



Brussels, 21 December 2017  
(OR. en)

15903/17

FREMP 151  
JAI 1220  
DROIPEN 194  
COHOM 165

## OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

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From: General Secretariat of the Council  
On: 13 December 2017  
To: Delegations  
Subject: Outcome of the Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens' Rights  
and Free Movement of Persons (FREMP)

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### 1. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted as set out in doc. CM 5355/1/17 REV 1.

### 2. Presidency non-paper containing the elements for a Code of Conduct laying down the arrangements regarding the exercise of rights and obligations of the European Union and Member States (WK 11626/2/2017 REV2) - exchange of views

Delegations had an exchange of views on the revised version of the Presidency non-paper for a Code of Conduct laying down the arrangements regarding the exercise of rights and obligations under the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention).

The Presidency concluded that further reflection was needed on certain issues, such as the division of tasks between the Commission and Member States when preparing EU positions, the division of tasks between the Commission and the Member States when reporting to GREVIO on matters within the exclusive competence of the EU that are covered by the EU *acquis* but which do not fall within the scope of the signing decisions and the representation of the Union in GREVIO, the independent expert body responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The file will be handed over to the incoming Bulgarian Presidency and discussions will continue at the forthcoming FREMP meetings in 2018.

**3. FRA report on the challenges facing civil society organisations working on human rights in the EU (WK 14600/1/2017 REV 1) - Presentation by FRA and exchange of views**

A representative of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) presented the results of the FRA report on the 'Challenges facing civil society organisations (CSOs) working on human rights in the EU' which will be published on 18 January 2018. The report is based on information gathered in 2011-2016 and identifies key areas of concern for civil society, including the regulatory environment, a safe environment in which CSOs can operate, access to resources and funding in the 28 EU Member States and the participation of CSOs in decision-making processes. The report was welcomed by the majority of delegations, with the exception of one delegation which expressed doubts whether the topic fits into the scope of FRA's mandate and added its regret over the lack of consultation with the Member States during the preparation of the report.

**4. Civil Society in the internal and external dimension of EU policies- Exchange of views between FREMP and COHOM Delegates (doc. 15330/17)**

FREMP and COHOM delegates discussed how to ensure and enhance coherence and possible synergies between the internal and external aspects of civil society policies, on the basis of a Presidency non-paper setting out the main results achieved through EU engagement with civil society, both in the internal and external dimension.

All delegations that spoke noted the vital role played by CSOs in promoting and protecting human rights, particularly “on the ground”, and the importance of cooperation between the EU, national governments and civil society. Most speakers also agreed that challenges for civil society are on the increase and require coherent responses. Delegations noted that before pointing out deficiencies in the civil society working environment in third countries, the Union and its Member States should make sure that the EU’s own civil society policy and framework are in order internally. A number of delegates also agreed that coherence between the internal and external dimensions of civil society policies was essential but sometimes difficult to achieve due to the different spectrum of problems faced by civil society organisations internally and externally.

The Presidency concluded that both the EU and the Member States should pay more attention to the question of coherence and consistency between the internal and external aspects of the EU’s civil society policies.

## **5. AOB**

### **a) Seventh annual high-level human rights conference (8 December 2017 in Tallinn) - Information from the Presidency**

The Presidency debriefed delegations about the above-mentioned event.

### **b) FREMP priorities during the incoming Bulgarian Presidency - information from the incoming Bulgarian Presidency**

The incoming BG Presidency presented its priorities for the work of FREMP in the first half of 2018, including EU accession to the Istanbul Convention as its priority file, EU accession to the ECHR and, possibly, protection of whistle-blowers.

## **IN THE MARGINS OF THE MEETING**

Before the start of the afternoon session, the Presidency invited delegations (both FREMP and COHOM) for an informal exchange of views with representatives of the Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN). The focus was on the current challenges faced by civil society in the EU and in third countries.

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