

Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU

A symposium on the institutional mechanisms to protect, promote and monitor fundamental rights in the EU

7 May 2010, FRA, Vienna

The fundamental rights architecture in the European Union has developed over time and continues to evolve. Regular health checks on the situation are always needed, especially when great change is taking place.

On 7 May 2010, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) will release four reports:

- a survey on rights awareness that in part relates to equality bodies (based on EU-MIDIS data),
- a report on data protection authorities,
- a report on national human rights institutions and
- a report on the impact of the Racial Equality Directive.

These reports are concerned with four sets of highly related issues that all contribute to the overarching architecture of fundamental rights protection: equality bodies, data protection authorities and national human rights institutions.

For the Fundamental Rights Agency, these three sets of monitoring bodies at the national level are key players in this context. The Agency is specifically mandated to cooperate with, for example, governmental organisations and public bodies competent in the field of fundamental rights in the Member States, including national human rights institutions with the aim of improved joined-up cooperation between actors at national level and actors at EU level. It is the need for an ever more efficient protection and promotion of fundamental rights at the national level in particular, coupled with European and international mechanisms, which form the basis for considering the fundamental rights architecture in the European Union.

The Agency is inviting representatives from EU institutions, equality bodies, data protection authorities, national human rights institutions and national government officials to discuss the findings of these reports.

Lead questions for participants:

- Looking at the main findings in these four reports, which do you consider to be the most pertinent to address - given your experience of working in these fields?
- How best can we strengthen the fundamental rights architecture in Europe - should action be targeted at EU, Member State and/or local level?
- What are the priorities for strengthening the effectiveness of the institutional mechanisms for fundamental rights protection in terms of powers, impact, independence and cooperation?

European Union Agency for
Fundamental Rights

Agence des droits fondamentaux
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für Grundrechte

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AGENDA

- 09:00 – 09:30 Registration of participants
- 09.30 – 09.40 **Opening remarks**
Ilze Brands Kehris, Chairperson of the FRA Management Board
- 09.40 – 11.00 **Keynote addresses**
Moderator: John Kellock, Head of the External Relations and Networking Department, FRA
VIP speaker – Silvia Escobar, Spanish Ambassador at Large for Human Rights
Protecting fundamental rights in the EU today: New challenges and opportunities for our institutional architecture by Morten Kjaerum, FRA Director
Questions and comments from the plenary
- 11:00 – 11:30 Coffee break
- 11:30 – 13:00 **Panel I: “Protecting, promoting and monitoring fundamental rights today and tomorrow – national structures and links to the EU level”**
Moderator: Michael O’Flaherty, Professor, Co-Director of the Human Rights Law Centre at the University of Nottingham
Kirsten Roberts, Director of Research, Policy and Promotion, Irish Human Rights Commission, European Coordinating Group of NHRIs
Mandana Zarrehparvar, Chair of the Board of the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet), Director of Equality and Diversity Department, Danish Institute for Human Rights
Luis Silveira, Chairman, CNPD (Portuguese Data Protection Authority)
Barbara Terenzi, Comitato per la promozione e protezione dei diritti umani, Executive Secretary
Joanna Goodey, Head of the Research Department Freedoms & Justice, FRA
Questions and comments from the plenary

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13:00 – 14:30 Lunch

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14:30 – 15:30 **Panel II: “Protecting, promoting and monitoring fundamental rights today and tomorrow – the EU level”**

Moderator: Martin Scheinin, Professor of Public International Law, European University Institute

Kinga Gal, Member of the European Parliament, Vice-Chair of the LIBE Committee

Peter Hustinx, European Data Protection Supervisor

Nikiforos Diamandouros, European Ombudsman

Aurel Ciobanu-Dordea, Director "Fundamental Rights and Citizenship", DG Justice Freedom and Security, European Commission

Morten Kjaerum, FRA Director

Questions and comments from the plenary

15:30 – 16:00 Coffee break

16:00 – 17:00 **Plenary Debate: “Strengthening the effectiveness of fundamental rights institutions at EU and national level”**

Moderator: John Kellock, Head of the External Relations and Networking Department, FRA

Summaries of Panels I & II:

Michael O’Flaherty, Professor, Co-Director of the Human Rights Law Centre at the University of Nottingham

Martin Scheinin, Professor of Public International Law, European University Institute

Following up on the panel discussions, the debate will explore the following issues in relation to the work of the institutions:

1. Powers
2. Impact
3. Independence
4. Cooperation between the institutions at national and EU level as well as with other actors including civil society

17:00 – 17:15 **Concluding remarks**

Ilze Brands Kehris, Chairperson of the FRA Management Board

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