



## PRESS STATEMENT

### EU leaders must protect discriminated groups in all walks of life

**Brussels, 12 January 2012 – The EU has thrown in the towel about protecting discriminated groups, including lesbian, gay and bisexual people, persons with disabilities, religious minorities, youth and older people. A coalition of European equality and anti-discrimination NGOs<sup>1</sup> now calls on the European Commission and the Danish Presidency of the EU to urgently take up this issue.**

The European Commission proposed a progressive EU anti-discrimination law in 2008, which would ban discrimination on grounds of religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation in areas including education, housing, and access to goods and services, but it has been stuck at EU Council level for over three years. So far, EU law only protects against discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation in employment and occupation, but not in other areas.

If this proposal is shelved, the consequences will be severe. Hopes were raised that at last everyone will enjoy the same rights and access to goods and services wherever they are in the EU. Currently, a person can be denied access to a hotel, housing, or bar based on their religious belief or sexual orientation.

For instance:

- An EU-wide survey by the European Fundamental Rights Agency on Muslims' experiences of discrimination shows that some of the highest levels of discrimination occur in private services.
- 78% of Europeans who participated in the 2011 European Disability Forum's survey on freedom of movement said that they would make more use of their right to free movement in the EU if there were no barriers, such as inaccessible goods and services, non-adapted public spaces and discriminatory attitudes.
- Older people face age discrimination attempting to take out bank loans or buy travel insurance for holidays within the EU.
- 53% of the respondents to a study on social exclusion of young LGBT people in Europe (2007) reported having experienced bullying in school.
- While sex-based discrimination is partly covered by EU legislation, multiple discrimination is still not recognised in EU law. Adoption of the directive would make it easier to combat discrimination against the many women who also belong to discriminated groups.

Given the current climate of growing intolerance against minorities and the impact of the financial and economic crisis on the most vulnerable groups across Europe, including persons with disabilities and older people, we urge:

- the European Commission to put the proposed law back on the political agenda;
- the Danish Presidency of the EU to take the lead in moving forward with negotiations in a transparent manner, open to the input of human rights and anti-discrimination experts including civil society;
- the Council of the EU not to undermine the Commission's proposal and ensure a swift adoption of a strong and ambitious anti-discrimination directive which also covers multiple discrimination.

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<sup>1</sup> AGE Platform Europe, Amnesty International, European Disability Forum, European Network Against Racism, European Women's Lobby, ILGA-Europe (European Region of the International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association), International Gay and Lesbian Youth Organisation.

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