

FRA Press Release

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A decade of human rights protection The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights turns 10

These are difficult times for human rights. To mark its 10th anniversary, the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights is hosting a discussion to take stock of the human rights successes in the European Union over the last decade and at the same time consider the enormous challenges before us. Among the key speakers are Austrian President Dr Alexander Van der Bellen and EU Justice Commissioner Věra Jourová.

"The EU Agency for Fundamental Rights can be justifiably proud of what it has achieved in its first 10 years," said FRA Director Michael O'Flaherty. "However, we are well aware of the challenges we face in upholding the values that are the foundation of our shared societies. Respect for human rights can never be taken for granted, as we can see from the high levels of intolerance, lack of respect and discrimination around the EU. We must find ways of renewing our commitment to the fairness, justice and equality on which our societies were built."

"In these times of change we sense that old certainties are crumbling, but we have not yet found new solutions to help us face the challenges before us," said Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen. "This uncertainty makes it all the more important to stand up for the fundamental principles on which our societies are based: that the human rights to freedom and dignity are universal and inalienable. 10 years ago, the European Union demonstrated its profound commitment to human rights by establishing the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. The Agency's work is now more vital than ever."

"The European Union is founded on our common values. It has and will always stand for our basic democratic values, for freedom, for tolerance and the rule of law," said Věra Jourová, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality. "It is the 10th anniversary of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights which has worked hard to promote fundamental rights in the EU. At the same time, I'm deeply concerned that in Europe and beyond, fundamental democratic freedoms are questioned. We all know where isolationism and nationalism have led us in the past. I am convinced that protecting fundamental rights and the rule of law is the only response."

In 2017 and beyond, the Fundamental Rights Agency will focus on today's most urgent human rights quandaries, from migration and asylum, through xenophobia and discrimination, to the very contemporary challenges of privacy, surveillance and hate speech in the digital age. At the same time, the Agency is increasing its efforts to boost public awareness and rekindle support for the protection of human rights; the rights of every individual living in the European Union.

For further information please contact: media@fra.europa.eu

Tel.: +43 1 580 30 642