# General Programme "Fundamental rights and justice": specific programme "Fundamental rights and citizenship", 2007-2013

2005/0038(CNS) - 05/05/2011 - Follow-up document

This document presents the main findings and recommendations of the interim evaluation of the "Fundamental Rights and Citizenship" Programme 2007-2013 as well as the conclusions drawn from these by the Commission.

**Effectiveness of the Programme**: at the stage of the interim evaluation any far-reaching conclusions regarding whether the programme is reaching its objectives would be somewhat premature. Furthermore, the programme, due to its structure, varied priorities, and thematic fields, range of target groups and breadth of stakeholders makes the setting of meaningful and useable indicators complex and the extraction of revealing information somewhat illusive.

It is nevertheless clear from the evaluation carried out that the type of projects having been funded as well as the initiatives taken by the Commission, have all fallen under the objectives and priorities of the programme. However, the funding available is a factor which clearly limits achievement of the programme objectives, especially on a European scale. With an **upper limit of EUR 1 million per 2 year project with an average of 4 partners**, this leaves a maximum amount of just over EUR 125 000 per year per partner, which does not enable projects to show a true European dimension and added value.

Overall, beneficiaries did not identify any major obstacles that would be considered a detriment to progress in implementing the activities. The level of funding of up to 80% was considered as adequate, and the general setup such as the duration and partnership requirements were deemed appropriate for action grants. In the case of operating grants a longer-term funding extending beyond the current annual setup was suggested by some beneficiaries to ensure a greater impact. The focus on balanced partnerships and equal attribution of tasks and participation in the project, regulated by a balanced distribution of funding, have resulted in healthy participative management of the projects and a fertile breeding ground for establishing and exchanging best practices. It is evident that the projects have led to the deepening of collaboration between existing partners as to the creation of new partnerships.

On the other hand, the disproportionate participation of some countries (Italian applications representing over one third of the total received under the 2009-2010 call for action grants) and in some cases total absence of others should be considered a weakness that may need to be redressed.

**Conclusions**: the Interim evaluation confirms the importance of the programme. The growing interest not only in its funding opportunities, but also the increasing visibility of its projects and the recent addition of well-known and respected international organisations as its direct beneficiaries, are all strong indicators of the relevance and added value of the programme. Although the evaluation also highlighted some challenges in the implementation of the FRC programme and identified a number of improvements that could be made, there is no denying the intrinsic quality of the programme, its relevance to current European policy priorities, to the needs of its chosen target groups and stake-holders, as well as its added value.

The Commission considers that certain improvements are necessary in order to increase the impact and effectiveness of the programme. These are as follows:

Improved focus of EU policy priorities: a narrowing of the scope of the programme may help to increase its impact. In this respect, the number of annual priorities could be streamlined and significantly reduced. With a view to the next generation of programmes, consideration should be given to focussing the programme's project funding on strengthening its policy areas of fundamental rights, including **data protection and union citizenship**. Accompanied by appropriate support for the development of Commission initiatives, this would increase the impact of policy development and avoid overlaps with existing programmes that have significantly higher budgets for this type of direct funding.

**Concentration of projects with a strong European dimension**: in order to increase the effectiveness of the programme the currently limited funding should concentrate on projects with a stronger European dimension. Larger-scale projects receiving more funding would increase the visibility of the programme and ensure that projects achieve a wider impact not limited to local or regional level. The Commission will examine further if the impact that operating grants have on reaching the programme's objectives are sufficient to uphold this type of funding.

**Balanced participation**: in order to remedy a situation which shows a preponderance of beneficiaries form certain Member States (such as Italy) the Commission will seek to target information campaigns at organisations in certain Member States and increase its contacts with the relevant national and regional authorities so to overcome the limitations set by the funding available.

**More efficient management of the programme**: further efforts are needed to streamline the processes that govern the life-cycle of projects. The Commission will take further steps to streamline the system's user-friendliness, efficiency and speed and to strive to ensure that it will be an integrated tool that will serve both applicants/beneficiaries and the Commission in the efficient management of projects throughout their entire life-cycle.

A further consideration should be to address the delays caused by the obligation to consult the programme committee on the outcome of selections and to asses whether the administrative burden of this procedure is warranted by the very limited funding involved.

**Dissemination of results**: lastly, the Commission will use a more output and results-based approach both in the selection and in the management of projects. In combination with the targeting of priorities this will further ensure a stronger correlation between policy initiatives carried out by the Commission directly and through the projects and will therefore result in a more synergies between these two funding mechanisms of the programme.

Further measures to highlight the results of the programme may be envisaged, with a more elaborate and dynamic online dissemination as well as through specific events to single out successful projects as a means to illustrate the added value of the programme.