

TIMELINE OF PROVISIONS AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

made by
international
organisations and
individual nations
since 1948



COMMISSION FOR
RACIAL EQUALITY

PROVISIONS AGAINST RACIAL DISCRIMINATION and other landmark events since 1948

The following list includes a selection of important international provisions against racial discrimination, as well as some of the legislative measures taken by individual countries. Since it would be impossible in a leaflet of this size to record all the relevant enactments of every country in the world, the list is not comprehensive. A number of initiatives and events of significance to international efforts to end racial discrimination have also been included.

1948



United Nations

Universal Declaration of Human Rights

Article 1 declares all human beings free and equal in dignity and rights; Article 2 guarantees equal entitlement to all of the Declaration's rights and freedoms without distinction of any kind, including race, colour, language, religion, national or social origin, and birth or other status



Italy

1948 Constitution

Contains general principle of equality, imposing equal treatment irrespective of several factors, including race

1949



Germany

Basic Law for the Federal Republic of Germany

Affirms equality before the law and outlaws prejudice or favour on any grounds, including parentage, race, language, homeland and origin, faith or religious or political conviction

1950



Council of Europe

European Convention on Human Rights

Article 14 guarantees equal entitlement to all of the Convention's rights and freedoms without discrimination on any grounds, including race, colour, language, religion, national or social origin, association with a national minority, and birth or other status. European Court of Human Rights established by the Convention

1954



USA

***Brown v Board of Education of Topeka* judgment**

Reverses the 'separate but equal' doctrine, marking the start of the US civil rights movement

1954



India

Constitution

Article 14 provides for a general right to equality for all persons within the territory of India, irrespective of nationality. Articles 15 and 16 prohibit discrimination in public areas and public employment on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. Article 15 also makes express provision for affirmative action to help 'backward classes' (Indian terminology) and 'scheduled castes and tribes', and Article 16 permits the state to reserve appointments or posts in favour of any 'backward class' of citizens. Article 330 reserves seats in the Indian parliament for members of the scheduled castes and tribes

1957



European Community

Treaty establishing the European Community

Article 39 guarantees free movement of workers without discrimination

1958



ILO

International Labour Organisation Convention concerning Discrimination in respect of Employment and Occupation

Comes into force in 1960



France

1958 Constitution

Article 1 guarantees equality of all citizens before the law without distinction as to origin, race or religion, and respect for all beliefs

1960



Canada

Bill of Rights

Prohibits discrimination by federal agencies on the grounds of race, national origin, colour, religion or sex

1963



UN

United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination



USA

Martin Luther King Junior's 'I have a dream' speech

Martin Luther King is awarded Nobel Peace Prize a year later

1964



USA

Civil Rights Act

Prohibits discrimination in public facilities, in government, and in employment, making it illegal to segregate people by race in schools, housing, or when hiring employees

1965



UN

International Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Racial Discrimination

Prohibits discrimination on grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origins. Comes into force in 1969



UK

Race Relations Act 1965

Includes prohibiting discrimination on grounds of race or colour 'in any place of public resort', such as hotels, restaurants, public transport and any place run by a public authority. The Act also creates a new criminal offence of inciting racial hatred by inflammatory publications or speeches. Race Relations Board established by the Act to respond to complaints of racial discrimination through conciliation



USA

Voting Rights Act

Suspends practices such as literacy tests, which had denied African Americans the right to vote in Southern states. By the end of the decade more than a million new African American voters had claimed their right to vote

1966



UN

The United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights



UN

The United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

1965



Australia

Referendum grants citizenship to all indigenous people of Australia

1968



UK

Race Relations Act 1968

Supersedes and extends protection provided under the 1965 Act, by making it unlawful to refuse housing, employment or public services on racial grounds. It also covers advertising. Race Relations Board enlarged, and the separate Community Relations Commission established to promote harmonious community relations

1968



USA

Civil Rights Act, also known as the Housing Act of 1968
Prohibits discrimination in the sale, rental, or financing of housing. Largely prompted by the assassination of Martin Luther King Junior a year earlier, the Act also provides protection for civil rights workers

1971



Canada

Canada becomes first country in the world to adopt an official multiculturalism policy

1972



France

Act of 1 July 1972

Prohibits racial discrimination as such for the first time. The Act introduces an article into the Penal Code which penalises anyone refusing to provide goods or services, refusing employment to someone, or dismissing them, on grounds of ethnicity, race, nationality or religion. Also introduces an article into the 1881 Press Act, prohibiting incitement to racial discrimination

1973



UN

1973–1983 Decade of Action to Combat Racism and Racial Discrimination

1975



Australia

Racial Discrimination Act 1975

Prohibits racial discrimination. The Act covers discrimination on grounds of race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origins, in areas such as employment, renting or buying property, providing goods and services, accessing public places and in advertising

1976



UK

Race Relations Act 1976

Establishes the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), which replaces the Race Relations Board and the Community Relations Commission. Widens the grounds of unlawful discrimination to include nationality. Both direct and indirect discrimination defined for the first time, and concept of victimisation defined as a form of direct discrimination. The Act introduces the right to individual redress, and gives the CRE powers of investigation and the statutory duties of working towards eliminating discrimination, promoting equal opportunities and good race relations, and reviewing the effectiveness of the Act.

1979



UN

UN recognises Roma as a distinct ethnic group

1981



Belgium

Anti-Racism Act of 30 July 1981

Based on the UN Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

1982



Canada

Constitution Act

Entrenches the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Rights of minority and aboriginal peoples are recognised and affirmed, and Canada becomes a constitutionally multicultural state

1983



Netherlands

Principle of equal treatment on all grounds introduced into constitution

Principle of equal treatment and non-discrimination applies in cases between the state and private individuals

1985



Canada

Human Rights Act

Prohibits discrimination on several grounds including race, national or ethnic origins, colour and religion

1988



Brazil

Federal Constitution

Designates racial discrimination as a crime, and for the first time accords rights to groups, as well as individuals. Preamble reaffirms commitment to developing a fraternal and pluralistic society free of prejudice. Article 3 stipulates that one of the objectives of the Federal Republic of Brazil is to promote the well-being of all people without prejudice on grounds of origins, race, sex, colour, age, or any other form of discrimination



Canada

Multiculturalism Act

Formally enshrines the multiculturalism policy of 1971



Germany

Works Constitution Act

Establishes an obligation for the private sector to ensure that all employees, regardless of nationality, origins or belief, are treated according to the principles of law and fairness

1989



India

Prevention of Atrocities Act

Prohibits caste-based discrimination and gives Dalits opportunity for legal redress for violence towards them

1990



UN

International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of all Migrant Workers and Members of their Families



Germany

Basic Law for Federal Republic of Germany, as amended by Unification Treaty and Federal Statute

Unites German people and reiterates commitment to core provision of equal treatment in general, and prohibition of discrimination of the 1949 Basic Law



France

Act of 13 July 1990

Strengthens penalties for racist incidents, creates a new offence of disputing crimes against humanity, and introduces new rights of association

1991



South Africa

Repeal of apartheid laws

Nelson Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk win Nobel Peace Prize two years later

1992



France

Law of 22 July 1992 reforms the Penal Code

Discrimination is criminalised. New Penal Code provides definition of discrimination, and specifies the cases in which it is punishable and the designated penalties. Discrimination by representatives of public authorities is made illegal. New Penal Code comes into force in 1994

1993



Council of Europe

Council of Europe Declaration and Plan of Action on combating racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance

Establishes European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

1994



South Africa

First free, multiracial elections

Nelson Mandela is elected president

1994



Netherlands Equal Treatment Act

Prohibits racial and other discrimination in employment, housing, education, health care, care of the elderly, and other public goods and services. Equal treatment commission established by the Act

1995



Australia Racial Hatred Act

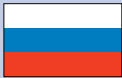
Extends the coverage of the Racial Discrimination Act to allow people to complain about racially offensive or abusive behaviour



UNESCO

Declaration of Principles on Tolerance

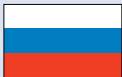
1996



Russia

National Cultural Autonomy Act

Offers people from all ethnic communities, particularly national minorities, guarantees of national cultural autonomy as a form of self-organisation (cultural development programmes established and an advisory council on cultural autonomy is set up)



Russia

New Penal Code

Prohibits discrimination on any grounds and makes it a criminal offence to engage in deliberate acts intended to incite national, racial or religious hatred, to promote the idea of exclusiveness or the inferiority of citizens because of their religious beliefs, nationality or race, or directly or indirectly to restrict the rights of or establish privileges for citizens because of their race, nationality or attitude to religion. Comes into force in 1997

1997



European Union

European Year Against Racism

European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) established, based in Vienna



European Union

Treaty of Amsterdam

Inserts what is now Article 13 into 1957 EC Treaty, granting the Community authority to pass legislation to combat discrimination on several grounds, including racial or ethnic origins. Comes into force in 1999

1998



UK

Human Rights Act

Incorporates into UK law the European Convention of Human Rights. The Act makes it unlawful for public authorities to act in a way which is incompatible with the Convention and allows individuals to begin proceedings for a breach of Convention rights. All UK legislation must be interpreted as far as possible in accordance with the Convention; where a court finds that primary legislation is not consistent, it may make a declaration of incompatibility. Comes into force in 2000



Italy

Immigration Act

Provides remedies against racial and ethnic discrimination, including both direct and indirect discrimination by individuals and public authorities



Ireland

Employment Equality Act

Prohibits direct and indirect discrimination at work on several grounds, including race and religion (and belonging to the Traveller community). Comes into force in 1999

2000



Council of Europe

Council of Europe Conference against Racism

'All different all equal: from principle to practice'



European Union

Race Equality Directive 2000/43/EC

Covers a wide range of areas where direct and indirect racial discrimination might occur, including access to jobs, working conditions, pay and the rights and benefits linked to a job, access to education and training, social security benefits, health care, access to and supply of goods and services which are available to the public, including housing. All governments have to designate a body to provide practical and independent support and guidance to victims of racial discrimination.

Requirement for member states to transpose directive into national legislation by 2003. Countries are currently at different stages of incorporating the directive into their national laws; some have done so completely, some have not introduced it in all districts, while others have yet to apply it to fields outside employment

2000



UK

Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000

Amends the 1976 Act. It becomes unlawful (from 2001) for any public authority to discriminate in any of its public functions, with limited exceptions. Most public authorities are given a statutory duty to promote racial equality by working to eliminate discrimination, and to promote equal opportunities and good race relations. Many authorities also have specific duties, such as creating a race equality scheme. The Commission for Racial Equality has power under the Act to enforce the specific duties, by issuing a compliance notice and, if necessary, taking an authority to court



Ireland

Equal Status Act

The Act gives protection against discrimination, including on the basis of race, ethnicity and belonging to the Traveller community, in non-workplace areas, complementing the 1998 Employment Equality Act. Amended in 2004 to implement the EU's anti-discrimination directives, including the race equality directive



UN

First ever thematic session of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

The session is devoted entirely to the issue of discrimination against Roma



Germany

Citizenship law

Passed in order to make it easier for immigrants to become German citizens. Children born of foreigners must decide on their nationality by the age of 23 and revoke one passport

2001



UN

World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance

2003



UK

The Race Relations Act 1976 (Amendment) Regulations 2003

Introduced to amend the Race Relations Act 1976 in relevant areas to make it compliant with the EU race equality directive

2003



European Union

European Council 2003

Heads of state decide that the EUMC will become a fundamental rights agency

2004

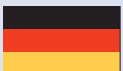


UK

Housing Act

Local authorities must assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers in the same way as they do for anyone else

2005



Germany

Immigration Act

Designed to ease the integration of foreigners in Germany



UN

2005-2015 Second International Decade of the World's Indigenous People



COMMISSION FOR RACIAL EQUALITY



*We work for
a just and integrated society,
where diversity is valued.
We use both persuasion
and our powers under the law
to give everyone an equal chance
to live free from fear,
discrimination, prejudice
and racism.*

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