

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FORUM 2018 - Consultation

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Survey name (ID): FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FORUM 2018 - Consultation (423448)

**Date submitted
submitdate**

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About the organisation

**For which organisation
are you working?**

Secretariat of COMECE (Commission of the Episcopates of the European Community)

Type of organisation

**Civil society
organisation (non-
governmental
organisations
dealing with
human rights;
trade unions;
employers'
organisations;
social and
professional
organisations;
churches,
religious,
philosophical and
non-confessional
organisations;
universities)**

**National Human
Rights Institution**

Equality Body

**Ombudsperson's
Institution**

National member

state of the European Union (national, regional or local authorities)

National Parliament in the European Union

National member state of the European Union (national, regional or local authorities)

Intergovernmental organisation (Council of Europe, UN, OSCE etc)

European Union institution/body

Judiciary

Other

"Organisation representing churches and religious communities": we would like to underline that the Church is not an NGO, by nature, status and contribution, in accordance with Article 17(1) TFEU. Furthermore, in some countries, even though characterised by autonomy, the Church cannot be considered as a non-State actor. The distinction enshrined in EU primary law between the EU-Churches Dialogue (Article 17(3) TFEU) and the EU-Civil Society Dialogue (Article 11 of the Treaty on European Union/TEU) must be respected. For this reason we have opted to tick the box "Other". In the same context, COMECE supports the call made by the European Parliament, with its recent Resolution of 1 June 2017 on the Multiannual Framework for 2018-2022 for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, to revise the Regulation establishing the Agency, so as to improve the procedures for its governance and functioning. In particular, Article 10(1) of the founding Regulation should be revised so as to clarify the distinction between Churches and the other actors of Article 17 TFEU on one side; and civil society organisations on the other, granting a specific status to Article 17 TFEU Dialogue partners (e.g. as observers in the Fundamental Rights Platform, should it continue to be considered as a tool of cooperation "with non-governmental organisations and with institutions of civil society").

In which thematic field is your organisation active?

Access to Justice Yes [Y]

Victims of crime Yes [Y]

Information society, privacy and data protection Yes [Y]

Judicial cooperation, except in criminal matters	Yes [Y]
Asylum, migration, borders	Yes [Y]
Racism, xenophobia and related intolerance	Yes [Y]
Equality on all grounds	Yes [Y]
Rights of the Child	Yes [Y]
Roma integration	Yes [Y]
Other	

What type of activities/ services does your organisation provide?

Policy advice, litigation and advocacy	Yes [Y]
Awareness raising, training and education	Yes [Y]
Representation of target group interests	
Research	Yes [Y]
Service provision to target groups	Yes [Y]
Other	

Questionnaire

What does belonging mean in your and/or your organisation's views?

- Being able to live in a community in accordance with one's faith; - Sharing cultures/languages; understandings on humanity in search of common good; and common destiny; - Structural importance of family, as first anthropological belonging, in all policies; - Children specific position, under the primary, shared guidance of the father and the mother; - Countering discrimination on grounds of religion (showing belonging to a religion may lead to discrimination by law/practice); - Role of reasonable accommodation, provided it is complementary to other legal tools (e.g. freedom of religion); and that options are left up to the national level; - Article 22 CFR as guiding principle.

Do you think that a Forum around the theme of "Belonging" will be useful for your work? Please tell us why.

Yes, provided that it leads to strengthening fundamental rights, rule of law and subsidiarity. For the Church, "...the characteristic implication of subsidiarity is participation" (Apostolic Letter Octogesima Adveniens, § 22, 46). Excessive emphasis on "belonging" entails some risks: weak societies tend to self-define themselves in a way that excludes some of their sectors. Therefore, there is a need for a positive understanding of "belonging", rooted in human dignity and respect for diversity. The Forum could also explore the meaning of EU citizenship/belonging to the EU as a community of citizens; and should lead to concrete policy options that reflect discussions.

Please give three questions or topics that could be discussed around "belonging"

Question/Topic 1

Perception of fully belonging through the protection of core fundamental rights, even when not in line with the real or perceived mainstream in societies (e.g.: conscientious objection, freedom of expression)

Question/Topic 2

Justiciability of fundamental rights and in particular of the one to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, as a way to enforce belonging in societies and to fight exclusion of people that practice their faith

Question/Topic 3

Cultural rights, respect for diversity and subsidiarity

Drawing from your experience, please give us one example of interesting or promising practices, projects and 'lessons learned' related to "belonging".

(If possible with a link to a website)

The Church offers to the human person a unique place to belong through faith regardless of origin, social status, sex or age, in a joint effort in view of the common good (e.g. in parish life). In this sense, the Church as such constitutes a long-standing example of integration by "belonging". From a theological point of view, belonging to the Catholic Church is receiving baptism and being in communion. Further concrete examples can be found in the COMECE Secretariat contribution to the 2015 Fundamental Rights' Colloquium (http://ec.europa.eu/justice/events/colloquium-fundamental-rights-2015/files/contributions/comece-commission_of_the_episcopates_of_the_european_community_en.pdf).

What would be your main objective for attending the Forum on "belonging" and what would you like to take out of it?

Bringing the specific contribution of the Church to the debate, in the context of Dialogue ex Article 17(3) TFEU: this provision refers to "the Union", and therefore encompasses EU Agencies (including FRA) as Dialogue partners for the Church. The Church is open to sharing its field experience on "belonging" and to promoting good practices, in dialogue with the EU institutions and in cooperation with other social actors of good will. For any communication concerning its activities (including in view of the 2018 Fundamental Rights Forum), the Agency can consider as the COMECE Secretariat contact point our legal advisor Alessandro Calcagno (alessandro.calcagno@comece.eu / +32 2 235 05 13).

Which formats (panel debates, working groups, etcetera) do you think would be most useful for the Forum?

Please chose up to two items from the following list

Plenary debates

Working groups and workshops

Yes [Y]

Expert and lightning talks (e.g. live stage talks, Speaker corners)

Participatory methods (e.g. Policy Simulations, Hackathons, Data Dive, Open Space Technology, Learning Carousel/Speed Dating, World café)

Artistic performances and other disruptive methods

Other
