


The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

An introductory guide





“The [European] Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

These values are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail.”

Article 2, the Treaty on European Union

The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)

“Helping to make fundamental rights a reality for everyone in the European Union”

Who?

The FRA is an advisory agency of the European Union. It was **established in 2007** by a legal act of the European Union.

The Court of Justice of the European Union
ensures the correct interpretation of European Union law.

The European Court of Auditors
audits the finances of the Union.

The European Parliament and The Council of the European Union
together form the **legislative** branch of the Union.

The European Commission
is the **executive** branch of the Union.



The Economic and Social Committee
is a consultative body that represents employers, employees and civil society.

European Union Agencies
such as the **FRA** provide expertise to the institutions.

The Committee of the Regions
involves regional and local authorities in the decision-making process of the Union.

What?

The FRA presents **evidence-based** advice to the European Union Institutions and the European Union Member States on how to improve the situation of fundamental rights in the European Union. It gives advice on its own initiative or at the request of the European Parliament, the Council of the European Union or the Commission. The FRA carries out its tasks independently.

The objectives of the FRA include:

- Assisting the European Union and its Member States in decision-making;
- Identifying and analysing major trends in the field of fundamental rights;
- Identifying and disseminating examples of good practice;
- Informing various target audiences about fundamental rights;
- Enhancing complementarity with other international organisations active in the area of fundamental rights;

- Co-operating with civil society organisations.

The FRA looks at the fundamental rights situation in the whole of the European Union and suggests ways to ensure that rights are better protected. Unlike a court, however, it is not empowered to look at individual complaints.



Why?

The FRA helps to make fundamental rights a reality for everyone in the European Union so that they can live a free and dignified life.

How?

The FRA achieves its objectives in three ways:

1. **Collecting and analysing objective, reliable and comparable data** on a variety of fundamental rights issues in the European Union. Based on this information, the FRA formulates advice about how to better respect the
2. **Networking** with partner organisations and ensuring that the research carried out by the FRA is relevant to their needs, that it complements the work of other organisations and that the research findings reach the relevant actors.
3. **Communicating** its evidence-based advice to partner organisations and the general public and raising awareness of fundamental rights.



Fundamental Rights

The *Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union* sets out civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights belonging to everyone in the European Union. The rights are divided into six thematic chapters (*examples are given below*):

Chapter 1: Dignity

e.g. the right not to be tortured or held in slave-like conditions

Chapter 2: Freedoms

e.g. the protection of personal data

Chapter 3: Equality

e.g. the right not to be discriminated against

Chapter 4: Solidarity

e.g. the right to collectively negotiate with employers

Chapter 5: Citizens' Rights

e.g. the right to good administration and the right to vote

Chapter 6: Justice

e.g. the right to a fair trial

The FRA's work contributes to ensuring that the rights proclaimed in the Charter are being enjoyed in practice.

Focus areas

The areas to be examined by the FRA are set out in its multi-annual framework, as defined by the Council of the European Union every five years.

The nine focus areas for the period 2007–2012 are:

(Reference is made to recent FRA publications or ongoing work in these areas)

1. Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance:

- *Racism and Ethnic Discrimination in Sport in the European Union and positive initiatives to combat it (ongoing)*
- *Comparative Employment Report (ongoing)*

2. Discrimination on all grounds, multiple discrimination:

- *Multiple and Intersectional Discrimination in Access to Health Services and Health Treatment on the Grounds of Age, Gender and Ethnicity (ongoing)*

3. Rights of the child:

- *Child Trafficking in the European Union – Challenges, perspectives and good practices (2009)*

4. Asylum, immigration and integration of migrants:

- *Separated Asylum Seeking Children in European Union Member States (2010)*
- *The Treatment of Third Country Nationals at European Union External Borders: the Fundamental Rights of Persons Intercepted at Sea, Challenges and Good Practices (ongoing)*

5. Visa and border control:

- *The Situation of Roma European Union Citizens Moving to and Settling in other European Union Member States (2009)*

6. Access to efficient and independent justice:

- *The Impact of the Racial Equality Directive: Views of Trade Unions and Employers in the European Union, Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU IV (2010)*
- *National Human Rights Institutions in the EU Member States, Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU I (2010)*

7. Information society and protection of personal data:

- *Data protection in the European Union: the role of National Data*

Protection Authorities, Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU II (2010)

8. Compensation of victims:

- *Access to Justice: Legal Study and Social Study (ongoing)*

9. Citizens' participation in the Union's democratic functioning:

- *S'cool Agenda (2010)*
- *9 May Europe Day open day event (2010)*
- *Diversity Day Vienna, (24 November 2010, Vienna City Hall)*

The annual work programmes adopted by the FRA's Management Board further define the areas within this framework that will be the focus of the FRA's activity.



Formulating and Disseminating Evidence-based Advice

1. The FRA asks its partner organisations what the issues are on the ground.

The External Relations and Networking Department

2. The FRA formulates a research project which is discussed with experts in the field.

The Research Departments

3. Each year, research projects planned for that year are adopted by the Management Board in the form of the FRA's annual work programme.

4. **Research networks** collect data according to guidelines outlined by the FRA. In some cases, the research is **contracted out** to other organisations. These include research institutes, think-tanks and independent experts. The FRA supervises their work closely.

5. The researchers at the FRA analyse the data and draft a comparative report about the situation in the European Union as a whole. The Scientific Committee is involved in ensuring the scientific quality of the report.

The Research Departments

6. The report is published in a timely fashion and in a format useful to the FRA's partners. The report is then widely disseminated to relevant partners.

The External Relations and Networking Department

The Communication and Awareness Raising Department

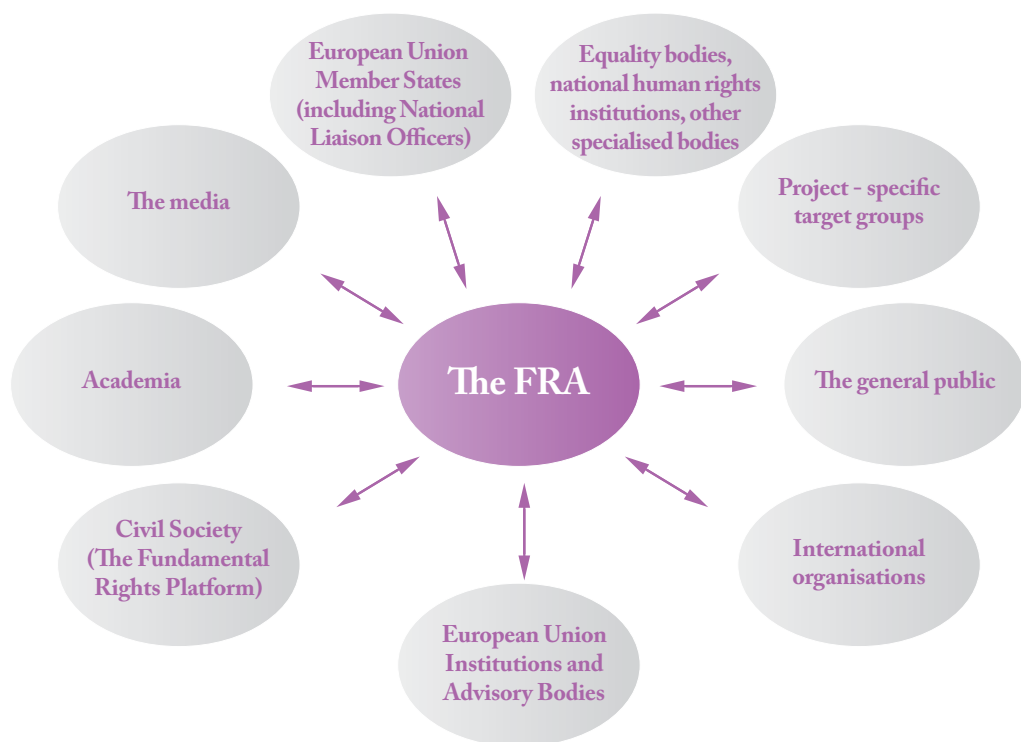
Research networks

The **national focal points** that form the FRA's research network on Racism, XENophobia and related intolerances (**RAXEN**) include research institutes, universities, national equality bodies, national human rights institutions and non-governmental organisations from all of the European Union Member

States. The **FRALEX** research network is composed of legal experts in the field of human rights from each of the European Union Member States. In the interests of transparency, the research networks can publish reports based on the data collected for the FRA.



The FRA's Partners



The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an **international organisation** in Strasbourg which comprises 47 European countries. It was set up to promote democracy and protect human rights and the rule of law in Europe. Linked to the European Court of Human Rights, but distinct from the European Union, it secures

the enforcement of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Council of Europe and the FRA work closely together to ensure that their work is complementary and does not overlap. To this end, an independent person appointed by the Council of Europe sits on the FRA's Management Board.

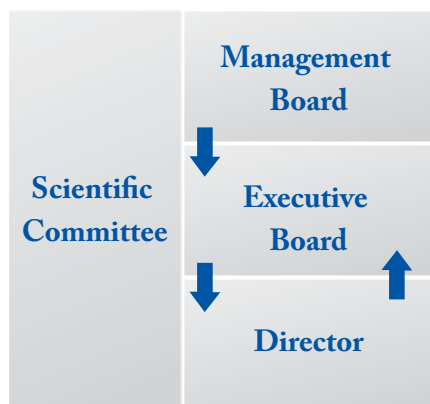
The FRA also works in particular with:

- The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE): the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM)
- The United Nations (UN): the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)



How is the FRA Structured?

The FRA comprises the following bodies and networks:



The Management Board is composed of one independent human rights expert from each of the 27 Member States. One independent person appointed by the **Council of Europe** also sits on the Management Board and two representatives of the **European Commission**. The Management Board appoints the **Director** and the **Scientific**

Committee, which is selected after an open call for applications. It adopts the FRA's annual work programme, its annual reports, its budgets and financial rules.

The Executive Board is composed of the Chairperson and the Vice Chairperson of the Management Board, two other members of the Management Board and one of the representatives of the European Commission. The Executive Board prepares the decisions of the Management Board and assists and advises the Director.

The Director is responsible for implementing the tasks of the FRA and for its staffing.

The Scientific Committee is composed of 11 independent human rights experts. The Scientific Committee guarantees the scientific quality of the FRA's work. It is selected through an open call for applications.

The Fundamental Rights Platform is a network that facilitates co-operation and information exchange between the FRA and civil society. The platform brings together around 300 organisations that are active in the field of human rights from across the European Union. Members of the platform give feedback and suggestions to the FRA's annual work programme and its annual report. They elect an advisory panel

which engages more regularly in direct dialogue with the FRA.

National Liaison Officers facilitate the exchange of information and ideas between the national governments of the 27 European Union Member States and the FRA. Each government appoints one national liaison officer to the FRA. National liaison officers provide input to the FRA's work where relevant.



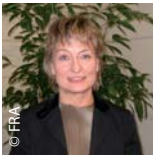
To find out how to join the Fundamental Rights Platform contact frp@fra.europa.eu



Directorate

Morten Kjærum,
Director

The mission of the Directorate is to guide and manage the FRA, ensuring that its objectives and related tasks are achieved efficiently and effectively and in accordance with the direction given by the Management Board.



Chairperson of the Management Board

Ilze Brands Kehris

The Chairperson of the Management Board is elected from amongst the members of the Management Board and serves a term of two years. The chairperson convenes and presides over Management Board and Executive Board meetings.

Research

The FRA conducts objective, reliable and comparable research to produce in-depth legal and social science-based

reports, as well as European Union-wide surveys. The research departments fill gaps in existing knowledge and provide comparative and relevant information and data on fundamental rights in the European Union.



Research: freedoms and justice

Joanna Goodey,
Head of Department

The work of the Freedoms and Justice Department focuses on the following areas: access to justice; asylum, migration and borders; and information society, privacy and data protection.



Research: equality and citizens' rights

Ioannis Dimitrakopoulos,
Head of Department

The work of the Equality and Citizens' Rights Department focuses on equality and non-discrimination; racism; and the rights of the child.



External relations and networking

John Kellock,
Head of Department

The External Relations and Networking Department establishes the communication flow with the FRA's external partners, practitioners and beneficiaries. The department develops human rights education and training programmes and organises key conferences and events.



Communication and awareness raising

Friso Roscam Abbing,
Head of Department

The Communication and Awareness Raising Department ensures that the FRA's publications are timely, in a useable format and useful to its partners. The department also raises awareness of fundamental rights through events, open days, the publication of educational material and the FRA's website.



Administration

Constantinos Manolopoulos,
Head of Department

The Administration Department supports the operational work of the FRA. Tasks span the areas of finance and procurement, ICT and facilities and quality management.



Human resources and planning

Paul Cozzi,
Head of Department

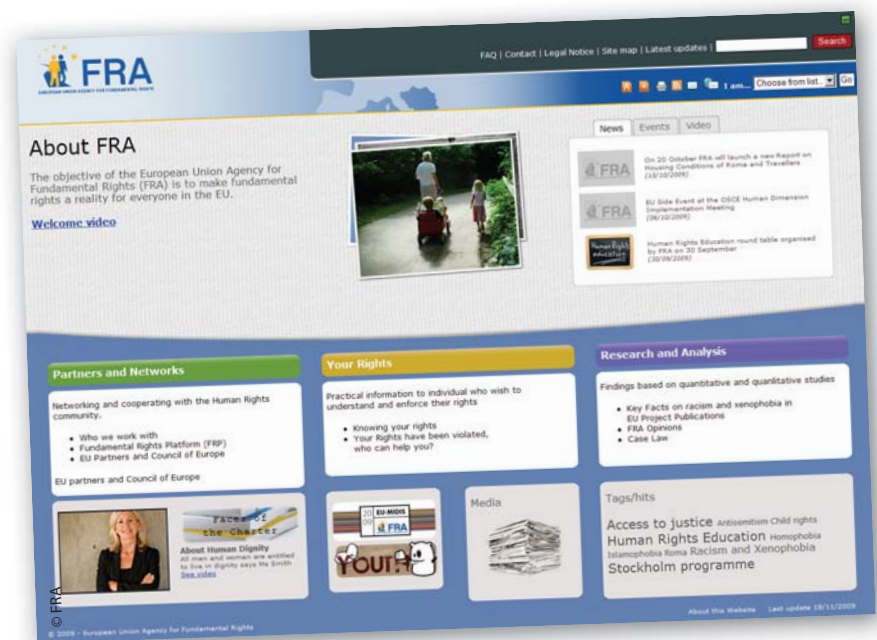
The core activities of the Human Resources and Planning Department include: staff policy formulation and implementation, recruitment, training and development, ensuring good co-operation between the various departments and evaluating the impact of the FRA's work.

The FRA currently employs around 70 members of staff.

This will grow to 113 by 2012, as stipulated in the FRA's Multi Annual Staff Policy Plan, which is adopted by the Management Board.

Visiting the FRA's website allows users not only to explore material from the latest research reports, but also provides menus geared specifically towards individual interests. Whether a young person, teacher, policy-maker, journalist or researcher, visitors can directly access what they need to know about

fundamental rights, and information about how the work of the FRA affects them. Victims of human rights abuses are invited to use the interactive map which indicates where redress mechanisms can be found in the 27 European Union Member States.



How is the FRA Funded?

The FRA is financed by European Union funds allocated to it on an annual basis by the European Union budgetary authority i.e. the European Parliament (directly elected) and the Council of the European Union (representatives of the 27 Member State governments).

The Director of the FRA must present information about how the FRA implemented its budget to the European Parliament (on the request of the Council of the European Union).

The FRA is also obliged to present its annual report to the European Parliament and to compile an Annual Activity Report.

The Agency's budget for 2010 is €20 million.

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For a detailed overview of the Agency's 2010 budget visit www.fra.europa.eu

The Annual Fundamental Rights Conference

The FRA's Fundamental Rights Conference is an annual forum organised with support from *the Presidency of the Council of the European Union** that brings together policy-makers, fundamental rights practitioners and experts. Participants examine key fundamental rights challenges and develop courses of action to better guarantee their protection.

**The presidency of the Council of the European Union is rotated between the Member States every six months.*

2008

Paris: Freedom of Expression

2009

Stockholm: Making Rights a Reality for All

2010

Brussels: Access to Justice for Victims of Human Rights Violations



The Fundamental Rights Conference 2009: Making Rights a Reality for All. For more information about the 2010 Fundamental Rights Conference contact frc@fra.europa.eu

Publications

To order a FRA publication
visit www.fra.europa.eu

New publications

- National Human Rights Institutions in the European Union Member States: Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU I
- National Data Protection Authorities in the European Union Member States: Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU II
- Awareness of fundamental rights and redress mechanisms in the European Union Member States: Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU III
- The Impact of the Racial Equality Directive: Views of Trade Unions and Employers in the European Union, Strengthening the fundamental rights architecture in the EU IV
- Discover the Past for the Future: A Study on the Role of Historical Sites and Museums in Holocaust Education and Human Rights Education in the European Union Main Results Report (2010) ISBN 978-92-9192-470-7
- *S'cool Agenda English (2010)* ISBN: 978-92-9192-403-5
- *S'cool Agenda French (2010)* ISBN: 978-92-9192-404-2
- *S'cool Agenda German (2010)* ISBN: 978-92-9192-402-8
- The Situation of Roma European Union Citizens Moving to and Settling in Other European Union Member States: Comparative report (2009) ISBN: 978-92-9192-466-0
- Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation in the European Union Member States – Part I – Legal Analysis (2009) ISBN: 978-92-9192-291-8
- Homophobia and Discrimination on Grounds of Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in the European Union Member States - Part II – The Social Situation (2009) ISBN: 978-92-9192-211-6

Other recent publications

- EU-MIDIS European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey: Main Results Report (2009) ISBN 978-92-9192-461-5



The FRA is open to visitors who are invited to learn more about fundamental rights via an interactive Info Point. The FRA also organises programmes for visitor groups. Please contact information@fra.europa.eu

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