



Fundamental rights: challenges and achievements in 2011

Foreword

The year 2011 witnessed important developments in the area of fundamental rights. The European Union (EU) adopted key legislation and policy documents in areas such as the protection of victims, human trafficking, the fight against sexual exploitation of children, the use of body scanners and the integration of Roma and third-country nationals. The Court of Justice of the European Union delivered landmark judgments in a variety of fields, including asylum and citizenship. EU Member States pressed forward with a number of initiatives. Various EU Member States reformed their child protection systems, took steps to fight violence against women, extended considerable effort in shortening the length of court proceedings, made progress in implementing the European citizens' initiative and recognised that the phenomenon of multiple discrimination required more attention.

Despite these and other important positive developments, this Annual report by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) also identifies many challenges that must be recognised, analysed and efficiently addressed. The annual report further highlights promising practices. This, however, should not disguise the fact that much of what is reported is less than promising and requires the attention and concerted effort of all those within the European Union who are concerned about the robust fulfilment of fundamental rights for all.

Many challenges facing the European Union and its Member States today are likely to persist in the near future. The year 2012 will be a crucial year for the finalisation of the Common European Asylum System and debate on the new EU data protection framework. In the area of child protection, EU Member States will need to introduce changes to legislation and practice. The areas of racism, equality and non-discrimination are likely to remain core concerns. Steps will be taken to implement the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities – the first international human rights treaty to which the European Union has become a Party.

We would like to thank the FRA Management Board for its diligent oversight of the annual report from draft stage through publication as well as the FRA Scientific Committee for its invaluable advice and expert support, which helps guarantee that this important FRA report is scientifically sound, robust and well-founded. Special thanks go to the National Liaison Officers for their comments on the draft, thereby improving the quality and accuracy of EU Member State information. We are also grateful to various institutions and mechanisms, such as those established by the Council of Europe, which continue to provide valuable sources of information for this report.

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