



## Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

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# Charter of European political parties for a non-racist and inclusive society

## CHARTER OF EUROPEAN POLITICAL PARTIES FOR A NON-RACIST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETY

WE, THE DEMOCRATIC POLITICAL PARTIES OF EUROPE,

**Having regard** to the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by our member States, in particular to the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;

**Having regard** to article 1 of this Convention, which defines racial discrimination as "... any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise on an equal footing of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life...";

**Having regard** to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, and particularly to its article 14 prohibiting discrimination with respect to the rights under the Convention;

**Having regard** to Protocol no.12 to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, which introduces a general prohibition of discrimination that applies to the enjoyment of any right set forth by law;

**Having regard** to the Revised European Social Charter, in particular its article 19, paragraph 1, according to which the Parties undertake in particular to take all appropriate measures, so far as national laws and regulations permit, against misleading propaganda relating to emigration and immigration, and its article E (non-discrimination);

**Having regard** to the Treaty of Amsterdam which enables the European Community to "... take appropriate action to combat discrimination based on... racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief..." and facilitates police and judicial cooperation in the framework of the member States in preventing and combating racism and xenophobia;

**Having regard** to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which at article 21 "forbids discrimination on grounds of sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or other belief, political opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation;"

**Having regard** to the relevant texts adopted by the Commission on Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission), notably the Code of good conduct in the field of political parties and the Guidelines on Political party regulations, which encapsulate equality and non-discrimination among the principles for which political parties should strive;

**Taking into account** the general policy recommendations adopted by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), in particular those on combating hate speech, anti-Muslim racism and discrimination, and antisemitism;

**Taking into account** the relevant texts adopted by the European Parliament and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in particular those on combating hate speech, Afrophobia or anti-Black racism, antigypsyism, antisemitism, Islamophobia or anti-Muslim hate, and all other forms of intolerance;

**Recognising** that the fundamental rights as enshrined in the international human rights instruments signed and ratified by the member States and other relevant standards include the right to free and uninhibited political speech and debate;

**Mindful** that according to these same international human rights instruments, political freedoms are not absolute in view of the equally fundamental right to be protected against racial discrimination and that therefore political freedoms cannot be allowed to be abused to exploit, cause or initiate prejudice on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic origin or nationality, or for the purpose of seeking to gain the sympathy of the electorate for prejudice on such grounds;

**Recalling** that Europe derives from its history a duty of remembrance, vigilance and opposition to all forms of racism and intolerance, including Afrophobia / anti-Black racism, antigypsyism, antisemitism, Islamophobia / anti-Muslim racism, LGBTI-phobia, sexism, xenophobia, as well as crimes of genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes and the public denial, trivialisation, justification or condoning of such crimes;

**Deeply concerned** about the resurgence of rhetoric presenting migrants and refugees as a threat to and a burden on society, which increases negative reactions among the public to immigration and immigrants;

**Deeply concerned** about the increase in hate crime in Council of Europe member States and the propagation of hate speech, including in political discourse, particularly online and especially through social media;

**Aware** of the special tasks and responsibilities of political parties as actors in a democratic political process, in defending, articulating and bearing witness to the basic principles of a democratic society; in providing a platform for discussion on issues where there may be differences of opinion, integrating different views into the process of political decision making, thereby enabling society to solve conflicts of interest and of opinion between various social groups through dialogue rather than through opting out and conflict; and in selecting representatives at various levels for active participation in the political process;

**Convinced** that free use of political rights can and must go hand in hand with firmly upholding the principle of non-discrimination and is inherent in the democratic process itself;

**Convinced** furthermore that representation of minority groups in the political process is an integral part of the democratic process, since political parties are, or should strive to be, a reflection of society;

**ADHERE TO THE FOLLOWING PRINCIPLES OF GOOD PRACTICE AND COMMIT OURSELVES TO:**

- **Defending** basic human rights and democratic principles and reject all forms of racism and intolerance, hate speech, incitement to racial hatred and harassment;
- **Taking** open, firm, and pro-active stands against racism, xenophobia, hatred and intolerance on whatever grounds and however they manifest themselves;
- **Refusing** to display, to publish or to have published, to distribute or to endorse in any way, including online, views and positions which advocate, promote or incite, or may reasonably be expected to advocate, promote or incite, in any form, denigration, hatred or vilification of a person or group of persons, as well as any harassment, insult, negative stereotyping, stigmatisation or threat in respect of such a person or group of persons and the justification of all the preceding types of expression, on the ground of “race”, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin, age, disability, language, religion or belief, sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, social origin and other personal characteristics or status, dealing firmly with hate speech, sentiments and behaviour within our own ranks and engaging in counter-speech and alternative speech;
- **Dealing responsibly and fairly** with sensitive topics relating to such groups; avoiding negative stereotyping and stigmatisation;
- **Refraining from** any form of political alliance or co-operation at all levels with any political party which incites racial or ethnic prejudices and racial hatred;
- **Striving for** the fair representation of the above-mentioned groups at all levels of our political parties, with a special responsibility for the party leadership to stimulate and support the recruitment of candidates from these groups for political functions as well as membership;

**And further pledge** to take appropriate action to ensure that all persons who work for or associate themselves in any way with any of our activities, including election campaigns, are made aware of and at all times act in accordance with the above principles.

**ACCOUNTABILITY**

With a view to ensuring that these principles are complied with by party members so as to have the positive impact that they are meant to achieve, we commit ourselves to applying sanctions for non-compliance, based on the following rules:

- Disciplinary sanctions will apply to members of political parties whose words or actions, offline or online, breach the aforementioned principles, thus undermining their party's contribution to creating an open, inclusive and non-racist society;
- Sanctions shall be proportional to the gravity of the infraction committed; they may be financial or otherwise and may include temporary exclusion from internal functions, exclusion from electoral lists, and expulsion from the party.

#### **ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP AND DEFINITION OF POLITICAL PARTY**

All democratic political parties are encouraged to sign the present Charter and to abide by its commitments. In this context, based on the definition provided by the European Commission on Democracy Through Law (Venice Commission) in its Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, a political party is “a free association of individuals, one of the aims of which is to express the political will of the people by seeking to participate in and influence the governing of the public life of a country, *inter alia*, through the presentation of candidates in elections”, irrespective of whether it refers to itself as a party, movement or otherwise.