

**FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS FORUM**

**20 JUNE 2016, VIENNA**

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Chairperson of the Management Board

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

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Your Excellency, First Vice President, City Councillor, ladies and gentlemen,

Good afternoon, and a very warm welcome to the Fundamental Rights Forum. We are honoured to have so many distinguished guests, and are greatly looking forward to our discussions over the next three days.

In order to find rise to the many challenges Europe is facing, we need real debate. We don't always have to agree. We need to welcome the many different perspectives all of us bring to the table. But we have to talk to each other to find solutions. That's why we are bringing together political and thought leaders, academia, the media, national human rights institutions, equality bodies, business representatives, and grassroots groups in a dialogue that takes place far too rarely.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends,

What is the Fundamental Rights Forum? **4 days, 3 themes, and 1 goal:** to formulate commitments that will result in meaningful change. Change in the promotion, protection and respect for fundamental human rights throughout the European Union. These commitments will be shaped and formulated over the course of our debates. They will be captured formally in a Chair's Statement, as well as informally in the many newly forged partnerships and initiatives I'm sure we will see.

And the themes themselves?

With Europe experiencing the greatest movement of people to and across the continent since the Second World War, it was clear to us that **migration and refugee protection** would be a predominant topic at the Forum. We will discuss means of saving lives and improving protection by expanding the number of legal avenues to the EU for those in need of protection.

At the same time, we urgently need to improve rights protection for the children arriving in the EU, those with families and particularly those who are unaccompanied and thus exposed to trafficking and other abuse. An integrated child protection approach at Member State level is vital to ensure effective safeguards.

The next theme of the Forum is **inclusion**. Having observed developments in Germany over the last 12 months, the topics of migration and inclusion are for me intertwined. I have seen events unfold from the heady days of last summer when the borders were opened, through to the sobering recognition of the fundamental divisions in Europe over this issue, as well as the more prosaic realisation that many of the new arrivals will be staying and will need support. Support in finding long-term accommodation, support in overcoming the traumas they have suffered, support in finding a foothold in the labour market, and support in simply understanding the country they are now living in.

And, inclusion, like integration, is a two-way street. We need to find ways of overcoming prejudice and of fostering a culture of fundamental rights and respect among the young, and indeed the public at large. We need inclusion policies that can help to prevent us from driving members of the majority and minority population into the hands of extremists of any kind. For this, the concept of inclusion must embrace the entire population.

Finally, I turn to the theme of the **digital age**. New technologies create a plethora of new opportunities for individuals, business, and society as a whole. By granting access to public services that were previously out of reach and helping users to participate as full members of society, they can be a valuable tool for inclusion. At the same time, terrorists and other criminals are increasingly using technology to further their own aims, creating a dilemma for policy makers in their efforts to balance the needs of law enforcement with the right to data privacy.

Your Excellency, ladies and gentlemen,

Over the next three days, we will we have the opportunity to engage with the wisdom and experience of all those present here.

For fundamental rights to flourish, so too must critical debate. And that is what we are here for.

I wish you invigorating and fruitful debates at the Forum.

Thank you.