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## European Year for Equal Opportunities for All gears up to fuel the debate on diversity

*Today the 2007 European Year for Equal Opportunities for All (EYEO), which will kick off in Berlin on January 30th at the first ever Equality Summit, launched its new website and published the results of an EU survey on anti-discrimination. The survey - carried out in preparation for the European Year - reveals that over half of Europeans (51%) think that not enough is being done to fight discrimination in their country and a large majority of respondents also feel that discrimination is widespread (64%). Overall, the results confirm that Europeans are ready for change, with a broad majority in favour of adopting measures to promote equal opportunities for all in the field of employment.*

Vladimír Špidla, EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities said "The results of today's survey send a clear message that Europeans think discrimination remains rife and they are ready for stronger measures to fight prejudice, intolerance and inequality. I am confident that the 2007 European Year for Equal Opportunities for All will spark a lively debate on diversity, giving a new impetus to tackling discrimination effectively."

The survey highlights that awareness of the existence of anti-discrimination laws (on grounds of sex, ethnic or racial origin, age, sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief) is still relatively low in the EU - only one third of citizens claim to know their rights should they become victims of discrimination or harassment. That is why the main goals of the European Year will be to inform citizens of their right to non-discrimination and equal treatment, to promote equal opportunities for all and to celebrate the benefits of diversity. To reach out to citizens the campaign will be highly decentralised with hundreds of activities taking place locally, regionally and nationally. Activities include projects like diversity and working life awards for private and public companies making real efforts to fight discrimination; writing competitions in schools on the themes of respect and tolerance; training on anti-discrimination issues for the media.

The events will involve the people and organisations who have the biggest stake in its success. This includes trade unions, employers, NGOs, youth groups, organisations representing those facing unequal treatment and local and regional authorities. The Year's decentralised approach will allow activities to continue beyond the EYEO creating a lasting impact on the ground.

Replies to the survey vary widely between Member States however the main message is that Europeans feel that discrimination is still widespread (64%) in their country and they are ready to change this. A broad majority of Europeans believe that being disabled (79%), being a Roma (77%) being over 50 (69%) or having a different ethnic origin (62%) is a disadvantage in their society.

At the same time, in all but four Member States, a majority thinks that people of a different ethnic origin other than the rest of the population enrich the national culture. A large majority feels that more women are needed in management positions (77%) and as MPs (72 %). Many also believe that more people with disabilities (74%) and more people over 50 (72%) are needed in the workplace.

When it comes to getting a job, disability and age are the two main factors which Europeans believe put people most at a disadvantage. Close to 8 out of 10 respondents feel that with equivalent qualifications, a person aged 50 or over stands less chance when it comes to employment or promotion compared with a person aged under 50, and similarly a disabled person compared with an able-bodied person. Many respondents (68%) believe that, for women, family responsibilities are an obstacle to accessing management positions. Support for this view is particularly strong in Spain and Germany (both 76%).

The new EYEO website will be an important communication tool throughout the Year, providing up-to-date information on activities in which citizens can participate, acting as a source of inspiration for various activities and fostering networks. To ensure the Year's long-term impact, the EU's new programme for employment and solidarity called PROGRESS - to fund activities from 2007-2013 - will take up some of the best ideas generated during the European Year. New approaches, new ideas and a new impetus from the Year will help advance the EU's efforts in the field of equality and non-discrimination.

One of the main initiatives of the European Year will be next week's Equality Summit for the Year's launch in Berlin, bringing together EU leaders, Equality Ministers and senior Representatives of civil society.

**For more information see:**

*Link to summary of Eurobarometer:*

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/news/2007/jan/euro\\_baro\\_summary\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/news/2007/jan/euro_baro_summary_en.pdf)

*Link to EYEO website*

<http://equality2007.europa.eu>

*Link to Berlin Equality summit*

[http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/eyeq/index.cfm?&page\\_id=95](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/eyeq/index.cfm?&page_id=95)