

Symposium on anti-Black racism in Switzerland, 3 May 2018

Report on behalf of the Service for Combating Racism SCRA

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Foreword

Judicial rulings, advice cases and surveys all prove that discrimination happens. Yet foreign nationals newly arrived in Switzerland are not the only ones at risk of social exclusion. So too are population groups who have been part of Swiss life for many years, or even as long as anyone can remember. The discrimination they face must be analysed and highlighted in accordance with their individual exclusion and thought patterns if appropriate action is to be taken.

Black people in Switzerland report racist incidents which are seldom violent, but more subtle and everyday in nature. However, they occur with such frequency that the damage they do is just as painful. What is more, they are often unpunishable under the law.

Depending on their life circumstances, discrimination is experienced and construed differently by each individual. Like any other section of the population, Black people do not constitute a homogeneous group with a single shared identity. For this reason, in common with other countries Switzerland has seen the development of a range of approaches to explaining and combating anti-Black racism.

The present report offers an overview of the current state of knowledge. Work over the past few years has shown that discussions between the parties concerned are complex, and hold the potential for conflict. That said, this dialogue is the only way in which to identify and tackle the patterns of racism against Black people that exist at both the individual and structural levels within our society.

Michele Galizia
Head of the Service for Combating Racism

1 Introduction

Racism against Black people only sporadically attracts the attention of the media and broader sections of the public in Switzerland, for example in instances of *racial profiling*. Furthermore, until a few years ago the focus of academic research in this area was on the general phenomenon of xenophobia and racist discrimination. While countless surveys and studies in other countries such as the USA, UK and the Netherlands have examined racism against individuals perceived or identifying themselves as Black, there is little relevant basis for such work here in Switzerland. The reasons for this may be debated, but as the latest surveys show, it would be wrong to assume that the phenomenon does not affect Swiss society. In fact, the opposite is true, as evidenced by the work and initiatives of researchers and activists of African descent advocating more in-depth research in to the individual, institutional and structural aspects of anti-Black racism.

1.1 Object and aims of this report

The Swiss federal government's Service for Combating Racism (SCRA) commissioned researchers from the Swiss Forum for Migration and Population Studies (SFM) at the University of Neuchâtel and the University of Geneva to undertake an exploratory study from the point of view of those personally affected by anti-Black racism, i.e. the emic perspective. It was published in October 2017. Based on this study the Federal Statistical Office (FSO) designed a module on anti-Black racism for inclusion in its 'Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland', known by the French acronym VeS (*Vivre ensemble en Suisse*). The findings of this survey were published in early 2018. Following on from these projects, the Federal Commission against Racism (FCR) commissioned a legal analysis of racism against Black people in Switzerland. This was conducted by the Zurich University of Applied Sciences (ZHAW). Drawing on this study, the FCR then drafted a series of recommendations.

Both of the studies, the findings of the survey and the recommendations of the FCR were discussed in May 2018 at a symposium attended by representatives of civil society, the research community, and the authorities.

This report documents the discourse by addressing the primary areas of controversy. In the interests of transparency for those who were not present at the symposium or who are less familiar with the issue, discussions will be supplemented at certain points with references to academic literature and public debate that were examined when preparing the symposium and at the event itself. The document has been drawn up on behalf of and in close collaboration with the SCRA and the FSO.

The report is divided into six sections. The first section lists the sources of surveys and studies. Section 2 presents the structure and content of the symposium on 3 May 2018, while Section 3 gives a general status report and addresses a number of key problem areas. Section 4 then describes and discusses the forms in which anti-Black racism is expressed, and the aspects of life that it affects. Section 5 documents the debate about the legal and institutional framework as well as specific ways of combating the phenomenon. The report concludes with a brief summary of areas in which action is needed, as well as prospects for the future.

1.2 Background

Based on a five-year pilot project conducted by the SCRA, in 2015 the Federal Council decided to introduce a regular survey of the resident Swiss population's attitudes, opinions and perceptions of

racism and coexistence in society in order to identify trends and any problem areas¹. It instructed the FSO to carry out the 'Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland', known by its French acronym VeS (*Vivre ensemble en Suisse*). The survey has been conducted every two years since 2016, while a shorter survey which examines individual topics in greater depth or explores new issues takes place in the intervening years (FRB 2017).

Table 1 – Overview of studies and foundations

Survey / study / event	Objectives, focus	Commissioned by	Produced by / literature
VeS surveys of 2016 and 2018, population as a whole; ad-hoc Diversity module on anti-Black racism in 2017	Attitudes and opinions on coexistence and various forms of racism; capture anti-Black racism from 2016, https://bit.ly/2PTKjtk	Federal Council	FSO
Explorative emic study (social science perspective)	Document experiences of anti-Black racism from the point of view of those affected, and preparation for the FSO's in-depth survey https://bit.ly/2wzhf2e	SCRA	SFM with UNIGE Efionayi & Ruedin 2017
Theoretical legal study on anti-Black racism (including a survey of experts)	Legal analysis, expert opinion, identify need for action www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/ZHAW_Studie_Anti_Schwarze_Rassismus_2017.pdf	FCR	ZHAW Naguib et al. 2017
Abridged version of the study and FCR recommendations	Analysis of the phenomenon, challenges and need for action www.ekr.admin.ch/pdf/Studie_AntiRassismus_D.pdf	FCR	FCR and Naguib et al. 2017
Symposium, May 2018	Presentation of study and survey findings, discussion, calls to action, networking https://www.edi.admin.ch/edi/en/home/fachstellen/frb/berichterstattung-und-monitoring.html	SCRA in collaboration with the FCR, ADCS and COSM	SFM

¹ The gfs.bern research institute conducted three pilot surveys between 2010 and 2014 (Longchamp et al. 2014). They were modelled on a study done by an SNSF-sponsored Cattacin et al. study, among others (2006).

2 The symposium

The one-day symposium on anti-Black racism was held at the Hôtel DuPeyrou in Neuchâtel on 3 May 2018. The SCRA served as lead coordinator, working alongside the FCR, the *African Diaspora Council*, which is represented in the FCR, the SFM, and the Neuchâtel cantonal *service de la cohésion multiculturelle* (COSM).

The organisers invited representatives of civil society associations engaged in combating racism, of discrimination advisory centres, specialist integration units, and migration authorities, and members of the research community. Just under one-third of attendees were Black, the majority of whom were representing civil society organisations. Meanwhile, most of those representing authorities were White.

The aim of the symposium was an open and frank exchange between attendees. To facilitate this, the deliberate decision was made not to invite the media. This was criticised by some attendees, as they would have liked the opportunity to raise awareness among these very media directly. The organisation of the symposium was also criticised by organisations and individuals who had wished in advance to help determine the content of the symposium, and to be able to present themselves and their demands. Some subsequently decided not to attend². A further criticism raised in informal chats between sessions was that the two studies and the surveys were all presented by White speakers, even though researchers of African descent had been involved in the SFM study.

The morning of the symposium was dedicated to presenting the studies from the FCR and SCRA, as well as the findings of the FSO's VeS survey³. After a round of questions, the President of the FCR put forward six recommendations for the government, politicians, advisory services, media, the judiciary and the scientific community which the Commission draws from the research findings.

In the afternoon, three representatives of (post) migrant interest groups (the *Collectif Africain*, *Mouvement pour le respect et la dignité des Noirs* and *Bla*sh*, *Black She network*) commented on the principal findings of the studies and the survey. This was followed by four workshops which discussed the following issues:

- How should anti-Black racism be defined?
- Group-specific action, or action for all?
- Advisory work relating to anti-Black racism
- Research: benefit, status and need

The symposium provided a forum for lively debate, especially in the workshops, but also during the breaks. Aside from the criticisms mentioned above, feedback was positive: interesting inputs, highlighting of existing problems and new findings, ideas for intervention and research, a diverse audience, and opportunities to forge new contacts and to network. Some attendees would nonetheless like to have seen more political lobbying, especially on the part of the FCR, as well as intervention in anti-Black racism issues that would make an impact in the media. The underlying feeling,

² The *Carrefour de Réflexion et d'Action contre le Racisme Anti-Noir* (CRAN), which had been asked to lead one of the workshops, made attendance conditional upon its appearing as co-organiser. In an open letter, CRAN described the rejection of this condition as a vote of no confidence in Black experts. CRAN also criticised the purported mixing of anti-Black racism and migration issues (cf. open letter from CRAN dated 3 May 2018).

³ The programme of the symposium and all documentation accompanying the presentations can be accessed via the SCRA website and also read in the reports: <https://www.edi.admin.ch/edi/en/home/fachstellen/frb/berichterstattung-und-monitoring.html>

frequently expressed in a variety of contexts, was that those affected by anti-Black racism should themselves be involved more closely in research, teaching, advisory services, and policy-making.

3 Status report and blind spots

3.1 The term 'Black'

The symposium addressed those who are perceived as Black or who identify themselves as such. They are generally individuals with an African background, as defined by the UN Working Group of Experts on People of African Descent:

“People of African descent may be defined as descendants of the African victims of the trans-Atlantic slave trade (...) Africans and their descendants who, after their countries’ independence, emigrated to or went to work in Europe, Canada and the Middle East.”⁴

'Black' and 'African descent' are thus used largely as synonyms in the remainder of this document. This nonetheless does not rule out individual participants (in both the symposium and the studies) taking a broader view of 'Black' as a category, including in it other people of colour, such as Tamils. Indeed, there is still a degree of confusion about whether 'Black' refers only to people of African descent, or to anyone with dark skin. The primary Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland, VeS, asked about people with 'black skin'. Responses may therefore be based on different understandings of who is 'Black'.⁵ The ad-hoc Diversity module to the VeS survey in 2017, which examined slavery and colonialism, never draws an explicit link to African descent. Proponents of post-colonial theories emphasise the very specific nature of attitudes towards people with African roots, and therefore advocate a narrow definition and strict delineation (Mbembe 2013). Neither the studies nor the symposium looked in any depth at how the experiences and perceptions of those who are not of African descent with regard to or compared with those of African descent can be distinguished from the experiences and perceptions of people of African descent, or whether – and if so, how – a distinction is to be made between different categories of people with different physical or other characteristics. However, it was decided in advance to limit the scope of the questions and to focus as a first step on the situation affecting people of African descent.

3.2 Group or ethnicity-specific data collection?

Neither Switzerland nor any of its neighbouring countries conducts (official) surveys of the population's skin colour or ethnic origin. It is thus impossible to provide any detail about the number of people who identify as Black or who are perceived as such. Rough estimates can be made on the basis of nationality or place of birth, but this approach does not count those who have become naturalised Swiss citizens, nor is a person's citizenship or birth country a conclusive indicator of their skin colour – examples being immigrants from Brazil, the USA or South Africa, for instance.

If we consider that around 115,000 people within the permanent resident population were born in a

⁴ Identification and definition of 'people of African descent' and how racial discrimination against them is manifested in various regions – Working Paper prepared by Ambassador P.L. Kasanda (E/CN.4/2003/WG.20/WP.3). http://www2.ohchr.org/english/events/ypad2011/documents/Working_Group_on_African_Descent/2003_WGPAD_Session/Definition_of_People_of_African_Descent-PL_Kasanda.pdf, as at 17.05.17.

⁵ The corresponding block of questions was introduced as follows: "In Switzerland we increasingly meet people who have black skin. The following questions relate to what is often said about them."

sub-Saharan African country,⁶ then we can assume that they account for at least 1.4% of the resident Swiss population. There was virtually no immigration from these African states up to the 1980s, but it has risen steadily since. In the future there will therefore be a further increase in particular in Black people who were born and have grown up in Switzerland.⁷ This point was raised in many conversations, with an emphasis that it was insulting for Black people to be classified wholesale as immigrants simply on the basis of their skin colour, because it implies that they do not belong in Switzerland. These concerns were also behind some of the criticism of protections against discrimination being made part of cantonal integration programmes.

Attendees at the symposium – and people of African descent and researchers in particular – expressed the desire for data to be collected about the proportion of Black people in the Swiss population. Beyond their practical value, statistics about ethnicity are regarded by those concerned as a symbolic acknowledgement that they do not belong to the majority population or to other minorities.

The pros and cons of such surveys were addressed in a number of votes, as well as in some of the workshops. While several attendees attested to the need for such statistics as a means of proving discrimination, there were also warnings that data on skin colour and ethnic origin might be misused.

Referencing international guidelines on population surveys that recommend collecting data on (ethnic) origin and diversity (Naguib et al. 2017), as well as examples from other European countries (Simon et al. 2015), representatives of interest groups and researchers spoke in favour of introducing the corresponding survey instruments – naturally in compliance with the necessary data protection measures. Objections tended to come from the side of the authorities. Methodological questions and the general framework – i.e. official statistics versus research – were not discussed in any depth, however.

3.3 Terminology and problem areas

While racial discrimination is clearly defined in national and international law,⁸ racism as a sociological phenomenon is a subject of controversy not just in the public debate, but also among researchers, being interpreted differently depending on context and historical period. Racist arguments themselves have occasionally been raised in this struggle to become the generally accepted definition, appearing in conflicts on social media and readers' comments on press articles – and even, also, among the academic community.

The FCR's jurisprudential study looks in detail at the genesis of this term for racism (part 1; 12-61), while the sociological study conducted by the SCRA took an inductive approach, limiting itself to a small number of working definitions along with references to the issue in the literature (section 1.2; 6-11).

⁶ Source: FSO, calculation on the basis of the place of birth of the permanent resident population on 31.12.2016. The figure also includes around 3,800 people who were born in the Caribbean.

⁷ The FSO (2017) defines those with a 'migration background' as follows: "Persons holding foreign citizenship and naturalised Swiss citizens – with the exception of those born in Switzerland and whose parents were both born in Switzerland – as well as Swiss citizens by birth whose parents were both born abroad."

⁸ The recognised term of 'racial discrimination' is key in international law: Article 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) defines it as "any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life". (cf. Naguib et al. 2017;11)

The term 'anti-Black racism' has not yet become established in legal practice, but it has long been used by researchers and activists of African descent.⁹ The following distinctive characteristics were postulated in the presentation on the legal study:

- Treatment as inferior as a result of colonialism and slavery
- Dehumanisation legitimised by 'enlightened' scientists
- Normalisation of invasive access to the Black body
- The 'inevitability' of stigmatisation ('conspicuous', visibility)¹⁰

As is the case with racism generally, anti-Black racism is understood and interpreted in many different ways, some of them controversial. The reason has to do with that, despite the occasional headlines, it is a largely overlooked issue, even taboo. The absence of any broad public debate also means that the Black population's experiences of racism go unheard.

The organisers of the symposium made a deliberate decision not to define racism and anti-Black racism as the same in order to leave opportunity for debate about the different aspects of these phenomena. A number of the problem areas addressed at the symposium are highlighted below.

Biology versus culture

Those who are not affected by it often argue that anti-Black racism is a long-outdated term because there has been proven to be only one human 'race'. Viewed in these terms, racism appears abstruse or irrational, even though the historical existence of the phenomenon is undisputed. The academic literature describes such arguments as *post-racial denial*. While the existence of biological 'races' is seen as disproved, 'race' as a social category remains unrecognised, or is negated as such. This has resulted in the social invisibility of anti-Black racism (Lentin 2018). By contrast, anti-Islamic hostility, anti-Semitism and xenophobia in general are seen and recognised because religion or nationality appear self-evident means of social classification. That said, there is controversy about whether or not all variants of the phenomenon can be described as racism. For example, it was pointed out at the symposium that 'anti-Black racism is the only real racism', because there is no 'Balkan' race, or Muslims do not belong to any specific 'race'.

Ideology/psychology versus history/traditional attitudes

In broad sections of the population, racism is reduced to either a conscious ideology or to a personal psychological reaction. The first case concerns a conscious politically or ideologically motivated rejection or denigration, such as that practised by right-wing extremists and white supremacists propagating the superiority of their 'race'. The position of cultural differentialists, who want different ethnic groups and nationalities to be separated from each other, and attempt aggressively to shield their own group from foreign influence, is also often seen as a racist ideology. This does not make the job of defining and explaining racism clearly as a term any easier, however. One African activist pointed out that, to preserve her own culture, White people are disadvantaged against Black people in her own country, and a White spouse would be out of the question. Others asked whether conflict and discrimination among members of different ethnicities could be classified as racism.¹¹

⁹ For example, *Carrefour de Réflexion et d'Action Contre le Racisme Anti-Noir* (CRAN) has been active both nationally and internationally for more than fifteen years in its efforts to have the existence of anti-Black racism recognised as a fact. (Lindemann 2014; Mutombo 2014).

¹⁰ cf. Naguib et al. 2017: 9

¹¹ cf. in this connection also the debates surrounding the concept of 'White self interest', Goodhart (2017) or Kaufman (2018).

Both studies and several speakers at the symposium represented post-colonial and race-critical theories that racism occurs solely amid relationships of power that have grown up over time. The postulation of 'anti-White racism' was rejected, because racism is a means of describing a social phenomenon based on a specific structural balance of power that has emerged over history. It was determined not to be racism per se, even in cases of an aggressive rejection of White people or of exclusively social and psychological defence reactions against members of specific groups.

The situational/interpersonal perspective versus the institutional/structural

Post-colonial, race-critical theories focus on social processes, structures and institutions. These give rise to racism rooted in social relationships and practices, which thus extends beyond personal prejudice and consciously racist attitudes and actions. The emphasis on ideologically and morally reprehensible motives as the fundament of racism serve only to distract attention from the power positions and privileges of the dominant White society, it was alleged. If racism is perpetrated solely by hate-filled or fanatical individuals, there is no reason to address the phenomenon at the wider social level.

The legal study levels the criticism that, in some cases, anti-racism work itself is shaped by an understanding of anti-Black racism that is too narrow and individualised. It counters that only an approach that focuses on institutional and political discrimination can properly capture racist discrimination that occurs without any specific individual intention. Black people who are confronted daily with all the different forms of structural and institutional racism have a perspective as the targets, and a background knowledge, that means they develop a finely tuned sensor for the less dramatic everyday manifestations of structural anti-Black racism. To them, in the sense of White privilege, those from the White majority are often blind to this. Distorted presentations in the media of living conditions in African countries, or fund-raising campaigns featuring pictures of infantilised Black people with their White aid workers, touch on frequently unconscious attitudes handed down through history. They both explain the structural racism found in institutions, politics and the media, and help to conceal it. In the absence of alternative views, messages like this continue to perpetuate perceptions of a majority White population.

Social issue (distributive justice) – cultural identity (recognition)

Socio-economic factors on the one hand, and identity and culture-based recognition on the other – these two facets of racism against Black people are weighted differently, and often played off against each other. At the left-hand end of the political spectrum, anti-Black racism is seen by some as an elite matter affecting relatively privileged Black people, or academics. A representative from one African association, for example, suggested that many Black people focus too much on the racism issue, resulting in a victim mentality unhelpful to economic integration. Another delegate took the view that recognition is earned by performing well in the workplace in order to participate in the political life of society. By contrast, others felt that too great an emphasis can be placed on socio-economic factors (by White people, especially), thus minimising the existence of anti-Black racism. Furthermore, racism is also felt by Swiss Black people of high social standing. In this way, it was asserted, it targets a historical construct of membership of a certain group, and cannot simply be explained by socio-economic or migration-related factors.

These debates are also linked to the differing personal circumstances and profiles of Black people in Switzerland. Data about first-generation African migrants shows a very diverse picture, even though

the majority face financial problems and professional disqualification (Efionayi-Mäder et al. 2011). Legal status – new arrivals with uncertain immigration status versus established residents – can result in differing priorities in terms of the social issue and recognition of identity. There were also voices, however, suggesting that anti-Discrimination does not necessarily have to conflict with the fight against socio-economic inequality. Racist discrimination in the labour market puts people in a precarious financial situation, which can then in turn exacerbate exclusion mechanisms and racist stigmatisation.

The debate cannot be positioned along a conventional left-right political axis, as is sometimes claimed. The issue is about handling social plurality: on the one hand, the call for the symbolic and practical recognition of religious, cultural and identity diversity by means of appropriate measures, and on the other the universalist principle of the equality of all humankind, which itself comes under fire for concealing an unquestioned White norm. Both positions are championed at both ends of the political spectrum.¹²

Based on the two studies, the results of the surveys and the discussions at the symposium, consciousness of the problem can be summarised as follows:

- Racist attitudes and practices cannot be reduced to individual wrongdoing. Rather, they develop in certain contexts and within certain power structures.
- Racism – and especially anti-Black racism – is an emotive term, with expressions such as xenophobia or hostility to foreigners sometimes used as substitutes without the relationship between them ever being made clear.
- The lack of a generally agreed and broad-based definition is a stumbling block to constructive exchange. Any (excessively) broad or (excessively) narrow interpretation causes annoyance, because it is (mis)understood as dramatising or trivialising the situation, making it difficult to establish a basis of trust between the parties to dialogue.
- Levels of knowledge about the daily and structural dimensions of anti-Black racism differ markedly, and many sections of the population are entirely unaware of its nature. Thus, different population groups take opposing views of the problem, the difference between Black people and White people being particularly marked. This makes constructive dialogue difficult.
- Anti-Black racism is perceived as a relevant social problem to only a limited degree, not only among the public at large, but also to some extent among specialists in integration and anti-discrimination work.

3.4 General social problem or sideline issue?

Based on a representative sample, the FSO survey reflects the opinions of the majority White population, as Black people make up less than two per cent of Switzerland's resident population. The findings illustrate the contradictory understandings of anti-Black racism: while 66 per cent of respondents describe racism as a major social problem (Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland, VeS, 2016), around half (51 per cent) regard racism against Black people as (something of) a sideline issue (VeS 2017). Meanwhile, the shares of respondents who firmly reject 'racism against Black people as a sideline issue' (i.e. they do not agree at all), and those who fully accept it,

¹² In this connection, Charim's (2018: 193-307) analysis of a comparison of Europe and the USA in and after the Obama era is enlightening.

are balanced at 13 per cent and 10 per cent respectively. Positions are just as clearly divided on the question of whether or not Black people complain too often of being discriminated against. In each case, 45 per cent of respondents agreed with this statement ('fully' or 'rather'), and 45 per cent reject it.¹³ Finally, less than half, but still a substantial 41 per cent of respondents, believe that there is less racism against Black people in Switzerland, because the country never had any colonies (VeS 2017).

This dichotomy is likely the result of ignorance, a lack of experience, and uncertainty about the living circumstances of the victims of racism, as well as individual understandings of what anti-Black racism actually means. Forms of discrimination which target physical characteristics, or which manifest as clearly unjustified unequal treatment and verbal abuse, tend to be more identified as racism rather than the more 'subtle' forms of daily or structural racism.

The lack of awareness about anti-Black racism may also be linked to the small size of the Black population in Switzerland or because 'academic' racism is thought to have been debunked as a phenomenon, and consigned to an age long past.

Differing ideological positions also have a part to play – a conclusion supported by one of the findings of the VeS study: almost a quarter of respondents (24 per cent) take the view that the presence of Black people in Switzerland is a long-term threat to Swiss culture, while a clear majority (71 per cent) reject this statement (VeS 2017).

At the symposium, delegates, those affected and researchers were almost unanimous in their view that there is need for a broad debate specific to anti-Black racism, beyond specialist groups. Representatives of the authorities acknowledged the importance of the issue, but saw addressing it as part of a wider campaign against all forms of racism and discrimination, rooted in the basic rights of the individual. This position is also shared by researchers and those affected.

These differing views of the problem make dialogue difficult. A broad-based, progressive confrontation of the problem – as initiated by the symposium – is the only way in which the various positions can be set out, bridges built, and options for action identified, gradually working towards a broadly recognised understanding of anti-Black racism.

4 Survey and study findings

Without exception, all of the participants in the emic study stated that they had experienced anti-Black racism, and been affected by it to a greater or lesser degree. Other survey findings and advice statistics would support this (FRB 2017): regardless of their age, gender, immigration status, socio-economic position, Black people face racism in a wide variety of forms in all professions and in all parts of the country.

4.1 Attitudes about racism against Black people

Around ten per cent of those consulted as part of the 'Survey on diversity and coexistence in Switzerland', VeS, have a hostile attitude towards Black people or hold negative opinions about them.¹⁴ This share remained relatively constant between the 2016 survey and the latest 2018 survey. Six per cent of respondents have entirely negative attitudes towards Black people, to whom they

¹³ The other 10% did not provide an answer.

¹⁴ Respondents were asked about statements such as the following: 'there are too many Black people in Switzerland'; 'they are not good for our society', and 'they contribute to the increase in crime'.

attach characteristics such as impulsive, unwilling to work, and violent, with 24 per cent viewing them as a potential threat to 'our culture'.

A minority of respondents have clearly racist opinions, although the data here is likely to represent an absolute baseline, as such attitudes are not seen as socially acceptable and some care is probably taken with expressing them. This is all the truer in the present case, as a greater sense of taboo is attached to anti-Black racism, and it is thus less tangible in society than anti-Islamic feeling.

At the same time, it must be stated that at least as great a share of respondents firmly reject racist stereotypes or shows of hostility. This leads to the conclusion that between 8 and 20 per cent probably refused to give an answer to the question on stereotypes (VeS 2017) because they believe that people cannot be classified on the basis of their skin colour. The fact that 71 per cent of respondents fully agreed with the statement that Black people have good and bad points like anybody else, and a further 25 per cent tended to agree (VeS 2016), can be seen to support this finding. Finally, it is also conceivable that the nine per cent of respondents who agreed with positive stereotypes such as willingness to help others, extroversion and resilience, etc. did so as a means of demonstrating their rejection of racist prejudice (VeS 2016).

The majority of respondents supported only positive or largely negative stereotypes with relative consistence. Further research is required to determine whether or not these findings hold in a broader-ranging survey.

There is no precise information available about the frequency of racist statements and incidents, because even the statistics provided by advice centres cover only those cases that are actually reported. That said, counsellors give anti-Black racism as the second-most frequent reason for discrimination, after general xenophobia. It may be assumed that the scale of the phenomenon is underestimated.

In most cases, the 'conspicuousness' of their physical characteristics makes anti-Black racism an inevitable feature of life for those affected.¹⁵ Many voices at the symposium addressed the historical roots of this form of rejection, such as the classification of Black people in teaching on race, and slavery, and pointed out that such attitudes may be unconscious, but are all the more deeply ingrained because of that. At the same time, it was emphasised that financial and professional situation, and immigration status, may exacerbate or mitigate racist stigmatisation. There was lively debate in the workshops about the relative importance of the individual dimensions of the various categories of differentiation (intersectionality).¹⁶

4.2 Anti-Black racism in Switzerland

Where the growth of racism against Black people is concerned, almost all participants in the emic study stated that it had remained steady or possibly (slightly) increased over the past 10 to 20 years. Survey results are available only for the period after 2016, but also confirm a stable trend (see above).

Those affected by anti-Black racism do not believe that it will 'go away by itself' in the future, which also explains why they see a significantly greater need for action than the majority population.

¹⁵ The importance of appearance in connection with racial discrimination was highlighted in a meta-analysis by the Expert Council of German Foundations on Integration and Migration (SVR). It found that "people with observable (physical) characteristics which mark them out as being of foreign origin, such as a dark skin tone or headscarf feel they are discriminated against more frequently than migrants who cannot be told apart from the native population by their appearance" (SVR 2018).

¹⁶ To capture these aspects more effectively, one speaker called for consideration of the work not only of Kimberlé Crenshaw (lawyer), but also of Patricia Hill Collins (sociologist).

Notably, White experts, researchers or journalists often use the term 'still', unprompted, in connection with statements on anti-Black racism, as if this form of racism is a hangover from an age which is essentially over, or will be overcome in the near future. This discrepancy in the perceptions of those affected by anti-Black racism and the majority population begs the question of whether what can be observed here is a fantasy that time will heal all ills, which has the ultimate effect of maintaining the racist status quo.¹⁷

Both the emic and the legal study point out that anti-Black racism manifests itself in many different ways. Without examining these individually, it is important to state that, although attacks or insults against skin colour directly do happen, they are much less frequent than (hurtful) cultural ascriptions or assumed foreignness and non-belonging.

That is why these different forms of discrimination were covered individually in the ad-hoc Diversity module on anti-Black racism in 2017. First of all, the findings confirm the assumption that the majority population has a narrow understanding of anti-Black racism that focuses on 'classic', i.e. general or physical appearance-based incidents (being told on the bus to 'go home', refusal of service, rejection of a Black nurse, etc.).¹⁸ Meanwhile, the racist potential of cultural stereotypes and forms of everyday racism (assumptions that a person does not belong, questions about their origin, underestimation of academic capabilities, etc.) receives less frequent recognition. Seventy six per cent of the respondents recognise 'classic' manifestations of racism, while only 61 per cent recognise the 'new' forms.¹⁹ For example, 66 per cent of respondents regarded *racial profiling*²⁰ as racist, and 58 per cent that, in a full bus, the only empty seat, next to a Black man, remains unoccupied.

When the survey was conducted in 2017, there was still little public awareness of the issue of everyday racism against Black people. There have since been initial moves in the media to address it, however. This shows that the experience and interpretation of everyday micro-acts of aggression (typically being asked 'where are you from?', or being spoken to in high German rather than the local dialect) is triggering some lively debate about what can be classified as racism, and what cannot. This involves a degree of defensiveness, with attempts to belittle the experiences of those affected, but some have also complained that the concept of everyday racism blurs the definition of racism, thereby trivialising racism as such.

Secondly, the 2017 survey also shows that awareness of the significance and mechanisms of anti-Black racism is limited. In fact, just under 22 per cent of respondents are familiar with the complexities of the history behind anti-Black racism, or at least do not deny the connections (the role of Switzerland in and after the colonial age, the injustices that Black people have suffered through history, or anti-Black racism as a social problem). In the interests of registering awareness of the problem overall, an experiment was done in the form of four questions²¹ resulting in an 'awareness index'. Based on the answers to *all* four of these questions, around 15 per cent of respondents could be said to be aware of the problem of anti-Black racism. This proportion rises significantly if

¹⁷ It reflects Martin Luther King's words in his 1963 Letter from Birmingham Jail, in which he accused moderate citizens of constantly playing for time, instead of taking further steps to eliminate discrimination.

¹⁸ Given the lack of more accurate short-form descriptions, the surveys use 'classic' and 'new' to distinguish between different genres of anti-Black racism (cultural stereotypes and everyday racism, respectively).

¹⁹ This applies where the respondent recognises at least three of five suggested types of behaviour. However, only 47 per cent (classic forms) and 17 per cent (new forms) of respondent recognised all of the discriminating situations that were proposed.

²⁰ "If a young Black man is out with two White friends, the police will stop only the Black man, with no clear reason to do so."

²¹ Agreement to: 'Black people have more difficulty than White people finding a home to rent in Switzerland'. 'Discrimination against Black people in the workplace damages the working climate'. Rejection of: 'Black people complain too often that they are being discriminated against'. 'Racism against Black people is a sideline issue in Switzerland'.

individual questions only are considered, but all in all it can be said that the issue is relatively unknown to a majority of respondents.

Addressing the characteristics of the respondents themselves, virtually no significant socio-demographic differences could be distinguished in terms of gender, migration background or nationality. No systemic differences emerged between language regions, and were also barely mentioned at the symposium, which brought together people from all over Switzerland. There is a slightly higher awareness of the problem in urban centres than in rural parts of the country, and educational background and age also play a part. The 25–34 age group are particularly aware of the problem, while awareness levels among older cohorts were not as high. However, there is a clear link between awareness of the problem and knowledge of the historical background to anti-Black racism, as well as the frequency of contact with Black people that respondents have in their everyday lives. How personal contact and experience, on the one hand, and a knowledge of history, on the other influence each other, remains undetermined.

4.3 Areas of life

The proportion of respondents who believe that discrimination in the workplace impacts negatively on the working climate (72 per cent) is remarkably high, as is those who think that Black people are at a disadvantage when looking for a flat (76 per cent) (VeS 2017). The fact that these two statements are so well supported among the majority population may have something to do with the more general debate about working climate, and that looking for a flat is generally seen as being fraught with 'major difficulties'.²² Both of these examples nonetheless concern coping with everyday situations in key areas of life, and are thus relatable from the respondents' own experience. These areas of life, as well as other major parts of everyday existence such as schools and public spaces, were the subject of intense discussion both in the study interviews and at the symposium.

Most Black people have themselves been stopped by the police, or they know someone who has. It is perceived in most cases to be discriminatory. However, in the survey around 26 per cent of the majority population surveyed said that they did not regard checks on Black youths without obvious reason (*i.e. racial profiling*) to be racist.²³

With the police being the chief state actor, *racial profiling* is a landmark issue and an excellent example of the interplay of all the different dimensions of society's approach to anti-Black racism, whether they are political and/or structural (security, migration, and identity policy), institutional (the police and the force's culture), or situational and interpersonal in nature (a specific person during an identity check). It is thus no accident that the problem has attracted public attention for a number of years now, after it was taken up by several NGOs, an ombudsman's service, international human rights bodies and researchers (Künzli et al. 2017).²⁴

The issue was mentioned in a number of presentations at the symposium, but otherwise only touched

²² Surprisingly, 84 per cent of people aged 65 and over supported the statement about finding a flat, compared with only 67 per cent of 15–24-year-olds. The same was true of individuals who are not from a migration background (82 per cent) compared with those who are (66 per cent). Only in 3.1 per cent of cases did the respondent refuse to answer this question.

²³ It is possible that these respondents are ruling out racist motives for such checks, because the police enjoy a good reputation overall among the resident population, so racist behaviour is not expected. On this point, please refer to the SILC 2017 survey conducted by the Federal Statistical Office, which found that the police enjoy the greatest levels of trust, ahead of the judiciary and politicians.

²⁴ One landmark court case was particularly prominent in the public consciousness: following a ruling by the Federal Supreme Court, a complaint of institutional racism has been referred to the European Court of Human Rights with the support of the *Alliance Against Racial Profiling*. Discussion fora involving the police and African migration associations have also been formed in several cantons, resulting in occasional improvements.

on in the discussions. One commentator emphasised that everyday discrimination in the form of *racial profiling* is currently simply expected. This strengthens the association of Black people with crime and illegal migration, thereby increasing racist prejudice, she said.

Various delegates and researchers firmly believe that the consequences of institutional anti-Black racism are particularly prevalent in areas of life such as work, schooling and the housing market, but are almost impossible to prove – much less to prosecute – without further investigation. Institutional racism can be found in working processes, rules or regulations without those responsible being aware of it. And in addition to the institutional barriers, there are the classic prejudices: 34% of respondents in the 2017 VeS survey agreed with the statement that Black people "only work well under supervision", while 25% classified them as "unwilling to work".

In this connection, several Black respondents in the studies, as well as symposium participants pointed out that they have to work twice as hard at school and work in order to be accepted. On the other hand, one delegate complained that many Africans complain about anti-Black racism if they are having problems (including those of their own making) at work. In doing so he addressed a widespread accusation that Black immigrants sometimes play the victim role to explain their lack of professional success. In the 2017 VeS survey, 46% of respondents agreed with the accusation that Black people are always complaining about discrimination, and an equal number rejected it. However, this may also be a defensive reaction on the part of White people who are not willing to reflect seriously on the justification for accusations of racism.

As part of the German #Metoo debate in the summer of 2018, US researcher Robin DiAngelo explained this as a specific irritability (which she termed *white fragility*) where structural anti-Black racism is concerned. She argued that the majority population reacts with rejection when confronted with its own Whiteness because, in Europe, it constitutes an unquestioned norm: most White people reduce anti-Black racism to behaviour on the part of 'bad individuals who deliberately want to hurt others', and thus distance themselves from it (Schrader 2018). This reaction results in these defensive positions hardening. It is thus also telling that 64% of respondents said that they were generally careful when speaking about racism. The effect of caution and defensiveness is that both sides tend to avoid the potentially explosive topic, thereby perhaps exacerbating misunderstanding and prejudice still further.

5 Underlying conditions for and means of combating anti-Black racism

There is a broad consensus about the legal framework for sanctioning anti-Black racism – at least as far as the statements made by attendees at the symposium were concerned. The ban on racial discrimination laid down in Article 261^{bis} of the Swiss Criminal Code was described as a "disaster for the victims", as an ivory tower statute which bears no relation to reality, or simply as impossible to apply, as it is almost impossible for victims to provide proof in most cases.

5.1 Gaps in protections against discrimination

The legal study (Naguib 2017) pointed out many gaps in the present system of law. Its findings are upheld by other research work. One study by the SCHR concluded that content-related, procedural, financial and psychological factors (such as exposure and the double victimisation of the victims)

blocked access to a functioning system of punishment and compensation (Kälin und Locher 2015). Only particularly serious and public offences against human dignity are punishable, and criminal law is interpreted restrictively because, for example, nationality and immigration status (especially in the case of asylum-seekers) are not recognised as characteristics on which racial discrimination can be based. Newer, culturalising forms of racism which do not relate directly to 'race' cannot be prosecuted, even if they target Black people specifically.

The lack of explicit provisions in private law to combat racial discrimination is also seen as problematic. For example, labour and landlord and tenant law do not contain any special regulations on protection against racial discrimination, and current general legal provisions, such as those protecting the rights of the individual, are hardly ever applied. Kälin and Locher (2015) were able to find only four cases in private law which addressed racist motives explicitly. This paucity of case law increases legal uncertainty and dissuades those affected by racism from taking the appropriate steps.

Addressing this situation, Black people often claim that they are treated as second-class citizens. The opinion of attendees at the symposium was that, although the problem is recognised politically, resistance against taking action is too great, and there is too little pressure to act. While experts point out the many new bodies and projects which have been supported in the past, NGO representatives expressed the impression that little has been achieved to date with regard to protections against anti-Black racism, and that the field was simply "of no interest to anyone". The suspicion of institutional and structural racism in the judicial and political systems was raised, but not addressed in detail.

As one expert consulted in the emic study put it, combating anti-Black racism requires White people to reflect fundamentally on their internalised superiority and the advantages that it affords them. It is therefore understandable that such an opinion may provoke a defensive reflex which is at odds with the expectations and demands of interest groups. This gap in perceptions explains why measures that are seen by the majority population as a (relative) breakthrough are received with scepticism by minorities, or even regarded as empty concessions.

5.2 Advisory services relating to anti-Black racism

There was lively discussion about advisory services, and especially the question of the conditions that counsellors should fulfil in addition to their specialist knowledge. All in all, the debate showed that, while methodological, psychological and content-related expertise (about the law, victim support or the forms in which racism may manifest) are all essential to working in the advisory field, identity-related and symbolic aspects can also be important.

The lack of knowledge about the mechanisms and characteristics of anti-Black racism was criticised several times. The legal study (Naguib 2017), which contains a survey among experts at cantonal level, supports the same finding: that the majority of those working in integration authorities, to which racism advisory services are often attached, "do not understand anti-Black racism and its intersectional manifestations" (p.140), while some respondents were entirely aware of it, and others do not see any need for action.

There were several calls to employ Black experts, not only as counsellors, but also in research and in schools, for example. While one (White) counsellor asked if skin colour plays a role in advisory services, one activist noted that a person can only understand anti-Black racism if they have experienced it themselves, and studying the phenomenon alone was not enough. Although – or perhaps precisely because – this opinion was not contradicted or explicitly supported, a more in-depth

discussion would be worthwhile. One delegate suggested that advisory centres and other official bodies are inevitably viewed as 'services for White people' if no Black people work there. Another said that it was easier to trust someone similar to oneself. A (White) representative of an NGO, meanwhile, claimed that it is possible for a wide range of reasons that a Black person explicitly does not wish to be advised by another Black person.

A (Black) expert involved in the emic study proposed that the best option would be a choice of White or Black counsellor in cases involving anti-Black racism and 'soul-baring'. Activists, in particular, generally recommended that advisory centres should seek to collaborate with interest groups, enabling the latter to contribute their background knowledge to the design and implementation of services, and thereby help to gear them more closely to the needs of a Black clientele. HR policy should also always include comprehensive training on anti-Black racism, as this is still very patchy.

More logistical measures to improve the use of institutions and advisory services were also addressed. These include more flexible opening hours, additional language skills, the location of services (not all of those affected are mobile, owing to transport costs and working hours), and funding. Although web portals and informal advice sessions in a private setting are more easily accessible and may play an intermediary or complementary role alongside official services, they should not be regarded as a cheap alternative.

Despite signs of positive trends as advisory work becomes increasingly professional – as general protections against racial discrimination take root at the institutional level – many attendees expressed a general disillusionment with the situation.²⁵

5.3 Specific and general action required

The controversy about specific versus general action does not affect anti-Black racism alone, but rather the underlying area of conflict between general equality before the law, and the protections against discrimination (on the grounds of origin, race, gender, age, language, social position, way of life, religious, ideological, or political convictions, or because of a physical, mental or psychological disability) that is guaranteed in Article 8 of the Federal Constitution. Studies show that general legal provisions alone cannot counterbalance the lack of special legal provisions. This was illustrated using the example of protection against discrimination on the basis of gender or a disability (Kälin und Locher 2015).

The majority of participants in the workshop devoted to this issue indicated that each manifestation of racism has its own mechanisms and characteristics, thereby requiring a nuanced approach. One delegate stated, for example, that he as a Black man and his Jewish boyfriend had had very different experiences of racism.

The great majority of participants agreed that racism must be combated from both the specific and general perspectives, as the two complement each other. Several attendees emphasised that it is particularly important in training and in awareness-raising in schools to begin with a general approach and only then to bring up specific topics. This way could be used to highlight ascribed (negative) characteristics on both sides, and to dispel misconceptions. One representative of an authority pointed out that, in their actions – whether specific or general – official agencies must always take care not

²⁵ One (Black) integration expert who was unable to participate in the symposium sent the research team the following sobering message: "As experts, we are involuntarily sitting in a trap when it comes to 'racist discrimination', and we have been going around in circles for years".

to play minorities off against each other, and also had to consider the different positions within the individual minority groups.

In schools, parents and teachers often do not know what to do when children are confronted with anti-Black racism. One (Black) expert stated that teachers tend to play down events rather than stepping in to put a stop to racist incidents as quickly as possible. They are motivated to some extent by the wish to treat all children equally, he said. In doing so, they miss the point that equality of opportunity does not necessarily mean equal treatment, but rather a more nuanced, needs-based response to different problems.

Participants repeatedly said that there was a lack of (financial) support to allow those affected to mobilise themselves to intervene against racist incidents in schools, the workplace, or in public. This call was also made multiple times in the emic study, with respondents pointing out that the continued absence of support or clear positioning against anti-Black racism can feed a hazy suspicion of racism among those affected. Others countered that it was less a matter of means than a matter of will, and that there is a basic lack of specific instruments to combat and prevent anti-Black racism.

They see a need for political action at communal, cantonal and federal levels to encourage a broader debate about the issue beyond individual communes or interest groups. Those affected should also become politically active although, as two men reported from their own experience, it can be a challenging and costly undertaking. The media were described as important message-carriers in this regard, which partly explained participants' disappointment that they were absent from the symposium.

6 Outlook

Although there was lively debate on some aspects of the general current situation discussed at the symposium, there was underlying agreement overall. There was also little disagreement with the presentations of the studies and survey findings. Participants were almost unanimous in believing that action must be taken.

- The research findings show widespread ignorance among the population, as well as differing views of racism and related experiences. With this in mind, activists called for a broad debate on anti-Black racism that extends beyond specialist circles. Representatives of the authorities recognised the need for action, but pointed out that a specific examination of anti-Black racism must always be seen as part of wider action against racism and discrimination that is rooted in the fundamental rights of the individual. Many of those affected, and the majority of researchers, supported this approach.
 - The broad-based dialogue taken up at the symposium must be continued in order to set out the different positions, build bridges, highlight possible courses of action, and work towards a widely recognised understanding of anti-Black racism.
 - A constructive dialogue on a topic that still attracts a wide variety of public opinions demands that the forms and terminology of racism in all its facets must be examined continuously, in both specialist circles and among the wider public.
- The studies and the symposium did not reach any conclusion as to how the experiences and perceptions of Black people who are not of African descent should be distinguished in relation to or as separate from Black people of African descent.
 - An in-depth discussion between the various groups of those affected by anti-Black racism about what, exactly, it means, and who is affected by it, would be desirable.
- Racial discrimination is clearly defined in national and international law, and yet there is still a need for clarification. One issue that is repeatedly raised concerns the use of the term 'race'. It refers to something of a taboo construct, and yet it offers a more comprehensive umbrella than, say 'ethnic origin' where discrimination is concerned.
 - The SCRA has commissioned an expert report to analyse the use of the term 'race' and the pros and cons of internationally tested alternatives. The findings are likely to be published in the summer of 2019.
- People of African descent and researchers in particular expressed the desire for data to be collected about the proportion of Black people in the Swiss population.
 - In collaboration with the FSO, the SCRA has commissioned an external expert to analyse the legal and institutional framework for ethno-specific data collection in Switzerland. The findings are expected to be available in the spring of 2019.
- It was repeatedly emphasised that more must be done at the structural and institutional levels to combat anti-Black racism, and the images of and prejudices against Black people handed down from the colonial age must be addressed in their present form.
 - Greater attention must be paid in all areas to the structural and institutional aspects of racism. For example, in cantonal integration programmes the structural dimensions of anti-Black racism

must be included more explicitly than to date in the process of opening up institutions. This has been determined as one of the goals for protections against discrimination, in addition to the expansion of advisory services.

- People of African descent are an extremely heterogeneous section of the population in terms of their circumstances, origin, immigration status, professional situation, migration status, etc. The sociological study shows that young second or third-generation immigrants and Black people without a migration background tend to experience and classify racial discrimination differently from first-generation immigrants, although these, too, in no way constitute a homogeneous group (cf. Efiionayi-Mäder 2010). It was also found that the specific problem of combating anti-Black racism is relatively new in the Swiss context, and there is a general lack of foundations or instruments with which to intervene appropriately.
 - A closer examination of the specific problem of anti-Black racism is needed in order to develop a nuanced programme of action. There is a need for research into the experiences of young Black people socialised in Switzerland, and the racism they experience in their everyday lives, families and schools, as well as the various forms of structural racism and its mechanisms. A closer examination of the effects of racism on health is also recommended.
- Activists resist mixing general migration-related matters and specific issues relating to anti-Black racism, and thus take a critical view of its integration in anti-discrimination work at the institutional level.
 - The second 2018 issue of Tangram, the FCR bulletin, is devoted to experience with embedding anti-discrimination work in cantonal integration programmes, as part of a more comprehensive approach to combat racist discrimination.
 - Non-migrant or post-migrant actors should be included to a greater degree in the discussion about anti-Black racism, as their intentions and interests differ from those of migration-related groups.
- The political and social engagement of those affected is crucial. It is all the more important because the great diversity of a relatively small Black population on the one hand, and Switzerland's federal structure and multiple languages, on the other, make it difficult for them to mobilise themselves. The symposium offered the opportunity to talk about various issues and beyond linguistic and regional boundaries, but it also showed that the projects and information that do exist are too little publicised.
 - We must work together to find workable ways in which to (further) support these organisational processes. In the longer term, collaboration would be helpful to the authorities by providing additional contacts from among those affected. The media are important message-carriers in raising awareness about anti-Black racism outside of those who are affected or interested.
 - More political lobbying, especially on the part of the FCR, as well as interventions against anti-Black racism that will attract media attention, would be a good thing.
 - An electronic and/or actual exchange platform might improve the flow of information among the various actors concerned.
- Media coverage was criticised on a number of occasions. It should be integrated more closely

into a broader, constructive, programme of information provision.

→ One of the FCR's recommendations addresses this difficult area in which the media operate, caught between the promulgation of racist attitudes and awareness-raising work.

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