

Background Information on FRA

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

Purpose and background	<p>The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) is a body of the European Union. It is based in Vienna and is being built on the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). FRA began its work on March 1st, 2007.</p> <p>FRA carries out its tasks independently. It cooperates with other national and international bodies and organisations, in particular with the Council of Europe.</p> <p>The objective of the Agency is to provide the relevant institutions and authorities of the Community and its Member States when implementing the Community law with assistance and expertise relating to fundamental rights in order to support them when they take measures or formulate courses of action within their respective spheres of competence to fully respect fundamental rights.</p> <p>The Agency focuses on the situation of fundamental rights in the EU and its 27 Member States. It will be open for participation of Candidate Countries as observers after a decision of the relevant Association Council. The Council may also invite countries which have concluded a stabilisation and association agreement with the EU to participate in FRA.</p> <p>FRA was established through Council Regulation on 15 February 2007.</p>
Tasks	<p>The main tasks of FRA are divided into three main areas:</p> <p>Information and data collection and analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Collect, analyse and disseminate objective, reliable and comparable information on the development of fundamental rights in the EU;• Develop methods and standards to improve the quality and comparability of data at EU level;• Carry out and encourage scientific research and surveys. <p>Co-operation with civil society and awareness-raising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Raise public awareness of fundamental rights;• Promote dialogue with civil society; establish a network through a Fundamental Rights Platform. <p>Advice to EU institutions and Member States:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Formulate and publish conclusions and opinions to the EU institutions and the Member States when implementing Community law;• Publish an annual report on fundamental rights in the EU, and thematic reports based on its research and surveys, also highlighting examples of good practice regarding fundamental rights.

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Policing matters and EuroCOP

The agency will not oversee activities of the EU with relation to police and criminal justice cooperation.

It remains to be seen, whether the agency will be useful as a tool to foster collective and individual rights of police officers in EU Member States. Collective rights are enshrined in the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in Art 12.

Activities of the Agency will depend on a thematic work programme. EurCOP will closely follow these work programmes in order to be able to raise issues that concern police officers.

The process followed by the FRA is likely to be similar to that of the Monitoring Procedure the Council of Europe has installed with regards to the implementation of the European Social Charter (see EuroCOP Fact Sheet on this matter).

Structure

FRA consists of a:

- Management Board (one independent person with knowledge in fundamental rights and management experience from each Member State, one independent person appointed by the Council of Europe and two Commission representatives);
- Executive Board (preparing the decisions of the Management Board);
- Scientific Committee (consisting of eleven highly qualified independent persons to guarantee scientific quality of the work); and
- Director (executing the Agency's tasks and appointing its staff).

Beate Winkler has been appointed as interim Director and Anastasia Crickley as Chairperson of the interim Management Board.

State of play

From 1 March 2007, FRA became operational in the field of racism and xenophobia as covered by the previous mandate of the EUMC. With regard to other areas of fundamental rights, it will gradually build up knowledge and expertise required under its mandate and future work programmes. FRA is expected to be fully operational in 2008.

Website

<http://fra.europa.eu>