

European Anti-Racism Network CONFERENCE

Egmond, The Netherlands, 1-3 November 2002

Backgrounds

From November 1st until November 3rd 2002 the European Anti Racism Network (EARN) Conference will take place in Egmond, the Netherlands. The conference is organised by the FNV working group EARN (European Anti Racism Network) in co-operation with TIE Netherlands, Black Workers for Justice - Europe from England and a group of unionists of the French union SUD Rail. The conference is directed at black and migrant trade unionists from different European trade unions. It aims (1) to empower black and migrant trade unionists within their trade union as well as their work environment: (2) to learn from each other's knowledge and experiences in building up and executing equal opportunities policy and (3) to set up an European network of black and migrant trade unionists.

Objectives and vision

Throughout Europe there reside four million migrants with a EU-passport and another 16 million people with a non-EU nationality. Until now it has always been spoken about this group of people. However, they are seldom admitted to the floor nor are they involved in the execution of the policy directed to them.

Several developments ask for co-operation and the joining of strengths of migrants with each other:

- the Schengen agreement (free passenger traffic for subjects to countries within the European Union and some others);
- new Article 13 of the Amsterdam Treaty (new European legislation to ensure equality of treatment for individuals irrespective of nationality, sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation)
- the recent electoral victories of (extreme) right wing parties in many European countries.

Moreover, the developments after September 11 as well as the decreasing employment do have influence on the different ethnic communities.

All citizens of the European Union have the right of equal treatment; have the same right of access to the labour market, to accommodation, to medical treatment and to education. Unfortunately, due to discrimination and institutional racism this is not yet a reality everywhere.

The results of the conference should eventually lead to practical instruments that can be used in the work environment.

The formation of a network of black and migrant trade unionists throughout Europe will help them to find solidarity, to inform each other, to support and to exchange knowledge and experiences. In this manner they want to contribute to the anti-racism policy within the European trade unions and within companies and institutions.

History

The first ideas for a European Anti Racism Conference aroused among black and migrant trade unionists during a TIE-conference in Cologne (Germany) in March 2000. The initiative has been further discussed during the TUC Black Workers' Conference in England in April 2000. There, trade unionists from different trade unions throughout Europe dis-

cussed the necessity of such a conference. During a preliminary meeting in Paris in October 2000 and after several interim contacts between different initiators it has been decided to discuss further particulars. It was during the same meeting that agreement was reached concerning the objective and the contents of the programme. However, the financing of the conference as a whole remained an unsolved problem. Without any success so far, all initiators have been lobbying within their trade unions in order to receive a financial contribution to the conference. Trade unions are reluctant to support initiatives of trade unionists. Besides, the subject of anti-racism is not very popular. Aside from the search for possibilities of financial support, during a second preliminary meeting in Amsterdam in January 2001 the programme has been further completed. In order to facilitate the contacts in an efficient way it was agreed to install a reference group (of black and migrant unionists) in every country involved. These reference groups communicate with each other.

Developments in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands this reference group calls itself European Anti Racism Network (EARN) (officially: EARN working group FNV unions). The focus of the group is national anti-racism activities within the different trade unions of the FNV Federation. In co-operation with the FNV head office the attempt has been taken to submit an application for EQUAL (application for funding of an anti-racism project with financial means of the EU). Furthermore, a workshop at the theme day Migrants and Networking of the ABVAKABO trade union was organised. Due to the influence of EARN, trade unionists have been reintegrated in the Contact Committee Ethnic Minorities (CCEM). Furthermore, EARN requested to have a say in the preparation of the programme for the FNV National Day Ethnic Minorities.

Meanwhile EARN has been active for about two years. The group exists of black and migrant trade unionists from five different trade unions. EARN states that within the trade unions not enough attention is paid to the fight against racism (in particular) on the labour market. EARN demands more attention to this issue and a more active role for black and migrant unionists themselves.

Research and policy notes are too often concentrating on closing the gaps on the labour market (concerning emancipation) without considering the effects of institutional racism on the employment policy, chances for promotion, career expectations and teamwork at the work place. Therefore, EARN does plead for the development of policy instruments which black and migrant employees themselves can use to fight institutional racism and to evaluate and improve the equal opportunities policy. Knowledge, ideas and experience of black and migrant employees are exploited insufficiently. They are not involved in this policy making. EARN aims to stimulate substantial change in this.

Members of the FNV working group EARN

All members of the working group EARN are active trade unionists in either a panel or an advisory board for migrants within their trade union. Rita Mungra and Iwan Leeuwin are members of the steering committee of their trade union as well.

Soerin Binda	FNV Bondgenoten
Jan Cartier	TIE Netherlands
Nelson Cid Jara	FNV Bondgenoten
Jerry Chintoe	NPB (Police union)
Kenneth Cuvalay	AbvaKabo FNV
Satyra ten Holt	AbvaKabo FNV
Iwan Leeuwin	AbvaKabo FNV
Mohammed Mdaghri	AOb (Education)
Rita Mungra	AbvaKabo FNV
Annette Noya	Women Association FNV
Herbert Römer	FNV Bondgenoten

Developments in the United Kingdom

The British reference group organised itself within the Black Workers for Justice - Europe (BWJ-e). Members of the TUC Race Relations Committee (association for black and migrant members within the TUC Federation) are actively involved in this organisation. They are engaged in the spreading of information and the offering of support to black and migrant employees within Europe. In addition, they started to support trade unions in cases of race discrimination at the work place. On June 29, 2002 they organised their first seminar entitled *Black Self Organisations - from rhetoric to reality*. For more information about the Black Workers for Justice Europe check their website on: <http://www.bwj-e.net>

European co-operation

The contacts with the British comrades do remain in force, amongst other things, by participating in the annual TUC Black Workers' Conference. For the last four years EARN members participated in this conference (for the first time in 1999).

EARN members also attended the earlier mentioned seminar of the Black Workers for Justice Europe. On their part, EARN invited three members of the Black Workers for Justice Europe for the FNV National Day Ethnic Minorities on November 24, 2001.

Finances

TIE Netherlands is an organisation that aims to facilitate the exchange of information and experience in networks of employees of multinational cooperation's and within trade union structures. From the very first TIE has been involved in the plans for the conference and has been very supportive. Since the last preliminary meeting TIE has been trying to receive funding for the EARN-conference. As the conference became a reality, these efforts were finally a success. However, there is not sufficient funding to cover all conference expenses. Therefore, the accommodation as well as travelling expenses is on the account of the conference participants. Preferably, these costs will be refunded by their trade unions. That is why EARN requested the trade unions to delegate interested trade unionists to the conference and to cover the expenses for accommodation and travelling.

Programme

On the first day of the conference there will be a panel discussion with invited speakers from different countries. They will give an overview on the situation in their country based on their own experience. Furthermore, discussions between the speakers and with the participants are part of the programme. The panel chairs are Sirelda Jackson and Guilly Koster.

The eight panel members are:

- **Barryl Biekman**, chairwoman National Platform Dutch Slavery Past, chairwoman Afro European Womens movement Sophiedela (Netherlands)
- **Roland Biosah**, member Black Workers for Justice – Europe (England)

- **Najat Bochhah**, policy maker National Bureau against Racial Discrimination/LBR (Netherlands)
- **Mamadou Ly**, unionist of the French union SUD Rail (France)
- **Claude Moraes**, member European Parliament and local council London (England)
- **Saladin Muhammad**, co-founder and national chairperson of the Black Workers For Justice in the United States (United States)
- **Bob Purkiss**, Chairman European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia/EUMC (England)
- **Herbert Römer**, district official union Bondgenoten FNV (Netherlands)

Moreover, workshops on different subjects will be organised, also fringe meetings on actual subjects, and the youth will be able to present their vision on the subject of racism and their perception of their own position at the labour market.

For the full program check EARN's website at <http://fnv.net/earn/>

Conference location

NJHC Herberg Klein Rinnegom
Herenweg 118
1935 AJ Egmond, the Netherlands
Phone +31(0)72-5062296

More information

For more information, please contact:
Kenneth Cuvalay (co-ordinator EARN)
Phone +31(0)6-22231842
Fax +31(0)8-42216235
E-mail fnv_earn@hotmail.com

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