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**Invitation to the Fundamental Rights Conference 2013:
*Combating hate crime in the EU, 12-13 November, Vilnius***

Dear Madam/Sir,

It is with great pleasure that we invite you to take part in the 2013 Fundamental Rights Conference entitled '*Combating hate crime in the EU*' on 12-13 November in Vilnius.

Europe's socio-economic crisis has proved fertile ground for prejudice and, in some cases, violence against the most vulnerable groups of our society, such as Roma, migrants, and ethnic and religious minorities. Evidence collected by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and other organisations shows that hate crime is a daily reality throughout the EU. Motivated by racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance or by bias against a person's disability, sexual orientation or gender identity, such crimes harm not only those targeted but entire communities. They thus strike at the heart of EU's commitments to democracy and the fundamental rights of equality and non-discrimination.

The Fundamental Rights Conference will invite decision makers and practitioners to explore effective strategies to combat hate crime through legal and policy measures at the national as well as EU level. Discussions will focus on monitoring and recording hate crime, victim support services, ensuring effective investigation and prosecution, the discriminatory aspects of hate crime, human rights education and remembrance, capacity building for law enforcement and criminal justice systems, the challenges presented by the relatively recent phenomenon of cyberhate, and many other issues.

The conference is FRA's key annual event, and will be hosted this year in cooperation with the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the EU. About 300 representatives from EU institutions and bodies, international organisations, national governments and parliaments, law enforcement authorities, criminal justice systems, national human rights bodies and civil society are expected to attend. Further information is enclosed in the draft programme.

We hope that you will be available to participate in this important event and look forward to seeing you in Vilnius.

Yours sincerely,


Juozas Bernatoni
Minister of Justice
Lithuania


Morten Kjaerum
Director
FRA

