

7TH ANNUAL FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS PLATFORM MEETING

'Future fundamental rights priorities in the area of freedom, security and justice – The contribution of civil society'

Vienna, 10-11 April 2014

CONCEPT

The 2014 annual Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP) meeting with civil society organisations will focus on their contribution to the future fundamental rights developments in the field of freedom, security and justice.

The aim is to offer an opportunity for FRP participants to act as one Platform with a common input both into the current EU discussions on the area of freedom, security and justice, as well as in view of the future work of the new European Parliament and new European Commission, both expected to be in place in the second half of 2014. Civil society organisations will be invited to share their views on the future fundamental rights priorities in the area of justice and home affairs (JHA). Key concerns in this area include:

- how trust in Member States' legal systems can be enhanced in parallel with the increasing cross-border nature of justice in the EU;
- how the common asylum system can be improved;
- how security issues could be addressed;
- How extremism should best be addressed;
- and overall how the EU acquis is applied on the ground.

An essential component in all of this is fundamental rights.

Existing promising practices shall serve as guidance on how to shape improvements in the years to come, including related to an increased role of civil society.

The 7th FRP meeting should result in an overview of what civil society sees as key topics or key concerns, and a 'catalogue' of ways (in particular existing promising practices) in which civil society organisations are already, or could be in the future, involved in making fundamental rights a reality in the area of freedom, security and justice.

BACKGROUND

- The EU will undergo major institutional changes in 2014. It will have a new European Parliament, a new President of the European Council as well as a new Commission. Thus, 2014 will be a year of transition: There will be discontinuity in the work of the European Parliament, due to elections for the European Parliament from 22 to 25 May 2014. Following the elections, the composition of the new European Commission will be agreed. The new Commission will start on 1 November 2014.
- End of the programme cycle in the area of freedom, security and justice: The current multiannual programme in the area of justice and home affairs – the Stockholm programme – will expire in 2014. New strategic guidelines in the area of freedom, security and justice for the coming years are expected to be adopted by the European Council meeting in Athens in June 2014.
 - FRA prepared a submission to the Commission's public consultations on the future of justice and home affairs within the EU. FRA's contribution points to fundamental rights as being cross-cutting concerns. It underlines the EU institutions' obligation to take fundamental rights into account when developing all legislation and policies and proposes a number of considerations for the short- and medium-term future of justice and home affairs in the EU.

On this basis, it is proposed that the FRP meeting, amongst other FRA flagship events, feeds into the 'Post-Stockholm process' and provides platforms for discussion and input on fundamental rights issues that the EU should address in the area of freedom, security and justice in the years to come.

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS PLATFORM (FRP)

The FRA's FRP comprises over 400 civil society organisations working on a variety of fundamental rights issues across the EU. Over the past years, the Platform has become a unique forum for knowledge and information exchange among civil society organisations active on fundamental rights. Through the FRP, civil society organisations are directly informed about the Agency's work and findings, explore synergies for their activities, and also provide valuable input to the FRA's projects, helping the Agency to better tailor its work to the real needs of European citizens.

Every year, up to 200 FRP participants come together at the annual meeting in Vienna to discuss issues of common concern, exchange promising practices and look for shared ways forward and needed further developments.

The annual meeting is FRA's major event dedicated to its cooperation with civil society and fulfilling the task of the Agency as foreseen in Article 4 and Article 10 of the Funding Regulation (EC) No 168/2007.

OBJECTIVES

- Inform and raise awareness about current EU-level discussions on future fundamental rights developments in the area of freedom, security and justice;
- Encourage a debate on the role of civil society in future justice and home affairs policies. The meeting should come up with concrete suggestions in order to inform policy makers on key priorities, concerns and proposals for contributions of civil society in this area;
- Enable the exchange of promising practices, in particular related to a strengthened role of civil society in making fundamental rights a reality;
- Provide a platform where civil society organisations can exchange views with policy makers, with FRA, and with other civil society organisations.

The FRA aims to feed the meeting outcomes into the work of EU institutions and bodies, and concretely into the discussions on the implementation of the 'strategic guidelines', to be adopted by the European Council in June 2014.

PARTICIPANTS

The 7th FRP meeting will bring together around 200 civil society organisations from among those participating in the Fundamental Rights Platform. Representatives from EU institutions and bodies (including EU agencies working in the area of freedom, security and justice), as well as from national level human rights structures will also be invited.

FORMAT AND PROGRAMME OUTLINE

The FRP meeting will start at 1pm on Thursday 10 April and end at 3.30 pm on Friday 11 April.

Open door at FRA premises

The FRA will organise an Open Door morning at the FRA premises just before the beginning of the FRP meeting. Registered FRP participants will get an up-close look at the Agency's work.

The meeting

The one-and-a-half day event will consist of:

- Two Keynote speeches;
- One high level panel debate;
- workshops and knowledge and promising practice exchange at 'The floor is yours'

Interactive discussions

The meeting will be dynamic and interactive, including a number of opportunities for all participants to contribute to the discussions and to shape their outcomes. It will start with a welcome by the Chairperson of the FRA Management Board and the FRA Director, followed by a keynote speech, and a panel debate by representatives from the three big EU Institutions: Parliament, Commission and Council. In a series of workshops, the most relevant issues of concern for civil society regarding future fundamental rights priorities in the area of freedom, security and justice will be discussed. Topics will be based on the input by participating organisations to a survey, to be held prior to the meeting. On the second day, 'The floor is yours' sessions will provide a space for FRP participants to present their ideas and possible promising practices related to the role of civil society in making fundamental rights a reality.

Elections

2014 will be the year of the new elections for the Advisory Panel members.

Further information is available on the FRA website.

LOCATION AND DATE

Following tradition, the 7th FRP meeting will take place in Vienna in the month of April 2014. Due to its central location, as well internationally known human rights profile, Vienna is a suitable location for such a meeting, and can attract a wide range of participants from across the EU.

The venue will be the Wien Messe, a modern and well-located exhibition centre, and the date has been set for 10-11 April 2014.

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