

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
Media Release

Vienna, 7 March 2008

Morten Kjærørum becomes first Director of Fundamental Rights Agency

Morten Kjærørum from Denmark has been designated as new Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Meeting on 6/7 March 2008, the Agency's Management Board decided to appoint the Dane who has extensive experience in the field of fundamental rights. The Board thus followed the opinion of the Council and the European Parliament that Morten Kjærørum best fulfilled the conditions for this post, based on his personal merit, experience in the field of fundamental rights and administrative and management skills.

“With Morten Kjærørum, a highly respected and internationally recognised human rights specialist will be heading the Fundamental Rights Agency“, said Anastasia Crickley, Chairperson of FRA's Management Board. “His past experience as director of a national human rights institution and in the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is an ideal combination to be able to address the fundamental rights as well as the anti-discrimination issues which are guiding FRA's mandate and work. Equality and human rights are two sides of the same coin. They are key principles that must underpin the European project of creating a common area of freedom, justice and security.”

“It is an inspiring challenge and a great privilege to have been selected as the first director of this new institution“, said Morten Kjærørum upon his election. The Agency has a strong foundation on which to build a modern network organisation, strengthening human rights protection for people in Europe as well as creating a common European understanding of fundamental rights. We can be proud of our human rights heritage in the EU, but there are challenges that we must address and we cannot be complacent. The Agency will address some of those challenges - whether in the field of anti-racism, minority rights, discrimination against disabled people for example, homophobia, protection of personal data, fundamental rights education, or with regards to the rights of the child, to name only a few.

FRA's Director has been appointed following a selection procedure, involving the EU institutions. After an open call for candidates, the European Commission placed Dario Carminati from Italy and Morten Kjærørum on a shortlist of suitable candidates. Mr. Carminati and Mr. Kjærørum then addressed the Council and the European Parliament Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs, which subsequently stated their order of preference. Taking these opinions into account, FRA's Board finally elected the Director by secret vote. FRA's Management Board consists of 27 independent persons appointed by each EU Member State, one independent person from the Council of Europe (without right to vote on the Director) and as well as two representatives of the European Commission.

Morten Kjærørum is scheduled to take up his post on 1 June 2008. His term of office will be five years, which may be extended once for a period of not more than three years.

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Notes to the Editors

Biographical information about Morten Kjærum:

- Morten Kjærum (50) has 23 years of experience in the field of human rights. He was the founding Director of the Danish Institute for Human Rights (DIHR), Denmark's national human rights institution, and developed it from a small organisation to a large internationally recognised institution. He previously directed the DIHR's predecessor, the Danish Centre for Human Rights (1991-2003), after having started his career in the non-governmental sector, at the Danish Refugee Council. He has published extensively on fundamental rights, human rights in general, as well as refugee protection and non-discrimination in particular. He is a member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) and was a member of the EU network of independent experts responsible for monitoring compliance with the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (2002-2006). Morten Kjærum holds a Master of Law from the University of Aarhus, Denmark, and is a Danish national. He is married and has two grown-up children.

Information about FRA

- The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), based in Vienna, was established in March 2007. It is an independent body of the EU and being built on the former European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC). Its task is to provide assistance and expertise on fundamental rights matters to the EU and its Member States, when they are implementing Community law. The aim is to support them to respect fully fundamental rights when they take measures or formulate courses of action.

To find out more about FRA's work, please visit <http://fra.europa.eu>