



**Overview of the cooperation between the  
European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights  
and the Council of Europe**  
*(1 January 2020 – 31 December 2020)*

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## Part I: What do we want to achieve together, and in which areas?

### 1.1. Introduction

The cooperation between the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (the Agency or FRA) and the Council of Europe (CoE) is based on FRA's Founding Regulation<sup>1</sup> and on the European Community's and Council of Europe's agreement on cooperation between the two entities.<sup>2</sup> This EU-CoE Agreement, adopted in 2008, established a general cooperation framework. It aims to avoid duplication and ensure complementarity between, and added value to, the work of FRA and the CoE.

The cooperation between the Agency and the CoE has evolved continuously in recent years, moving towards improved coordination of activities and synergies between FRA and the CoE Secretariat, the Parliamentary Assembly, the European Court of Human Rights, and the Commissioner for Human Rights.

This document presents the key objectives and methods of this cooperation. It also provides concrete examples of cooperation activities in relevant fields between 1 January 2020 and mid-October 2020.

### 1.2. Key objectives

In their cooperation, the CoE and the Agency pursue common objectives and strategic priorities related to promoting and protecting human rights, based on the above-mentioned cooperation agreement.

The cooperation mainly focuses on:

- Developing joint projects in areas of mutual concern;
- Engaging in dialogue with stakeholders to improve respect for fundamental rights in Europe;
- Coordinating communication activities to increase awareness on fundamental rights;
- Informing each other about the results of each organisation's activities;
- Exchanging data and consulting each other at operational level.

### 1.3. Methods and review of cooperation

#### 1.3.1. Permanent mechanisms of cooperation

Different mechanisms laid down in the Agency's Founding Regulation and in the EU-CoE Agreement ensure complementarity in the relationship between the Agency and the CoE.

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<sup>1</sup> Council Regulation (EC) No 168/2007 of 15 February 2007 establishing a European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, OJ L 53, 22.2.2007, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Agreement between the European Community and the Council of Europe on cooperation between the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and the Council of Europe (hereafter the EU-CoE Agreement), OJ L 186, 15.7.2008, p. 7.

For instance, the CoE has appointed an independent member to FRA's Management and Executive Boards. This person also participates as a voting member in the selection of the members of FRA's Scientific Committee.

In addition, a representative of the CoE Secretariat is present as observer at FRA Management Board meetings, as well as at the regular meetings of the board's Annual Report Editorial Committee (AREdit).

Moreover, once a year, a senior CoE representative is invited to address FRA's Management Board. This allows for an exchange of views between the CoE and FRA, and keeps FRA's Management Board fully informed of key activities planned by the CoE.

Periodical exchanges of views between the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on External Relations (GR-EXT), the independent person appointed to FRA's Boards by the CoE, and FRA's Director also foster efficient cooperation between the two organisations.

Article 9 of FRA's Founding Regulation prescribes consultations between FRA and the CoE during the preparation of the Agency's Annual Work Programmes and the Agency's annual report on fundamental rights issues. This ensures that CoE priorities, activities and findings are properly taken into account in key FRA documents in general, and in the Agency's annual report (*Fundamental Rights Report*) in particular.

In addition, Article 3 of the EU-CoE Agreement provides that each entity shall appoint a contact person to deal specifically with matters relating to their cooperation. The respective contact persons continuously exchange information.

Furthermore, the services of both organisations contribute to each other's work at different stages of activities and projects. Finally, inter-institutional meetings further enhance collaboration.

### 1.3.2. Forms of cooperation at operational level

The operational cooperation between FRA and the CoE is an ongoing, day-to-day process. This cooperation takes various forms. It includes: consultations on specific projects and activities; regular exchanges of data and information; participation in inception meetings of projects; joint projects and activities; the Agency's observer status in several CoE human rights monitoring and intergovernmental committees; participation in respective civil society structures; and complementarity through mutual references to each other's work.

The contact persons appointed by the CoE and the Agency are informed about these activities on a regular basis so that they can facilitate the process and ensure its continuity and consistency. Furthermore, since 2019, a bi-annual meeting takes place between FRA's and the CoE's management teams to further strengthen cooperation and to exchange views on respective current and future priorities.

The Agency cooperates at an operational level with a number of relevant bodies and services of the CoE. These include the Secretariat – Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law and the Directorate General of Democracy; the Commissioner for Human Rights; the Parliamentary Assembly; the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR); the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR); and the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI).

FRA also participate as an observer in inter-governmental committees and expert groups, such as the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion and its substructures (CDADI). FRA also cooperates with the European Committee for

the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT), as well as other human rights monitoring committees, the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), the Venice Commission, the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, and the Conference of INGOs.

FRA relies in its work on the standards set by the CoE and takes due account of the judgments of the ECtHR and the way they are being implemented, the decisions and conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights, reports and activities of other CoE human rights monitoring bodies and intergovernmental committees, as well as reports by the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights.

FRA also maintains an online platform – the European Union Fundamental Rights Information System (EFRIS)<sup>3</sup> – which provides details on commitments to international human rights obligations and compliance with CoE and UN monitoring mechanisms. The CoE participates in the EFRIS expert/advisory group. So far, EFRIS includes the ECtHR, ECSR, CPT, ECRI and the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), with further mechanisms to be added.

In turn, FRA data and findings support the work of the CoE. For example, ECtHR and ECSR case law regularly cites the Agency's reports.<sup>4</sup> FRA also regularly submits relevant findings and information in response to ECRI's calls for submissions in preparation for its monitoring work. ECRI's monitoring reports make regular reference to FRA's publications – for instance the *Fundamental Rights Report*,<sup>5</sup> FRA survey data and thematic reports.

So far in 2020, the country reports on Germany, Austria and Belgium of ECRI's Sixth Monitoring Cycle have referred to, and used as evidence, data and information from FRA research – in particular the Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey (EU-MIDIS II);<sup>6</sup> the LGBTI survey;<sup>7</sup> the Roma survey;<sup>8</sup> the opinion on the Framework Decision on Racism and xenophobia – with special attention to the rights of victims of crime;<sup>9</sup> the thematic report on access to effective remedies from the perspective of asylum seekers;<sup>10</sup> and the survey results on discrimination and hate crime against Jews in EU Member States.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The [EU Fundamental Rights Information System](#) is available via FRA's website.

<sup>4</sup> See for example: ECtHR, *Equal Rights Trust v. Bulgaria*, Complaint No. 121/2016, 16 December 2018, *European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC) v. Bulgaria*, Complaint No. 151/2017, 5 December 2018; Conclusions 2015 (Article 19§4, Slovenia); *Beizaras and Levickas v. Lithuania* (Application no. 41288/15), 14 January 2020; *N.D. AND N.T. v. Spain* (Applications nos. 8675/15 and 8697/15), 13 February 2020.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, FRA (2020), [Fundamental Rights Report 2020](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union (Publications Office).

<sup>6</sup> FRA (2017), [Second European Union Minorities and Discrimination Survey - Main results](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<sup>7</sup> FRA (2020), [A long way to go for LGBTI equality](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<sup>8</sup> FRA (2020), [Roma and Travellers Survey: Europe needs to break the vicious circle of poverty and discrimination against Roma and Travellers](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<sup>9</sup> FRA (2013), [FRA Opinion on the Framework Decision on Racism and Xenophobia – with special attention to the rights of victims of crime](#), Vienna, 15 October 2013.

<sup>10</sup> FRA (2010), [Access to effective remedies: The asylum-seeker perspective](#).

<sup>11</sup> FRA (2013), [Discrimination and hate crime against Jews in EU Member States: experiences and perceptions of antisemitism](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

Similarly, the CoE Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) Baseline Evaluation Report on the Netherlands references FRA's survey report on Violence against women.<sup>12</sup>

The CoE Commissioner for Human Rights also repeatedly mentioned FRA's work in her Human Rights Comments ("Close the gap – How to ensure human rights for all")<sup>13</sup>; and in her third-party intervention submitted in the proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Florin Buhuceanu and Victor Ciobotaru v. Romania* and 12 other applications.<sup>14</sup>

The CoE's report 'Digital Solution to fight COVID-19' also refers to FRA's work.<sup>15</sup>

Moreover, the Ad-hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (CAHROM) makes reference in its thematic reports to FRA reports. These include the Roma survey, the Indicators Framework developed by the Roma Working Party facilitated by FRA, and FRA's thematic Roma reports on education, housing and gender.<sup>16</sup>

Such cross-references help disseminate the results of the respective activities of the CoE and FRA on a reciprocal basis. Reciprocal consultation and feedback, as well as participation at meetings and events, have become integral parts of both organisations' working methods.

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<sup>12</sup> FRA (2014), [Violence against women: an EU-wide survey. Main results report](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<sup>13</sup> Council of Europe (2020), [Close the gap How to ensure human rights for all](#), Compilation of Human Rights Comments published in 2018 and 2019 by Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights.

<sup>14</sup> Council of Europe (2020), [Commissioner publishes observations on the absence of legal recognition of same-sex relationships in Romania](#), September 2020.

<sup>15</sup> Council of Europe (2020), [Digital solutions to fight Covid-19: 2020 data protection report](#), October 2020.

<sup>16</sup> For more information, see the Council of Europe's webpage on the [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)](#) and its webpage on [CAHROM](#). See also FRA (2020), [Roma and Travellers Survey: Europe needs to break the vicious circle of poverty and discrimination against Roma and Travellers](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

## Part II: Inter-institutional and regulatory cooperation in 2020

### 2.1. Inter-institutional and regulatory cooperation

The independent person appointed by the CoE participated in FRA's Executive Board and Management Board meetings. In addition, the CoE Secretariat representative participated in FRA Management Board meetings as an observer.

The new independent member of FRA's Management Board appointed by the CoE, Philippe Boillat, was nominated on 1 July 2020. Lawrence Early was appointed to serve as his alternate. Philippe Boillat was elected to FRA's Management Board's Annual Report Editorial Committee (AREDIT), while the CoE Secretariat representative also participates as an observer.

In March, FRA's Director met with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner for Human Rights, and the two General Directors of the Council of Europe. On the same occasion, he also met with Heads of EU Missions to the CoE as well as the Head of the EU Delegation. The discussions focused on how to further strengthen cooperation between FRA and Council of Europe, and to exchange views on respective current and future priorities. Among thematic priority areas for cooperation, the following topics were suggested: EFRIS, artificial intelligence, Roma and Travellers, National Human Rights Institutions, migration and asylum.

Due to the COVID-19 outbreak, FRA did not address the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on External Relations (GR-EXT) this year.

The external contractor conducting the mid-term review of FRA's Strategy 2018-2022 consulted the CoE.<sup>17</sup> The Agency also consulted the CoE directly on FRA's Programming Document 2021-2022. Through these consultations, the CoE provides valuable input into FRA's programming cycle, creating programmatic synergies between the two organisations.

### 2.2. FRA-CoE cooperation on Handbooks

The handbooks jointly produced by the CoE, the ECtHR, and FRA are a very concrete example of the successful cooperation and complementarity between FRA and the CoE.

The handbooks cover very diverse and crucially important areas, such as data protection; asylum, borders and immigration; non-discrimination law; rights of the child; and access to justice. They examine relevant European law stemming from both the EU and the CoE, including case law by the Court of Justice of the EU and the European Court of Human Rights. The handbooks are designed for legal practitioners, providing an accessible guide to the various European standards in the field at issue. A new handbook, on European law relating to cybercrime and fundamental rights, is planned for next year.

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<sup>17</sup> See [FRA Strategy 2018-2022](#).



Many stakeholders have expressed high appreciation for the handbooks. Statistics on downloads from FRA's website and the dissemination by the EU Publications Office further show their appeal.

For instance, in 2020, 45,031 copies of the *Handbook on European law relating to asylum, borders and immigration* were downloaded (in various languages). The *Handbook on European data protection law* was downloaded 33,428 times; the *Handbook on European Law relating to the Rights of the Child* was downloaded 16,377 times; and the *Handbook on European non-discrimination law* was downloaded 10,022 times.

Furthermore, the EU Publications Office disseminated 3,345 hard-copies of the data protection handbook. In addition, it disseminated 1,152 copies of the handbook on asylum, borders and immigration, in various languages. Finally, it disseminated 330 copies of the non-discrimination handbook, as well as 156 copies of the handbook on the rights of the child.

Notable developments on handbooks in 2020 include:

*Update of the Handbook on European law relating to asylum, borders and immigration*

The Agency and the European Court of Human Rights updated the 2014 version of the handbook.<sup>18</sup> The updated version has been published in five languages in 2020, with additional translations to follow in 2021. It provides an accessible guide to the various European standards relevant to asylum, borders and immigration, stemming from both the European Union and the Council of Europe.

*New language versions of the updated Handbook on European data protection law*

In 2020, the 2018 edition of the handbook<sup>19</sup> was published in Croatian, Polish and Romanian. FRA has now published 11 language versions of the handbook; the Council of Europe added a Georgian version. This handbook is designed to familiarise legal practitioners not specialised in data protection with this emerging area of the law.

*New language versions of the updated Handbook on European non-discrimination law<sup>20</sup>*

In 2020, this handbook was published in Hungarian, Dutch, and Czech. It will also be published in Bulgarian, Croatian and Slovenian. This handbook examines European non-discrimination law stemming from the EU non-discrimination directives and the European Convention on Human Rights as complementary systems, drawing on them interchangeably to the extent that they overlap, while highlighting differences where these exist.

*Handbook on European Law relating to the Rights of the Child<sup>21</sup>*

In 2020, this handbook was published in Georgian. The process of updating the handbook is underway, with its publication scheduled for the second half of 2021. A preparatory meeting was held with representatives from the European Court of Human Rights and the Children's Rights Division. This handbook aims to illustrate how European law and case law accommodate the specific interests and needs of children.

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<sup>18</sup> FRA (2014), [Handbook on European law relating to asylum, borders and immigration](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<sup>19</sup> FRA (2018), [Handbook on European data protection law - 2018 edition](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<sup>20</sup> FRA (2018), [Handbook on European non-discrimination law - 2018 edition](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

<sup>21</sup> FRA (2015), [Handbook on European law relating to the rights of the child](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.



## Part III: Operational cooperation in 2020

### 3.1. Key highlights – Cooperation in the Agency's five thematic programme areas, and on COVID-19's impact on fundamental rights

#### 3.1.1. Fair and equal society

##### *Executive Summary*

Cooperation between FRA and the CoE has been very solid throughout 2020, covering a wide range of different thematic areas. These range from Roma integration and children's rights to racism and anti-discrimination, as well as the advancement of social and economic rights. Significantly, FRA was invited to contribute to the work of both the CoE Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and the Child Rights Steering Committee (CDENF).

FRA and ECRI further enhanced their cooperation on countering racism and discrimination and fostering diversity and inclusion. In May, for the first time, FRA's Director addressed ECRI's Bureau, exemplifying the heightened and fruitful institutional cooperation on these subjects. They exchanged views on how the Agency can best support the work of ECRI. They also discussed FRA's research findings on the fundamental rights impact of EU Member State measures taken in response to the COVID-19 outbreak,<sup>22</sup> which was also taken up in a study on the topic that was prepared for the CDADI. In addition, they discussed the Agency's work on racism and related intolerance, such as antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, anti-Gypsyism, as well as its most recent report *A long way to go for LGBTI equality*.<sup>23</sup> Discussions also touched upon FRA's work on effectively communicating human rights.

FRA continued to provide information for the preparation of ECRI's country reports and visits, including references to the Agency's newest publications, such as the LGBTI Survey and the Fundamental Rights Report 2020. ECRI's reports make regular reference to FRA's work. At the same time, ECRI continued to provide input to the preparation of FRA's annual report. The good cooperation between FRA and ECRI was also confirmed by their joint statement, along with other IGOs, for the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

On social and economic rights, the dedicated CoE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET collaborative platform held its first online meeting in July. It was entitled "*Sustainable Economic and Social Recovery Based on an Equality and Human Rights Approach – What role for National Human Rights Institutions and National Equality Bodies?*". The meeting highlighted the profound and transformative societal challenges triggered by the COVID-19 outbreak and their impact on social and economic rights.

With regard to LGBTI rights, FRA participated in regular meetings of the LGBTI Governmental Focal Points, coordinated by the CoE's SOGI Unit.

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<sup>22</sup> See FRA's [Bulletins on fundamental rights impacts of the Coronavirus pandemic in the EU](#).

<sup>23</sup> FRA (2020), [A long way to go for LGBTI equality](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

### *Rights of the child*

The topic of the Rights of the Child has continued to be a key topic for coordination and cooperation, and in particular due to the disruptive impact of COVID-19 on children's lives.

In cooperation with the European Commission, FRA and the CoE have focused on an upcoming comprehensive EU child rights strategy as well as on a new CoE strategy. FRA also continues to contribute to, and support the work of, the Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF). In September 2020, the committee held a virtual plenary session for the exchange of views on preparing the Council of Europe's Strategy for the rights of the child (2022-2027).

FRA and the Council of Europe have also initiated the update of the Handbook on European law relating to the Rights of the Child.

### 3.1.2. Just, digital and secure societies

Cooperation on the topic of artificial intelligence remained positive during the period under review, as in previous years.

FRA participated, as observer, in the work of the CoE's Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI), in particular its Policy Development Group (PDG) and, in this context, was able to inform this CoE body's work with its evidence. CAHAI is tasked with examining the feasibility, and potential elements of, a legal framework for the development, design and application of artificial intelligence based on human rights, democracy and rule of law standards.

FRA also disseminated its evidence and findings in the area of AI, victims of crime and non-discrimination, in particular by informing the work of the Expert Committee on Freedom of Expression and Digital Technologies (MSI-DIG) and the Expert Committee on Combating Hate Speech (CDADI/MSI-DIS), and participated in their first meetings in September 2020.

Fruitful cooperation and different exchanges also took place in other thematic areas. These include violence against women and domestic violence, data protection, business and human rights, as well as cybercrime; for instance, FRA contributed to capacity building at the national level in these areas. Further cooperation and exchanges took place at an event organised by the Secretariat of the Committee of Convention 108 where FRA presented its research on facial recognition technology. The Agency also contributed to the work of the Council of Europe on its new HELP Course on Cybercrime and Electronic Evidence, and cooperated with the CoE on revising the CoE HELP training course on Business and Human Rights, which as of this year includes a new module on the environment.

### 3.1.3. Migration, asylum and borders

Cooperation between CoE and FRA on migration, asylum and border-related human rights issues involved different themes and projects.

Among other highlights in 2020, FRA and the European Court of Human Rights updated the Handbook related to asylum, borders and immigration in five language versions. Once public, it will support legal practitioners across Europe.

At the end of 2019, Mr Drahoslav Štefánek was appointed as the CoE Special Representative for Migration and Refugees. FRA and the Office of the Special Representative enhanced their cooperation, as exemplified by the jointly published paper on *Fundamental Rights of refugees, asylum applicants and migrants at the European borders*<sup>24</sup> and by the work within the framework of the Frontex Consultative Forum. The joint publication helped clarify European legislation and case law, as Member States were taking actions to respond to challenges at their borders.

Other joint initiatives between FRA and the CoE included cooperation in developing practical guidance ('dos and don'ts') for border guards on how to fully comply with fundamental rights when controlling the EU's external land borders,<sup>25</sup> as well as regular informal exchanges of information between FRA and different CoE entities on the situation in Greece. The Council of Europe was also involved in finalising FRA's report *Relocating unaccompanied children: applying good practices to future schemes*,<sup>26</sup> which informed the development of standard operating procedures for relocating children from Greece.

Fainly, the CoE-IHRB Division contributed to FRA's Fundamental Rights Report.

### 3.1.4. Supporting human rights systems

FRA and the CoE maintained a broad cooperation in 2020 in their joint support and development of human rights systems.

Through FRA's European Union Fundamental Rights Information System (EFRIS), the CoE's mechanisms and the findings of its monitoring bodies are made easily accessible and searchable. In 2020, further CoE mechanisms were added to EFRIS: the European Court of Human Rights, the European Committee of Social Rights and the anti-corruption mechanism GRECO. The follow-up on the implementation of judgments by the European Court of Human Rights (the Execution Department) is expected to go live in late 2020. An exchange of letters between FRA and CoE is being finalised.

The year 2020, moreover, was characterised by sustained mutual contribution to outputs, particularly on National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). The CoE contributed to FRA's report on NHRIs as member of an advisory board for the project. Meanwhile, FRA participated, as observer, in the CoE's Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), taking part in discussions on drafting a Committee of Ministers Recommendation to Member States on establishing independent NHRIs.

Other specific examples of cooperation in 2020 on relevant themes include the shared effort on civic space. FRA and the CoE also continued to cooperate on the topic of human rights defenders, notably through the IGO Contact Group on HRDs. FRA experts coordinating FRA's Fundamental Rights Platform are also in regular contact with the Conference of INGOs. A FRA expert was a speaker at the working seminar on the

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<sup>24</sup> Council of Europe and FRA (2020), [Fundamental rights of refugees, asylum applicants and migrants at the European borders](#).

<sup>25</sup> Council of Europe and FRA (2020), [Border controls and fundamental rights at external land borders](#).

<sup>26</sup> FRA (2020), [Relocating unaccompanied children: applying good practices to future schemes](#), Luxembourg: Publications Office.

transformation of the CSO sector organised by the Conference of INGOs in February 2020.

Building on the good cooperation established in 2019, moreover, FRA and the CoE continued to collaborate on human rights at the local level. FRA involved the CoE Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC) in developing a framework of commitments for human rights cities. Cooperation on this important area is expected to increase in 2021, when the framework will be finalised.

FRA also continues to cooperate with the CoE HELP Programme in various ways. This includes contributing to updating its online courses and having its experts participate in HELP training events, which regularly feature FRA publications and capacity-building tools.

The CoE also participates in regular online information exchange meetings organised by FRA on business and human rights, with participation also from the UN Human Rights Office, the OECD and the ILO.

The close cooperation between FRA and the CoE leads to better coordination and impact, across the board, in areas such as civic space and national human rights institutions. For instance, EFRIS guides users to the CoE databases (HUDOC) for the respective mechanisms, and provides a reminder of the various mechanisms that exist. FRA's work on the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU also generates numerous references to the standards of the CoE, reinforcing the standards in an EU context.

### 3.1.5. Communicating rights

#### *Executive Summary*

FRA and the CoE further increased their established cooperation on the topic of communicating human rights in 2020. This was further intensified by working together on effective communication during the COVID-19 pandemic.

FRA has engaged the CoE in its Human Rights Communicators Network (including the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, ECRI and the Secretariat). The network focuses on strategic communication on human rights and aims to identify possibilities for joint communication activities. The group's membership has increased to 307 members. Chief communication officers from various other institutional partners also participate in the network.

Cooperation on communicating rights occurred on a regular basis – marked, for example, by FRA promoting work by the Council of Europe and its bodies via social media posts. A specific example is the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights' video message on the occasion of FRA's launch of its Fundamental Rights Survey in June 2020.

The efforts of the Agency to communicate rights effectively can, among others, be seen in the rising number of media items published related to FRA. At the end of September, this number peaked to 412.

Moreover, communicating rights featured prominently at the first meeting of the Advisory Board of the Fundamental Rights Forum 2021, in which the CoE participates. Communicating human rights remained a key theme of FRA's cooperation with ECRI, as well. In September, FRA shared its experience on communicating human rights and equality messages at ECRI's annual seminar with equality bodies.

### 3.1.6. COVID-19 impact on fundamental rights

FRA and the CoE cooperated in several ways to highlight and report on the impact of COVID-19 on fundamental rights.

FRA has shared with the CoE its periodic bulletins on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on fundamental rights across the 27 EU Member States. The bulletins look at population groups who are disproportionately affected by the pandemic, such as people with disabilities, older people, Roma, migrants, detainees, homeless people and victims of domestic violence. It examines issues such as xenophobic speech, harassment and violent attacks; disinformation and fake news relating to the virus; and contact-tracing apps. They look at impacts in different areas of daily life, including work, education, freedom of movement, and the judicial system.

At the same time, the CoE has shared with FRA its reports and statements regarding the impact of COVID-19 on human rights.

In March 2020, FRA and the Office of the Special Representative jointly published a paper on *Fundamental Rights of refugees, asylum applicants and migrants at the European borders*,<sup>27</sup> covering special measures imposed in case of a pandemic.

In the exchange between FRA's Director with ECRI's Bureau, the findings of FRA's research on the impact of COVID-19 on racial discrimination was discussed. The findings were also taken up in a study on the topic by ECRI, which was prepared for the CDADI.

In June 2020, FRA joined the first exchange of views of the Council of Europe's Child Rights Steering Committee. It was an opportunity to take stock, from a child rights perspective, of lessons learnt to date from the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in Member States. Committee members and observers shared their perspectives on the disruptive impact of the coronavirus on children's lives, their wellbeing and their rights. FRA referred to its own bulletins on the fundamental rights implications of COVID-19 and relevant country studies. Participants also discussed how to ensure that child protection systems remain operational and effective in such situations.

In addition, FRA's work was mentioned in the CoE report 'Digital Solution to fight COVID-19'.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Council of Europe and FRA (2020), [Fundamental rights of refugees, asylum applicants and migrants at the European borders](#).

<sup>28</sup> Council of Europe (2020), [Digital solutions to fight Covid-19: 2020 data protection report](#), October 2020.

## Part IV: Outlook for cooperation in 2021

FRA and the CoE will continue its established institutional cooperation in 2021. A number of new initiatives will be taken and existing cooperation activities will be consolidated further.

A particular highlight will be the organisation of the Fundamental Rights Forum 2021 (FRF 2021). As a member of the FRF 2021 Advisory Board, the CoE will contribute to the conceptual development of this flagship EU human rights conference. Like in previous editions, the FRF will again give visibility to CoE initiatives and pull together the combined expertise of FRA, the CoE and other IGO partners, such as the UN and ODIHR.

Regarding handbooks, FRA, the CoE and the ECtHR will start consultations and continue to meet at expert's level, aiming to produce a new Handbook on European Law relating to Cybercrime and Fundamental Rights. Similarly, the process of updating the Handbook on the Rights of the Child will continue, with its publication scheduled for the second half of 2021. FRA, the CoE and the ECtHR will also look into producing new language versions of existing handbooks.

With regard to EFRIS, FRA and the CoE will further develop the tool, adding new mechanisms, such as GREVIO and GRETA – on violence against women and on trafficking, respectively.

FRA will also continue to participate in inter-governmental committees and expert groups, such as the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion and its substructures (CDADI), the Expert Committee on Freedom of Expression and Digital Technologies (MSI-DIG), the Expert Committee on Combating Hate Speech (CDADI/MSI-DIS), and the Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI), in particular its Policy Development Group (PDG).

Thematic cooperation between FRA and CoE will continue across many areas. These include, but also go beyond: combating racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance; equality and non-discrimination; asylum and migration; information society, data protection and artificial intelligence; the rights of the child; Roma and travellers; rights of LGBTI persons; national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and national human rights action plans; civil society space; human rights at the local level; the HELP Programme; sustainable development goals (SDGs); and communicating human rights.