

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights: adoption of a Multiannual Framework for 2007-2012 (implem. Regulation (EC) No 168/2007)

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The Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs adopted the report by Michael CASHMAN (PES, UK) amending, under the consultation procedure, the proposal for a Council decision implementing Regulation (EC) No 168/2007 as regards the adoption of a Multi-annual Framework for the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights for 2007-2012. The amendments intend to extend the scope of the Agency to cover new areas of competence. It should be noted that the report notes that the rapporteur has replicated some of what he sees as key parts of Regulation 168/2007 as amendments in this report. He feels that it is worth clearly restating in the report on the multi-annual framework some of the basic elements of the Agency's mandate and the work that it will pursue.

Firstly, the report states that the Framework should include the fight against racism, xenophobia and related intolerance amongst the thematic areas of the Agency's activity and the protection of the rights of persons belonging to ethnic or national minorities.

One important amendment stipulates that the Agency shall deal with issues relating to discrimination based on sex, in particular instances of multiple discrimination?. The notion of multiple discrimination? should be examined closely so as to try and understand this complex form of discrimination. In its work in the thematic areas, the Agency shall seek to identify the economic, social and cultural factors that contribute to respect for human rights in those areas or which may constitute root causes of violations of human rights such as extreme poverty and social exclusion.

The report states that the Agency may work outside the thematic areas determined in the Multi-annual Framework at the request of the European Parliament, the Council or the

Commission provided its financial and human resources so permit. The Commission, the Council and the European Parliament may request the Agency to investigate specific actions or concerns.

The report also calls for better democratic scrutiny and urges the other institutions to involve the European Parliament in this process as much as is possible. The Agency should report regularly to the European Parliament.

On the specific issue of the Agency's five year framework programme, MEPs consider that although this framework provides stability for the work of the Agency, there should be a possibility to update or review this framework during this period as new challenges to the protection of human rights may arise.

Lastly, the report states that the Agency shall actively cooperate with candidate countries in the field of fundamental rights in order to facilitate their compliance with Community law.