

## EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

### CONSULTATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

The Fundamental Rights Agency (hereafter Agency/FRA) is planning to develop a strategy for cooperation with civil society. It is in the process of identifying tasks and tools which shall form the basis for this cooperation. While trying to find new, more efficient and mutually useful forms of cooperation and synergy, FRA acknowledges the important contribution that civil society organizations made to the work of its predecessor – the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC).

The importance of the role of civil society in European societies is growing and finding new forms of expression. The role of civil society in promoting and protecting human rights (fundamental rights) is recognized as an important component of democratic and open societies, founded on the respect and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Civil society continues to be active in the fields of anti-racism, anti-discrimination, human rights awareness raising, the monitoring and scrutiny of state action and a host of issues which ensure that European Union democracies remain vigilant and active in the fundamental rights field. FRA believes that civil society is a natural partner and stakeholder of an Agency tasked to collect data and information, undertake research, draw together expertise and experience from the grass roots to the European level, promote dialogue and raise awareness. This is supported by the experience of the EUMC.

FRA is seeking ways on the one hand to channel the expertise and experience of civil society actors within a strategic and coherent approach that supports the tasks and working methods of FRA. On the other hand, FRA is conscious that any cooperation with civil society should be mutually beneficial and is therefore seeking ways to ensure that the cooperation with civil society produces benefits for civil society and that civil society can use FRA's civil society cooperation to share and exchange expertise and information among themselves.

The Council Regulation establishing FRA<sup>1</sup> recognizes the particular importance to the Agency of engaging with civil society in order to fulfill its main objective of providing assistance and expertise relating to fundamental rights. The Regulation sets out in articles 4(h) and 10 the tasks and means to cooperate with civil society. Article 4(h) highlights the key tasks related to the promotion of dialogue with the aim of raising public awareness of fundamental rights and to disseminate actively information about the work of the Agency. Article 10 requires FRA to establish a cooperation network namely a Fundamental Rights Platform as the main channel for cooperation with civil society.

FRA is interested in ways that civil society can contribute to its policy development, its data and information collection, its research and analysis, its awareness raising and outreach and the dissemination of the results of its activities. It is also seeking ways that FRA can profile the work of civil society.

FRA is therefore launching a public consultation on the Agency's civil society cooperation. The consultation is conducted through a questionnaire which you can access here. It is of utmost

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<sup>1</sup> (EC) No 168/2007 of 15 February 2007

importance to the Agency to receive direct views from civil society actors. To facilitate the consultation we have given a set of questions to be answered with also a possibility to give an open commentary. Prior to submitting your comments you will be asked to give your name, function (whether you participate as an individual or represent an organization), a brief description of your organization, its policy area, its main area of activity and the contact details. We will also ask if your opinions can be made public.

The consultation process will last from **17 April till 18 May 2007**. The replies to the consultation will feed into the development of a strategy for the Fundamental Rights Agency's civil society cooperation.

We strongly recommend you to submit your comments by attaching the questionnaire to an Email and then sending it to the following address:

**civil-society@fra.europa.eu .**

However the questionnaire is available in print and when completed can be sent to the following address:

**Civil society consultation  
Communication and External Relations Unit  
05/07  
Fundamental Rights Agency  
Rahlgasse 3  
A-1060 Vienna**

**Fax: +43 1 58030693**

Consultation documents:

**Council Regulation on the establishment of the FRA, FRA Fact Sheet, FAQ**

Privacy Statement: This consultation is subject to a Data Privacy Statement.

Name of organization:	The Runnymede Trust
Policy area and main activities:	Research and policy work in the field of race equality, anti-discrimination and the promotion of a successful multi-ethnic and multicultural society
Contact person:	Sarah Isal, Senior Research & Policy Analyst
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**A. GENERAL: From the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia to the Fundamental Rights Agency**

1. Do you or have you used the EUMC's products, if so in what way?
- a. Information purposes
  - b. Research and analysis
  - c. To influence policy making
  - d. Awareness raising
  - e. Advocacy
  - f. Campaigning material
  - g. Training
  - h. Other (please specify)

**B. INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION**

What kind of information would you expect FRA to deliver? What are your needs with regard to materials and products?

- Accurate and up-to-date information on the situation of fundamental rights in the different Member States
- Comparative information across Member States of situation of fundamental rights (or breaches of)
- Information on the role of European policy in influencing national situations

Which communication tools would you suggest for enhancing information exchange between the Agency and civil society organizations? E.g., a bulletin targeted specifically to civil society, website discussion forum, thematically focused meetings/hearings?

- Weekly or monthly email bulletin on FRA initiatives and activities
- A well-functioning, user friendly website that can be used for resource purposes

**C. DATA AND INFORMATION COLLECTION**

Does your institution have any mechanisms for receiving and registering complaints related to discrimination on the grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation? (Please specify which ground(s) and the nature of the mechanism, including whether it is officially registered as a body/organization empowered to receive and act on complaints)

We are a policy organisation that carries out research and influences policy in matters related to racism but we do not as such deal with individual complaints.

Does your institution have any mechanisms for recording or monitoring incidents of discrimination on the grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation?

No

Does your institution collect systematically from the media information and reports on incidents or cases of discrimination on the grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation?

No

Does your institution participate (and if yes, how) in any official monitoring mechanism for the collection of data on discrimination on the grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation?

No

Does your institution provide support to victims of discrimination on the grounds of gender, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age and sexual orientation?

No

Does your institution cooperate with national bodies empowered to combat discrimination, promote equal treatment and/or human rights?

Yes, we do cooperate with the CRE and soon will be cooperating with the Commission on Equality and Human Rights, advising them and working in partnership on specific issues that are relevant to our work. In the past, this has taken the form of organising joint events, or joint campaigning efforts.

#### **D. POLICY DEVELOPMENT**

How can civil society best contribute to FRA's policy development activities, examples include participation in expert meetings, drafting discussion papers, drafting policy documents, contributing to an online discussion forum, participating in FRA traineeships?

Civil society organisations should be thoroughly consulted on any planned policy developments of FRA, through the Platform and beyond. One suggestion is to have regular national meetings between the national representative of FRA and national civil society organisations to inform them of policy developments and allow them to feed their views.

## **E. PROMOTING DIALOGUE AND AWARENESS RAISING**

How could the FRA promote dialogue, enhance cooperation and contribute to the capacity building of civil society on national and European level through networking and beyond the Platform?

Civil society organisations based in the UK would benefit from information on policy and legislative developments in the EU and how they will impact their national situation.

We would benefit from knowing how various European agendas relate to fundamental rights and what we can do about influencing these agendas.

How could FRA cooperate with civil society in making people more aware of their rights?

What kind of support would your organization need from the FRA in the area of dialogue and awareness raising?

## **F. FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS PLATFORM (See art. 10, Council Regulation (EC) No 168/2007)**

Is your organization already a member of a network, if so which one? Is it a national or European network?

Yes, we are a member of the European Network Against Racism and of the Equality and Diversity Forum (national)

On which criteria should organizations be selected for participation in the Platform?

One criterion should be their capacity to relay the information and work of FRA to wider networks at national and regional level.

They should be familiar with European related issues of fundamental rights.

Although it is important to ensure that some civil society organisations are familiar with the broad range of fundamental rights that are part of FRA's remit, it is equally important to secure the ongoing cooperation of and dialogue with organisations that have a specific expertise, either in relation to a given sector of activity (i.e. education, employment etc...) or in relation to a particular ground (i.e. race equality, disability, etc...)

Should the Members of the Platform change according to the FRA's work program and the Multiannual Framework?

No, the membership of the Platform should remain as broad-ranged as possible, although it should also include specific expertise on specific areas (i.e. race equality, disability rights etc...) that can be called upon depending on the FRA's focus of work at a given time.

What working methods would you suggest the Platform to adopt? E.g., should there be thematic round tables?

We hope that FRA will use a combination of methods, including thematic roundtables and virtual email distribution lists, that will allow for Platform members to exchange ideas and work amongst themselves as well as with the FRA

In addition to yearly meetings of the Platform, would a restricted website for the Platform Members or a virtual platform be a useful tool for exchanging information and sharing expertise?

Yes, this could be a good idea, provided the terms of use and reference of the virtual platform were clear to all members, in order to avoid it becoming a "talking shop".

**G. FRA’s THEMATIC AND OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES**

What do you think should be FRA’s thematic priority areas for the next five years, apart from racism and related intolerance?

Multiple discrimination  
Effective enforcement  
Institutional discrimination

In FRA’s set up phase what do you think should be its operational priorities for the first 2 years, for example establishing networks of expertise, conducting mapping exercises, developing promotional materials, cooperating with international organizations etc.?

Clarify the role of RAXEN and its outcome and ensure that it is able to deliver targeted and up-to-date information that can be used by civil society organisations.  
Develop an appropriate strategy for engagement with civil society organisations, based on information provision, consultation and practice sharing.

**H. SYNERGY**

You may include comments on your expectations with regard to synergy between civil society activities and the work of FRA, how you would measure synergy, whether you think that there are other structures/communication tools that should be established, what concrete outcomes you would expect from working together with FRA etc.

We feel that stronger links need to be built between the UK Representative on the Board of FRA, the RAXEN Focal Point (of equivalent) and civil society organisations in each member state.

**I. ANY OTHER COMMENTS:**

Would you like to be included in the FRA's distribution list for bulletins, Equal Voices magazine, publications and media releases?

(Yes / No):      Yes

Thank you very much for your contribution.