



AT THE CROSSROAD
OF INEQUALITIES /
DISCRIMINATION

Online training on intersectional discrimination

3. Racism and ethnic discrimination

The aim of this section is to introduce the basic vocabulary and concepts in the fields of 'race' and racism, and ethnicity and ethnic discrimination.

After completing this section, you will:

- be able to define basic terms for the categorisation of people into groups that leads to ethnic discrimination and racism;
- understand the importance of power in establishing and perpetuating racism;
- understand personal limitations and advantages for addressing issues of ethnic discrimination and racism.

3.1 'Race'

You have already learned about the concept of categorising people into groups. The social construct of 'race' is no different in this regard. This outdated classification of people into groups, mostly based on physical characteristics such as skin colour, was created in order to establish a hierarchical system to increase inequality, discord, violence and marginalisation of nations and regions.

The categorisation based on 'race' is not fixed, but can change over time, depending on the location and the existing context.

3.2 Racism

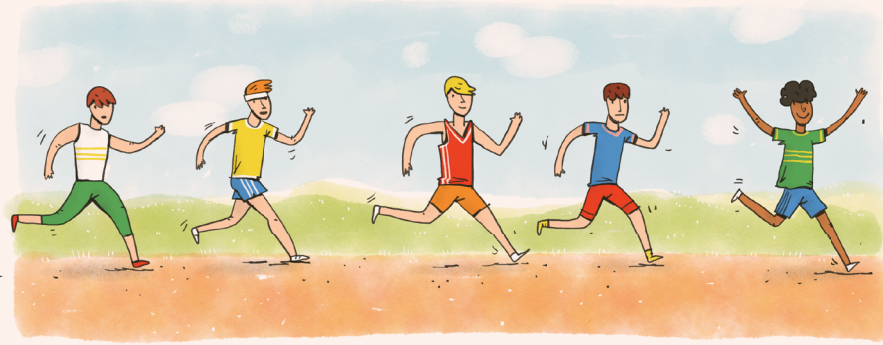
The result of the establishment of a social hierarchy where individuals are treated unequally on the basis of their 'race'. This established social hierarchy allows the dominant group to exercise systematic discrimination through power against a particular group, attributing negative attributes to it, while at the same time attributing positive attributes to the dominant group, thus boosting its own self-image. These positive qualities are seen as the ideal of beauty, intelligence and rationality.

The important thing to understand about racism is that it is not just racial discrimination, but discrimination from a position of power.



Forms of racism:

- **Interpersonal racism:** this occurs when a person of a 'superior' group has a prejudice against a person of an 'inferior' group and discriminates against them on that basis. It exists on both conscious and unconscious levels. Microaggressions based on interpersonal racism manifest themselves as rejection, exclusion, problematisation and belittling. Microaggressions are often normalised and thus rendered unquestionable.
- **Institutional racism:** policies, formal and informal practices and the culture of institutions that exclude minorities from equal options and opportunities. It is racism that is ingrained in the way our societies operate. Because of institutional racism, the effects of certain policies and practices, for example in healthcare, education or employment, are not equally distributed between those in power and those from minority groups.
- **Internalised racism:** repeated stereotyping and discrimination can lead to the internalisation of this stigma. It is therefore an internalised self-hatred based on social norms and stereotypes created by the dominant population with the power to justify discrimination, which in turn justifies self-doubt and self-loathing.
- **Structural racism:** all of the above types of racism are intertwined and complement each other to form systemic racism. This makes racism the most effective, because the whole structure is based on defending the interests of the dominant group and thus also preserving its power. The routine practices in which racism is embedded create and reproduce it.



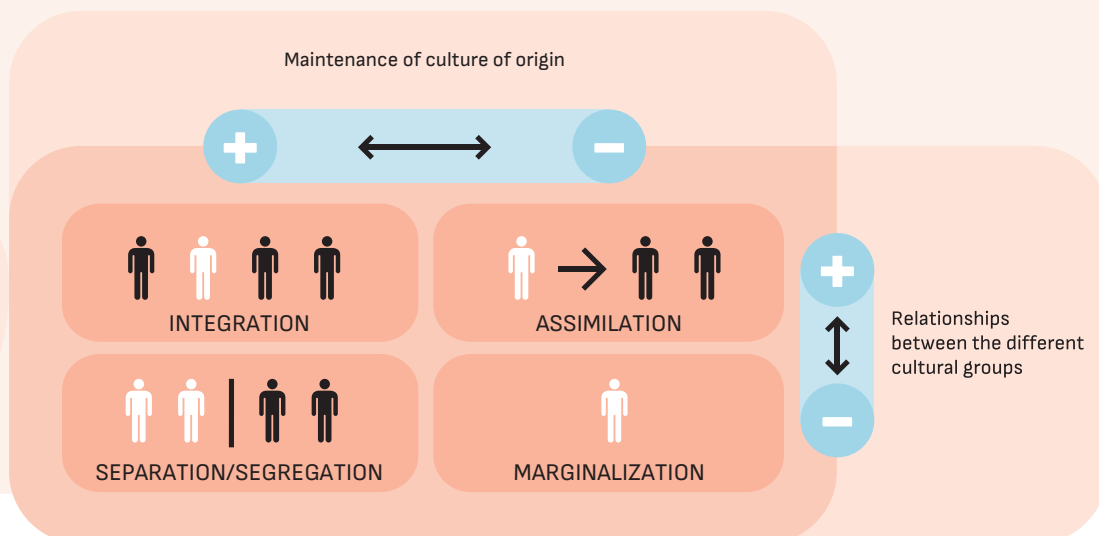
3.3 Ethnic community

An ethnic community identifies itself, or is identified by others, as a group of people linked by a common culture and other factors such as language, shared history, cohesion and religion.

An ethnic community is not the same as a nation, although they may overlap in some respects. A nation inhabits its homeland, has its own public culture and a certain degree of autonomy, and thus a desire for self-determination. A nation does not necessarily have its own sovereign state. However, an ethnic group does not usually have a political label, nor does it have its own territory and its own public culture.

Ethnic minorities or migrants from ethnic groups that are not the predominant populations are confronted in their environment with their ethnic identity and the identity of the society in which they find themselves. Ethnic communities may wish to have less or more contact with the predominant population, and may also wish to maintain or abandon their own cultural characteristics to a greater or lesser extent. Depending on the different combinations of preserving one's culture and adapting to the host society, it is possible to distinguish between:

- **assimilation**, which occurs when people do not preserve their own cultural heritage and are in regular contact with the culture of the predominant population;
- **separation**, which occurs when contact with the dominant culture is avoided/not frequent and the original culture is preserved;
- **integration**, which involves regular contact with the culture of the predominant population, but at the same time the persons retain to some extent their culture of origin;
- **marginalisation**, which occurs where there is little opportunity or interest in engaging with the culture of the predominant population.



These processes are always two-sided. Both the dominant culture and the ethnic minority participate in the intercultural space and adopt the posture that suits them best. Both groups should adapt and change. However, power is unfortunately not evenly balanced between the groups, which brings its own dynamics to each society. In the worst cases, ethnic minorities and people belonging to them do not have free choice about engaging in intercultural relations.

3.4 Ethnic discrimination

Ethnic discrimination is different and usually worse treatment of a person from a particular ethnic group, based on ethnic origin. Discrimination occurs in all areas, including schooling, finding housing, finding a job and then at work, accessing services, including healthcare. As a result of discrimination, persons belonging to ethnic minorities suffer from multiple consequences, including poverty, poorer health, lower education and substandard living conditions. All this is accompanied by a low level of participation in decision-making processes at local and national levels.



Discrimination against Roma in the EU

- With a population of 6 million, the Roma are the largest ethnic group in Europe. Research shows that as a consequence of centuries old discrimination and marginalisation only 44% of Roma children are enrolled in pre-school education and 68% of Roma drop out of school. As much as 63% of Roma are not in education, employment or training. Only 43% have paid employment. This
- As much as 80% of Roma live below the poverty line in very poor social and economic conditions. Research shows that in many European countries they are systematically discriminated against in access to clean drinking water and sanitation.
- In Romania, 68% of Roma did not have plumbing in their homes in 2016. In Italy, where Roma live in 'nomadic camps', research has shown more cases of asthma, diarrhoea and bronchitis in children because of poor water hygiene. Five years ago

in Slovenia, just under half of Roma settlements were not connected to public sewerage or had no septic tanks, and only around 60% of buildings in Roma settlements were legally connected to the electricity grid.

- Research from 2023 showed that 78% of Roma in Slovakia and 73% in the Czech Republic faced discrimination when looking for a job. As much as 85% of Italians and 66% of French people do not have a positive opinion of Roma. One in five Roma in the EU have been victims of racially motivated crimes.



3.5 Reflection on racism and ethnic discrimination

Imagine the following events and consider whether they are examples of racism.

1. A white Slovenian man is talking to a second-generation person with Chinese roots: "Oh, how well you speak Slovenian! Where are you from?"
2. A Black man is stopped by the police at least 10 times a year and asked for his identification.
3. Migrants and people from ethnic minorities faced a higher mortality rate than the white population in many EU countries during the Covid-19 pandemic.
4. A Black person uses cosmetic products to bleach the skin and permanently straighten their hair.
5. A Black person enters a shop and is followed by a security guard until they leave the shop.

Answers:

1. This is a case of microaggression, where a white person gives a clear message to another person that they are not of Slovenian origin, that they are a foreigner, and that they do not belong in this space.
2. This is an example of systemic racism, specifically racial profiling based on skin colour. The unconscious bias, stereotypes and prejudices of individual police officers are reinforced by the structural belief that violence takes place in a vacuum and is not dependant on socio-economic and societal factors.

3. *This is a case of institutional discrimination. Social factors of human health affect the health status of individuals and communities. Migrants and ethnic minorities are more likely than the white population to be employed in caring professions (healthcare, care homes), in lower paid jobs, in precarious employment or self-employed. They are also more likely to live in larger communities or with several people in smaller spaces. They are more likely to have lower functional health literacy due to lower language proficiency, which represented an additional barrier during the health crisis. In case of illegal status, they avoided healthcare institutions for fear of deportation. There is very little research in Europe on the impact of racism on the health of migrants and ethnic minorities (not in times of crisis). However, those that do exist show that, even in non-crisis times, racism present in healthcare systems significantly reduces migrants' and ethnic minorities' trust in the healthcare system. Unfortunately, due to the lack of research, it is not possible to determine whether racism is predominantly interpersonal or whether there is also institutional racism.*
4. *This is an example of internalised racism, where a person tries to create a whiter appearance, which, based on the dominant group's definitions, is considered the ideal of beauty.*
5. *It is a case of racial microaggression, where a Black person is labelled in advance as dangerous, as someone who will steal, as a criminal. The message is also that this person is poor and does not belong in the space into which they have strayed.*



Racism is reproduced by stereotypes, prejudice and unconscious bias, just like other forms of discrimination. Particularly in some Central and Eastern European countries, such as Romania and Slovenia, there is a predominant belief that racism does not exist, either because they had no colonialist past or because of the low number of non-white people in the countries. In Italy, the situation is somewhat different: a 2023 survey showed that 22% of respondents believed that migrants from Africa were often victims of racism, while 48% thought they were very often victims.



In any case, reflection is needed on one's own experiences and perceptions of 'race' and racism:

- When did you first notice that people of different skin colours and other physical characteristics live in this world?
- If this happened in your childhood, how did you interpret these differences between people, did anyone help you?
- If it happened when you were older, how did it make you feel?
- What experiences did you have as a child with people who were different from you? And as an adult?
- When you were a child, did anyone talk to you about diversity and racism? How do you talk about these issues with others as an adult?
- How many role models of different 'races' appear in your everyday life (in politics, in films, in books, in art, in architecture, in science, etc.)?
- What do you think you can talk about if young people ask you about racism? Do you think you have enough knowledge? Do you think you would be uncomfortable with a question, or would you prefer to avoid it and pretend that nothing happened?



Addressing structural and systemic inequalities, such as racism, takes courage because:

- difficult topics are easier to avoid than to discuss;
- are discussed openly and respectfully by only a few people;
- because you have to face your own unconscious bias;
- because others can notice your unconscious bias;
- because conversations can trigger many emotions (passivity, sadness, anger, shame, unpredictable reactions) in young people, and you are not sure if you will be able to address them appropriately.

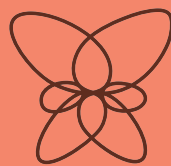
Perhaps you can work with the young people to establish ground rules that everyone should follow before the conversation starts, to ensure respect and a sense of safety.

Imagine the following situations and consider whether they are examples of ethnic discrimination.

1. The teacher warned a boy from the ethnic majority not to associate with a classmate from an ethnic minority.
2. The school psychologist recommended to a girl that she should enrol in a vocational high school instead of a gymnasium, because her last name was of Romani origin.
3. During the Covid-19 pandemic, many Roma were accused of spreading the virus in Eastern European countries.

Answers:

1. *This is a case of 'soft discrimination' based on the teacher's prejudices. Soft discrimination is difficult to prove, but it has long-term effects on the individual.*
2. *This is a case of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, which put the girl in a position of inferiority, which led her to enrol in a school that was against her wishes.*
3. *It is discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, which has no basis in fact.*



AT THE CROSSROAD
OF INEQUALITIES /
DISCRIMINATION

The content is part of the e-training Intersectional Discrimination in Youth Work, prepared by the Forum for Equitable Development in cooperation with project partners Zavod Global, Nosotras Onlus and Asociatia Pro Democratia.

Main authors: Ana Kalin and Patricija Škornik Vrtič

Editor: Darja Sekula Krstič

Illustrated by: Jaka Vukotič

Design: Mrož d.o.o.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the authors only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the National Agency. Neither the European Union nor the National Agency can be held responsible for them.