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NOTE

From:	Presidency
To:	Permanent Representatives Committee/Council
Subject:	Presidency note with regard to an exchange of views on combating racism and other forms of discrimination and hatred

Racism and related forms of hatred and discrimination constitute one of the major scourges that threaten the core values of the European Union, among which are the principles of human dignity, equality, and non-discrimination enshrined in Article 2 TEU. Despite strong legal frameworks and policy initiatives at the EU and national level, these phenomena remain a widespread and harsh reality for millions across the Member States. Therefore, strengthening the fight against this issue by all stakeholders remains an important objective.

A recent major development in this regard is the adoption by the Commission of the Anti-Racism Strategy 2026-2030 in January 2026. The new Strategy builds on the 2020-2025 Anti-Racism Action Plan and responds to persistent, structural racism in Europe by mainstreaming anti-racism measures into EU policies through a comprehensive approach covering enforcement, protection against racial hatred, strengthening social equality, building strategic partnerships and promoting a “leading by example” approach for the European Institutions.

The fight against racism, antisemitism, as well as related aspects of hatred and discrimination, is a recurring theme in Council agendas, taking for instance the approval of the March 2022 conclusions, under the FR Presidency, on the fight against racism and antisemitism. This dedicated work has been intensified following the commitment - in a Joint Declaration of 7 June 2023 - taken up by two previous Presidency trios (France, Czechia, Sweden & Spain, Belgium, Hungary), to hold regular exchanges on related topics in the Council and, at technical level, in particular in the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights and Free Movement of Persons (FREMP). A case in point of the FREMP's work is the June 2023 note, under the SE Presidency¹ in which a "forward looking approach in the efforts of the Council to combat racism and antisemitism" is spelled out. In that context, regular exchanges at political and technical levels on the state of play and next steps, based on reliable data are encouraged with the JHA Council and the FREMP WP as main focal points.

The 2026 Strategy was officially presented by the Commission at the European Anti-Racism Conference in Brussels, which was co-hosted by the CY Presidency, on 17 March 2026. The ensuing March FREMP WP held an in-depth discussion on the findings of the Conference and the implementation of the Strategy.

Bearing this aforementioned commitment of the Council in mind, the Presidency has submitted to the 1-2 October 2026 JHA Council a set of Conclusions on combating racism and related forms of hatred and discrimination. They aim at tackling the damage these phenomena inflict upon individuals and societies and at prioritising ways to do so.

In addition to the approval of the Conclusions, the Presidency invites an exchange of views by Ministers, with the participation of the Commission and the Fundamental Rights Agency, based on the following question:

Tackling racism and related forms of hatred and discrimination is crucial for upholding EU values. What concrete legal or policy measures should be added to the EU toolbox against these phenomena in order to more effectively combat discrimination and hatred?

¹ ST 11306/23.