



European Network Against Racism
The voice of the anti-racist movement in Europe

OPEN LETTER
To EU decision-makers
on funding human rights and equality for all

To:

President of the European Parliament, David Sassoli
Members of the European Parliament
President of the European Council, Charles Michel
Head of Presidency of the Council, Chancellor Angela Merkel
Members of the Governments of EU Member States

In copy:

President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen
Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Věra Jourová
Commissioner for Equality, Helena Dalli

Brussels, 2 September 2020

Your Excellencies,

We, the undersigned, as civil society organisations leading the work at EU level on advancing the rights and equality for all, are writing to you about the upcoming MFF 2021-2027 and EU recovery plans. The EU is currently at a crossroads to prevent the mistakes of the past, and must adopt a politically robust long-term budget and recovery plan that responds to the devastating and far-reaching impacts of COVID-19 on society, particularly the most marginalised. **In the spirit of European solidarity, we are urgently calling on your political commitment to adopt an EU recovery plan and budget that visibly embeds and reinforces EU fundamental values including human rights and equality at its core.**

COVID-19 has had alarming social and economic impacts across Europe, deepening existing inequalities and making visible complex forms of systemic discrimination as equality and human rights across Europe had already been regressing in the past decade as a result of backsliding political contexts and severe economic austerity measures.

We recall that the EU's and its Member States' responses to care for those affected by COVID-19 have been shaped by fundamental values including respect for equality, human rights, non-discrimination, solidarity and equality between women and men (as per Article 2 TEU, and the provisions on Equality outlined under Title III of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights). These European values must be upheld with regard to

strengthened measures within the EU budget to protect the rule of law to combat the shrinking civic space threatening human rights organisations and specialist services across Europe, and continue to pave the way for the future recovery

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme, as part of the Justice, Rights and Values Fund, is the only programme dedicated to protecting and advancing these objectives for all people across Europe over the next seven years. It also provides crucial funds to civil society organisations, often working in increasingly shrinking civic spaces and with limited resources. With the support of European civil society equality networks, the EU is playing a key role in empowering grassroots organisations at national level in these difficult times of pandemic, resurgence of xenophobia and progressive discrediting of democratic principles in some Member States.

We welcome the recent decision by the [European Commission](#) to reverse the 20% cuts initially proposed to the Fund, which was further supported by the [European Council](#) during the July 2020 Special Council meeting.

In light of the [European Parliament's](#) vote to withhold its consent for the MFF on 23 July 2020, we urge EU decision-makers to swiftly come to a satisfactory and ambitious agreement and meet the Parliament's demands for targeted increases to flagship programmes, including **tripling the amount allocated to the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme to €1.83 billion (current prices)**¹ to meet the diverse experiences of all those residing in the EU.

The cost of the EU's recovery from this pandemic must not be paid by those whose inequalities have been made graver. A successful and continuous European integration project must be driven by EU fundamental values of inclusion, diversity, justice, solidarity and non-discrimination that ensure no person is left behind. Together, we now count on your invaluable support to represent the voices from across all of Europe, particularly those at risk/living on the margins of society. **As we recall the words of Commissioner Dalli, "Equality matters – now more than ever."**²

We trust that you will urgently meet our demands and welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss this further.

Yours sincerely,



Maciej Kucharczyk
Secretary General, AGE Platform
Europe



Yannis Vardakastanis
President, European Disability Forum (EDF)



Michaël Privot
Director, European Network Against Racism
(ENAR)



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President, European Women's Lobby (EWL)



Evelyne Paradis
Executive Director, ILGA-EUROPE

¹ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/TA-8-2019-0407_EN.pdf

² <https://timesofmalta.com/articles/view/equality-matters-more-than-ever-michelle-bachelet-and-helena-dalli.804228>