

UK intervention-TS1-P3: Discussion on all forms of discrimination, including racism, xenophobia and intolerance

The UK would like to reiterate our commitment to tackling racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, including that which may be experienced by migrants and persons belonging to ethnic and religious minorities. All members of our societies, irrespective of, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation or gender identity must be treated equally in law and in practice. Any restrictions based on a person's legal or migration status must be consistent with human rights law.

Over the years, the UK has constantly monitored how racism, xenophobia and related intolerance can evolve and express itself. We believe that the better we understand such intolerance and its causes, the more chance we have of tackling it.

As consciousness of racism rose generally in the twentieth century, the UK brought in an extensive series of laws to tackle it, starting with The Race Relations Act in 1965. Acts subsequent to that have outlawed discrimination in employment, housing and social services. In the last decade various countries have become more aware that racism has always formed a part of a wider phenomenon of hate incidents, discrimination and xenophobia.

We have specific laws in the UK for dealing with Hate Crime and these are enforced vigorously. But we also know that laws are not enough. We have a Hate Crime Action Plan that seeks to challenge beliefs and attitudes and increase the reporting of hate crime against all groups, including against migrants. We also have a culture where the media is free to very proactively report on hate crime and xenophobia and even more subtle forms of discrimination. As we heard from the discussion yesterday a free media is a crucial element in addressing social cohesion, as well a discrimination and intolerance.

No country is completely free of discrimination and intolerance but the UK government works consistently and persistently hard to make the UK one of the most tolerant countries in the world.