

RACISM, LEIDEN TALKS!



This city talk is an initiative of the municipality of Leiden in collaboration with Inluzio, SOL, JES Rijnland and Stichting iDb (Inclusion & Anti-Discrimination Foundation, the anti-discrimination service covering Leiden). This report gives a first impression of the discussions and atmosphere during the evening, based on the notes taken during the discussions in smaller groups. The signals that were picked up during the event will be discussed with various partners in the city to see what is already happening and where things can be strengthened. And to work with them to prepare a plan to further combat racism in Leiden. This joint plan should be ready in the first half of 2024.

IMPRESSION OF THE CITY TALK ON RACISM IN LEIDEN ON 21 MARCH 2023

ON 21 MARCH THE CITY TALK, RACISM, LEIDEN TALKS! TOOK PLACE. IT WAS ATTENDED BY ALMOST 200 CITIZENS OF LEIDEN FROM A VARIETY OF BACKGROUNDS. REPRESENTATIVES OF THE POLICE, EDUCATIONAL AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS, AND VARIOUS MUNICIPAL DEPARTMENTS WERE ALSO PRESENT. FOLLOWING AN INTRODUCTION BY ALDERMAN ABDELHAQ JERMOUMI, THE PARTICIPANTS DISCUSSED RACISM IN THEIR CITY.

The discussion was facilitated in Dutch and English by the presenters, Marisa Monsanto and Yung Lie. Participants could vote on the problems they considered most important when it comes to racism in Leiden. In the Dutch room these were: racism at school

or internships, racism and work, and racism between individuals. In the English room these were: reporting and dealing with racism, ethnic profiling by the police and racism between individuals. In small groups, people shared their experiences, visions and ideas for solutions.

INSIGHTS INTO RACISM IN LEIDEN

RACISM AT SCHOOL OR INTERNSHIPS

The examples that were shared relate to, amongst other things, low secondary school advice for children with a non-Western or migration background. But also to discriminatory comments from teachers about what children can and can't achieve based on their background, such as "You should be happy with a five." Based on a scale of 5 out of 10. Getting an internship is also more difficult for someone with a non-Dutch name.



Participants said they were surprised by the widespread lack of interest in other cultures. This is reflected in the history lessons at school, where important chapters about other cultures are skipped.

"Older generations have never been taught about slavery. As a child you learn how to look at the world, so it's vital that children get such information early on. It would have been far better if the topic of slavery had also been taught in the previous decades. This might have helped create a different perception of all newcomers who have arrived here." The power relationship between schoolkids and teacher makes it difficult to discuss racism in schools. Moreover, participants don't always experience school as a safe place to talk about their feelings. School principals, teachers and staff can find it difficult to acknowledge that racism occurs, but it's necessary that they do, it was felt, in order to be able to talk about it.

Possible solutions included greater focus on diversity within schools, confronting teachers about their behaviour, appointing confidential counsellors and establishing a quality mark for inclusive internship companies.

"I was impressed by the large turnout at the city talk Racism, Leiden Talks! It was great to see how people from different backgrounds stood up and shared their experiences. Thank you to everyone for coming! Your compelling stories made it clear that unfortunately racism still exists, also in Leiden. Between individuals; but also within organizations, in education and woven into the fabric of our systems. This has to change, and we must do it together. As alderman for Equal Opportunities, Youth & Education, I will be doing my best to make this happen. As far as I'm concerned, this conversation will certainly get a follow-up!"

Abdelhaq Jermoumi

RACISM AND WORK

Much of the conversations about racism and work concerned prejudices about multilingualism. If you don't speak the language perfectly you're immediately at a disadvantage. This also counts if one has an accent. Participants said it is striking that people from Europe who don't speak Dutch but speak good English are more likely to get a job than people from outside Europe who do speak Dutch.

The lack of role models in companies leads to a situation in the workplace, where climbing up in the organisation is seen as difficult. One's gender can reinforce this inequality: women present said that many employers often prefer male employees and that men are also paid better for the same work.

Opinions were divided on anonymous job applications as a solution to workplace discrimination. It may help not to mention your name or place of birth, but it can also feel like you're hiding your identity. The solution lies not just in hiring people from diverse backgrounds, but also being inclusive once people start working for you. For example, by offering halal food in the cafeteria or a space for praying. In addition, people said, leadership is required to create a culture-sensitive company. For example, by taking action in the event of bullying or racist behaviour.

RACISM BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS

A wide range of topics were covered during these discussions. For example, that some Islamic people feel excluded in Leiden. One person feels ill-treated because people continually allude to her accent. An Asian appearance or wearing a headscarf were also mentioned as reasons for racist remarks on the street. Some participants pointed out the fact that there can be conscious and unconscious racism. You can display racist behaviour without intending to. But even if unintended, the effect on the person to whom the remark is directed can still be very negative or painful.

Racism can come from ignorance about the history of slavery and colonialism. People felt it also has to do with norms and values. Fighting racism therefore starts with children's upbringing. Multiple times people mentioned that several politicians set bad examples when it comes to norms and values, and that social media have a negative impact on how people interact with one another.



ETHNIC PROFILING BY THE POLICE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

A participant said that one's friends of colour were regularly approached and stopped by police officers, and how frustrating they find this. A woman with a headscarf told how during the first week after getting a brand-new car she was stopped several times with the question, "Is this car registered in your name?" Another person has experienced how restaurant owners of colour often have to undergo intensive controls by enforcement officers, such as extensive hygiene inspections. And one black person said that they feel they are treated differently from white people in bars and restaurants in Leiden, and subjected to bags controls more frequently in supermarkets. Other people shared similar experiences of ethnic profiling.

To prevent ethnic profiling from happening people plead for, for example, greater diversity in organisations by hiring new staff. On this, it was added that during recruitment, people are more likely to be selected for an organisation if they look similar to those already working there, which isn't exactly conducive to diversity.



The solution can and must start with children, and therefore has to start with education. Beginning in schools, as early as possible. People suggested giving all teachers anti-discrimination training. And organising neighbourhood parties to stimulate social interaction between people from different backgrounds.





It was said that part of the problem could be a closed culture within these organisations. There is a need to look into how institutions function, how people who work there interact and how people can come to think and work inclusively. Things could be improved by intercultural training sessions, training sessions on prejudice and by setting up sounding boards with people who experience ethnic profiling, and from there develop policy. Policy should not be dreamed up in City Hall.

REPORTING AND DEALING WITH CASES OF RACISM

The citizens who spoke about this issue said they experience the threshold when it comes to reporting racism or discrimination in Leiden as high. They called for an accessible, physical location with a coordinator and enough volunteers. People experienced the way things used to be arranged in the past as more inviting. The hotline for reporting cases is now centralised and connected to other hotlines in the region. A hotline at schools was also suggested as an option. It is important people who report racism are listened to and that something is done with their complaints.

DISCRIMINATION AGAINST FOREIGN STUDENTS

It is difficult for international students to find student accommodation. There is a sense that Dutch students in student houses prefer Dutch roommates, and that landlords are more likely to doubt non-European students' ability to pay the rent. Not finding a room in a student house makes it more difficult for international students to become a part of Dutch student culture.

FOLLOW-UP

The municipality of Leiden, Stichting iDb, Inluzio, SOL and JES Rijnland will use this input to draw up an action plan against racism that will be ready in the first half of 2024. We take these important signals seriously and will be discussing them with the relevant organisations and departments (e.g. the police). When drafting the action plan, we will use insights and feedback from the 'youth panel against racism' set up in 2022 and the adult advisory group that is still being set up. Participants who wish to be kept informed on the follow-up will receive updates.

CONTACT

If you have any questions, comments or ideas please email the municipality of Leiden's Leiden Inclusive Programme at leideninclusief@leiden.nl or contact Stichting iDb, Inluzio, SOL and JES Rijnland via their websites. You can also sign up via this email address to be kept informed about the follow-up, or if you wish to participate on the youth panel or adult advisory group.



INCLUSIVE MUSIC

This playlist was made for 'Racism, Leiden Talks!' and played on the evening. Racism and discrimination have no place in Leiden, and all languages and cultures should be celebrated. So put the list on shuffle and enjoy!

Initiated by:



Leiden

Together with:

Stichting **iDb**
Inclusie & discriminatiebestrijding

INLUZIO
LEIDEN.

SOL
SAMEN ONDERNEMEND LEREN

JES Rijnland