



## **Presentation of the 2006 Racism Report**

On March 21, 2007 ZARA-Zivilcourage und Anti-Rassismus-Arbeit presented its seventh Racism Report. ZARA's Racism Report is the only annually published qualitative data source on the structure and extent of racism in Austria. An increasing number of people actively stand up against racist assaults and fight for their right of non-discrimination. The documentation and monitoring experience gained by ZARA during the last seven years shows how and to what extent racist discrimination affects people in all different kinds of everyday circumstances of their lives. The Racism report makes obvious that racist assaults in Austria are not isolated incidents but that racism has tradition and structure.

### **No awareness of injustice – Being right does not automatically lead to getting justice**

“On the one hand, people do not realise that what they have experienced is discriminatory, on the other hand people do not perceive their unjust behaviour as discrimination. In Austria, discrimination is very often seen as a peccadillo. This attitude has not been changed by the new legislation promoting equal treatment”, explicated Hikmet Kayahan, head of the counselling unit of victims and witnesses of racism. In order to make more people aware of their right to non-discrimination the Racism Report contains several sections called “Knowing your rights”. In these sections concrete cases are picked out and it is explained in detail how legislation can be applied in these cases. Nevertheless: Being right does not automatically lead to getting justice. “Information on the legal situation is important but does not suffice. People affected by discrimination very often become subject to long and exhausting proceedings. Unfortunately, hardly any court decisions have been taken on behalf of victims of racism, which means a high degree of legal uncertainty. Besides, people affected by discrimination have to bear the cost of litigation when they lose their case, explained Hikmet Kayahan. “Changes in legislation and an improved access to the right of non-discrimination are essential for empowering victims of discrimination to actively fight for their rights.”

### **Equal opportunities is a right and not a privilege**

ZARA expects the new federal government to improve legislation with regard to anti-discrimination, to provide anti-discrimination measures in general and ZARA's work in particular with adequate resources. Up to now, ZARA has only been able to continue its work because members of civil society have continued to financially support the organisation. Time has come to put political commitments into practice. „Equal opportunities are to be understood as a right and not as a generously distributed privilege”, stated Xiane Kangela, chief-editor of the Racism Report.

### **ZARA's Racism improves Austria's image**



ZARA is often accused of damaging Austria's image in Europe. However, the Racism Report was one of the most important criteria of the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) not to put Austria within the category of those countries having a poor monitoring system on racism. "Continuous monitoring, the documentation of racist incidents by ZARA and the permanent reporting to European institutions such as the EUMC, have saved Austria from falling far behind European standards", stated Barbara Liegl, chief executive officer of ZARA. The categorisation by the EUMC shows those countries are ahead of the others in fighting discrimination that are aware of the problem of racism. These countries actively look at the problem and no longer deny racism. ZARA's Racism Report is an important source of information for politicians. They can gain a qualitative insight into the Austrian situation and start developing concrete and solution oriented measures improving the situation.

The Racism Report 2006 can be downloaded as a pdf at: [www.zara.or.at](http://www.zara.or.at)