



EUROPEAN FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS AGENCY

Call for Evidence

Sub-Committee E (Law and Institutions) of the House of Lords Select Committee on the European Union is conducting a short inquiry into the proposed Regulation establishing a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and Decision empowering the FRA to act in Title VI TEU matters (COM (2005) 280).

The Sub-Committee proposes to examine the issue of overlap between the proposed agency and the Council of Europe and other agencies in the field of fundamental rights. Comments on the following points are particularly welcome:

Council of Europe

1. All Member States of the European Union are members of the Council of Europe and have signed the European Convention on Human Rights. Is the creation of a European Union agency dealing with fundamental rights a useful initiative? Can you provide any examples of where the FRA might fill a gap in fundamental rights protection in the European Union?
2. The Commission has proposed that the remit of the FRA should extend beyond the EU and encompass non EU-Member States in circumstances outlined in Articles 3 and 27 of the proposal. Should the FRA have a mandate to act outside the boundaries of the Union?
3. The FRA would be competent to provide assistance and expertise to institutions and bodies of the Community and of the Member States. Do you consider that this would in practice give rise to an overlap between its activities and those of the Council of Europe? What measures might be taken to limit or avoid such overlap?

The European Institute for Gender Equality

4. A proposal for the creation of a European Institute for Gender Equality has recently been adopted by the Commission. Should the protection of gender rights be separated from other fundamental rights through the creation of two separate agencies? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach?
5. How might the two bodies work together to ensure that overlap is avoided and that cooperation is maximised to improve their effectiveness?

General

6. Are you aware of the existence of other bodies, at national, European or international level, which perform activities similar to those which would be carried out by the FRA? How might the FRA affect the work of these bodies?

The Sub-Committee plans to hold oral evidence sessions in February/March 2006.

Evidence should be submitted by 20 January 2006 and should be sent to Ms Michelle Lafferty, Legal Assistant, House of Lords, London SW1A 0PW (email: laffertym@parliament.uk). Where possible, please supply an email copy as well as a hard copy of all evidence submitted. **It would be helpful if paragraphs could be numbered for ease of reference. Please also date the evidence.**

Evidence submitted becomes the property of the Committee and may be printed or circulated by the Committee at any stage. If your evidence is not printed, it will be made available to the public in due course in the Parliamentary Record Office.

Personal Contact details supplied to the Committee will be removed from evidence before publication and from the copy deposited in the Record Office. However, personal contact details will be retained by the Committee Office and used for specific purposes relating to the Committee's work, for instance to seek additional information or to send copies of the Committee's Report.