

BACKGROUND PAPER

Equality Data¹ Initiative

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Open Society European Policy Institute

The Project

Reliable data is needed to ensure equality and actively fight discrimination. Data does this by measuring inequalities and allowing the development of positive solutions to inequality such as targeted social policies. Data also allows us monitor whether these measures work.

The Equality Data Initiative (EDI), initiated by the [Open Society European Policy Institute](#), and implemented in collaboration with the [Migration Policy Group](#) and the [European Network Against Racism](#), aims to develop research on, and increase awareness of, the need for data regarding specific minority groups in the European Union (EU). Its ultimate goal is to enhance the measurability of (in)equality for groups at risk of discrimination. The EDI has six components including consultation with established experts, comparative policy-oriented research resulting in a report (see below), identification of, and consultation with, national stakeholders, national and EU targeted advocacy, and strategic litigation.

Why now?

Inequality – social, economic, political – persists in Europe. New anti-discrimination directives ([Racial Equality Directive](#) and [Employment Equality Directive](#)) mean equality data and statistics are required to monitor their impact. Data collection is a key way to assess the practical implementation of these directives and find out if and how they are working.

Country research focus

The project focuses on Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Romania and Sweden in the field of public education and on France in the field of public employment.

¹ Definition of “equality data” adopted by the researchers of the EDI report: “Equality data” refers to all types of disaggregated data used to assess the comparative situation of a specific group at risk of discrimination. Such data can be collected through different techniques, i.e. in the framework of public statistics (census, administrative files), ad hoc surveys, internal monitoring by enterprises or public administrations, judicial system data, and data from complaints received by equality bodies.

Phase I - Open Society Foundations and the Migration Policy Group

A background comparative report² developed by the Migration Policy Group examines proposals made by national experts regarding an operational definition of best practices for equality data collection in the seven countries that make up part of the project. It also presents the best options and methods for equality data collection related to race, ethnicity and disability for the purpose of monitoring equality in the field of public education and employment. The report provides an overview of possible windows for advocacy and litigation at national level as well as concrete policy recommendations in the selected member-states.

"The general principle in the selected countries is the prohibition of processing *sensitive* data, although there are both exemptions to this prohibition and situations which are excluded from its scope. Thus, the opportunity for such data collection exists in a range of specific situations."

Equality Data Initiative, comparative report, 2013

On 24-25 October 2013, the Open Society Foundations and the European Network Against Racism held a symposium on equality data collection in Brussels. The aim of the first EU symposium on equality data collection was to gather academics, statisticians, researchers, NGO representatives and national and EU officials to share their perspectives and work on equality data collection. The symposium included four workshops: "Towards an EU Framework on the collection of equality data", "Advocating at the national level for the collection of equality data", "NGO mobilization and communication strategies to advocate for the collection of data", and "The role of statisticians and academics in advocating for the collection of equality data." The workshops focused on the practical work of those organizations dealing with the issue as well as on identifying possible ways forward.

"It is necessary to keep the purpose of data gathering in mind. Particular sets of data are not useful for everything; discerning their appropriateness to certain situations is key. In the past, the mantra was that data did not exist; nowadays, the mantra is to operationalize the data into strategy."

Andrey Ivanov (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights), Closing Speech, Symposium on Equality Data Collection

October 24, 2013

Phase II - Open Society Foundations, the Migration Policy Group and the European Network Against Racism

It is crucial to operate at an EU member-state level to revive the debate on equality data collection and foster a change of attitudes among authorities and the public on this issue in

² Isabelle Chopin, Lilla Farkas, and Catharina Germaine-Sahl, *Equality Data Initiative, Collection of data on race, ethnicity and disability in the field of public education in Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Ireland, Romania and Sweden, and public employment in France: What are the possibilities?*, MPG, (forthcoming 2014).

light of the limited powers of the EU and international human rights institutions to enforce data collection obligations. Therefore, Open Society Foundations in cooperation with the Migration Policy Group and the European Network Against Racism is conducting four stakeholder events in 2014, as a continuation of the first phase of the project, and identifying potential future actions.

National stakeholder meetings:

Germany – 10-11-12 MARCH 2014

Hungary – 24-25-26 MARCH 2014

France – 14-15 APRIL 2014

Sweden – 28-29-30 APRIL 2014

Join our actions: Share your perspective on equality data collection; share your organizational advocacy strategy, awareness-raising campaign or news about litigation on equality data collection in any field of public life at equality.data@opensocietyfoundations.org

Relevant EU Directives and international legal texts - data collection:

[Racial Equality Directive \(2000/43/EC\)](#);

[Employment Equality Directive \(2000/78\)](#);

[Data Protection Directive \(1995/46\)](#);

[Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Optional Protocol](#);

[European Convention on Human Rights](#);

[Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#);

[European Commission against Racism and Intolerance](#) (reports);

[Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#) (reports).

EU surveys on anti-discrimination:

[Special Eurobarometer 263 on Discrimination in the European Union \(EC, 2006\)](#);

[Eurobarometer 2012 on perceptions of discrimination in the EU \(EC, 2012\)](#);

[EU-MIDIS: European Union minorities and discrimination survey](#) (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights);

[Roma at glance](#) (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights).