



Providing information, advice and support to EU migrants in post-Brexit Scotland



SHAPING THE FUTURE OF THE ANTI RACISM OBSERVATORY FOR SCOTLAND (AROS)

Consultations with the Italian, Polish, Spanish-speaking and Romanian communities in Scotland

Alice Castelnuovo

Anda Griveteanu

Pawel Kopeć

Noelia Martínez Castellanos

Elisabeth Mulero

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INTRODUCTION

This report presents the findings from a series of consultations organised by the Citizens Rights Project (CRP) as part of the Scottish Government's Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland (AROS) initiative. These consultations aimed to gather insights from EU migrant communities and Spanish-speaking communities in Scotland to inform the development of AROS, ensuring that the voices of ethnic minorities are meaningfully embedded in its creation and operations.

The consultations were held online via Zoom on November 11, 12, 13, and 14, 2024, from 6:00 to 8:00 PM. The sessions, conducted in Romanian, Polish, Spanish, and Italian respectively, were designed to last no more than two hours to respect time and ensure focused, engaging discussions. Each session was facilitated by multilingual individuals with deep knowledge of the respective communities and experience in similar activities.



Why We Applied for This Funding

CRP applied for this funding to amplify the voices of EU communities, which often face systemic racism but remain underrepresented in Scotland's anti-racism efforts. Focusing on both Eastern and Western European communities allowed us to capture the varied experiences of systemic racism among these groups.

1. Spanish-speaking communities

While the session primarily targeted Spanish nationals, we intentionally opened it to Spanish-speaking communities, including individuals from Latin America who do not hold Spanish nationality. This approach ensured representation from a group often overlooked in Scotland's anti-racism initiatives and data collection efforts. Additionally, many Spanish nationals in Scotland either originate from or have heritage in Latin America, Africa, or South Asia, further highlighting the rich diversity within this community.

2. Romanian

Our efforts to ensure representation for this community included a specific focus on engaging members of the Roma community, a group with a long history of systemic discrimination across Europe.

3. Italian

Similar to the Spanish community, Italy's colonial past and recent migration patterns have contributed to the diversity of its population. Many Italian nationals originally come from, or have heritage in, African and Asian countries, and we aimed to reflect this diversity in the conversation.

4. Polish

For this conversation, we prioritised ensuring diverse representation in terms of geographic location, age groups, gender identification, and length of residency in the UK. This approach allowed us to capture a broad range of experiences and perspectives within the Polish community.

The decision to apply for this funding was also motivated by the opportunity to address systemic racism and power dynamics affecting EU migrants in Scotland, ensuring their voices contribute to shaping AROS's work.

Our Approach to Diversity

We prioritised diversity across several dimensions, including age, geographic location within Scotland, employment status, length of time in Scotland, and ethnic background. We also try to have a range of, balancing those with experience in anti-racism efforts with others who may not have formal knowledge but could share personal or community perspectives.

These sessions provided a safe space where could share their experiences of systemic racism, rooted in issues like healthcare, employment, and access to public services. Conversations avoided complex jargon and instead focused on accessible discussions of systemic racism and power dynamics. This inclusive approach ensured that felt empowered to contribute their thoughts and ideas, shaping a more representative vision for AROS.



Summary of applicants

The consultations were widely promoted using a multi-channel approach to ensure broad engagement. Paid ads on Facebook were created in four different languages (Polish, Romanian, Spanish, and Italian) to target specific communities. Additionally, information was manually shared with hundreds of Facebook groups, including groups for EU nationals, Roma communities, and Latin American, African, and Asian diaspora groups. For instance, the Italian consultation was promoted within Bengali and Pakistani communities, as some individuals in these groups hold Italian passports. In these cases, posts were written in English to explain why these specific communities were being targeted.

We also utilised our extensive network to disseminate information. Emails were sent to our 3,000+ contacts in our Mailchimp database, and we also sent 100s of emails directly to migrant support organisations, consulates, and EEA community groups. A database of African, Asian, and Caribbean organisations, developed during past work on Windrush, was also leveraged. Furthermore, we approached individuals and clients we had previously worked with to encourage their participation based on their interests and backgrounds. As a result, a total of 97 people (See Annex A) applied across the four consultations, representing 15 out of 32 local authorities in Scotland. While the consultations achieved broad geographic coverage, the majority of participants were concentrated in the Central Belt, reflecting the population density in this region.

The applicant pool included 22 men and 75 women, with no participants identifying as non-binary. Notably, in the Polish session, only 1 man applied, but he was not considered as his application was submitted after candidates had already been selected and invited. The majority of applicants were aged 26 to 44 years, with no applicants over 65 years old, indicating a gap in engagement with older demographics. Ethnic diversity largely met the intended outreach goals. However, the Italian consultation had lower representation of non-White ethnicities, suggesting the need for improved engagement with diverse groups within this community.

Overall, the consultations effectively captured a wide range of voices and perspectives, while identifying areas for improvement in reaching older individuals and achieving more balanced ethnic representation in specific groups.

Summary of Participants

In total, 22 individuals participated in the conversations, with 5 attendees each in the Romanian and Spanish-speaking consultations, and 6 in both the Polish and Italian discussions.

The participants included 18 women and 4 men, representing several nationalities. These included Romanian, Polish, Italian, Spanish, Mexican, and Dominican.

They identified with a variety of ethnicities, reflecting the diversity within their respective national groups. These included White, Mediterranean, Latin, Mixed White-Asian, African, Romanian, Roma, White-Romanian, White-Polish, Polish, and Polish-Jewish (Ashkenazi). Attendees were based in the following local authorities: Edinburgh, Glasgow, Fife, Aberdeen, Stirling, Dumfries & Galloway, and North Lanarkshire.

The age distribution of participants was as follows: the majority (17 participants) were aged between 26 and 44 years old. Additionally, 3 participants were aged 45-59, and 2 participants were aged 16-25.

Most participants were employed, with some combining work and study or self-employment. Others held diverse roles, including caring responsibilities and religious leadership.

The participants had varying lengths of residency in the UK. A total of five participants had lived in the country for 1-5 years, nine participants for 5-10 years, and eight participants for more than 10 years.

Consultations' Overview

The consultations were designed to gather insights into participants' experiences with racism and discrimination in Scotland, as well as their expectations for the future role of the Anti-Racism Observatory for Scotland (AROS). The discussions were structured into two main themes: Experiences of Racism and Disempowerment and Expectations from AROS (Check Annex B to see the specific questions)

To ensure that everyone had an opportunity to speak, facilitators carefully managed the time, allowing participants 15-20 minutes each to share their thoughts. Participants were encouraged to be mindful of time to ensure equitable contributions. The session began with reading three key definitions—Racism, Ethnic Minority, and Systemic Racism—to create a shared understanding of the concepts being discussed (Check Annex C to read the definitions)

CONSULTATIONS



CONSULTATION IN ROMANIAN

Facilitation and Reporting by Anda Griveteanu

Five people attended the online consultation on the 11th of November 2024, with additional input gathered from others outside the meeting. The meeting attendees included three women and two men, all of Romanian nationality. Among them, two identified as Roma, one as White, one as White-Romanian, and one as Romanian.

Geographically, two participants were based in Edinburgh City, one in Fife, one in Aberdeen, and one in Glasgow. In terms of age, one participant was aged 16-25, two were 26-44, and two were 45-59. Employment-wise, three participants were employed, four were self-employed, one was caring for someone, and one was a pastor. Regarding their time in the UK, one participant had been living in the country for 1-5 years, one for 5-10 years, and three for more than 10 years.

All attendees expressed great satisfaction with this initiative, though many felt that the two-hour consultation was insufficient to fully explore their experiences and share additional examples. Despite the time constraints, participants were eager to engage and share their insights.

There was a strong interest in staying informed about the outcomes of the consultation, and many attendees expressed their willingness to contribute further and assist in any future initiatives.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISEMPOWERMENT

Participants shared a wide range of experiences highlighting systemic barriers, workplace discrimination, inequities in public services, and instances of microaggressions within their communities. These examples illustrate how racism manifests in both overt and subtle ways, affecting access to benefits, employment opportunities, housing, education, healthcare, and daily interactions. Below, we have detailed specific examples that participants either experienced directly or became aware of through their support for others in the Romanian community.

Systemic Barriers to Accessing Benefits and Pensions

- When a vulnerable Romanian person applied for Universal Credit and other benefits the authorities (a Scottish employee) asked for more info several times. The applicant sent them all that was required. In the end, their application was rejected without a clear reason, and they were told they could reapply. This happened three times in a row, with rejections citing different reasons (twice because they failed the residency test – which was not the case because the person was in employment since they moved to Scotland, and once because they had limited status – presettled, not permanent residency). The fourth time, they changed the place where they applied, and it was approved immediately. They felt that they couldn't make a complaint, and they felt disempowered; the complaints process is complicated, time-consuming, and inaccessible for individuals with limited legal knowledge and English proficiency. This person felt so humiliated, he felt that he was treated differently because he was Romanian. The same clerk who checked their application also commented during an identity check that Romanian passports are forged most often and made them wait for 45 minutes.
- A Romanian Roma parent with limited literacy, who cannot write or read, struggled to apply for benefits for their child with disabilities. They felt judged and discriminated against by authorities, highlighting barriers created by systemic racism and inadequate accessibility.

Employment Discrimination and Barriers

- Applying for a better-paid job – A Romanian applicant applied for a site supervisor role, meeting all the essential and desirable qualifications and possessing significant work experience. They had the opportunity to review the CVs of other candidates, who were Scottish, and noted that while the qualifications were similar, the other candidates had considerably less experience. They remarked that it is difficult to build a case or prove that they were the more qualified candidate.
- Romanians working in construction are often treated differently from their Scottish colleagues. Despite having the same job description, Romanians are frequently assigned more labor-intensive tasks and are given jobs that Scottish workers tend to avoid. Additionally, if a Scottish worker fails to complete their tasks by the end of the day, there are typically no repercussions. In contrast, a Romanian worker in the same situation would receive formal notices, highlighting a clear disparity in treatment.
- A Romanian working for a local council – applied for training dedicated to people with ethnic minority backgrounds but they were denied access because Romanians are not classed as ethnic minority.
- A Romanian employee working in the customer service department of a local council was verbally abused multiple times by a client due to her accent. On one occasion, the security guard overheard the conversation and asked the client to leave. Both the Romanian employee and the security guard completed incident reports regarding the situation. The client left but returned a few days later. The Romanian employee politely requested that they speak with a different colleague, which offended the client, who then asked to make a complaint. The colleague sought assistance from the manager, but instead of directly addressing the issue, the manager instructed the security guard to ask the client to leave. Although the Romanian employee felt supported by her employer to some extent, she felt the situation was not handled appropriately. The client was not informed about their inappropriate behaviour or why they were not welcome to return. This left the employee feeling that the issue was not adequately resolved.
- A Romanian citizen, who has lived in the UK for over 10 years, applied for a bus driver role at a public transport company. On the first day of training, the instructor told the new employees that he was expecting only two people, not three (one Romanian and two Scottish trainees). During the training, the Romanian received the least amount of hands-on training on the bus and was spoken to as if he had learning disabilities—this despite being in his 40s, holding

a bachelor's degree from Romania, and having completed HNC studies in Scotland. The company is well-known for treating its employees poorly, which further discouraged the Romanian trainee. Feeling disempowered, frustrated, and humiliated by the experience, he ultimately quit without filing a formal complaint.

- A dual Romanian-British citizen recounted an incident at her local council workplace. Upon transferring departments, she was asked to provide a “share code” to verify her right to work. She informed her employer that, as a British citizen, she did not possess or require a share code. Despite this, her employer accused her of residing in the UK illegally. They proceeded to scrutinise her British passport, seemingly attempting to find evidence of forgery.

Systemic Discrimination in Public and Social Services

- Romanian children with disabilities receive unequal treatment compared to Scottish children, including restricted access to medications and specialised support.
- Vulnerable older Romanians are often told to “go back home” because they are unable to access pensions in Scotland. This reflects systemic neglect towards elderly migrants.
- Social services/hospital staff – A Romanian family, with the father working as a nurse and the mother as a community worker, had to take their child to the hospital after an accident. The attending doctor accused them of hitting their child after realising they were Romanian and from the Roma community. They stated that such behavior is “normal and common practice in Romanian culture.” Despite the parents’ explanations, they were reported to Social Services. This incident reflects harmful stereotypes within the healthcare system. The doctor was also a migrant but not Romanian.

- A participant shared an example where medical staff consistently recorded in her child's medical records that she, the mother, was Romanian, despite also being a British citizen. She expressed that mentioning her Romanian nationality was irrelevant, especially since her English is fluent, and she had never requested an interpreter. This unnecessary note left her feeling humiliated.
- Eastern European accents are treated differently than, for example, American accents. One Romanian participant noted repeated preferential treatment given to their American family member compared to them.
- Most of the time, when interacting with people in positions of authority—such as local authorities, GPs, hospitals, councils, or the police—they do not directly ask about your nationality, even when it might be relevant. Instead, they typically ask, “Where are you from?” If you mention your location in Scotland, they often follow up with, “No, originally.” This implies an assumption that you are new to the country and makes it difficult for them to believe you could have lived here for a long time, been born here, or even hold British citizenship. Once they learn you are from Romania, they often assume you are a sessional worker, a cleaner, or a labourer, disregarding the possibility that you might have a higher-paid or more skilled job. These interactions are frequently followed by comments like, “Your English is better than my Romanian,” as if it is surprising that Romanians can speak English fluently.
- A Roma family was regularly visited by social services. During each visit, the assigned social worker assured them that everything was fine and that no issues were observed. However, the social worker later submitted a derogatory and false report to the authorities, recommending that the family be taken to court for prosecution. The family was not given the opportunity to review the report until it was at a very advanced stage in the process. This left them feeling disempowered, misinformed, and humiliated.
- A 19-year-old pregnant woman from the Roma community sought financial support, prompting regular visits from social services. During these visits, she received no negative feedback or concerns about her ability to care for her child. However, immediately after giving birth, her child was taken away and placed in temporary foster care. Social services claimed that the mother was unfit to raise her child due to medical issues she had experienced as a child (epilepsy), despite her parents consistently providing support. The young mother felt disempowered and humiliated by this decision. With help from the Roma community and after two months of legal effort, the child was returned to her care. However, the family had to pay for a lawyer to resolve the issue, highlighting the systemic barriers and prejudices faced by Roma individuals in accessing equitable support.

Housing

- A homeless Romanian citizen applied for housing and, despite having lived in the area for a long time and having two disabled family members who were well-integrated into the local community and relied on specialised support, they were offered accommodation 40 miles away. When they requested that the housing agency reconsider their decision, they were told that they “couldn’t afford this luxury.” The Romanian citizen was advised to submit a formal complaint in writing, which they did. However, the response they received was via a phone call rather than in writing. The housing agency claimed it was a misunderstanding and insisted that a council employee would never make such a statement. The individual felt frustrated, disempowered, and humiliated by the process and the dismissive handling of their case.

Discrimination in Education

- A Romanian high school student was verbally assaulted by peers after a teacher, during a Geography class, mentioned that Roma people originated from Romania. The students used the term “Roma” in a derogatory way, implying negative connotations. The student’s family filed a formal complaint about the incident, but they received no written response—only a verbal acknowledgment. In response, the headteacher held an assembly for all students in that year group to address issues of discrimination and racism. However, the lack of formal communication left the family feeling that the matter was not adequately addressed.

Discrimination in Financial Services

- Certain Romanian surnames appear to be on “blacklists” at some banks, causing significant challenges for individuals trying to open accounts or maintain existing ones. People with these surnames often face sudden account closures without notice, particularly after relatively large transactions, such as transferring funds from selling a car. Affected individuals are required to go through extensive formalities to prove that their transactions are legitimate, often being treated as criminals from the outset without the benefit of the doubt. This issue is not experienced universally by all Romanian nationals but seems to target those with specific surnames, highlighting a discriminatory practice within the banking system.

Everyday Discrimination and Microaggressions

A Romanian individual placed an order, and when the delivery driver arrived to hand over the parcel, they immediately asked, “Where are you from?” without any prior conversation or verifying whether the recipient was the person who placed the order. When the Romanian customer responded that they did not understand the relevance of the question, the driver clarified, “Where are you from originally?” The customer, feeling uncomfortable, questioned how this information was relevant. The driver replied, “Just curious.” This interaction left the Romanian person feeling very uneasy. They ultimately filed an official complaint with the company. Although they did not receive a written apology, they received a call more than a week later from a company representative who expressed regret for the incident. However, the representative also explained that the drivers were employed by a third-party company, effectively shifting responsibility away from themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AROS

1. Raising Awareness and Advocacy

- We need to raise our voices louder about the issues we face and stop making excuses for those who treat us differently based on our skin color, name, or the country where we or our parents were born.
- AROS should highlight the contributions of migrant communities, showcasing the positive impact they have on Scottish society.

2. Accountability and Policy Monitoring

- Many organisations have anti-racism policies and procedures, but these often exist only on paper. While they claim to support anti-racism, their actions are limited. Such organisations should be held accountable when incidents are reported.
- Monitor and enforce the Equality Act to ensure it is consistently and fairly applied.

3. Representation and Collaboration

- Since those without British citizenship can only vote in local elections, our representation is inadequate. This leaves us without a strong voice in national politics, as MPs may not see us as an electoral asset. We need someone to represent us and advocate for our rights.
- Include representatives from diverse communities within AROS's structure to ensure inclusivity.
- Collaborate with local Romanian associations (and other relevant community groups) for future research and to promote AROS's services effectively.

4. Accessibility and Outreach

- Ensure AROS is visible, approachable, and accessible to vulnerable communities.
- Allow individuals to make complaints in their native language if they are not confident speaking English.
- Enhance accessibility through tools such as apps for recording complaints (via voice or text), dedicated helplines, mobile branches, or "pop-up" clinics in various locations.
- Promote AROS's services across social media, mainstream media, and through public institutions such as Job Centres, GPs, hospitals, and local councils.

5. Language and Support

- Advocate for simplified processes to allow individuals to file petitions more easily.
- Establish primary contact points with trained staff or volunteers who can assist individuals in filing complaints, ensuring they are not redirected from one organisation to another.

6. Evidence Collection and Reporting

- Educate individuals on how to effectively gather evidence of discrimination.
- Facilitate a simplified process for recording incidents, allowing even minor but significant events to be documented and centralised, helping to identify patterns and systemic issues.

7. Anti-Racism in Practice

- Ensure individuals are treated as unique cases and avoid judging entire communities based on the actions of one person.
- Review and learn from anti-racism practices implemented in Romania and other countries to adopt and adapt effective strategies.

CONSULTATION IN POLISH

Facilitation and Reporting by Pawel Kopec

Six women attended the online consultation on the 12th of November 2024, all of Polish nationality. Ethnically, the participants identified as follows: White (1), Polish (2), White-Polish (2), and Polish-Jewish (Ashkenazi) (1).

Geographically, the attendees were distributed across Scotland, including Aberdeen, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Dumfries & Galloway (2 participants), and North Lanarkshire. Age-wise, one participant was aged 16-25, three were 26-44, and two were 45-59.

All participants were employed, with one combining work and study. Regarding residency in the UK, two participants had been living in the country for 1-5 years, one for 5-10 years, and three for more than 10 years.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISEMPOWERMENT

The examples below provide an in-depth account of the experiences of Polish and other Central and Eastern European (CEE) communities living in Scotland. It highlights systemic challenges they face in various domains such as employment, access to services, cultural representation, and community inclusion. Through personal stories and collective insights shared during the consultation, the report sheds light on structural and social barriers that perpetuate inequality, as well as the emotional toll of persistent discrimination. The participants' voices underscore the urgent need for tangible actions to address these issues and foster a more inclusive society.

Discrimination at work

- Polish woman working in local Council has applied for a permanent position in her department and despite performing very well during the interview and being most qualified in her department (she is the only one with Master degree and three post-graduate degrees), she has been told over the phone by a senior staff that “for some people might find her accent problematic” and because of that she was rejected. She also notices that even though she is well qualified, her Scottish colleagues are more likely to receive important tasks which she could easily perform, and she is considered only in case they might need some additional help.

- Several women stated that they feel the need to perform significantly better than their Scottish colleagues or possess much higher qualifications to be perceived as valued members of their teams. In each case, they were working in women-only environments, indicating that the unequal treatment was unlikely to be caused by gender discrimination but rather by the fact that they were foreign nationals.
- One participant working in an NHS department pointed out that there is often reluctance to employ people from more diverse backgrounds, even when it would be beneficial for the services they provide. She gave the example of a Pakistani gay man who applied for a position in her department and had excellent qualifications for the advertised role. She strongly supported this candidate, noting that his inclusion would help their department reach several disadvantaged communities, especially since their team lacked men, Muslims, or LGBTQ+ representation. Unfortunately, the position was offered to a Scottish woman who, according to the participant, had lesser qualifications than the male candidate. Other participants also agreed that there is a tendency, particularly in public institutions, to maintain relatively homogenous teams.
- It has been also pointed out that often companies or institutions, hire people who due to their religion or nationality, might create impression of diversity and equality of the organisation, but because of their upbringing are not much different culturally from their Scottish peers. One participant gave example of her partner who is Jewish and was born in Luxembourg, but because of his upbringing in the UK and having higher education (degree in Law), he was not representative of the migrant community. Participants argued that this approach to policy of equality does not support ethnic minorities, as employers are trying to avoid hiring people who might bring more diversity and different perspective, and they prioritise people of similar characteristics as Scottish people, who can bring more diversity “on paper”.

Disempowerment and Accent-Based Discrimination

- All participants agreed that accent plays a significant role in the discrimination faced by minority communities. Individuals with more pronounced Eastern European accents are often immediately perceived as less qualified or inferior. Frequent comments about someone's accent, even if not intended negatively, emphasise the "otherness" of that person and serve as a constant reminder that they are not treated as equals. This issue extends beyond outright negative remarks, such as comments about "strange" or "funny" accents, to seemingly positive comments like "Wow, your English is very good" or "You have a very good accent." Such remarks, while intended as compliments, imply that proficiency in English is unexpected for people from minority communities.

One participant working for the Scottish Government shared that during a training course, such comments were highlighted as examples of bad practices to be avoided. However, when interacting with NHS workers, these remarks were frequently made, showing a disparity in the implementation of anti-discrimination policies. This highlights that while policies or guidance may be developed by the Scottish Government and followed within their institutions, they are not consistently passed on to or implemented by other public institutions.

Another participant shared her experience working at a Polish Consulate, where she was often asked to make phone calls to British institutions because her accent was considered "better" and she was more likely to obtain the requested information. This occurred even when other colleagues were more qualified or senior than her, as those colleagues were treated differently due to their "inferior" accents.

Participants acknowledged that identifying people by their accents is a feature of British culture, with discrimination sometimes extending to those with rural or working-class accents. However, they emphasised that the unequal treatment they experience due to their foreign accents, regardless of their education or qualifications, is unacceptable.

- Many participants mentioned that, anticipating questions about their nationality or country of origin due to their accent, they often preemptively inform others at the beginning of a conversation that they are from Poland. This behaviour reflects how members of minority groups have internalised an unspoken societal expectation to identify themselves as "others." It highlights a form of self-labelling that arises from their experiences and perceptions of what is expected of them in Scottish society.

- A particularly significant and telling account of the impact of workplace discrimination involved a participant who had been denied a position at the local council due to her accent. She shared that immediately after receiving the phone call, she burst into tears, feeling humiliated and cheated. However, she eventually resigned herself to the experience, stating that she had “learned to live with it” and felt compelled to simply move on.
- Participants emphasised that the systemic discrimination they face is often very difficult to prove, particularly when it involves verbal rather than written communication. They expressed a lack of confidence in turning to any institution for support, as they felt their concerns would not be taken seriously or that these institutions lacked the capacity to intervene effectively on their behalf.

Unequal Access to Public Services

- One participant working in an NHS department shared a troubling case involving a Polish man with a brain haemorrhage who was discharged from the hospital without any support. She only learned of his situation when visiting another patient who mentioned, “By the way, have you heard about this man who hasn’t left his flat for the past six months?” Concerned, she visited the man and investigated his condition. Upon filing a complaint about his treatment, it became apparent that no one in the NHS system could explain how such negligence occurred or who was responsible. The participant noted that while the NHS offers extensive courses and training on diversity and equality, some staff members neglect to properly assist migrants or individuals from ethnic minorities. She attributed this to a lack of willingness to deal with language barriers, assuming that such individuals will neither understand the information provided nor complain due to their limited awareness of their rights.
- The issue of migrants falling through the cracks in public services was echoed by a participant working for an NGO supporting the Polish community. She recounted numerous instances where Polish clients were referred to public institutions but eventually lost access to vital support. In many cases, there seemed to be no specific reason for this breakdown, but communication difficulties likely played a role. The participant also observed that public services often fail to take the initiative to follow up on cases involving migrant individuals, leaving them without the necessary assistance.

- Participants noted that when Polish individuals are part of a team in institutions like local councils or the NHS, they are almost always assigned cases involving Polish clients, as well as clients from other non-British nationalities. This disproportionate reliance on ethnic minority staff, coupled with a lack of willingness to employ more individuals from diverse backgrounds, creates systemic barriers that make it significantly harder for migrant communities to access public services.

Representation of Central and Eastern Europeans in British Culture

- Participants pointed out that the portrayal of Central and Eastern Europeans in British culture, such as in films or TV, is often stereotypical and negative. They are frequently depicted as gangsters, prostitutes, or individuals of low social status and questionable ethics. This kind of representation reinforces harmful stereotypes and biases, contributing to the marginalisation of these communities and perpetuating discriminatory attitudes in broader society. Some participants expressed the view that modern standards of political correctness discourage negative portrayals or ridicule of certain groups, as these are quickly recognised as discriminatory or racist. However, they felt that the same level of sensitivity is not extended to Eastern Europeans, whose accents and cultural traits are still often subject to ridicule or negative stereotypes.
- Participants also highlighted the negative depictions of Central and Eastern Europeans in British media, particularly during and after the Brexit referendum, as significant contributors to the reinforcement of harmful stereotypes and discriminatory behavior toward these communities.
- Participants emphasised that addressing these harmful portrayals is a critical area of focus for reducing discrimination against Poles and other Central and Eastern European (CEE) communities. They pointed out that no policy can be fully effective if popular culture continues to perpetuate unhealthy and unjust stereotypes that shape public attitudes.
- While participants did not entirely agree with the concept of tokenism, they acknowledged that increased visibility of Poles and Eastern Europeans in public discourse and politics could contribute to portraying diversity and inclusion. They suggested that Poles could serve as a group to challenge stereotypes and highlight the value of cultural representation.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AROS

1. Concerns About AROS's Role and Impact

Participants raised concerns about whether AROS will be merely an observing body with limited impact on policies or services in Scotland, or if it will have the power to scrutinise the activities of organisations or institutions effectively.

2. Lack of Representation for the Polish Community

All participants agreed that the Polish community does not feel represented in the broader discourse on racism and discrimination, despite being the largest national minority in Scotland. While working for NGOs, local authorities, the NHS, or even the Scottish Government, participants observed numerous programs and policies directed at specific minority groups. However, they noted a lack of a similar approach toward Poles, who also face discrimination and, due to a lack of awareness or language barriers, often cannot exercise their rights or access public services.

3. Issues with Data Collection and Categorisation

Some participants highlighted inadequate data collection practices, where minorities with vastly different characteristics are often grouped together under the category of «White – Other.» This generalized approach obscures the unique challenges faced by specific communities. Participants particularly emphasised the experience of Central and Eastern Europeans, who are often treated as inferior to their Western European peers despite being analysed within the same category.

4. Co-Production with Minority Communities

Participants unanimously agreed that AROS needs to be built and operated in co-production with minority communities. This requires greater transparency regarding the values, procedures, and actions of the Observatory. They suggested that AROS should leverage the extensive experience of grassroots organisations and community groups that have direct contact with marginalised and discriminated communities.

5. The Role of a Minority Representation Council

The idea of a Forum or Council associated with AROS was proposed, where representatives of minority communities could influence, oversee, and consult with AROS staff. Members of this body should be carefully selected to ensure they have genuine experience with discrimination or have worked directly with

discriminated individuals. Participants stressed that it should not consist solely of well-educated individuals who, aside from sharing the same nationality, have little in common with the most vulnerable members of their communities. Additionally, members of this body should receive compensation for their time and effort dedicated to AROS.

6. Outreach and Communication Strategies

Participants emphasised that AROS should conduct extensive outreach among minority communities to inform them about its activities and achievements. They argued that members of these communities must be aware of and trust that there is a body that can advocate on their behalf. Communication efforts cannot rely solely on online platforms or the English language, as this would exclude the most vulnerable individuals who need AROS the most. Information in physical formats could be distributed via local authorities directly to people's homes, or through community groups, grassroots organisations, or support services. Participants stressed the importance of ensuring people can contact AROS in their native language and through a medium that suits them best (e.g., online, by post, or via phone).

7. Supporting Community Organisations

Participants repeatedly emphasised the need for cooperation between AROS and NGOs or community groups. However, they also pointed out that these organisations are often used by public institutions or social services to reach minority communities without receiving additional funding. This places a significant burden on these groups, which are often the ones assisting individuals who have fallen through the cracks of the social service system. These organisations also frequently remind social services of their responsibilities and hold them accountable when insufficient support is provided. Participants suggested that AROS could play a role in distributing funding to minority communities for projects related to addressing discrimination.

CONSULTATION IN SPANISH

Facilitation and Reporting by Elisabeth Mulero

Five people attended the online consultation on the 13th of November 2024. The attendees included four women and one man, representing diverse nationalities: one from Mexico, one from the Dominican Republic, and three from Spain. Ethnically, participants identified as Latin (two individuals), Mixed White-Asian, African, and White.

Geographically, the attendees were spread across Scotland, with two participants based in Edinburgh City and one each from Fife, Stirling, and Glasgow. All participants were aged between 26 and 44 years old, and they were all employed.

In terms of residency, one participant had been living in the UK for 1-5 years, three had been here for 5-10 years, and one had lived in the UK for more than 10 years.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISEMPOWERMENT

Participants shared personal and community experiences of racism and systemic barriers encountered in Scotland. These accounts provided valuable insights into the unique challenges faced by the Latin American and Spanish-speaking communities in various areas of life, including the workplace, healthcare, housing, and social services. The following sections outline participants' experiences, highlighting systemic issues, identity-based biases, and inadequate support structures.

Systemic Barriers to Employment and Recognition

Participants described significant challenges in the workplace and in securing jobs that align with their qualifications.

- **Resistance to Migrant Perspectives**

Some participants felt that their contributions were often undervalued or dismissed, particularly when they brought new perspectives to their work. This resistance, they believed, stemmed from their status as migrants and the perception that their ideas were less credible.

- **The Need to Work Harder for Recognition**

Participants highlighted a pervasive belief that, as migrants, they must work significantly harder than their native colleagues to be taken seriously. Many shared that they often feel compelled to exert twice the effort to gain the same level of recognition. This pressure is exacerbated by workplace dynamics that seem to undervalue the contributions of migrants.

One participant described being actively discouraged from applying for a higher position, with colleagues telling her that the job was «not for her» or «beyond her abilities.» Such remarks reinforced a sense of exclusion and diminished self-worth. Another participant observed that when migrant workers made mistakes, they were often punished more harshly than their native counterparts. In some cases, migrants lost their jobs for errors that would not have led to dismissal for native employees. These double standards reflect an unequal valuation of mistakes, leaving migrants and ethnic minorities more vulnerable to punitive measures.

Together, these experiences underscore the systemic biases that create additional hurdles for migrants, forcing them to constantly prove their worth and navigate an environment where their efforts are often undervalued or dismissed.

- **Undermining Language Skills**

Migrants reported frequent instances of colleagues unnecessarily correcting their English, even when their work had already been approved by native speakers. This pattern of excessive scrutiny appeared to stem from biases against non-native speakers rather than genuine concerns about accuracy. Such experiences not only delayed progress but also created additional stress, as migrants had to navigate unwarranted critiques alongside their regular responsibilities.

One participant shared a particularly disheartening example: her boss repeatedly emphasised that English was not her first language, starting from her very first day of employment. This fixation on her language skills led to constant corrections, which left her feeling undermined and disempowered. For her, and many others, this behaviour eroded confidence and reinforced a sense of exclusion, highlighting the systemic challenges faced by non-native speakers in professional settings.

- **Dismissing International Experience**

Migrants' professional and academic qualifications from their home countries were often not recognised. Participants noted that they were frequently forced into low-paid, unskilled jobs, even when they had advanced degrees and significant expertise. One participant highlighted that employers often assumed migrants lacked qualifications, perpetuating stereotypes and discrimination.

- **Challenges for Migrant Youth**

A participant, a support worker for teenagers, shared how many of the young people she assists are migrants or from non-White ethnic backgrounds. These youths often face systemic racism and discrimination that hampers their ability to navigate life independently. During professional meetings, teenagers whose first language is not English are treated with impatience, frequently interrupted, and not given the same level of support to express themselves as their native peers. This disparity reinforces systemic barriers for young migrants, making it harder for them to succeed or feel empowered.

- **Prejudices in the Workplace**

Prejudice against certain ethnicities, particularly Latinos, was also mentioned as a significant issue in the workplace. Participants noted that native people often hold preconceived notions about Latin individuals, stereotyping them as lazy, which in turn becomes a source of insecurity for the migrants themselves. This bias reinforces assumptions that certain ethnic groups are only suited for low-paid, unskilled jobs, further hindering their ability to access better opportunities or professional roles.

- **Unequal Treatment in Workplace Policies**

A participant expressed frustration after her request to work remotely from abroad was denied, while a similar request by a German colleague was approved. The disparity left her feeling undervalued and questioning potential favouritism based on nationality.

Microaggressions and Racism in Public and Community Spaces

- **Hostility in Public Spaces:** On the day of the Brexit results, a participant working in a public library was harassed by a native woman accusing her of stealing jobs. Although library staff intervened and supported her, the incident exemplified the heightened anti-migrant sentiment during that period.
- **Community Hostility and Bias:** Participants highlighted instances of hostility and bias within their neighbourhoods, illustrating the challenges migrants face in integrating into local communities:
 - **Exclusionary Behaviour in Housing:** A participant recounted how her brother, after purchasing a home in Armadale, received a letter from a neighbour demanding that he leave within 10 days because «foreigners» were not welcome. Despite reporting the incident to the police, no action was taken, leaving the family feeling vulnerable and unsupported.
 - **Unfair Treatment in Conflicts:** Another participant shared an incident involving a friend who was harassed on her street by a native member of the community. Despite being the target of aggression and defending herself, the community sided with the native individual, forcing the migrant to apologise. This example underscores how community bias can magnify the challenges faced by migrants in standing up against discrimination and defending their rights.
- **Stereotypes and Harassment:** Latin American women are often stereotyped as overly sexual or party-loving. Participants shared experiences of harassment, including being stopped at airports, where their belongings—and even hair—were searched for hidden contraband.
- **Micro-Racism in Rural and Urban Areas:** Participants explained that racism in rural areas tended to be more overt, while urban settings often exhibited subtler microaggressions. Though less explicit, these microaggressions still had a significant psychological impact, leaving individuals feeling excluded and undervalued. Existing laws were perceived as inadequate for addressing these nuanced forms of discrimination.

Barriers in Healthcare and Social Services

Participants highlighted systemic issues within healthcare and social services:

- **Bias in Healthcare Communication**

One participant shared the experience of taking her mother to the hospital for health issues. The participant, a Spanish-speaking individual with a very good level of English and no difficulties communicating, explained that while her mother received initial treatment, her symptoms persisted. Later, a Spanish-speaking doctor reached out to assist and clarified the underlying issue. The doctor mentioned that she felt the notes taken by the previous healthcare professional might be inaccurate and did not accurately reflect the patient's condition, likely due to an assumption that non-native English speakers cannot adequately describe their symptoms—an issue the doctor noted as being common. In this specific case, the notes recorded that the patient came to the hospital for a general headache, whereas she had actually reported a localised headache in a specific area.

The participant expressed frustration over whether she would need to request an interpreter in the future just to be taken seriously and to ensure doctors take accurate notes, despite her ability to communicate fluently in English.

She also mentioned that she would avoid requesting an interpreter, as she feels it is unnecessary in her case and does not want to add additional costs to the NHS. This example illustrates a systemic bias in communication within the healthcare system, stemming from assumptions about non-native English speakers. It highlights the need for greater sensitivity, active listening, and accuracy in patient care, regardless of language or accent.

- **Isolation and Lack of Support Networks**

Migrants often lacked close family networks for support, a reality that participants felt was misunderstood by authorities and employers. This gap in understanding created additional challenges, particularly in family reconciliation and caregiving situations.

- **Insufficient Social Services**

Participants reported difficulties and a recurring disadvantaged faced by migrants accessing necessary services and often received inadequate support. Many felt isolated or struggled to receive the necessary support due to stereotypes and improper attention from professionals. For example, stereotypes about Latinos being lazy create additional barriers, compounding feelings of isolation and impostor syndrome. This constant fight against negative assumptions erodes confidence and trust in public systems.

Experiences with Authority and Power Dynamics

Participants described feeling disempowered when interacting with institutions or navigating systems of power:

- **Domestic Violence and Housing Insecurity**

One participant shared her ongoing experience of gender-based violence, describing profound insecurity and uncertainty about where to seek help. Despite reaching out to multiple organisations, she is repeatedly told they cannot assist her. She currently resides in housing accommodation but has not received clear statements of fees or effective communication from council officers regarding her rights or her situation. Although she is employed, she does not qualify for benefits, leaving her in the difficult position of paying both a mortgage for a flat she had to leave due to domestic violence and rent for her current accommodation. This dual financial burden, coupled with inadequate support and communication from the council, has left her feeling powerless and abandoned.

While the participant could not explicitly link her experience to being a migrant, her sense of being unsupported reflects broader systemic failures to address the unique vulnerabilities of individuals without a close support network—such as extended family or community ties—which migrants often lack. This lack of acknowledgment and tailored assistance exacerbates the challenges faced by migrant women in similar situations.

- **Exclusion from Public Funds**

Participants highlighted the significant challenges faced by individuals in their communities who have no recourse to public funds. This lack of support creates a cycle of vulnerability that is nearly impossible for some migrants to escape. One participant shared the story of a friend who entered a relationship with a British citizen where there was an abuse of power. Trapped in a situation without sufficient resources or support, the individual ultimately decided to leave the country to escape the abusive relationship.

- **Challenges in Knowing Where to Seek Help**

Participants noted that it is often difficult to know where to turn when facing issues, particularly for members of the Latin American community. The lack of representation of this community in Scotland compounds the problem, leaving many unsure of how to access appropriate resources.

Identity-Based Treatment and Discrimination

- **Workplace Bias Based on Skin Color**

One participant with darker skin shared that at work, every time she interacts with new people, they tend to perceive her as less qualified or less educated. She constantly feels the need to prove her worth, demonstrating her qualifications and expertise to gain acceptance. Her role involves working with various professionals, and she frequently finds herself explaining her competence to counter these assumptions.

- **Accent and Perceptions**

Another participant mentioned that while her physical appearance doesn't immediately affect how people treat her, the situation changes when she speaks, as her accent becomes noticeable. People tend to correct her often or ask her to repeat herself, which she finds frustrating and disheartening.

- **Racialised Perceptions of Attractiveness**

A participant noted that there is a general notion among some that certain races or accents are considered "sexier" than others. For instance, the Spanish or Latino accent is often described as appealing, while other accents, like Asian ones, do not receive the same perception.

This is problematic because it reinforces objectifying stereotypes tied to ethnicity and accent, reducing individuals to superficial traits rather than valuing them for their skills, character, or contributions. Such perceptions perpetuate exoticization and tokenisation, creating an unequal dynamic where certain ethnicities are praised or fetishised for perceived allure, while others are dismissed or devalued. It reflects a broader issue of racial bias and the unequal ways in which society assigns value based on ethnicity or cultural markers.

- **Bias in Border Control and Work Recognition**

Several participants shared their experiences of being repeatedly questioned about their reasons for entering the UK when passing through airport security. They reported being questioned more frequently compared to others and witnessed Latin Americans being deported for visiting the UK «too often.» In some instances, people's belongings—and even their hair—were searched under the assumption that they might be concealing contraband. This treatment is deeply problematic as it reflects and reinforces harmful stereotypes about Latin Americans, painting them as untrustworthy or suspicious. Such assumptions often stem from ignorance about Latin American culture and the diversity within it, leading to discriminatory practices. These biases not only perpetuate misconceptions but also create an unwelcoming environment that stigmatises an entire community based on unfounded generalisations.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AROS

Supportive Measures for Anti-Racism Work in Communities

1. Centralised Information Platforms

- Develop accessible platforms detailing where individuals can seek support for various challenges, such as workplace issues, family matters, or healthcare needs.
- Provide clear, concise information on individuals' rights when facing discrimination or difficult situations, including domestic violence.

2. Visibility of Migrant Contributions

- Promote the positive impacts of migrant communities through awareness campaigns, showcasing their cultural, economic, and social contributions to Scotland.
- Create initiatives to counter negative stereotypes and highlight the diversity within migrant and minority ethnic communities.

3. Massive Public Campaigns

- Launch large-scale campaigns akin to successful movements like LGBT+ awareness, but focused on migrants and minority ethnic groups. These campaigns should aim to normalize diversity and foster inclusion.

4. Anti-Racism Education

- Implement comprehensive anti-racism education programs across schools, not only for students but also for teachers and administrative staff.
- Expand these educational initiatives to public services, workplace environments, and the general public to foster better understanding and interaction with migrant communities.

5. Community and Cultural Activities

- Organise events and activities that amplify the voices of migrants and ethnic minorities, offering them platforms to share their experiences and perspectives.
- Partner with existing support organisations to create community-based programs and support groups tailored to the needs of migrants and minority ethnic groups.

6. Awareness and Accountability for Racist Aggressions

- Raise public awareness about racist incidents and microaggressions, emphasising the need to treat such occurrences with seriousness.
- Ensure that all communities, including those in rural areas, receive equal attention and support to address racism.

7. Inclusive Support Strategies

- Extend support to all minority ethnic groups, particularly those that are less visible or harder to reach, ensuring no community is overlooked.

8. Data Collection and Campaigns

- Conduct research to identify when, where, and how racism occurs, using data to develop targeted interventions and campaigns.

Key Priorities for AROS in the First Two Years

1. Develop Guidelines on Microaggressions

- Create comprehensive guidelines to address emerging forms of racism, such as microaggressions and indirect discrimination, which are often subtle but damaging.
- Work with communities to develop frameworks that help identify and combat these behaviors.

2. Data Collection and Reporting

- Establish mechanisms for migrants to report incidents of abuse or harassment comfortably and confidentially.
- Use the collected data to produce actionable reports, making the issues visible and ensuring they are prioritised.


3. Mental Health Advocacy

- Highlight the mental health impacts of racism and discrimination on migrants and ethnic minorities.
- Collaborate with mental health professionals to provide resources and strategies for coping with the psychological toll of harassment.

4. Community Education

- Focus on community education campaigns to increase awareness about racism and its many forms, fostering empathy and understanding.

Ensuring Accountability

- Engage directly with communities to evaluate AROS's progress through regular consultations, feedback sessions, and transparent reporting.
 - Create advisory panels that include representatives from diverse ethnic and migrant groups to ensure that AROS's work remains community-driven.
 - Establish measurable goals and timelines for AROS's initiatives, with progress updates shared publicly to maintain accountability.
- 

CONSULTATION IN ITALIAN

Facilitation and Reporting by Alice Castelnovo

Six individuals attended the online consultation on the 14th of November 2024, all of Italian nationality. The participants identified ethnically as Mediterranean (1), Italian (1), White-European (1), White (2), and Mixed White-Asian (1).

Geographically, five participants were based in Edinburgh, with one residing in Glasgow. Age-wise, five participants were between 26-44 years old, and one was aged 45-59. All participants were employed, with one being self-employed.

Regarding their residency in the UK, one participant had lived in the country for 1-5 years, four for 5-10 years, and one for more than 10 years.

PERSONAL AND COMMUNITY EXPERIENCES OF RACISM AND DISEMPOWERMENT

Stereotypes and Microaggressions

- Participants reported being frequently subjected to stereotypical comments, which, while sometimes intended as harmless jokes, felt alienating. For example, phrases like “Here, you need to follow the rules” or jokes about culture and traditions create a sense of distance and judgment. One participant shared an example from a workplace where an individual was nicknamed “Lasagna.”
- Accents can also become a source of derision or devaluation, with non-standard ways of speaking or accents being dismissed as a sign of inferior intelligence. One participant, for instance, felt obliged to use an interpreter during a midwife appointment because the midwife claimed she could not understand her accent. The participant expressed discomfort at this, particularly as she had never encountered such an issue before.

Systemic Issues in Employment

- Issues not limited to informal settings such as pubs or workplace conversations but also arise in professional, healthcare, and educational contexts, increasing the sense of exclusion and discrimination. For instance, another participant shared how their temporary work contract was tied to the expiration date of their pre-settled status, even though the advertised position was for a permanent role. This is not standard procedure and highlights a broader issue: a lack of employer knowledge about rapidly changing immigration regulations, particularly those surrounding EU Settlement Scheme rights. Such cases are compounded by employers either misunderstanding the rules or, at times, taking advantage of migrants' limited knowledge of their rights. Migrants often struggle to navigate complex legal systems, face difficulties expressing themselves about legal matters in English, or feel too intimidated to assert their rights. In this instance, the contract condition created unnecessary anxiety and a sense of insecurity for the employee. Notably, the Independent Monitoring Authority (IMA) and other organisations have flagged similar issues, leading to the Home Office removing expiration dates from pre-settled status in the digital service employers use to verify the right to work in the UK.
- Workplaces also present integration challenges and instances of racism towards non-British citizens. The lack of multicultural environments and the dominance of Scottish managers make it hard for foreigners to feel part of the team. Many report feeling as though they are constantly “on trial,” needing to prove themselves without ever achieving stability or security.
- One participant shared their experience of a job interview for a customer service role requiring Italian and English skills. After a 30-minute conversation, the interviewer abruptly ended the interview when the participant asked for clarification on the word “challenge.” The candidate felt dismissed based solely on this minor language misunderstanding.

Pay and Career Advancement

- In sectors such as hospitality, foreign workers are often paid less than their Scottish colleagues. Others face career progression barriers due to biases, despite the Equality Act explicitly promoting workplace equality. One participant shared their experience of being hired primarily to meet ethnic representation quotas and subsequently facing discrimination and different treatment compared to Scottish employees. An example involved a manager referring to this participant as “Ah, the brown person,” undermining their professional value. Such behaviours create insecurity and erode self-esteem, causing many to doubt their worth and abilities.

Access to Services

- All participants agreed that there is a need for a professional figure who can act as a bridge between foreign communities and local services. The presence of cultural mediators and qualified interpreters might create better access to services and help address daily challenges faced by migrants.
- Participants also believe that those working with ethnic minority communities often don't fully understand their struggles. This leads to hidden barriers going unaddressed and a lack of proper representation and support for those who need it most.

Participants mentioned that Scotland is often seen as more tolerant than other places, thanks to its progressive laws and greater cultural diversity. However, many questioned the depth of this inclusion: Is it merely superficial? Is it driven more by legislation than by genuine cultural change?

Reporting the incidents mentioned above rarely leads to supportive outcomes, reinforcing the perception that, even when laws exist to protect rights, they are not effectively enforced.

Moreover, they agreed that these challenges intensify for those with darker skin tones, who face more frequent racist comments and discriminatory attitudes.

The stories shared highlight a broader issue: racism is not always overt or direct but often appears in subtle, persistent forms. This “micro-racism” has a systemic impact, making it difficult for foreigners to truly feel part of Scottish society.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AROS

To address the challenges mentioned by participants, the following strategies were proposed to create an effective anti-racism approach:

1. Data Collection

Participants emphasised the importance of gathering both qualitative and quantitative data on minority experiences to identify patterns of discrimination. Methods such as focus groups and direct community engagement were suggested as effective tools to ensure diverse voices are captured. They also suggested, for instance, gathering data to analyse potential disparities between UK and non-UK employees, such as differences in salaries, career progression, and opportunities based on nationality.

2. Cultural Mediators

Investing in professionals who understand the struggles of migrant communities and can facilitate dialogue between these communities and public services was identified as a critical step.

3. Workplace Awareness

Participants highlighted the need to create truly inclusive environments where diversity and talent are not just tolerated but actively celebrated. Greater awareness and action are required to eliminate systemic biases in hiring and workplace culture.

4. Representation

Establish agencies to amplify the voices of migrant communities and address their specific needs. Participants called for concrete steps by the government to address systemic racism through active engagement with local communities.

5. Community Engagement and Affinity Groups

AROS should create affinity groups where individuals from local communities can share their experiences. These groups must be integrated into government strategies, influencing governance and decision-making processes. Participants emphasised the importance of including minorities from smaller towns to ensure their voices are heard and their unique experiences are acknowledged.

6.**Feeding from lived Experiences**

Participants stressed the need for regular and direct engagement with community experiences. Policies must remain dynamic and updated, reflecting ongoing interactions with diverse communities. Active engagement is necessary for the government to effectively respond to the needs of ethnic minorities.

7.**A Unified National Platform**

A unified platform is necessary to encourage collaboration, ensure transparency, and maintain accountability. Such a platform would enable consistent practices across Scotland, promoting equity and inclusion in all regions.

8.**Policy Development and Implementation**

Participants emphasised that the government must develop and implement policies that prioritise these concerns. Drawing directly from the lived experiences and voices of all communities, these policies should aim to create systemic change and address deep-seated inequities.

Participants believed Scotland has the potential to be a model of inclusion, but achieving this requires confronting its contradictions. By acknowledging the challenges faced by migrants and actively working to overcome them, Scotland can build a truly welcoming society where everyone feels valued, respected, and fully integrated.

KEY FINDINGS AND ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

The four consultations revealed common patterns of systemic racism and microaggressions in migrant communities. Participants shared experiences of discrimination in the workplace, public services, healthcare, and everyday interactions. These discussions also underscored the need for structural reforms, targeted awareness campaigns, and stronger support mechanisms to address inequities faced by migrant and minority ethnic communities in Scotland

SYSTEMIC ISSUES IDENTIFIED ACROSS COMMUNITIES

Workplace Discrimination

- Participants frequently reported unequal treatment in hiring, promotions, and day-to-day workplace dynamics.
- Foreign qualifications and experience were often dismissed, leaving migrants underemployed despite holding advanced degrees or professional expertise.
- Migrants felt they needed to work harder than their Scottish colleagues to gain the same recognition.
- Prejudices and bias related to accents, ethnicity and even surnames were reported to influence treatment.
- Discrimination in pay and job assignments, particularly in sectors like construction and hospitality, created additional barriers.

Barriers in Public Services

- Systemic challenges in accessing benefits, housing, and healthcare were reported, often due to language barriers, stereotypes, and unclear processes.
- Participants noted a lack of cultural representation in public institutions and insufficient understanding of the unique challenges faced by their communities.
- Discriminatory treatment in social services and healthcare compounded feelings of exclusion and disempowerment.

Microaggressions and Everyday Racism

- Subtle forms of racism, including inappropriate comments about accents, cultural traits, and stereotypes, were prevalent.
- Participants frequently recounted being questioned about their nationality or treated as «others,» even in professional or formal settings.
- Discrimination based on accents was addressed as very common.
- These microaggressions, though subtle, carried significant psychological and emotional impacts, reinforcing feelings of inadequacy and exclusion.

Limited Cultural Representation

- Negative stereotypes perpetuated in media and public discourse reinforced harmful biases against Central and Eastern Europeans, Latinos, Roma, and other minority groups.
- Many participants felt their communities were overlooked in anti-racism policies, further eroding trust in institutions.
- The lack of visibility and positive portrayals in Scottish society contributed to systemic underrepresentation and invisibility.

Lack of Effective Recourse

- Participants expressed frustration with the ineffectiveness of existing complaint mechanisms and a lack of accountability for discriminatory behaviours.
- Fear of retaliation or disbelief discouraged individuals from reporting incidents of racism or discrimination.
- Systemic failures in addressing reports of social service misconduct and discriminatory policing were also highlighted.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AROS

During some of the consultations, participants recommended that AROS could play a role in highlighting the contributions of migrant communities. However, when discussions shifted to experiences of racism and disempowerment, participants also pointed out how migrants often feel they must exert twice the effort of their British counterparts to be valued. We want to emphasise this contrast, as it underscores how migrant communities frequently feel pressured to demonstrate their societal contributions in order to gain respect and acceptance.

This expectation places an undue burden on migrants, suggesting that simply being human is insufficient to earn respect. Such a standard is rarely imposed on host communities and is inherently unjust. It is essential to highlight this inequity and reflect on the principle that respect and inclusion should be inherent rights for all individuals, not privileges granted based on their contributions. Addressing this perception is critical to building a society where everyone is respected simply for their humanity.

With this context in mind, we present a summary of the recommendations provided by participants across all consultations

Data Collection and Monitoring

- Develop systems for collecting both qualitative and quantitative data on racism and discrimination, focusing on identifying patterns and systemic issues across all communities.
- Ensure data collection practices accurately reflect the distinct challenges faced by different communities, avoiding homogenisation under generalised categories like «White – Other.» Additionally, emphasise the recognition and inclusion of underrepresented communities, such as Latin Americans, to ensure their experiences are adequately captured.

Workplace Inclusion and Equity

- Promote mandatory diversity and inclusion training in workplaces, addressing biases in hiring, promotions, and daily interactions.
- Recognise and value foreign qualifications and work experience to address underemployment among migrants.
- Establish clear guidelines to address accent-based discrimination and microaggressions in professional environments.

Improved Access to Public Services

- Invest in cultural mediators and interpreters to bridge gaps between public services and minority communities, ensuring accessible and inclusive service delivery.
- Simplify processes for accessing benefits, housing, and healthcare, ensuring resources are available in multiple languages and formats.
- Introduce accountability mechanisms to ensure fair treatment for migrants and minority communities in public services.

Awareness Campaigns and Education

- Launch large-scale anti-racism campaigns.
- Incorporate anti-racism education into schools, public institutions, and workplaces, with a focus on tackling stereotypes and fostering empathy.
- Address microaggressions and indirect discrimination through targeted community education and workshops.

Community Engagement and Representation

- Establish community councils or affinity groups that provide platforms for minority voices to influence policies and governance.
- Include representatives from marginalised groups in decision-making processes and ensure they are fairly compensated for their time and contributions, to guarantee diverse perspectives shape anti-racism strategies.
- Focus outreach on rural and smaller communities to ensure their unique experiences are acknowledged and addressed.

Policy Implementation and Oversight

- Develop policies to combat microaggressions and systemic racism in public and private sectors, supported by robust enforcement mechanisms.
- Establish clear accountability frameworks for organisations and institutions failing to uphold anti-racism commitments.
- Provide funding and resources to grassroots organisations and NGOs supporting minority communities.

Mental Health and Support Systems

- Recognise the psychological toll of racism and discrimination by integrating mental health support into anti-racism initiatives.
- Provide resources and access to mental health services tailored to the unique needs of migrant and ethnic minority communities.
- Raise awareness about the impact of systemic racism on mental well-being and promote strategies for resilience.

The lived experiences shared across these consultations underscore the persistent challenges faced by migrant and minority ethnic communities in Scotland. While Scotland's progressive legal framework provides a foundation for equity, significant work remains to translate these laws into meaningful, everyday inclusion.

By focusing on data-driven insights, fostering community representation, addressing microaggressions, and improving access to public services, Scotland has the opportunity to lead as a model of inclusion. AROS must act as a catalyst for systemic change, ensuring that every resident feels valued, respected, and fully integrated into Scottish society.

ANNEX

ANNEX A

Summary of the Applicants for the Consultation in Romanian

Total of applicants: 19

Gender Distribution

- Women: 10
- Men: 9

Nationalities

- Romanian: 17
- US: 1
- Romanian/British: 1

Ethnic Backgrounds (as described by applicants)

- Romanian: 9
- Romanian – White: 1
- White: 3
- Roma: 4
- Scottish-Romanian: 1
- Celts: 1

Geographic Distribution in Scotland

- City of Edinburgh: 5
- Aberdeen City: 4
- Glasgow City: 2
- Fife: 2
- West Lothian: 1
- Dundee City: 1
- Midlothian: 1
- Inverclyde: 1
- South Ayrshire: 1
- Unknown: 1

Age Groups

- 26-44 years old: 10
- 45-59 years old: 7
- 16-25 years old: 2

Employment Status (participants could choose more than one option)

- Employed: 6
- Self-employed: 8
- Caring for someone: 2
- Unemployed and receiving benefits: 1
- Unemployed: 1
- Stay-at-home mother/homemaker: 1
- Student: 1
- Pastor in church: 1
- On medical leave: 1

Duration of Residency in Scotland

- More than 10 years: 8
- Between 5 and 10 years: 6
- Between 1 and 5 years: 5

Summary of the Applicants for the Consultation in Polish

Total of applicants: 32

Gender Distribution

- Women: 31
- Men: 1

Nationalities:

- Polish: 31
- Polish-British: 1

Ethnic Backgrounds (as described by participants)

- Polish/White Polish/White: 29
- Slavic: 1
- Polish-Jewish: 1
- Christian: 1

Age Groups:

- 26-44 years old: 17
- 45-59 years old: 11
- 16-25 years old: 4

Geographic Distribution in Scotland

- City of Edinburgh: 10
- Aberdeen City: 5
- Glasgow City: 5
- Dumfries and Galloway: 3
- Fife: 2
- North Lanarkshire: 2
- Perth and Kinross: 2
- Falkirk: 1
- Dundee City: 1
- South Lanarkshire: 1

Employment Status (participants could choose more than one option)

- Employed: 25
- Self-employed: 5
- Student: 6
- Unemployed: 1

Duration of Residency in Scotland

- More than 10 years: 21
- Between 5 and 10 years: 7
- Between 1 and 5 years: 4

Summary of the Applicants for the Consultation in Spanish

Total applicants: 29

Gender Distribution

- Women: 21
- Men: 8

Nationalities:

- Spanish: 15
- Mexican: 3
- Dominican: 5
- Venezuelan & Spanish: 1
- Dominican & Spanish: 1
- Peruvian: 1
- Anglo-Portuguese: 1
- Italian: 1
- Colombian British: 1

Ethnic Backgrounds

- White: 7
- Latin/ Latin American: 6
- Mixed Ethnicities: 2
- White Asian: 1
- Mixed Caribbean: 1
- Black Caribbean: 2
- Black: 2
- Hispanic: 2
- Caucasian: 2
- Caribbean: 1
- African: 2
- Muslim (Moroccan origin): 1
- Spanish: 1
- I don't know: 1

Age Groups

- 26-44 years old: 21
- 45-59 years old: 6
- 16-25 years old: 2

Geographic Distribution

- City of Edinburgh: 16
- Fife: 4
- Glasgow City: 4
- South Lanarkshire: 1
- Aberdeen City: 1
- West Lothian: 1
- North Lanarkshire: 1
- Stirling Council: 1

Employment and Educational Status

- Employed: 19
- Self-employed: 5
- Unemployed (receiving benefits): 2
- Studying: 1
- Combined study and work: 1
- Unemployed and studying: 1

Duration of residency in Scotland

- Between 5 and 10 years: 12
- Between 1 and 5 years: 9
- More than 10 years: 7
- Less than 1 year: 1

Summary of the Applicants for the Consultation in Italian

Nationalities:

- Italian: 16
- Italian and Romanian: 1

Ethnic Backgrounds

- White/Caucasian: 7
- Mediterranean: 2
- White-Asian: 1
- African-European: 1
- Neapolitan: 1
- Did not specify (Prefer not to respond): 1

Gender Distribution

- Women: 12
- Men: 4
- Prefer not to respond: 1

Age Groups

- 26-44 years old: 10
- 45-59 years old: 6
- 16-25 years old: 1

Employment Status (participants could choose more than one option)

- Employed: 10
- Self-employed: 4
- Student: 2
- Unable to work due to illness: 1
- Caregiver: 1
- Employed part-time: 1

Duration of Residency in Scotland

- Between 5 and 10 years: 7
- Between 1 and 5 years: 6
- More than 10 years: 5

Geographic Distribution in Scotland

- The City of Edinburgh Council: 11
- Glasgow City Council: 3
- Fife Council: 1
- South Ayrshire Council: 1
- Western Islands Council: 1

ANNEX B

Discussion Prompts

Theme 1: Personal and Community Experiences of Racism and Disempowerment

Personal and Community Experiences of Disempowerment

- Can you share a time when you or your community felt powerless or frustrated?
- This could involve settings like workplaces, neighborhoods, GPs, public transport, or accessing services.
- What day-to-day challenges do these experiences reveal?

Spaces and Situations of Disempowerment

- Are there specific places or situations—like workplaces, schools, or government offices—where you or others from your community have felt disempowered?
- What makes these environments particularly challenging?

Navigating Power Dynamics

- Do you feel certain individuals, institutions, or policies hold power over you or your community?
- Examples might include employers, government services, or the healthcare system.
- What has been your experience with these power dynamics?

Identity-Based Treatment

- Do you feel your background—such as nationality, accent, or ethnicity—affects how people treat you in Scotland?
- How does this manifest in daily interactions?

Support and Protection from Authorities

- When dealing with discrimination or difficult situations, do you feel supported by laws, authorities, or employers?
- What kind of support or protection would you like to see?

Theme 2: Expectations from AROS

- The second part of the conversation focused on gathering participants input on the role and responsibilities of AROS. Key questions included:
- What would be supportive (e.g., information, data, funding, advocacy) for anti-racism work within communities?
- What work do you think AROS should prioritise in its first two years?
- How could AROS be held accountable by communities?
- How should AROS hold public institutions accountable for their anti-racism practices?

ANNEX C

Key Definitions Shared with Participants

- 1. Racism**

According to the Equality Act 2010 in Scotland, racism includes discrimination or unfair treatment based on someone's race, colour, nationality, ethnicity, or national origin.
- 2. Ethnic Minority**

In this context, 'ethnic minority' refers to groups who may be marginalised or experience discrimination due to their national, cultural, or ethnic identity. In Scotland, this includes groups like Polish, Spanish & Latino, Italian, and Romanian nationals, whose distinct nationality, migration status, or cultural background may subject them to barriers in accessing services, employment, and housing.
- 3. Systemic Racism**

Systemic racism refers to discrimination embedded in institutions like workplaces, schools, or public services. Unlike isolated incidents, systemic racism creates ongoing, widespread barriers for certain groups. For example, government policies that limit access to benefits for foreign nationals disproportionately affect entire communities.