

EUROPEAN UNION AGENCY FOR FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

CONSULTATION WITH CIVIL SOCIETY

The European Union Fundamental Rights Agency is launching a second round of public consultation on its cooperation with civil society and the establishment of the Fundamental Rights Platform. It is launching this in response to the feedback from organizations which did not get an opportunity to respond to the first round of public consultation and as a result of the publication of the draft proposal for the Agency's Multi-annual Framework in September 2007. The first round of consultations took place in April – May 2007. The second round of public consultation will last from 3 October till 3 November 2007.

The European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (hereafter Agency/FRA) is developing 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 1 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 this second 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 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

¹ (EC) No 168/2007 of 15 February 2007

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 3 October till 3 November 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, Proposal for a Council decision regarding the adoption of a Multiannual Framework (MAF) for the period 2007-2012.

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

Name of organization: Scottish Council of Jewish Communities

Policy area and main activities: The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities consists of representatives of all the Jewish communities in Scotland – Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen and Dundee as well as two looser groups – the Jewish Network of Argyll and the Highlands, and Jewish students studying in Scottish Universities and Colleges. We also consult as appropriate with the leadership of the Orthodox, Reform and Liberal communities, and with the management of relevant communal organisations on matters that affect them such as welfare, charity law, education and youth work. This representative democratic structure enables us to speak authoritatively in the name of the whole Community to government, parliament, churches, trades unions, the media, etc.

Our activities include:

A) Representing the Jewish community in Scotland to government and other statutory and official bodies. This includes:

- i) monitoring the Scottish Parliament and Executive on a daily basis
- ii) regular formal and informal contact with Ministers, MSPs and civil servants
- iii) responding to official consultations that affect the Community, including Family Law, Charity Law, the census, shechitah, equalities, medical matters, anti-semitism, and child protection.
- iv) representation on the Scottish Boards of the Commission for Racial Equality and Equal Opportunities Commission, BEMIS (the Ethnic Minority infrastructure body), Inter-Faith Council, Policy Officers Network, and the Scottish Human Rights Coalition.
- v) membership of the Scottish Executive's Faith Liaison Group
- vi) regular meetings with senior officers and officials of the Church of Scotland, the Scottish Trades Union Congress (STUC) and similar bodies.
- vii) organising occasional high profile events such as the Chief Rabbi's visit to the Scottish Parliament.

B) Working in partnership with other organisations to promote good relations amongst community groups and to promote equality. This includes collaboration with the Scottish Executive and BEMIS on a variety of projects including MEMO (Minority Ethnic Matters Overview) a weekly electronic bulletin of information of interest to minority ethnic communities and MEMO+ a new series of briefing papers. (MEMO and MEMO + are available on our website at www.j-scot.org.uk)

C) Providing services to all of Scotland's Jewish communities. These include:

- i) organising briefings on current issues for communal professionals and others. Topics have included new health legislation, the Commission for Equality and Human Rights, child protection, women's issues, and briefings for teenagers on the Lebanon war and antisemitism.
- ii) processing Disclosure applications (required for people working with children and vulnerable adults) for most voluntary organisations in the Jewish Community as well as for the Scottish Interfaith Council.
- iii) providing information to communal organisations on developing issues such as exemption from water rates, regulation of burial societies, and employment legislation
- iv) responding to general enquiries from local authorities, potential visitors and others, ranging from the location of synagogues and kosher facilities, to Jewish wedding music for bagpipes.

D) Supporting the smaller Scottish Jewish communities by:

- i) publishing a quarterly newsletter, Four Corners, to provide information about events and activities across Scotland. Four Corners is available on our website at www.j-scot.org.uk
- ii) facilitating social and educational events in remote venues across Scotland such as Lochgilphead and Oban
- iii) responding to requests from rural local authorities, NHS boards, schools, police forces, etc

E) Bringing Scottish issues to the attention of relevant organisations such as the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the Office of the Chief Rabbi, Shechitah UK and the Community Security Trust.

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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?

Regularly updated data about the levels of racism and religious hatred in EU countries.

Research into racism and religious hatred, and analysis of the findings.

Educational materials to raise awareness of racism and religious hatred, and of effective measures to combat them.

Materials to support dialogue between organisations and facilitate the development of good community relations, and thereby combat racism and religious hatred.

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?

All of the above. It should be remembered that not all organisations have internet access, so bulletins, and information about forthcoming events should be available in both paper and electronic formats. (Data from the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator indicates that only 56% of registered charities in Scotland have e-mail access.)

Meetings and hearings should employ technology such as video and telephone conferencing to facilitate wider participation from organisations that do not have adequate resources to permit a representative to attend in person.

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)

Collecting and registering such complaints is not one of our core activities. When notified about antisemitic incidents, we advise that these should be reported to the police and the Jewish Community Security Trust (CST). If requested, we will do this on behalf of the person concerned.

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. The role of recording and monitoring antisemitic incidents in the UK is carried out by the Community Security Trust.

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?

We monitor the Scottish media on a daily basis and note all reports of discrimination on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, and religion or belief.

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?

Informal support only.

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

Yes. We are in frequent contact with the Equality Unit of the Scottish Government, and have received funding from them to support a capacity-building initiative for minority ethnic communities in Scotland (not just in the Jewish community). The Council is represented on the Scottish Government's Faith Liaison Group, Strathclyde Police Independent Strategic Advisory Group, BEMIS (the Scottish Ethnic Minority infrastructure body), Scottish Inter-Faith Council, Policy Officers Network, and the Scottish Human Rights Coalition, and works with these to promote good relations amongst community groups and to promote equality. We were also represented on the Scottish Boards of the Commission for Racial Equality and the Equal Opportunities Commission, but these ceased on 30 September 2007 and have been replaced by the Equalities and Human Rights Commission, on which we are not currently represented.

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 cannot contribute to policy development of an organisation of which they are unaware, so the FRA must first publicise its existence, remit, and current activities more effectively.

It should be remembered that, many organisations do not have adequate resources to enable them to attend meetings, or to devote time to commenting on policy papers etc. Where possible, the FRA should facilitate access to the requisite resources, be these financial or technical.

Consultations, draft policy and other documents should be made available in a variety of formats, to facilitate the participation of organisations without computer or internet access.

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?

By providing effective technical and financial support for conferences, seminars, and exchange visits.

The FRA should ensure that its website is regularly updated, and should publish regular newsletters (electronic and hard copy) that enable organisations to share information and expertise, and demonstrate examples of good practice.

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

By means of high profile joint events, and effective use of the media.

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

The Scottish Council of Jewish Communities collaborates with other organisations to facilitate and support improved engagement in civil society, and with government through initiatives such as "MEMO" and "MEMO+" (see http://www.j-scot.org.uk/MEMO/MEMO_2007.html), which is circulated weekly to several hundred minority community groups, as well as to a number of Scottish Government departments, UK-wide umbrella bodies, and Jewish communal organisations. The Council also provides support to, and enables capacity building in small Jewish communities in Scotland. These activities have been extremely successful, and, could be expanded and developed to provide additional benefit. However, the Council operates with minimal funding, with only two staff (one on a voluntary basis), and does not have the funding that would enable it to expand this work further. Additional funding would not only enable the Council to take on another member of staff to develop its current activities, but would also enable the Council to share its experience more widely, and act as mentor for other organisations.

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?

No.

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

Participating organisations should be representative of, and have established links with their constituencies to enable the "Platform" to access to a wide range of expertise, and also to ensure that information from the FRA is disseminated to communities.

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

There should be a balance between continuity and encouraging a regular influx of new members. The mechanism for joining the "Platform" must be clear and straightforward, so that potential members are not deterred from contributing to areas of the FRA's work in which they have expertise.

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

No comment.

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?

An online discussion forum with the facility to upload documents to a website would enable members to share information and expertise.

G. FRA's THEMATIC AND OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES (please refer to the Proposal for a Council decision regarding the adoption of a Multiannual Framework (MAF) for the period 2007-2012.)

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

The FRA should explicitly include religious hatred (for example, antisemitism and islamophobia) in its remit. Whilst it is sometimes difficult to identify whether a particular incident arises out of racial or religious hatred, the amalgamation of religious and racial hatred incident statistics has reduced awareness of the religious hatred, and resulted in the provision of fewer resources to combat religious hatred than are available to combat racial hatred.

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.?

Initial priorities should include:

Raising awareness of the FRA and its activities among Civil Society organisations across the EU.

Establishing a benchmark for future monitoring activities. Although this may involve some new research, much work has already been done, and full use should be made of existing publications.

Developing links with existing national and international organisations and networks.

Identifying existing expertise and inviting relevant organisations and individuals to participate in the "Platform".

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.

No comment.

I. ANY OTHER COMMENTS:

The language used in this consultation is not easily accessible (even the phrase "civil society" is not widely understood), and, will certainly have discouraged some potential respondents. The use of jargon should be avoided in future consultations in order to promote wider participation.

The format in which consultations are issued, should also be reconsidered, since an electronic form that does not allow the user to navigate easily between sections, use normal editing techniques, or highlight phrases by means of features such as bold and italic fonts, also discourages potential respondents.

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

(Yes / No): Yes