

Brussels, 5 February 2008

Area of Freedom Security & Justice boosted by launch of 'Justice Forum'

The Vice-President of the European Commission, Franco Frattini, will unveil today the imminent launch of a unique and innovative new 'Justice Forum'. As of 15 April 2008 a multi-disciplinary, collaborative forum of practitioners involved in judicial and legal processes will come into being. The Justice Forum, in addition to existing processes, will inform the Commission's work on justice policies and practice.

Vice-President Franco Frattini, Commissioner responsible for Justice, Freedom and Security, said: "This Forum meets the needs for more targeted consultation when proposing and evaluating our policies and laws in the justice field. It will not only create a platform for those practitioners that are involved, day-to-day, with the implementation of EU laws in our field but the nature of it will allow a mutually productive exchange of ideas. I am particularly pleased that the Forum will bring together a broad group of stakeholders: from victim support representatives, to senior Supreme Court judges and lawyers; as well as bringing together representatives of existing European networks currently operating in this area. It is our view that more targeted consultation is vital for effective EU justice instruments."

Targeted Consultation

The Commission has adopted a Communication - 'Creation of a Forum for Discussing EU Justice Policies and Practice' - setting out its plans for the Justice Forum. The short Communication sets out the rationale, format, composition and working methods (including output) of the Forum. It is available on the Vice-President's website (details included below).

The rationale for the Justice Forum is to involve practitioners who deal with the implementation, enforcement and consequences of JLS policies to be involved in a continuing dialogue with JLS. The Forum will comprise of practitioners, including judges at various levels, civil and criminal lawyers, prosecutors and other practitioners working in the justice systems of the Member States. Importantly, other relevant parties, such as academics and representatives of NGOs working in this field will also be involved. The individuals will be stakeholders from Member States providing their views and experience but not representing Member States.

Added-Value

The added-value of targeted and multi-disciplinary consultation involving practitioners, will have, in particular, the following impact:

more focused and effective legislation;

the permanence and regularity of meetings will ensure a ready made experts group to clarify the true needs of practitioners and problems they face in using EU justice instruments;

- better researched Impact Assessments in the specific justice areas with its direct links with the judiciary and other actors in the justice systems of the Member States;
- contribute to the standard evaluation model process set up by the Commission's June 2006 Communication on Evaluation of EU policies on Freedom, Security and Justice;
- provide concrete expertise needed for the stakeholder consultation and for the in-depth evaluation phase;
- bring together existing European networks specialising in justice matters and facilitate more co-ordinated discussion and knowledge sharing; and
- suggest areas where studies should be carried out and to supervise and manage such studies.

It is also important to underline that, in line with the spirit of the Forum, the Commission has very recently organized an experts meeting on judicial training.

This meeting attended by Judges, Prosecutors, lawyers, governmental authorities and national judicial training bodies as well as international stakeholders took place yesterday in Brussels for a first discussion on how best to develop a common European legal culture.

To find out more about the Justice Forum and Vice President Frattini's other work please visit his website:

http://www.ec.europa.eu/commission_barroso/frattini/index_en.htm