



Briefing: How the European Union supports race equality

- 1. It maintains and considers how to improve the current rules - for business, employment and travel - on equality and non-discrimination across the European Union and to ensure that adherence to those rules is a precondition for joining the European Union**

The European Union sets rules for member states, these are included in the treaties and in directives, they set out provisions that each member state must include as part of their national laws. These rules include provisions to outlaw discrimination on grounds of age, disability, gender re-assignment, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation. It is important that people working for UK businesses can travel around the EU without fear of being subjected to discriminatory treatment.

- 2. It provides common rights against racism across Europe where racism of all kinds is unlawful and solidarity is shown to all people regardless of their race**

The most important directive for those concerned about race equality is the Race Directive which requires member states to enact laws to prohibit discrimination on grounds of race or ethnic origin. These laws must cover access to employment and working conditions, social protection and advantages, education and access to goods and services. The fact that the UK has to comply with this directive was an important reason why the current government could not and did not attempt to weaken our race discrimination laws when it was considering how to implement the Red Tape Challenge and cut down on laws and regulations that affect business. Additionally, it is important that UK nationals regardless of race are protected when they work in other member states.

- 3. It creates a high level of consistency in the application of the rule of law and human rights across Europe based on common legal standards**

The EU has agreed to sign up to the European Convention on Human Rights which provides protection from torture and inhuman treatment and the right to a fair trial as well a right to respect for family life and freedom of thought, conscience and religion. These rights underpin all EU legislation and Court judgments.

- 4. It attracts international businesses seeking a way to enter the EU markets**

A number of international businesses such as the car manufacturer Nissan have chosen to locate their factories in the UK, providing a livelihood for legally resident people regardless of race or ethnicity, so that they can trade within the EU on advantageous terms. They have

warned that any threat that the UK might leave the EU would lead them to re-consider the siting of their factories.

5. It builds up a trading partnership with those nations that are geographically close to us and create an area of free trade built on common standards

The UK has a long history of successfully trading with European Union countries. This has brought wealth and livelihood to UK residents, regardless of race and ethnicity. Maintaining tariff free trading terms with EU countries is to our mutual benefit. The EU sets standards for the production of a wide range of goods and services in order to ensure that they are well made and safe. While we are part of the EU we will continue to have a say in what standards are set and for which businesses.

6. It maintains freedom of movement within the EU

The EU sets out a common standard for freedom of movement with the EU which makes it easier to travel and work within the EU. This has been to the advantage of British citizens travelling or working in other EU member states, and for UK employers to recruit workers from another EU state. Common security agreements make it easier for crime reduction agencies to work together across the EU to combat cross border crime. EU police and borders co-operation hampers the movement of criminals whilst protecting the movement of law-abiding citizens.

7. It provides for an open and safe Europe to the benefit of all EU citizens as well as third country nationals

In 2014 the EU will set the agenda for future asylum and migration policies, ensuring respect for human dignity and human rights, solidarity, pluralism, non-discrimination, equality and the approximation of rights of third-country nationals to those of EU citizens.

The UK Race and Europe Network (UKREN) is a network of local and national organisations across Great Britain and Northern Ireland that work to combat race discrimination within a European context. It does this through sharing information between members and co-ordinating action on race equality issues. It aims to provide policy makers with a UK civil society perspective on European race equality issues and to encourage a positive public debate on race in Europe.