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

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This report to the European Parliament and the Council concerns the *ex-post* evaluation of the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship Programme (2007-2013).

This evaluation was carried out by an independent external evaluator assisted by Commission staff.

The main elements evaluated are:

- relevance;
- coherence and complementarity;
- effectiveness;
- impact and sustainability;
- efficiency and scope for simplification;
- European added value.

As a reminder, the programme pursues four general objectives:

1. to promote the development of a European society based on respect for fundamental rights, including rights derived from citizenship of the Union;

2. to strengthen civil society and encourage an open, transparent and regular dialogue with it on fundamental rights;

3.to combat racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and foster greater understanding and tolerance in the European Union;

4. to improve contacts, exchange of information and networking between judicial and administrative authorities and the legal professions.

The total budget allocated to the programme from January 2007 to December 2013 amounted to **EUR 94.8 million**.

Main findings:

1. Relevance of the programme

- **priorities of the calls for proposals and the actions financed were generally considered relevant to the programme objectives** and to the development and implementation of EU policies and legislation;

- calls for proposals for action grants and operating grants have met the needs and interests of the main target group. However, calls should be further clarified;

- **priorities concerning the training of the general public**, or the judicial, legal and administrative authorities and the legal professions on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights **have not been defined consistently** during the implementation period.

2. Coherence and complementarity

- the programme is in line with other European policy initiatives and complementary with other EU funding programmes, such as Daphne III, Progress and JPEN. However, such complementarity also entails a **risk of overlap** between these programmes;

- at the project level, synergies have been created with **other programmes of international donors** with similar objectives at EU and national levels.

3. Effectiveness

- the majority of the projects were able to achieve the planned results on time reach the expected target groups. **No significant obstacles** to the implementation of project's results or objectives were identified;

- existing project monitoring mechanisms during implementation do not ensure that feedback is given to grant recipients or that lessons learned, good practices or success factors have been identified.

4. Sustainability

- the dissemination of project results by the beneficiaries has been generally effective, with some restrictions. Nevertheless, the efforts undertaken by the Commission to disseminate the results of projects have been limited. The **lack of effective means for the Commission to share information concerning the FRC programme** was already mentioned in the mid-term evaluation. This evaluation did not find any additional communication resources and measures put in place;

- overall, the FRC programme's projects generated sustainable results in terms of continuation of activities and partnership building. However, whether project activities continued depended on the type of activity and whether continuation required further funding.

5. Efficiency

- in general, funding provided to action grants and operating grants appeared to be **sufficient**. Of the total funds allocated for action grants during the period 2007-2012, some 90% were committed and of that, 88% was spent, indicating an **acceptable absorption rate**. For operating grants, only 39% of the funds allocated was committed. However, the percentage of expenditures in relation to funds committed is the same as for action grants, 88%;

- as regards scope for simplification, overall **programme management was efficient**. Nevertheless, some organisations experienced difficulties during the application and implementation process.

6. European added value

- the programme has contributed to the development and strengthening of EU actions in the areas of freedom, security and justice, and in particular has responded to the need to protect fundamental rights and to promote EU citizenship. However, it has not yet been possible to indentify and measure EU added value in terms of impacts;

- transnational partnerships resulted in specific benefits, such as broadening the knowledge base of participating organisations and improving the dissemination of good practices.

Key recommendations: among the main recommendations made by the Commission following the *ex-post* evaluation of the programme are:

- the need to **better define priorities**: the Commission must invest more time and human resources in setting priorities in order to ensure that they can be achieved in an appropriate way;

- a **more realistic risk assessment** of projects and better risk mitigation strategies are needed;

- the need to **focus on the assessment of impacts** and not just the outputs of the programme;

- improving the **uptake of project outputs**, results and best practices by other organisations, in particular those based in other Member States, including the allocation of additional resources for translation, communication and **dissemination**;

- the need to **sharpen the programme's intervention logic** and to establish make the relations between the rationale, objectives, inputs, outputs, beneficiaries, expected outcomes and impacts more articulate, precise and concrete in any future continuation of the programme.