

Recommendations

EAPN Portugal

Inputs for the Report of the Working Group
of Experts on People of African Descent

june 2023



REPORT BY UN WORKING GROUP ON EXPERTS ON PEOPLE OF AFRICAN DESCENT

EAPN PORTUGAL INPUTS

Background & Context

The European Anti-Poverty Network / EAPN Portugal (EAPN Portugal¹) is currently implementing two projects which focus on migration issues. The project **Opportunities – Crises as Opportunities: Towards a level telling fields on migrations and new narratives of successful integration** is a transnational project promoted by BEWEGING and has several international partners, including the EAPN Portugal. The project **Opportunities** is based on dialogical ethics and features a human rights approach and proposes a new narrative for successful integration which follows the **European Agenda for Third Country Nationals** (2011).

From January to August 2022, 30 migrants² between the ages of 20 to 30 years were interviewed. 16 out of the 30 migrants were from African continent, including but not exclusive to the PALOP³ – African Countries of Portuguese Official Language. This has allowed for a first-hand experience concerning issues of discrimination, racism, integration, challenges, and opportunities. Participants were provided with safe spaces to share their story, this is particularly important, as one of the aims of the project is to create policy recommendations directly voiced by those who live through experiences. To project these stories, the **Cross Talk** methodology was used. In a safe space migrant's, civil society organizations, local authority figures and other public entities read each other's stories. Allowing themselves to be placed into each other's shoes. The use of this methodology opened a debate on what it means to be of African and of African descent in Portugal, as two key figures present were Portuguese of African descent. Events such as these show the urgent need for the creation of spaces to debate the issues faced by ethnic minorities, guaranteeing that those ethnic minorities are present and represented. One thing was made apparent by both the interview and Cross Talks process, Portugal still has a strong hierarchical order moulded by colonialist beliefs and there is a widespread feeling that being of African descent and Portuguese is not a widely accepted concept.

The project **Local Immigrant Council** is based in Lisbon, Portugal and has identified several formal and informal organizations which work with migrants from South Asian, Brazil and the PALOP. The aim of this project over the past three years has been to identify the crucial needs and difficulties faced by the different migrant communities and incentivise their civic participation in focus groups,

¹ www.eapn.pt

² The interviews were held with migrants from Guiné Bissau (10 people), Angola (2 people), Mozambique (1 person), Cape Verde (1 person), Nigeria (1 person) Eritrea (1 person), Brazil (5 people), Venezuela (1 person), Sri Lanka (1 person), India (1 person), Nepal (1 person), Bangladesh (1 person), Iraq (1 person), Turkey (1 person) and Cyprus (1 person).

³ Países Africanos de Língua Oficial Portuguesa

capacity building and participatory assemblies organized through a bottom-up approach resulting in recommendations which directly voice the concerns of migrants.

Recommendations

Transversal recommendations:

1. EAPN Portugal considers that **meaningful participation** is a key priority in the fight against poverty, in the inclusion vulnerable groups and in the definition of effective policies to tackle needs. It's important to promote spaces for effective participation of migrants in order to understand their main difficulties and needs, monitor and improve existing policies.
2. Intervention on migration requires a **holistic and integrated view and action**. Migrants face different challenges and needs that are interconnected and require a multidimensional intervention.

Thematic Area: Legal Framework on Racism and Discrimination

The State and Public Entities

Key Priority: Portugal's jurisprudence has laws in place to protect the population against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and hate crimes. Although these laws are in place, migrants and African descendants are mistrusting of the national legal system and have interiorized fear of not being believed by public entities who oversee filing victim reports. There is a power imbalance motivated by racial hierarchy caused by colonization which leads to migrants and people of African descent feeling insecure, diminished, unheard, and not believed or taken seriously. To improve the relationship between citizens and law enforcers:

Recommendations:

1. Public entities should recognize how Portugal's colonial past affects their response system and treatment of ethnic minorities. Identifying the existing prejudices in the workplace is essential to work towards deconstructing stigmatizing behaviours and constructing equal dialogue.
2. Law implementation by public law enforcers should be closely monitored to guarantee they are being correctly implemented.
3. Public entities who oversee victim reports should have access to improved training on racial profiling, racism, xenophobia, discrimination, hate speech and violence. To be able to improve these trainings there should be an increased effort on building relationships between public entities and ethnic minorities by sharing and exchanging experiences. Activities as these should be done in a safe space where all parties feel heard and included.

Thematic Area: Education and School Programmes

State, Schools and Universities

Key priorities: Children of migrants and other ethnic groups, including Roma and African Descent must be seen and treated equally. Student's must not become victims of discrimination due to race, ethnicity or religion by school staff and other students. Students must not be discriminated against because of differences in the Portuguese language between countries. It is essential that all students are equally motivated to fulfil their highest potential regardless of race, ethnicity, and religion.

The Portuguese education system is often identified as creating barriers when concerning the Portuguese language. Students of different nationalities and ethnic minorities often feel discriminated if they do not use the "correct" Portuguese (the Portuguese from Portugal), either because they have adopted expressions from other Portuguese speaking countries or because they speak their family's native tongue in their social and home life.

People of African descent and other migrants have also strongly exposed feeling that they are considered as less capable and intelligent than the "regular" Portuguese students, reporting that they are often referred to as "the PALOP" or as the people from the colonies exposing the systemic racism in schools. This narrative of "they" vs "us" demonstrates the continuous impact of the racial hierarchy across all public services which hinders opportunities for those who do not fit in with the conservative model of education. There is a lack of acknowledgment of the contributions made by people of African descent, migrants, and other ethnic minorities.

Recommendations:

1. Teachers and school staff should have access to improved training which focus on the impacts of colonization. They should also have access to instruments which can improve communication and dialogue with students by identifying prejudice language and racial slurs used in the classroom.
2. The history of slavery, colonization, and systemic racism should be improved in the school curriculum and taught by specialists in the field. There should no longer be a portrayal of Portugal as the "good colonizer".
3. A survey should be conducted at the national level to know the number of African descendants who have gone into the formal education system or the professional education system.
4. Schools should invest in cultural exchanges, showcasing the positive aspects, language, culture, food, music, literature, religion, and traditions of different countries, especially those most identified in Portugal.

Thematic Area: Decent work, recognition of skills and qualifications and integration in the workplace

Public entities, policy makers and employers

Key Priorities: People of African descent should be treated equally and have fair and equal access to the job market, especially within more conservative fields such as medicine, law, education, and politics.

Racial hierarchy and systemic racism lead to segregation in the workplace caused by existing stereotypes of African descendants.

Recommendations:

1. CVs without a photograph should be made mandatory.
2. Team building and capacity building in the workplace should be reinforced to fight stereotypes and promote integration, communication, and dialogue.
3. Develop timely and affordable complaints mechanisms and ensure that migrants and ethnic minorities have access to them through, for example, formal mediation, and independent and fair tribunals, including for cases dealing with labour exploitation.
4. Employers should create safe spaces for collaborators with different traditions and religious practices to be able to freely practice these without feeling constrained or uncomfortable.

CONTACTS

EAPN Portugal
Rua de Costa Cabral 2368 | 4200-218 Porto
225 420 800
geral@eapn.pt
www.eapn.pt