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Racism and Xenophobia: Anna Diamantopoulou supports call for "a culture of healing"

Speaking following a European Round Table on anti-Semitism and Islamophobia on 20 March, European Commissioner Anna Diamantopoulou commented on the dangers of the conflict in the Gulf for communities in Europe. "We saw during the last Gulf War a dramatic increase in attacks on Muslims and people of Arab origin. And more recently, we have witnessed violent anti-Semitism as a reaction to tensions in Israel and Palestine. We must do everything we can to avoid a repetition of those excesses in response to the new conflict in the Gulf."

She went on: "the Round Table has shown that we can tackle these problems if we have the will to do so. Political leaders, religious leaders and community leaders must accept their responsibility and take action now to promote co-operation and understanding between the different groups in society. The Round Table concluded that we must promote "a culture of healing". A culture is the result of thousands of small acts, apparently insignificant in isolation, but powerful in combination. Leaders at all levels and in all walks of life must have the courage – now more than ever – to challenge racism and to promote the culture of healing."

Background

The meeting was the third and final in a series of Round Tables which had been organised by the Commission in co-operation with the Vienna-based European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia. It brought together leading experts from around Europe to look at practical ways of combating discrimination and encouraging dialogue and action between communities and focused on dialogue and co-operation between ethnic and religious groups. The meeting took place on the eve of the International Day against Racism.

This third and final Round Table built on the results of the first meetings which dealt with the themes of anti-Semitism and Islamophobia in Europe since September 11, 2001.