



Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law

EESC FRRL Group – country visits methodology

Before the visit

The FRRL group decides on the countries to visit on an annual basis. The FRRL group secretariat informs the permanent representations of the countries of forthcoming visits and subsequently the list is made public and announced on the FRRL section of the EESC website.

The FRRL group recommends that the delegation of six members going on visits should always be gender-balanced and **composed of members of the FRRL group**. It also suggests that members do not visit their own Member State.

The **key themes** for the country visits are:

- Freedom of association and freedom of assembly
- Fundamental rights of social partners
- Freedom of expression and of the media
- Non-discrimination
- Rule of law

The themes are the same for all visits, but minor adaptations of focus can occur.

At an early stage in the planning of the country visit, the FRRL secretariat organises a **meeting for one of the members of the country visit delegation with the permanent representation of the country** to explain the purpose of the visit.

The FRRL group coordinates with the national economic and social council and other partners, including equality bodies, ombudsman institutions, European level CSO networks and other EU institutions, in the preparation of the visits. The FRRL secretariat prepares **the visit** in all relevant matters related to the organisation of meetings and the background information of the Members of the visits.

During the visit

The visits generally last **two days**.

The discussions with the local stakeholders take place in five sessions corresponding to the key themes of FRRL group country visits set out above. **Chatham House** rules apply, meaning that the FRRL group will use the information received, but that neither the identity nor the affiliation of the participants is revealed in the country visit report that will result from the discussions.

After the visit

A short report on each country visit is finalised within a few weeks of the visit. The government of the country visited is granted a **right of response** ("observations") to the report after each visit, where context, nuances, example of good practices, etc. can be provided, thus contributing to a dialogue between governments and civil society organisations.

The **country reports** are systematically shared with the entire FRRL group, the members of the EESC's Section for Employment, Social Affairs and Citizenship, which has fundamental rights among the policy areas in its competence, and all EESC members from the country visited, as well as with relevant contacts in the EC, EP, FRA, EU Ombudsman, Member States, as well as CSO networks, etc., after each visit and made available on the EESC website after the right of response process is finalised.

The reports are translated into the language of the visited country. The FRRL secretariat **sends the country report** to all stakeholders met during the visit. Stakeholders met during the visit are invited to provide follow-up contributions through the [dedicated page](#) on the FRRL Group section of the EESC website.

The FRRL group can later **invite** some stakeholders met during the visits to its annual conference on the rule of law.