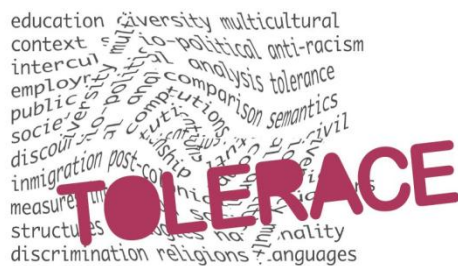


POLICY BRIEF



DISCOURSES AND PUBLIC POLICIES ON RACISM AND ANTI-RACISM IN EUROPE

Main findings of the analysis of key national and regional public bodies, political and academic discourse and policy documents on anti-racism, immigration and integration, in **Portugal, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom.**

July 2012

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of anti-racism in Europe

European monitoring agencies such as the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and the European Network Against Racism (ENAR) have recognised the **inefficiency of existing measures in tackling ethno-racial discrimination**. Official reports tend to confirm that policy efforts to fight discrimination do not always reflect the scope of the problem. The TOLERACE research analyses how this problem is **rooted in a dominant concept of racism that fails to address its relationship to the processes of nation formation, post-colonial conditions and citizenship in Europe**. Accordingly, the TOLERACE project proposes to abandon the dominant understanding which defines racism as individual prejudice and attitudes towards difference. Instead, the emphasis must lie in understanding the real dimensions of racism, as a political phenomenon embedded in *the production of political communities*.

Public policies in Europe concerning ethnically marked populations have a very narrow focus and do not incorporate anti-racist measures sufficiently. These policies make social structures vulnerable to racism and racial discrimination. The precariousness of anti-racist measures in EU member states is illustrated in the United Kingdom and France, for instance, by the limited number of anti-discrimination activities. Similarly, in Germany, the resources allocated to anti-discrimination policies are inadequate for a policy that aims to address the stated concern with anti-discrimination. Finally, in Portugal, the specific equality body in charge of monitoring racial discrimination lacks political

independence, resulting in an insignificant number of sanctions or condemnations of racial discrimination.

KEY OBSERVATIONS

The understanding of racism that informs policy making is inadequate

Existing measures to tackle ethno-racial discrimination operate within a very narrow definition of the problem. The TOLERACE project considers it imperative that both policymakers and academics should address racism as a **political phenomenon** that needs to be analysed by engaging with **historical processes** and **specific political conditions**. In order to understand the workings of racism it is therefore important to look at the **ways in which power is distributed and populations are administered** in different settings.

A key aspect of understanding the shortcomings in current European anti-racist and anti-discriminatory policy strategies concerns the prevailing underlying rationale. According to this rationale, 'race' no longer matters, or at least not in the way it used to. This idea is an effect of the strategy used to tackle racism **that became dominant after the Second World War, popularised by UNESCO's initiatives since the 1950s**: racism was conceived of as the *abuse* and *misuse* of erroneous scientific ideas on the superiority and inferiority of 'races'. Consequently, anti-racism centred on discrediting the scientific validity of these claims and beliefs – with the Nazi regime and the Holocaust serving as a paradigmatic experience – and on promoting education in understanding other peoples and cultures. Although this strategy addresses relevant issues it has proved inadequate since it neglects the specific historical conditions under which racism has been shaped, namely the processes of nation state formation and colonialism.

Racism is the basis of ideas and practices concerning political belonging

The production of the idea of 'race' has been closely related to the formation of **European nation states, colonialism, and capitalism** since the end of the 15th Century (e.g. slavery, colonial administration and the expulsion/deportation of populations). **Racism as a political phenomenon is the basis of ideas and practices of political belonging, namely inclusion/exclusion, equality/inequality and, most importantly, fundamental superiority and inferiority** (i.e. ideas of *humanity, reason* and *morality*). Thus, racism does not merely refer to discrimination based on a belief in the existence of genetically defined inferior 'races'. The categories used to designate the condition of superiority/inferiority that activate power structures and relations are themselves a product of history, and thus change over time (e.g. European, Western, White, Christian vs. Immigrant, Coloured, Black, Oriental, Muslim).

Racism is rooted in Eurocentrism

Although racism in Europe is not an exception (i.e. racism does not occur only in European territory), it is rooted in **Eurocentrism**, that is, in a specific theory of history and human rationality that has made it possible to refer to Europe and the European nation states as forms of political belonging. **It is through the contested nature of political belonging (and its surveillance) that racism is being reconfigured in current European liberal democracies.**

Racism is a political phenomenon

The full complexity of racism must be understood by taking into account **the interrelated processes, structures and ideologies that activate and reproduce unequal power relations**, thus conditioning access to socio-economic, cultural, and political resources (i.e. discrimination) **by populations marked as inferior in relation to those marked as superior (being a European/national citizen)**. The terms under which this condition of inferiority has been formulated change according to specific historical and political conditions. Interconnected biological, religious, civilisational and economic factors – amongst others – have been, and are, deployed to produce the idea of ‘race’ as a notion that designates the fundamental superiority and inferiority of certain people. This condition of inferiority is interpreted as the ‘way of being’ of these marked populations and therefore as somehow ‘inherited’, though it may be ‘corrected’ via assimilation/integration.

Concepts of racism in contemporary public imaginaries and policies are problematic

Academics and policy makers **often connect the question of racism to that of contemporary immigration**. TOLERACE argues that racism is not necessarily connected to migration. In addition, racism is often confined to a question of the majority’s reactions or attitudes towards immigrants and minorities. **TOLERACE has found that within the discourse and practices of ‘integration’ and ‘social cohesion’ racism tends to be naturalised, and the line between ‘us’ and the ‘other’ (non-EU immigrants, ethnic minorities, ‘second-generation’ immigrants) is redrawn.** Thus, when confronted with commonly accepted discourses on the ‘unwillingness’ of ‘immigrants’ and/or ‘minorities’ to ‘integrate’, for instance, the frequent reaction of policy makers is to attempt to convince the *majority* population that that statement is not ‘entirely’ true, and to deploy the image of the ‘good’ immigrant. The major problem with this perspective is that it ends up considering these ideas and discourses as ‘natural reactions’ to difference and not as the exercise of power that produces, perpetuates and naturalises one population’s privilege and other’s exclusion – in other words, racism. Confronting the dominant interpretations of ‘integration’ is therefore crucial to developing a broader approach to racism that addresses the

scope of the problem and works effectively towards its elimination.

Discourses on integration are trivialising racism

During the past two decades, **racism has been strongly linked to the subject of immigration and the 'inclusion' of ethnically or racially marked minorities**. One of the questions that has been highlighted in these debates is how much immigration a given society can 'accommodate' and the conditions under which this can take place, a question for which there is certainly no consensus. The TOLERACE project argues that the *assumption* that there are necessarily limits and that the host society naturally and legitimately cannot accept 'all' immigrants needs to be challenged. This assumption is closely linked to the idea that a clear distinction can be made between a *homogeneous, unified national society* (which is ethnically or racially un-marked) and various (marked) *minority groups*, and this idea is being naturalised in public debates. **Racism is being reconfigured in contemporary European contexts within these dominant discourses and political approaches.**

TOLERACE argues that official discourses on 'national culture and values' serve to reproduce **a fundamental divide between 'North' and 'South', Europe/the West and the 'other'/non-West**. There is no requirement to specify the content of such national 'core values', and the effectiveness of such public discourses on 'integration' and 'social cohesion' relies on the fact that they are constantly invoked: they are enacted as a discourse of power. The effects of such discourses are particularly salient in the cases of Portugal, Italy and Andalusia-Spain, where a dominant narrative asserting that these are no longer countries/regions of emigrants but of immigrants deploys these dichotomies (North/South; wealthy/poor). In doing so, it validates the idea that Europe and its citizen populations are (naturally) entitled to more privileges than those from the so-called 'third countries'.

Most importantly, the TOLERACE research draws attention to the fact that discourses on integration often ascribe the causes of current "integration problems" to immigrants. In this way, **racism is related to the 'deficiencies' of immigrants and acquires the status of natural reactions to immigrants and their peculiar characteristics**. This rationalisation and trivialisation of racism is sustained by a dominant academic perspective that conceives of racism as related to individual prejudice and attitudes to difference, or to extremist ideologies.

The current dissolution of anti-racist policies needs to be challenged

Within contemporary policy making in Europe there is a preoccupying tendency to marginalise anti-racist measures and approaches. This marginalisation of anti-racist measures is being

legitimised through a variety of political arguments which are part of the exercise of power that produces and naturalises racism: the approach focusing on ‘the positive side’, via integration and interculturality, which reduces the problem of racism to a question of ‘cultural difference’ and assimilation (Portugal, Andalusia - Spain); the comprehensive human rights approach which dissolves racism (UK, Basque Country - Spain, France); the discourse on tolerance (and its limits) and freedom of speech which naturalises racism in the name of ‘western’ values (Denmark; Portugal); the economicist approach, regarding the extra-communitarian population as immigrant-workers that have to actively contribute to the national/regional communities (Denmark, Germany, Andalusia - Spain, Portugal); the deployment of racism as a moralising discourse (Italy, Portugal), focussing on the ‘deficits’ and ‘characteristics’ of immigrants (Germany, Denmark, Portugal, Italy).

This dominant understanding of racism has paved the way for the *idea* that we are living in *post-racial* societies - societies in which people can be individuals without the imposition of colour-coded cultural constraints. The most striking example of *post-racialism* can be seen in the context of British policy, where the category of racism is being dissolved within a general human rights approach. A similar development is currently being debated in France with regard to the future of the anti-discrimination agency HALDE. However, this tendency to abandon racial discrimination as a distinct category is not uniform. It intersects with national (or regional) identity narratives in which race and ethnicity take on different functions. Furthermore, it takes shape in political contexts in which the significance of anti-discrimination and anti-racist policies in past decades has varied immensely. In the case of Spain and its autonomous communities for instance, ‘race’ and racial discrimination have not been considered relevant areas for state intervention.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Move beyond the current understanding of racism

Policy makers, academics, stakeholders and activists need to move beyond the dominant definition which understands racism as (a) *beliefs* or *attitudes* arising out of particular (extremist) ideologies and (b) a phenomenon only existing among *ignorant* people supporting the *wrong* ideas. In using this definition, policy makers, academics, stakeholders and activists ignore the fact that racism is concerned with **activating historically constituted power structures and relations**.

Separate racism from immigration

It is necessary for academics and policy makers to, **at least partially, separate the question of racism from that of contemporary immigration**, since it is within these dominant discourses and political approaches that racism is being

Redirect anti-racist measures

reconfigured in contemporary European contexts.

Academics and policy makers need to **address and challenge the power structures and relations that allow for the continuing existence of racism**. This means that they must stop reinforcing the idea that racism is connected with the perceived 'deficiencies' of minority groups. Anti-racist measures therefore need to abandon their predominant focus on minority populations and address the institutional and structural workings of racism (e.g. education, the production of knowledge, legal frameworks)

The TOLERACE research considers it paramount to confront this marginalisation of anti-racist policies and measures, since this situation prevents the historical and political specificities of racism, and therefore the way in which it is embedded in the everyday functioning of democratic institutions, from being acknowledged.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

Objectives of the first phase of research

The objectives of the first phase of the TOLERACE project (March-October 2010) were twofold:

- To advance the state of the art in the study of racism and anti-racism produced by different disciplines (with a specific focus on the fields of history, political theory and sociology);
- To explore the relations between studies of racism and anti-racism and the concepts of racism underlying current integration policies and public discourses on tolerance, and their connection with the celebration of cultural diversity in different national and regional contexts.

Methodology

The research employed qualitative methodologies and defined 3 different levels of analysis: (1) a contextualised comparative analysis of local/regional cases (2) discourse analysis of the meanings of (anti-)racism; (3) a historicised and contextualised analysis of power structures. The research involved public policy documents (see table below), representative academic works, and interviews with experts and civil servants.

CASES UNDER STUDY		
Country /Region	Public Body	Key documents
Portugal	High Commission for Immigration and Intercultural Dialogue (former High Commission for Immigration and Ethnic Minorities) (ACIDI) The Commission for Equality and Against Racial Discrimination (CICDR)	Immigrant Integration Plan <i>Choices</i> Programme
United Kingdom	Equality and Human Rights Commission (former Commission for Racial Equality, Equal Opportunities Commission and Disability Rights Commission) (EHRC)	Strategic Plan of the Equality and Human Rights Commission
Denmark	The Ministry for Refugees, Immigrants and Integration. The Danish Institute for Human Rights.	"Employment, participation and equal opportunities for everyone"
France	High Authority for the Fight Against Discrimination and for Equality (HALDE)	HALDE annual report: 2009
Germany	Federal Government Commissioner for Migration, Refugees and Integration. The Federal Anti-discrimination Agency (ADS)	National Integration Plan General Equal Treatment Act
Italy	National Office Against Racial Discrimination (UNAR)	One Year of Activities Against Racial Discrimination. Anti Racial Discrimination. 'Tool Kit'
Spain (Basque Country)	Department of Housing and Social Affairs of the Basque Country	I Basque Immigration Plan. II Basque Immigration Plan.
Spain (Andalusia)	The Government of Andalusia	Comprehensive Plans for Immigration in Andalusia.

PROJECT IDENTITY

Coordinator	Universidade de Coimbra Centro de Estudos Sociais (Coimbra, Portugal) Prof. Boaventura de Sousa Santos (bsantos@ces.uc.pt) Executive coordination: Dr. Silvia Rodríguez Maeso (srodrig@ces.uc.pt)
Consortium	Det Nationale Forskningscenter for Velfærd (SFI), Denmark Europa-Universität Viadrina – Frankfurt (EUV), Germany Centro de Estudios sobre la Identidad Colectiva: Universidad del País Vasco (UPV), Spain Grupo para el Estudio de las Identidades Socioculturales en Andalucía: Universidad de Sevilla (US), Spain Centre for Ethnicity & Racial Studies: University of Leeds (CERS), United Kingdom
EC contact	Louisa Anastopoulou (Louisa.Anastopoulou@ec.europa.eu)
Funding scheme	7th Framework Programme of the European Community: collaborative research (SSH-2009-3.3.1 Tolerance and cultural diversity)
Duration	March 2010 – February 2013 (36 months)
Budget	EU contribution: € 1.813.735
Website	http://www.ces.uc.pt/projectos/tolerace