

On 23 March 2011, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) will release its report **Access to justice in Europe: an overview of challenges and opportunities**. The report will be launched in Budapest at the conference 'Protecting victims in the EU: the road ahead', hosted by the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of the EU, with the support of the FRA.

The report provides a comparative analysis of access to justice across the EU Member States and finds that there are many obstacles that make it difficult for victims to enforce their rights. This report relates mainly to civil and administrative procedures available to victims of discrimination. Although its focus is the area of non-discrimination law, its findings are generally applicable to civil and administrative procedures as a whole.

The report reveals several problems that result in victims being deterred or unable to enforce their rights by taking cases to court:

- excessive length of proceedings appears to be the most frequent challenge across Member States;
- high legal costs including lawyers' fees and court fees;
- a high degree of variation among Member States on the amounts of compensation awarded, which in some cases appear too low to act as a deterrent or fully compensate for the harm suffered.

The report also finds promising practices in some Member States, such as:

- expedited procedures
- legal advice centres or pro bono work offering victims free legal advice and representation
- simple procedures where victims can represent themselves
- alternatives to going to court to settle disputes, such as mediation or other non-judicial mechanisms

For further information see:

http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/report-access-to-justice_EN.pdf (Report) and
http://fra.europa.eu/fraWebsite/attachments/pr-access-to-justice_EN.pdf (press release)

Please note the embargo: Wednesday 23 March 2011, 11 am.

We hope that you will assist the Agency in bringing the evidence and opinions contained in the reports to the attention of relevant decision-makers, whilst also raising general awareness of the issue. If the Agency can be of any assistance in these endeavours, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Best regards,

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