The CIJ Factsheet: Intersectionality at a Glance in Europe provides a framework and language for intersectional justice, reviewing the historical and legal development of intersectionality and its relevance to our societies today. CIJ developed the Factsheet to help further the conversation on institutional and structural discrimination, providing examples of best practices and interventions that can be applied to strengthen intersectional policy making in Europe.

FACTSHEET HIGHLIGHTS: INTERSECTIONALITY AT A GLANCE IN EUROPE

ABOUT THE FACTSHEET
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WHAT IS INTERSECTIONALITY?
Intersectionality is an analytical approach, a legal and policy tool, and a theoretical concept that captures the various layers of advantages and disadvantages everyone experiences based on societal and structural systems. These systems include capitalism, colonialism, patriarchy, and racism. Byproducts of these systems include ableism, cis- and heterosexism, classism, colorism, homophobia, as well as anti-Asian racism, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism, Islamophobia / anti-Muslim racism, anti-Roma racism, and anti-Semitism. These systems create a set of disadvantages and privileges based on gender (including gender identity, gender expression and sexual orientation), class (including socio-economic status and background), race (including skin color, migration status, ethnicity, nationality, language, and religion), as well as disability and other visible and invisible markers of identity embedded in the global hierarchy of power. Coined in 1989 by US academic and lawyer, Professor Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw, the concept of intersectionality addresses gaps in institutional and legal frameworks to acknowledge and address the interplay of multiple layers of oppression (1).

HISTORICAL AND LEGAL CONTEXT
Alongside colonial missions in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Oceania, European states created laws to uphold and legitimize the ruling of European nations over colonized nations and imposed institutions that directly and indirectly allocated opportunities and resources accordingly (2). These laws created differences and divisions, but most importantly social hierarchies based on exclusion. The European institutional frameworks that supported these hierarchical power structures ensured resources and wealth remained in ruling hands both within Europe and in its colonies. The historical legacy of such frameworks can be observed in contemporary Europe. Today’s social hierarchies are directly linked to colonial frameworks and are currently reflected in the form of laws, policies, and biases resulting in unequal access and structural barriers across public and private sector institutions (3). While legal frameworks slowly evolve, cognitive bias or implicit bias (4) grounded in century-old representations and hierarchies continues to enable and perpetuate structural inequalities.

An intersectional approach creates an opportunity to evaluate which systemic inequities have resulted in opportunities for some and not others. It recognizes that every individual experiences privileges and disadvantages due to their inherently complex identities, yet offers a perspective to explore what role everyone can take to cultivate an environment that could benefit from a culture of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

CHALLENGES AND GAPS
- Disproportionate Focus on the Individual Dimension of Discrimination: The individual dimension of discrimination represents the tip of the iceberg and overlooks wider structures and historical ramifications.
- Equality Data: Disaggregated data are a precondition to highlight how various population groups experience differential outcomes within a country or sector.
- European Reluctance Towards Race: If race-based social inequalities are framed solely in terms of migration or religion, it becomes impossible to trace patterns of racial hierarchization which also affect religious and ethnic minorities, migrants and asylum seekers.

APPROACHES AND RECOMMENDATIONS
An intersectional analysis of systemic trends not only allows us to understand structural barriers, but also offers evidence to create benchmarks and set a path towards strategic and effective solutions against systemic discrimination, exclusion and social inequalities. Within the EU, the Center for Intersectional Justice (CIJ) is leading the way in partnering with public, private and NGO sectors to advance the positive outcomes of intersectional approaches.
Evidence-based human rights assessments

Trade union advocacy

Intersectional legal approach

Political participation from marginalized communities

End to discrimination in schools

Increase visibility of disability justice movements

Strengthen intersectional data

Community led design of interventions

Affirmative action policy and programs

Adoption of intersectional approach to policy

**10 Steps Towards Intersectional Justice in Europe**

Read the Factsheet: Intersectionality at a Glance in Europe, including a glossary of terms, [here](#).

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