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**REPORT FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND  
THE COUNCIL**

**Report on the interim evaluation of the "Fundamental Rights and Citizenship"  
Programme 2007 – 2013**

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## **INTRODUCTION**

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.

## **THE PROGRAMME**

The specific Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme (hereafter referred to as "the FRC Programme") was established by Council Decision 2007/252/EC of 19 April 2007 for the period 2007-2013 as part of the programme "Fundamental Rights and Justice".

General objectives:

1. The programme has the following general objectives:
  - a) to promote the development of a European society based on respect for fundamental rights as recognised in Article 6(2) of the Treaty on European Union, including rights derived from citizenship of the Union;
  - b) to strengthen civil society and to encourage an open, transparent and regular dialogue with it in respect of fundamental rights;
  - c) to fight against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism and to promote a better interfaith and intercultural understanding and improved tolerance throughout the European Union;
  - d) to improve the contacts, exchange of information and networking between legal, judicial and administrative authorities and the legal professions, including by way of support to judicial training, with the aim of better mutual understanding among such authorities and professionals.
2. The general objectives of the programme are complementary to the objectives pursued by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights established by Regulation (EC) No 168/2007.
3. The general objectives of the programme shall contribute to the development and implementation of Community policies in full compliance with fundamental rights.

### **Specific objectives:**

1. The programme has the following specific objectives:
  - a) To promote fundamental rights as recognised in Article 6(2) of the Treaty on European Union and to inform all persons of their rights including those derived from citizenship of the Union, in order to encourage Union citizens to participate actively in the democratic life of the Union;
  - b) to examine, where necessary, respect for specific fundamental rights in the European Union and its Member States when implementing Community law,

and to obtain opinions on specific questions related to fundamental rights within this scope;

- c) to support non-governmental organisations and other bodies from civil society in order to enhance their capability to participate actively in the promotion of fundamental rights, the rule of law and democracy;
- d) to create relevant structures in order to foster an interfaith and multicultural dialogue at the level of the European Union.

#### **TYPES OF ACTIONS SUPPORTED**

With a view to pursuing the general and specific objectives, the programme supports the following 4 types of actions:

- a) specific actions taken by the Commission, such as studies and research, opinion polls and surveys, formulation of indicators and common methodologies, collection, development and dissemination of data and statistics, seminars, conferences and expert meetings, organisation of public campaigns and events; development and maintenance of websites, preparation and dissemination of information material, support for and management of networks of national experts, analytical, monitoring and evaluation activities;
- b) specific trans-national projects of Community interest presented by an authority or any other body of a Member State, an international or non-governmental organisation, and involving in any case at least two Member States or at least one Member State and one other state which may either be an acceding country or a candidate country, under the conditions set out in the annual work programmes;
- c) support to the activities of non-governmental organisations or other entities pursuing an aim of general European interest in accordance with the general objectives of the programme under the conditions set out in the annual work programmes;
- d) operating grants to co-finance expenditure associated with the permanent work programme of the Conference of the European Constitutional Courts and the Association of the Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions of the European Union, which maintains certain databases providing for a European-wide collection of national judgments relating to the implementation of Community law, insofar as the expenditure is incurred in pursuing an objective of general European interest by promoting exchanges of views and experience on matters concerning the case-law, organisation and functioning of their members in the performance of their judicial and/or advisory functions with regard to Community law.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRC PROGRAMME**

The FRC programme covers the 27 EU Member States. While it is in principle open to the participation of third countries, such as acceding countries, candidate countries and the

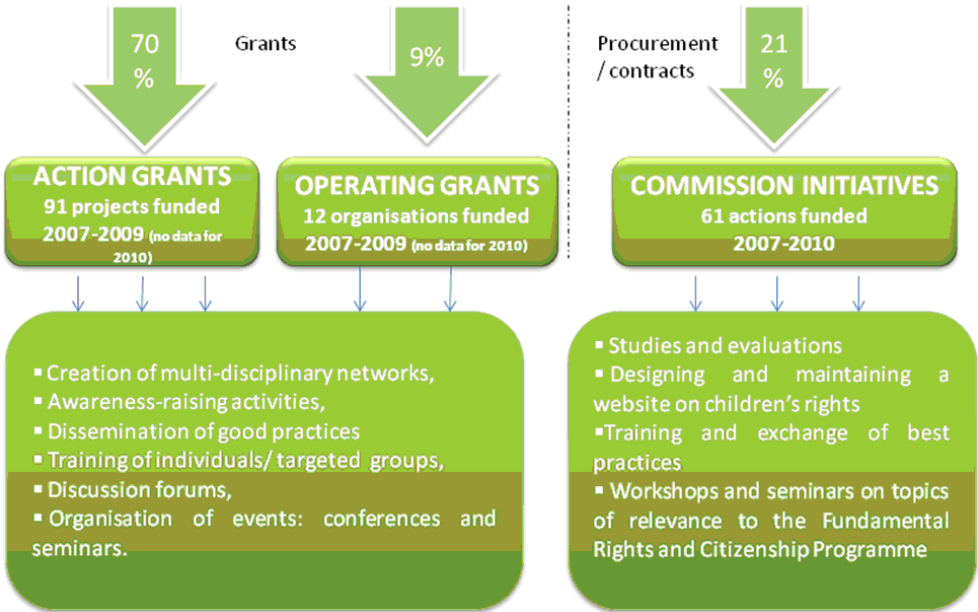
Western Balkan countries included in the stabilisation and association process, these have not taken up the opportunity to join.

The Programme is managed entirely at central level by the European Commission and has a budgetary provision of 95,2 M€ over the period 2007-2013, broken down into the following annual provisions in million Euro:

TOTAL AMOUNT OVER THE 2007-2013 PERIOD: 95,2 M€						
2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
10,60	12,00	14,20	13,80	13,80	15,30	15,50

As far as the distribution of the budget is concerned, an average of 70% of funds is allocated each year for Action Grants, 9% for Operating Grants and 21% for the Commission initiatives.

**BUDGET AVAILABLE FOR THE PERIOD 2007-2010**



Since 2007 the Commission has published 3 calls for proposals for Action Grants and 4 calls for proposals for Operating Grants and has funded 61 Commission initiatives through public procurement procedures.

**ACTION GRANTS**

The calls published by the Commission attracted a great number of proposals. For Action Grants the Commission has received and evaluated a total of 415 proposals submitted by the

partnerships of on average 4.5 organisations from at least two EU Member States. Out of that overall number, the Commission has funded a total of 93 multi-lateral projects with an average funding of €341.000 per project and with an average duration of 21 months.

## OPERATING GRANTS

Under article 4 c) of the decision establishing the Programme, the Commission has co-financed the annual work programme of eight NGOs or other entities pursuing an aim of general European interest in accordance with the general objectives of the programme, notably:

European Network of Ombudspersons for Children

Fair Trials International

Jesuit Refugee Service (Europe)

Association of European Administrative Judges

Two associations are mentioned in the legal basis of the programme and may receive operating grants to co-finance expenditure associated with their permanent work programme:

1. The Association of the Councils of State and Supreme Administrative Jurisdictions of the European Union.

The purpose of this association is to promote exchanges of views and experience on matters concerning the jurisprudence, organisation and functioning of its Members in the performance of their judicial and/or advisory functions, particularly with regard to Community Law. The Association has set up a data bank, consisting principally of decisions, advice and studies by its Members relevant to the purpose of the Association, reports and conclusions produced during the colloquiums of the Association as well as other useful information.

2. The Conference of the European Constitutional Courts.

Until now (2011), this association has never applied for the operating grant foreseen by the legal basis of the programme.

## ACTIONS TAKEN BY THE COMMISSION

Between 2007 and 2010 the Commission launched 61 own initiative actions financed by the programme through public procurement procedures. In these cases, contrary to grants, the action is totally financed by the programme and the product or the result belongs to the Commission.

The actions financed cover a large range of subjects, including:

- Awareness raising and information campaigns on data protection, rights of the child, racism and xenophobia
- Creation and maintenance of websites: rights of the child, consular protection
- Studies (12) and research, including:

- Study on a common electoral system for the European Parliament; multiple candidacy; recognition of disqualifications;
  - Comparative study on Member States' legislation and practices in the area of diplomatic and consular protection;
  - Study on how Member States' legislation and Member States' practices deal with the issue of the past totalitarian crimes, in particular which methods and instruments Member States concerned have employed to do this;
  - Study on the practical obstacles encountered by same-sex couples when they move within the EU;
  - Study on national legislation on combating racism and xenophobia etc.
- 3 Eurobarometers (data controllers and citizens; awareness of EU citizenship; memory of the crimes committed by totalitarian regimes)
  - Conferences, seminars, events etc.

## THE INTERIM EVALUATION

The interim evaluation was carried out by the Commission with the support of an external contractor<sup>1</sup>. The contractor carried out an extensive survey amongst all direct beneficiaries of funding through the action and operating grants and carried out interviews with internal and external stakeholders of the programme.

The overall aims and objectives of the evaluation were:

- a) To provide an **overview** of the results obtained in the first three years of the programme;
- b) To provide an **assessment** of qualitative and quantitative aspects of the implementation in terms of **relevance, effectiveness and efficiency**;
- c) To provide **recommendations** and guidance on how implementation in the remaining years of the programme could be improved.

The evaluation was carried out in the second half of 2010 and is based on data from 2007 to 2010<sup>2</sup> and provided a very detailed representation of the performance of the programme and extensive statistical data on its beneficiaries.

## MAIN FINDINGS OF THE EVALUATION

### RELEVANCE OF THE FRC PROGRAMME

The FRC programme is highly relevant to the needs it was set out to address. The FRC programme has contributed to the development and strengthening of EU actions in the areas of freedom, security and justice and specifically responded to the need to protect fundamental rights and promote EU citizenship.

The programme's objectives are pertinent to the needs, problems and issues they were designed to address, and hence externally coherent as indicated by the survey amongst beneficiaries. Furthermore, the annual priorities set out in the work programme allow it to be responsive and reactive to changing needs and policy orientations of the Commission. An example of this is the inclusion of fighting homophobia, which has proven to be a successful addition to the priorities. However, the FRC Programme covers a broad spectrum of policy areas which are also partially contained in other EU programmes, and as a result the impact of the implemented activities is not as focused on specific areas as it could be.

This has resulted in a steady rise in applicants and in an ever growing competition for the little funding that is available for action grants. The number of applications has more than tripled in

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<sup>1</sup> EPEC led by GHK Consulting, [www.ghkint.com](http://www.ghkint.com)

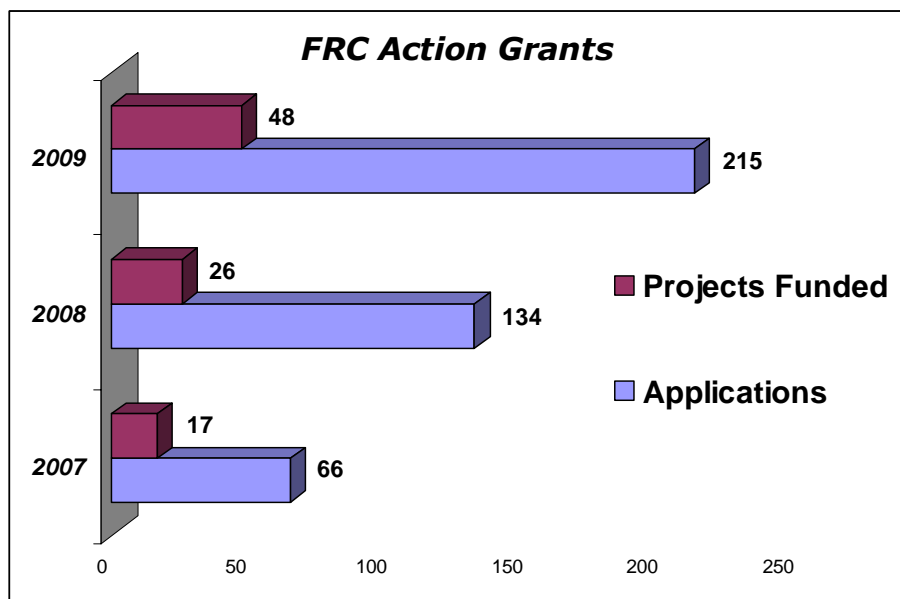
<sup>2</sup> Action Grants: 18 projects started in 2008 (finished), 26 projects 2009 (mid-term point)

Operating Grants: 3 in 2008, 7 in 2009 and 5 in 2010

Commission initiatives in 2007-2009: 47 with 12 foreseen for 2010.

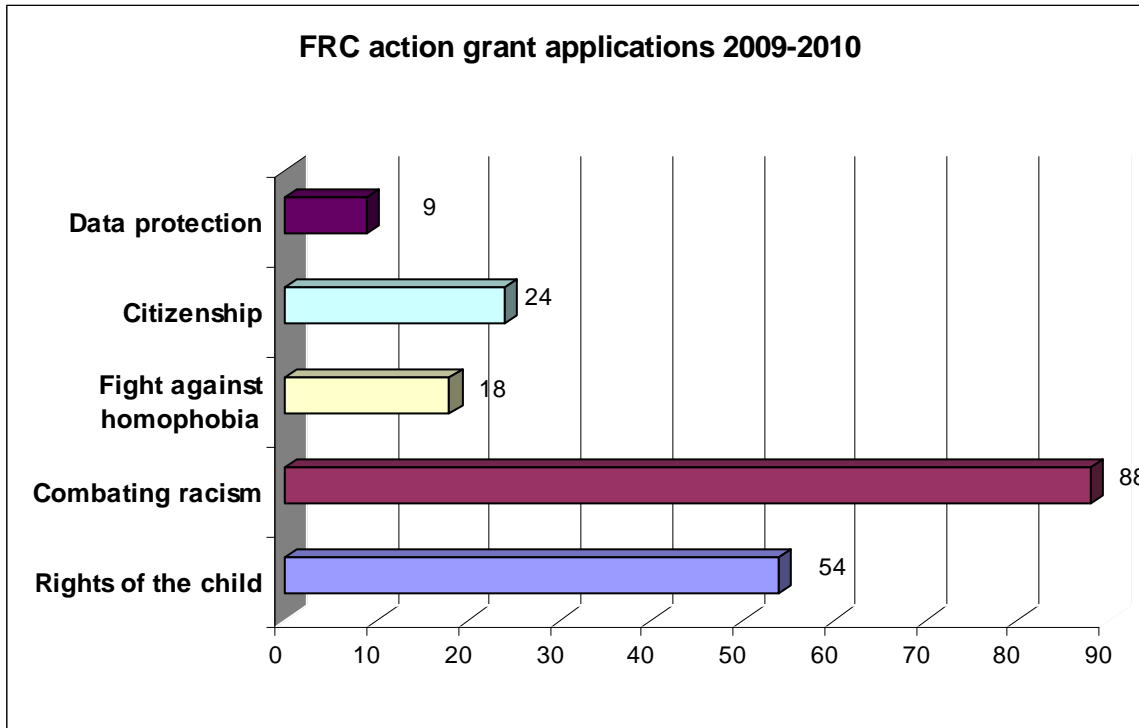


three years from 66 in 2007 to 215 in 2009-2010. By contrast, the interest in funding through operating grants has been limited with applications not exceeding 20 in the 4 years of calls published.



As regards the internal coherence of the programme, the implemented actions (projects funded and specific activities launched by the Commission) are strongly in line with the programme objectives and there is a strong correlation between the activities that have been (or are being) implemented by the projects and the annual priorities contained in the Work Programmes as well as the broader programme objectives.

However, the activities funded through different actions (direct grants or Commission initiatives) are somewhat segregated from one another. This is partially due to an organisational separation within the DG, the Commission initiatives being driven and implemented by three separate policy units, whereas action and operating grants are managed by an operational/financial unit. A further disparity lies in the demand for funding for action grants according to priority areas and Commission initiatives funded in those areas. Whereas the initiatives show a balanced spread between fundamental rights, data protection and citizenship, the demand for funding in the fundamental rights areas (racism, children's rights and homophobia) constitutes over 82% of the applications received, whereas Citizenship with 12% and Data Protection under 5% are far less represented.



Although the correlation between the priorities and the projects funded is strong, the use of the results and the outputs of implemented activities to support policy developments could be improved. No formal mechanisms are in place to ensure that outcomes of action and operating grants are communicated to the policy units, or to other stakeholders involved in policymaking, and the dissemination of results takes place in a rather ad-hoc and informal way.

Several factors also demonstrate the EU added value of the actions funded under the FRC programme. In particular, EU funding is considered a crucial enabling force for the implemented activities and the European dimension of projects in general helps the dissemination of results. In addition, involving partners from different Member States provides benefits with respect to increasing innovation, exchange of good practice and amplifying impacts. The approaches developed and the results of many projects can be implemented in other countries with minor changes.

#### **EFFECTIVENESS OF THE FRC 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.

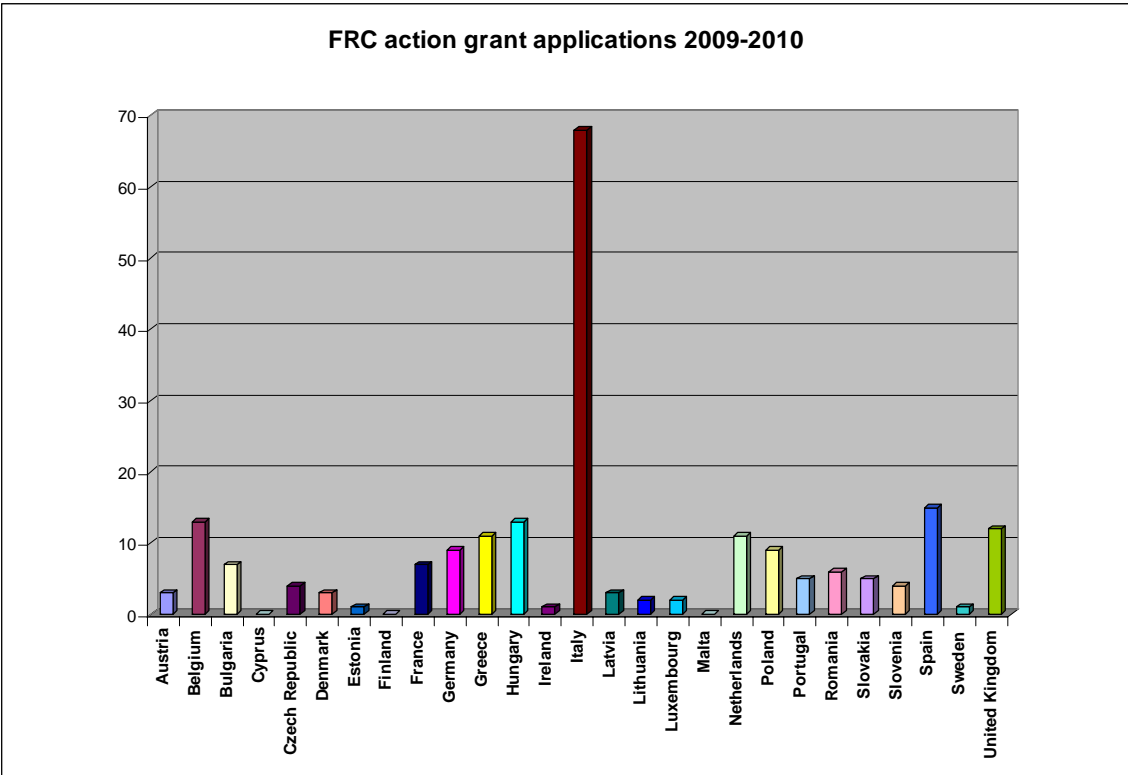
It is nevertheless clear from the evaluation carried out that the type of projects having been funded as well as the initiatives taken by the Commission, have all fallen under the objectives and priorities of the programme. However, a clear limiting factor to these contributing to reaching the objectives of the programme is the funding available, especially on a European scale. With an upper limit of €1000000 per 2 year project with an average of 4 partners, this leaves a maximum funding of just over €125000 per year per partner, which does not usually

enable projects to transcend beyond their wider partnerships and show a true European dimension and added value.

Overall, no major obstacles that would be considered as a detriment to the progress in implementing the activities were identified by the beneficiaries. 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.

By the very nature of the selection criteria for funding projects, these have proven to be effective in promoting cooperation between participating countries. Furthermore, the focus on balanced partnerships and equal attribution of tasks and participation in the project, not least regulated by a balanced distribution of funding, have resulted in healthy participative management of the projects and a fertile feeding ground for establishing and exchanging best practices.

In spite of these positive aspects it remains evident that the projects have as much led to the deepening of collaboration between existing partners as to the creation of new partnerships. Further to this, 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.



**EFFICIENCY OF THE FRC PROGRAMME**

The percentage of Commission funding allocated to action grants is close to the limits foreseen by the Financial Regulation. For operating grants this percentage is much lower, not

least due to the funding limit of €300000 per organisation. Nevertheless, with a significant proportion of beneficiaries being NGOs, these are encountering increasing difficulties in obtaining co-funding from other sources, due to the effects the financial crisis is having on availability of national funding for this type of activities and organisations.

The Commission's general management ability was considered appropriate by the beneficiaries surveyed, including in terms of guidance and reporting arrangements. However with the rapidly increasing popularity and success of the programme (application numbers have more than tripled between 2007 and 2010) the Commission's human resources are becoming overstretched and some important aspects such as closely monitoring projects throughout their life cycles have become less and less feasible. As a result the potential for vertical mainstreaming of FRC funded activities as well as dissemination and use of results to strengthen policy has not been optimally realised.

The efficiency of the delivery in terms of selection procedures has undergone profound changes and the move away from paper-based submission of proposals to the on-line application tool "Priamos" have simplified the first stages of that process significantly. However, in particular, aspects related to the plethora of documents required for submission and the lengthy evaluation procedure that follows, are considered as significant obstacles by the beneficiaries. Furthermore, the obligation of consulting a comitology committee on the outcome of the selections was identified as a further internal obstacle towards reducing the delays between the submission of proposals and the final awarding of grants.

The complex financial conditions governing the latest generation of multi-beneficiary grants and the extensive financial reporting obligations have been identified as hindrances in the efficient implementation of the projects by the beneficiaries. Some stakeholders considered that both the requirements in terms of co-financing to be provided by the beneficiaries and the required partnerships and European dimension, were an obstacle. As the nature of the activities funded would suggest, FRC action and operating grants have allocated most of their budgets to staff costs, costs relating to conferences and seminars, publications and dissemination as well as other direct costs. These costs are directly invested in the implementation of activities for the target groups. 88 % of total action grant costs and 86% of operating grant costs have been allocated to these categories. Action grants tend to allocate more resources to dissemination, as well as to conferences and seminars, whereas for operating grants the staff costs are comparatively higher.

## **SUSTAINABILITY OF THE FRC PROGRAMME**

The beneficiaries of action and operating grants are reliant on Commission funding to implement activities and to achieve impacts on the ground. The full achievement of objectives, particularly with a longer-term view, is also reliant on further funding. This has been achieved in some case by the same organisations securing funding from the FRC programme through consecutive successful applications, though this does not apply to the vast majority of organisations.

Many beneficiaries are making efforts to obtain additional funding for their activities, although only a few have managed this and consequently the co-funding is mainly provided by their own resources.

However, evidence also suggests that some of the completed activities are likely to have sustainable impacts even without additional injection of funds due to their validity beyond the project's scope. This is reflected in some of the outputs such as training manuals, tool kits and best practices being used beyond the end of the projects. Further evidence of sustainability of programme outcomes can be found in the durability and stability of partnerships developed within the grants. These partnerships in many cases have further deepened or indeed been formalised through the creation of informal or formal networks and are likely to continue to implement activities together.

The activities are likely to continue in a new format even if not necessarily with the same level of ambition. The needs of target groups are evolving and other approaches may be appropriate, rather than continuation of the same type of activities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

In response to the issues identified during the programme evaluation, the Commission plans to implement the following measures in order to strengthen the impact of the programme and improve its implementation.

### **IMPROVED FOCUS OF EU POLICY PRIORITIES**

The relevance of the programme was highlighted by all the stakeholders consulted, however its impact has been limited in part by the diffuse prioritising of funding. Therefore in order to accentuate the relevance of the programme, a narrowing of the wide coverage of the programme may help to increase its impact. In this respect, the number of annual priorities could be streamlined and significantly reduced.

It should also be considered, in particular with a view to the next generation of programmes, to focus 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 within other DGs that have significantly higher budgets for this type of direct funding.

### **CONCENTRATION ON PROJECTS WITH A STRONG EUROPEAN DIMENSION**

Throughout the first years of funding under the FRC programme, the element of multi-lateral partnerships and the involvement of a large number of actors and in some cases, Member States, have been promoted with considerable success. This approach however has the adverse effect of allocating only limited funding to many beneficiaries and therefore diffusing the impact these can achieve with the activities funded.

Therefore, 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, as they would be broader and better elaborated with a stronger added value at EU level and greater sustainability resulting from it.

Following the same aim, 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, considering the continuously limited interest shown by applicants and the restrained visibility the FRC programme and its objectives have through this type of funding.

### **BALANCE OF PARTICIPATION IN THE FRC PROGRAMME**

The participation in the FRC programme continues to show a preponderance of beneficiaries from certain Member States and an underrepresentation of beneficiaries, both direct and indirect, from the 12 newest Member States.

In order to address this, the Commission will seek to target information campaigns at organisations in those Member States and increase its contacts with the relevant national and regional authorities to act as multipliers for these campaigns to overcome the limitations set by the funding available for such actions.

### **MORE EFFICIENT MANAGEMENT OF THE FRC PROGRAMME**

With the growing success of the programme and the rising number of applications for funding and indeed of projects funded, further efforts are needed to streamline the processes that govern the life-cycle of projects.

The application process, having recently seen the introduction of the electronic application system PRIAMOS, has shown great potential in facilitating the work of applicants and Commission alike and has achieved a paper-less initial submission of proposals. There are many further potential advantages to be drawn from the system and the Commission will take further steps to streamline the system's user-friendliness, efficiency and speed and to strive towards it becoming 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 in-built delays caused by the obligation of consulting the FRC programme committee on the outcome of selections and to assess whether the administrative burden of this procedure is warranted by the very limited funding concerned.

To further improve the efficiency of the programme efforts will be made to strengthen the Commission's support and monitoring capability towards beneficiaries throughout the "life cycle" of the implemented actions. This will contribute towards a better implementation of the activities as well as an increased understanding and mainstreaming of policy priorities and good practices.

### **IMPROVED DISSEMINATION AND EXPLOITATION OF RESULTS**

The evaluation found that the deliverables and outputs produced by the projects would benefit from a more targeted dissemination and from being used as resources for policy development.

In order to achieve this, 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 fertile feeding ground for cross-fertilisation between these two funding mechanisms of the programme.

Together with this results-driven approach 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 specific successful projects as a means to illustrate further the added value of the programme.

## CONCLUSIONS

The Interim evaluation confirms the importance of the Fundamental Rights and Citizenship programme in promoting the respect for fundamental rights, encouraging dialogue and fighting racism and xenophobia.

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 for the relevance and added value of the programme. The fact that in the latest selection rounds the demand for funding exceeded 5 times the funds available is a clear indicator of the potential of the programme to further develop and expand.

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 of 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.

Therefore, in order to further improve the impact and effectiveness of the programme, the Commission will further focus the programme, ensure a stronger coherence between result-driven projects and policy developments, spread the reach of the programme to the EU12 Member States, rationalise the management processes of the programme and emphasise the dissemination of its achievements.