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**COMMUNICATION FROM THE COMMISSION TO THE EUROPEAN
PARLIAMENT, THE COUNCIL, THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL
COMMITTEE AND THE COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS**

2025 Annual report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

**Taking stock of the implementation of the Strategy to strengthen the application of the
Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU**

2025 Annual report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

Taking stock of the implementation of the Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 1. Introduction | 2 |
| 2. Ensuring the effective application of the Charter by the Member States | 4 |
| 3. Empowering civil society organisations, rights defenders and justice practitioners | 10 |
| 4. Fostering the use of the Charter as a compass for EU institutions | 15 |
| 5. Strengthening people's awareness of their rights under the Charter | 18 |
| 6. Conclusion | 20 |

1. Introduction

2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (the Charter)¹. Proclaimed in Nice on 7 December 2000, the Charter enshrines the fundamental rights of everyone in the European Union. It reaffirms and brings together civil and political rights, and economic and social rights, translating them into the EU context. The Charter highlights the role of fundamental rights as the founding values of the EU, which both the EU institutions and the EU Member States are required to respect when applying EU law.

In 2020, the European Commission presented its **Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU** (Charter strategy)², recognising the need to make the Charter rights and principles a reality for all. In application from 2020 to 2030, the Charter strategy relies on **effective cooperation** between the Commission and the stakeholders that are central to strengthening the implementation and application of fundamental rights – national, regional and local authorities, civil society and human rights defenders, justice professionals and EU institutions. The strategy also addresses the need to inform the public about fundamental rights and the remedies available if fundamental rights violations occur.

The past years have witnessed a stronger focus on advancing and safeguarding fundamental rights across the EU. The fundamental rights of the Charter – with its components of human dignity, freedoms, equality, solidarity, citizens' rights and justice – are at the core of EU legislation and policies, reflecting our shared commitment to a democratic and just society. During the first five years of implementing the strategy, new EU legislation that protects and promotes specific fundamental rights has been adopted³. This legislation has detailed some of the Member States' fundamental rights obligations and tasked stakeholder groups, such as independent fundamental rights bodies and civil society, with supporting the Charter's application through their role in applying the relevant EU law.

Nonetheless, progress on the protection of fundamental rights cannot be taken for granted⁴. Mechanisms to protect these rights must remain functional at all times, and sustained efforts are needed at all levels to ensure and strengthen the protection of the rights of the Charter.

When does the Charter apply?

With the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon in 2009, the Charter gained the same legal value as the Treaties⁵, i.e. the EU law on which EU legislation and policies are based. EU institutions, bodies, offices and agencies must comply with the Charter in all their activities, as must the Member States when they implement EU law⁶.

¹ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (OJ C 326, 26.10.2012, p. 391-407).

² [COM\(2020\) 711 final](#).

³ Including the [Digital Services Act](#); [European Media Freedom Act](#); [Equality Bodies Directives](#); [Directive on combating violence against Women and domestic violence](#); [the Pay Transparency Directive](#); [proposal for the revision of the Victims Rights Directive](#); and [proposal for a recast of the Child Sexual Abuse Materials Directive](#).

⁴ See 2025 Rule of Law Report, [COM\(2025\) 900 final](#), p. 1; FRA, [2025 Fundamental Rights Report](#), p. 21.

⁵ Article 6 Treaty on European Union (TEU).

⁶ Article 51(1) of the Charter.

Member States implement EU law when they:

- give effect to EU legislation by adopting national implementing measures;
- adopt legislation where EU law imposes specific obligations, or allows for a derogation⁷;
- adopt specific measures intended to contribute to the achievement of the objective of an EU act, when authorised to do so by the act in question;
- implement EU funding programmes in line with the EU funding rules.

This year's Charter report provides an important opportunity to take stock of the progress in the Charter strategy's implementation. The report presents an overview of the measures taken between 2020 and 2025 to strengthen the Charter's application at the EU level and in the Member States. It also highlights the remaining challenges in this regard, and identifies where further efforts are needed, proposing areas for improvement, and supporting deeper cooperation among EU institutions, Member States, and other stakeholders for the second half of the strategy's implementation.

The Commission has gathered data for this report through **various targeted consultations** and a call for evidence⁸. This report draws on a qualitative assessment of the consultation feedback, including targeted online consultations with: (i) Member States⁹; (ii) Charter focal points¹⁰; (iii) local and regional authorities¹¹; (iv) the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet), the European Network of Ombudsmen and their members¹²; (v) judges and other justice practitioners, judicial training providers and their networks¹³; (vi) Commission services and (vii) the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). An online consultation with civil society was carried out through the FRA's Fundamental Rights Platform¹⁴; as was a series of consultation meetings¹⁵.

⁷ When Member States adopt laws in an area where the EU has no competence and when no EU law exists, they are not implementing EU law, and the Charter is not applicable. However, many fundamental rights enshrined in the Charter are also set out in national constitutions and case law, as well as in the European Convention on Human Rights, to which all Member States are parties.

⁸ [Have your say - Mid-term review of the Charter strategy](#).

⁹ Responses were received from 20 participating Member States: AT, BE, BG, CY, DK, FI, FR, DE, HU, IE, IT, LU, NL, PL, PT, RO, SK, SI, ES and SE.

¹⁰ Responses were received from 12 participating Charter focal points: AT, BE, HR, CY, FI, LV, LT, MT, NL, RO, ES and SE.

¹¹ 51 participants.

¹² 23 participants.

¹³ 112 participants.

¹⁴ [Civil society and the Fundamental Rights Platform](#). A total of 101 responses were received. The consultation was distributed through the FRA's Fundamental Rights Platform. The Platform is composed of over 1 000 civil society organisations, trade unions, faith-based organisations, experts representing academia and research institutions, and individual human rights defenders.

¹⁵ With the Council Working Party on Fundamental Rights, Citizens Rights and Free Movement of Persons; Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs of the European Parliament; Commission for Citizenship, Governance, Institutional and External Affairs of the European Committee of the Regions; Ad hoc group on Fundamental Rights and the Rule of Law of the European Economic and Social Committee; and the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

2. Ensuring the effective application of the Charter by the Member States

Member States play a key role in implementing and applying the Charter, with national authorities giving full effect to fundamental rights whenever they implement EU law. In the Charter strategy, the Commission therefore committed to **strengthening its partnership with Member States to ensure the effective implementation and application of the Charter** by preventing fundamental rights violations, promoting fundamental rights awareness, increasing coordination and ensuring enforcement.

2.1. Charter focal points

To ensure effective coordination and cooperation on the application of the Charter, the vast majority of **Member States have nominated a national Charter focal point**¹⁶. The Commission has supported their work by organising information meetings and exchanges of best practice both online and in person, and by sharing updates on the Charter. To further strengthen these efforts, the Commission will organise the work of the Charter focal points as a **Commission network** to regularly exchange on the implementation and application of the Charter.

National administrations are best placed to determine how the tasks of the Charter focal points should be organised to effectively improve fundamental rights coordination in each national context¹⁷. The consultations also indicate potential for the focal points to further engage with fundamental rights bodies, civil society and local and regional authorities¹⁸. The Commission accordingly **invites the Member States to strengthen the information-provision, awareness-raising and capacity-building measures on the Charter** at national level, also **by supporting the activities of the Charter focal points**, and by involving civil society and national human rights institutions (NHRIs) in this work.

2.2. Promoting training on the Charter

In the Charter strategy, Member States are invited to promote the use and awareness of the Charter by developing **guidance and training for national, regional and local administrations and the sharing of best practice**¹⁹ and to encourage mutual learning on the

¹⁶ Consultation of Member States, question 2.

¹⁷ The focal points' tasks are varied and include the sharing of information and best practice on the Charter (92%), provision or coordination of Charter training (58%), assisting authorities in assessing the impacts of legislation and policies on fundamental rights (25%), organisation of Charter events, EU-funding-related activities and reporting on the Charter to the Commission and the FRA; consultation of Charter focal points, question 2; consultation of Member States, question 3. The main challenges are the lack of time due to other work tasks (83%), broad scope of the potential tasks (83%) and unclear guidance from the Commission (67%); consultation of Charter focal points, question 7; consultation of Member States, question 6.

¹⁸ Most of the focal points' tasks are carried out within governments (67%), with the EU (33%), civil society (25%), and NHRIs, equality bodies and ombudspersons (17%); consultation of Charter focal points, question 5.

¹⁹ 16 Member States have shared best practices on the application of the Charter on the e-Justice Portal ([Member States' best practices on the Charter](#)). 58% of the responding Member States indicate having updated the Portal (consultation of Member States, question 10); and 23 have provided information on where to seek remedies for fundamental rights violations ([National courts and other non-judicial bodies](#)).

Charter. While half of the Member States have organised dedicated Charter training²⁰, more targeted training is needed to ensure that relevant authorities have sufficient knowledge of fundamental rights²¹. The Commission will further support these efforts by **launching a mutual learning programme on the Charter to help national stakeholders implement and apply the Charter** through peer-to-peer exchanges, workshops, and transnational sharing of best practice.

The FRA has supported the Charter's application at national level through data collection and analysis, including in its **Fundamental Rights Reports** and **Charterpedia**²². To enable the exchange of best practice on the Charter, the FRA and the Commission have been organising, since 2023, **an annual CharterXchange online event**, which brings together practitioners and other interested participants including national administrations to share experience and discuss the challenges and opportunities related to the application of the Charter²³.

The Commission and the FRA have **developed training programmes and materials on the Charter** and **will continue to raise awareness of the existing materials**, information and tools. Member States are further encouraged to develop information and training material on the Charter in their national languages, also, where relevant, by translating the FRA's Charter tools and adapting them to the national context.

2.3. Increasing the use of impact assessments on fundamental rights at national level

In the Charter strategy, Member States were invited **to use impact assessments and legislative scrutiny procedures** to ensure that initiatives to implement EU law comply with the Charter²⁴. Some Member States have developed guidelines and use advisory bodies and public consultations to help applying the Charter, while ministries and parliamentary bodies also have a central role in overseeing and reviewing legislative proposals' compliance with the Charter²⁵. At the same time, FRA research indicates that assessments of impacts of legislative proposals on fundamental rights²⁶ are not carried out systematically, and *ex post* evaluations are the exception rather than the rule. This indicates a need to continue supporting

²⁰ 53% of the responding Member States; consultation of Member States, question 9. As only 20 Member States participated in the consultation, the results remain indicative.

²¹ Consultation of Member States, question 25.

²² FRA contribution, pp. 3-4, referring to [Charterpedia](#) and [2025 Fundamental Rights Report](#). The [Charterpedia](#) includes Charter articles available in all EU languages, case law and law references available in English and the national language of respective country. [Charter handbook](#), [trainer's manual](#) and [e-learning courses](#) are available in all languages except GA and MT). See [FRA material and resources on the Charter](#), [Charter factsheets](#).

²³ E.g. [2nd Annual EU CharterXchange](#), [3rd Annual EU CharterXchange](#).

²⁴ 79% of the responding Member States report using impact assessments and legislative scrutiny to ensure Charter compliance (consultation of Member States, question 7).

²⁵ 37% of the responding Member States have issued guidance to authorities on assessing the impacts on the Charter when transposing and implementing EU law; consultation of Member States, question 7. The role of national parliaments is mentioned by DE, FI, HU, IE and ES; consultation of Member States, question 8. Dedicated training has been made available to national, local or regional authorities in 53% of these Member States.

²⁶ Human rights impact assessments cover 1) *ex ante* impact assessments (the assessment of possible impacts of legislation); 2) legal scrutiny (assessment of a legislative proposal against fundamental rights standards); and 3) *ex post* evaluations (retrospective evaluations of how legislation has affected fundamental rights after it has been implemented); FRA, 2025, 'Better legislation: Human rights impact assessments in lawmaking'.

national authorities in assessing the impacts that national legislation that transposes EU obligations may have on fundamental rights, when the transposition measures could have a major impact on Charter rights. The Commission invites the Charter focal points to distribute relevant tools and information for national- and local-level policymakers to assist them in carrying out such impact assessments.

2.4. The role of local and regional authorities

The Charter is being used by local and regional authorities²⁷ and the **FRA's Human Rights Cities framework**²⁸ is considered useful in helping them develop fundamental rights-based action plans and networks²⁹. Dedicated training tools are being developed as part of the **RIGHTSCITIES** project³⁰ funded under the **Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV)**. Since 2021, the Commission has helped local and regional authorities to promote the Charter through the **Town Twinning call** of the CERV programme³¹. Town twinning creates opportunities for cooperation between municipalities in different countries, enabling local authorities to address shared challenges through the lens of the Charter. Projects have, for instance, focused on non-discrimination, inclusion, democratic participation, gender equality and rights of persons belonging to minorities.

Further information is however needed on the added value of the Charter in comparison with other human rights instruments, and when it applies at local level³². Consultations indicate a need for further practical support, such as tailored training, awareness-raising and funding³³. The Commission accordingly **invites the Member States to support local and regional authorities in applying the Charter**, for example by building on the materials developed by the RIGHTSCITIES project.

2.5. Prevention, monitoring and enforcement

Under EU law, national authorities have the main responsibility for correctly applying EU law. National courts play a key role in enforcing the Charter by applying and interpreting EU law in the domestic legal order. The preliminary ruling mechanism sets up a dialogue

²⁷ The responding local and regional authorities use the Charter to inform policy and decision-making (33%), in EU funding (33%) and to raise awareness (25%); consultation of local and regional authorities, question 6. They identify equality and non-discrimination (80%), housing, health, education, social protection and support to vulnerable groups (59%), personal data protection (49%), and local democracy (57%) as the policy areas where they can most effectively use the Charter; consultation of local and regional authorities, question 11. 52.94% of the respondents were from Poland, which affects the conclusiveness of this consultation.

²⁸ [Human rights cities in the EU: a framework for reinforcing rights locally](#). This framework is known to 41% of the respondents.

²⁹ Consultation of local and regional authorities, question 10.

³⁰ [RIGHTSCITIES - The Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law. RIGHTSCITIES- LBI für Grund- und Menschenrechte.](#)

³¹ Out of 400 funded projects between 2021 and 2025, approximately 10% reference the Charter.

³² Consultation of local and regional authorities, questions 15 and 21. 47% of the respondents are not taking initiatives to increase the use of the Charter by their authority, and 33% are unaware of such initiatives; consultation of local and regional authorities, question 12.

³³ Consultation of local and regional authorities, questions 21 and 22. 75% of the responding authorities have not participated in Charter training (question 7), and 26% consider the available training opportunities as insufficient or do not know if they are sufficient (55%) (question 8).

mechanism between the Court of Justice of the European Union and national courts to ensure that EU law, including the Charter, is interpreted uniformly.

In the Charter strategy, the Commission highlighted the importance of continuous **dialogue with Member States to prevent fundamental rights violations**³⁴. Such dialogue takes place in particular in policy-specific working groups³⁵ and through mutual learning activities³⁶. At the same time, the Commission reaffirmed its commitment to **monitor the application of the Charter and related EU laws** and closely monitor cases where a Member State is showing a systemic failure in applying the Charter when implementing EU law³⁷. In the past years, the Commission has launched infringement procedures³⁸ related to respect for specific Charter rights, such as for example the right to an effective remedy, the protection of personal data, respect for private and family life, the right to freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of association, non-discrimination on the basis of nationality, sex or sexual orientation, respect for human dignity, freedom of expression and media pluralism, the right to legal professional privilege, and the presumption of innocence.

Since 2021, the Commission has presented **annual reports on the application of the Charter**, looking at the Charter's impact in particular policy areas³⁹. The Charter strategy and the annual reports on the application of the Charter form part of a broader EU-level endeavour to strengthen the founding values, including the respect for human rights, the rule of law, democracy and equality. This also includes the annual Rule of Law Reports⁴⁰, the European Democracy Action Plan, the Defence of Democracy Package⁴¹, reports on EU citizenship⁴²,

³⁴ The Commission has also provided training to SOLVIT centres on fundamental rights.

³⁵ For instance, the high-level group on combating hate speech and hate crime that helps Member States to implement Council Framework Decision 2008/913/JHA; the expert group that helps Member States to transpose and implement Directive (EU) 2019/1937 on the protection of persons who report breaches of Union law; the EU Network for Children's Rights that provides a platform for dialogue for the implementation of the EU strategy on the rights of the child and the Commission Recommendation on integrated child protection systems; the Network for the prevention of gender-based violence and domestic violence; the High-Level Group on Non-Discrimination, Equality and Diversity that supports efforts to combat discrimination and promote equality and diversity; the European Equality Law Network that provides information on compliance with Equality Directives.

³⁶ Such as the mutual learning programme in gender equality, partnership initiatives on combating hate speech and hate crime, and the EU Child Participation Platform.

³⁷ In line with the principle of subsidiarity, the Commission does not generally intervene in individual cases related to breaches of fundamental rights, which must be dealt with by national authorities and courts in accordance with national remedies. It will only intervene if there are elements which point at the existence of provisions or systematic practices, which breach obligations stemming from Union law. See also point 5: Strengthening people's awareness of their rights under the Charter.

³⁸ [Infringement cases in the EU - Infringement cases, transposition of directives and EU Pilot dialogue](#). See, for example, [Case C-204/21](#), *Commission v Poland (Independence and privacy of judges)*, [Case C-808/21](#), *Commission v Czech Republic (Freedom of assembly and of association)*, [Case C-769/22](#), *Commission v Hungary (Human dignity, protection of personal data and respect for private and family life, freedom of expression and information, non-discrimination)*, [Case C-92/23](#), *Commission v Hungary (Right to provide media services on a radio frequency)*, [Case C-829/24](#), *Commission v Hungary (Protection against foreign political interference)* and [Case C-57/25](#), *Commission v Estonia (Effective judicial remedy)*.

³⁹ [Four annual Charter reports have been issued](#), focusing on fundamental rights in the digital age, thriving civic space, effective legal protection and access to justice, and fundamental rights funding.

⁴⁰ [2025 Rule of Law Report](#). The monitoring also covers issues such as judicial independence and the enabling framework for civic space, that are directly relevant for the application of fundamental rights.

⁴¹ Including [JOIN\(2025\) 791 final](#) and [COM/2025/790 final](#).

⁴² [EU citizenship reports](#).

the European Democracy Shield⁴³, the Strategy for Civil Society⁴⁴ and strategies to address the needs of specific rights-holder groups⁴⁵.

In developing the annual reports on the application of the Charter, the Commission works in partnership with other EU institutions and agencies, in particular the FRA, to gather information and data for the reports, and carries out broad stakeholder consultations⁴⁶. **The Charter reports are valuable tools for emphasising the relevance of fundamental rights across various policies**, while also serving as reminders on the broad scope and applicability of the Charter. The reports are also considered useful for civil society and the judiciary⁴⁷ as they provide regular aggregated summaries of relevant EU law, guide advocacy action in support of fundamental rights, and overall, in underscoring recognition of the existing challenges⁴⁸. However, stakeholders have called for boosting the reports' use as monitoring tools, in particular, by suggesting focusing on protecting specific Charter rights; and to include references to judicial decisions.

The Commission will look into ways to further develop the Charter reports to provide a more detailed overview of the main developments concerning the application of specific Charter rights related to the selected theme, including relevant judicial decisions. The Commission will support its findings with relevant data indicators, when available, from Eurostat and other relevant sources. It will conduct a feasibility study to analyse further opportunities to strengthen the monitoring of fundamental rights in the context of the annual thematic Charter reports. These aspects will also be discussed in the framework of the new Civil Society Platform that will be set up in 2026⁴⁹.

The consultations show that the **national level follow-up to the Charter reports** has remained limited⁵⁰. Therefore, the Commission **invites the Member States to increase their efforts following up the Charter reports**, in particular, in organising events with relevant stakeholder groups to discuss the topic of the annual report in the national context.

The Commission has likewise invited the European Parliament and the Council to organise substantive discussions to follow up on the Charter reports. In 2021, the Council adopted **Council conclusions on strengthening the application of the Charter**, detailing the

⁴³ [JOIN/2025/791 final](#).

⁴⁴ [COM/2025/790 final](#).

⁴⁵ Such as the [EU Strategy for the Rights of the Child](#). For the Union of equality strategies, see footnote 107.

⁴⁶ For the stakeholders consulted for this report, see Chapter 1.

⁴⁷ Consultation of civil society, question 19. 68.32% of respondents are aware of the reports; Consultation of justice professionals, question 19. 72.22% of respondents are aware of the reports

⁴⁸ According to the ENNHRI, the dedicated attention from the Commission to gathering information from key stakeholders for the annual Charter report has increased the recognition of the relevance and needs of stakeholders at EU level. The ENNHRI contribution to the consultations of NHRIs, p. 5.

⁴⁹ [COM/2025/790 final](#).

⁵⁰ 37% of the responding Member States report having organised follow-up; consultation of Member States, question 11. Some have sent the report for information to the responsible Minister (HU) or ministries and NHRIs (LU, ES). In BG, the findings have informed the development of future judicial training activities. PL and PT have organised follow-up events. See also consultation of NHRIs, equality bodies and ombudspersons, question 27.

measures Member States could take to support the strategy's implementation⁵¹. Each year, it has invited the Commission to present the findings of the Charter report to the Member States and has adopted Council conclusions on the topic of the report with further recommendations⁵².

In the strategy, the Commission also encouraged the European Parliament and national parliaments to develop **interparliamentary cooperation on the application of the Charter**. It again invites the European Parliament to involve the national parliaments in strengthening the application of the Charter, also by organising **an interparliamentary coordination meeting on the application of the Charter**. The Commission stands ready to support the development of this initiative.

2.6. Ensuring protection of the Charter values through EU funds

EU funding is key to supporting the implementation of EU policies. To ensure that the implementation of EU funds complies with the Charter, the Common Provision Regulation (CPR)⁵³ includes **a horizontal 'enabling condition' on the effective application and implementation of the Charter (Charter HEC)**⁵⁴. The Charter HEC requires Member States to have in place arrangements to ensure that programmes supported by the CPR funds comply with the Charter at all stages of programming and implementation. They are encouraged to involve civil society organisations, such as independent fundamental rights bodies, in these arrangements. Member States are also required to establish reporting arrangements to the monitoring committees for cases of non-compliance of operations with the Charter and complaints regarding the Charter.

The Commission will continue to monitor whether the Charter HEC remains fulfilled throughout the programming period, and will take the necessary measures to ensure compliance as appropriate⁵⁵. The consultations, however, indicate a need for more information and guidance to help the national and regional authorities managing EU funds apply the Charter, for instance, by providing guidance through training modules, capacity building, or the exchange of best practice⁵⁶. In line with the commitment made in the Charter strategy, such guidance has been published in the form of **a manual to guide national and regional**

⁵¹ [Council conclusions on strengthening the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the European Union](#).

⁵² [Council conclusions on digital empowerment to protect and enforce fundamental rights in the digital age; Council Conclusions on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights; The role of the civic space in protecting and promoting fundamental rights in the EU; Conclusions on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: promoting trust through effective legal protection and access to justice; Council conclusions on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights: funding to promote, protect and enforce fundamental rights](#).

⁵³ [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060](#).

⁵⁴ The horizontal enabling condition on the 'effective application and implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights' is provided under Annex III of the CPR. In addition to Charter HEC, the CPR includes horizontal principles in Art. 9, requiring the respect for fundamental rights and compliance with the Charter by the Commission and Member States in the implementation of the funds.

⁵⁵ For more information on the mechanisms and procedures to monitor the fulfilment of Charter HEC, see Charter strategy, p. 9, and [2024 Charter report](#), pp. 21 to 22.

⁵⁶ Consultation of Member States, questions 15 and 16.

authorities and bodies in ensuring a coherent and effective implementation of the Charter HEC⁵⁷. The Commission will translate the manual into the official EU languages to ensure that it is accessible to national stakeholders. The Commission will also explore whether further action is needed under the next MFF, such as capacity-building activities or the exchange of best practice.

The Commission's proposal for the next MFF includes strong safeguards and incentives that EU funding will respect the Charter and the rule of law⁵⁸. Compliance with the rule-of-law principles and the Charter is a prerequisite for financial support. To have their national and regional plans approved, Member States will have to demonstrate that they have appropriate mechanisms in place to ensure compliance with the rule of law and Charter HEC throughout the implementation of the funds.

3. Empowering civil society organisations, rights defenders and justice practitioners

3.1. Civil society

The Charter strategy highlights the indispensable contribution of CSOs and human rights defenders to ensuring that fundamental rights can be enjoyed by everyone. In the strategy, the Commission invited the **Member States to promote a supportive and safe environment for CSOs** and human rights defenders in their country, also at local level⁵⁹.

The Commission dedicated the **2022 Charter report to a thriving civic space⁶⁰** in which it described the role of CSOs, human rights defenders, NHRIs, equality bodies and ombudspersons in supporting the application of the Charter, mapped the measures taken at EU and national levels to protect, support and empower them, and identified challenges, gaps and areas of improvement in this regard. The report noted a **further narrowing of the civic space across the EU⁶¹** with threats and harassment reported by CSOs, human rights defenders and their members⁶².

To follow up on the 2022 Charter report, the Commission organised a series of seminars on the measures needed to further empower, protect and support civil society, which was concluded with a high-level event in November 2023⁶³. A final report⁶⁴ recommended that Member States and EU institutions commit to the protection, promotion and support of a civic space in the EU. These conclusions fed into a **Commission Recommendation in 2023 on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policymaking processes⁶⁵**. In line with this Recommendation, the

⁵⁷ [Manual on Fundamental Rights in EU Funding](#).

⁵⁸ COM(2025) 46, p. 12.

⁵⁹ Member States report having put in place civil society policies and refer to national funding opportunities and legislation protecting the freedom of association and expression. Consultation of Member States, question 17.

⁶⁰ [COM/2022/716](#), pp. 7-12. Also [2025 Rule of Law Report](#), pp. 29-30.

⁶¹ [Civil society | European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights](#), [Civic space | OECD](#), [Civicus Civic space monitor](#), [Civic forum](#). Also [2025 Rule of Law Report](#), p. 30.

⁶² [FRA, Protecting civil society – Update 2023](#), p. 3; [COM/2022/716](#), p. 13.

⁶³ [A thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU: a framework for future action](#).

⁶⁴ [Final Report - A thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU | European Commission](#).

⁶⁵ [Commission Recommendation \(EU\) 2023/2836](#).

Commission has developed tools to involve citizens in its policymaking, in particular the European Citizens Panels, which could inspire national and local governments to establish their own citizen engagement strategies. In 2024, the Commission also adopted **two Directives on minimum standards for the functioning of equality bodies** to improve their effectiveness and guarantee their independence⁶⁶.

Building on these initiatives and responding to calls from civil society, on 12 November 2025, the Commission adopted the **EU Strategy for Civil Society**⁶⁷. The strategy puts in place a framework to foster engagement with, and to protect, support and ensure sustainable and transparent funding of CSOs at EU and national levels. The Commission will set up a **Civil Society Platform** to step up its engagement with civil society organisations working on fundamental rights and other EU value-based policies. The Commission also invites Member States to **involve civil society in Charter-related activities at national level** to ensure the exchange of information and mutual capacity building⁶⁸.

The Commission also committed to supporting an enabling environment for civil society, in particular through **funding from the CERV programme**⁶⁹. Between 2022 and 2025, over EUR 1.3 billion have been granted to actors who contribute to the application of the values enshrined in Article 2 TEU and the Charter⁷⁰.

In July 2025, the Commission adopted its **proposal for a new AgoraEU funding programme** to continue funding the promotion and protection of fundamental rights through its Democracy, Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values ('CERV+') strand from 2028 to 2034⁷¹. Under the new MFF, working together with national budgets and complementing other efforts at European and national level, the European Union will support civil society in advancing the application of the Charter, including through the proposed AgoraEU programme and the Justice programme⁷² once adopted.

Lastly, the Commission invited **civil society networks**⁷³ **to strengthen their capacity-building efforts by cooperating on Charter training and sharing practice**, building on the

⁶⁶ [Council Directive \(EU\) 2024/1499](#) and [Directive \(EU\) 2024/1500](#).

⁶⁷ [COM \(2025\) 790 final](#).

⁶⁸ Of the consulted CSOs, 70% were unaware of actions to empower civil society taken by the national, regional or local authorities. Several referred to governments actively intimidating civil society. They generally saw a gap between strategies and tangible action taken by their Member States. Consultation of CSOs, question 8. For national policies to empower the civic space, see [Civic space | OECD](#).

⁶⁹ See [more information on the programme](#); the [2024 Charter report](#), pp. 5-9; [SWD/2025/133](#).

⁷⁰ [Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme - Performance - European Commission](#). Further information on how EU funding programmes have helped to apply the Charter is made available in the [2024 Charter report](#). See also, [Council conclusions of 7 March 2025](#). Under annual CHAR-LITI calls for proposals, funding has been provided for capacity-building and awareness-raising on the Charter, empowering the civic space, strategic litigation, combating hate speech and hate crime and protecting whistleblowers have been funded; [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](#)). Under the Union Values strand of the CERV programme, the Commission has supported European networks, civil society organisations and think tanks in applying the Charter.

⁷¹ Proposal for a Regulation establishing the 'AgoraEU' programme for the period 2028-2034.

⁷² Proposal for a Regulation establishing the Justice programme for the period 2028-2034.

⁷³ Referring to networks such as the ENNHRI, the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet) and the European Network of Ombudsmen, and networks addressing the needs of specific groups.

support and tools developed by the Commission and the FRA⁷⁴. It noted that CSOs, human rights defenders and NHRIs, equality bodies and ombudspersons are well-placed to share information and help people access judicial protection when their fundamental rights are violated⁷⁵. **Effective judicial protection and strategic litigation, in particular, can contribute to the effective enforcement of fundamental rights** and the Commission has funded several projects to build civil society's capacity to carry out strategic litigation on the basis of the Charter⁷⁶.

To further strengthen the implementation of the above commitments, the **Commission invites CSOs, human rights defenders, and NHRIs, equality bodies and ombudspersons to strengthen their efforts to cooperate and share practice on the Charter**. It furthermore invites those stakeholders, as well as justice practitioners and beneficiaries of EU funding **to share case law and other good practice on the Charter with the FRA**⁷⁷ to support the updating of the Charterpedia database.

3.2. The role of National Human Rights Institutions

The second strand of the Charter strategy highlights the **importance of strong and independent NHRIs**. With broad mandates that cover all fundamental rights, NHRIs have a unique role in ensuring that fundamental rights are safeguarded by state actors, and in creating links between governments and civil society⁷⁸. In the Charter strategy, the Commission therefore invited those Member States that have not set up an independent NHRI to do so. It also invited the other Member States to ensure that NHRIs are given the tools and means to comply with the United Nations Paris principles⁷⁹, and to refer to the Charter in their mandates. It took note of the role of the ENNHRI in helping Member States to achieve and maintain A-status accreditation of their NHRIs⁸⁰, in particular, through coordinating capacity building and sharing practice on the Charter.

After the adoption of the Charter strategy, **five additional NHRIs have been accredited with A-status** (in Austria, Cyprus, Estonia, Slovenia and Sweden)⁸¹ and progress towards the establishment of an accredited NHRI has been made in Czechia and Romania⁸². ENNHRI helps the designated institutions to achieve and raise their accreditation through technical advice and consultation. The Commission monitors the situation of ombudspersons, NHRIs, equality bodies and other independent authorities in its Rule of law reports under the pillar on 'other institutional issues linked to checks and balances'.

⁷⁴ See consultation of the ENNHRI, the European Network of Equality Bodies (Equinet) and the European Network of Ombudsmen and their members (fundamental rights bodies), question 10.

⁷⁵ Only 30% of fundamental rights bodies report using the Charter to provide information on available remedies or victim support, and 30% report using the Charter in (strategic) litigation; consultation of fundamental rights bodies, question 3(d).

⁷⁶ Between 2022 and 2024, EUR 15 million has been issued to fund 35 projects on the Charter and strategic litigation under the CERV programme.

⁷⁷ Through Charter@fra.europa.eu.

⁷⁸ [COM\(2024\) 800](#), p. 32.

⁷⁹ [Principles relating to the Status of National Institutions \(The Paris Principles\)](#) | OHCHR, [CM/Rec\(2021\)1](#).

⁸⁰ [NHRIs assessed as fully complying with the UN Paris principles are accredited with A-status](#).

⁸¹ [Membership - GANHRI](#), [Our Members - ENNHRI](#).

⁸² [Consultation contribution by ENNHRI](#), pp. 9-10.

Following the adoption of the Charter strategy, **ENNHRI and the NHRIs have been increasingly involved in supporting the application of the Charter**⁸³. ENNHRI organises capacity building for the Charter and contributes, together with its members, to preparing legislation and policies that touch upon fundamental rights and the founding values⁸⁴.

To support their efforts, the **Commission will consider the need for additional guidance as regards the role of NHRIs role under EU law**, including in the application of the Charter, and how Member States could support them. The Commission will continue to support NHRIs in applying the Charter, also through funding from the 2021-2027 CERV programme, and the proposed AgoraEU programme, once adopted.

The Commission furthermore invites NHRIs, equality bodies and ombudspersons to continue to support the application of the Charter through dedicated activities in their Member States, including by **providing information and advice to individuals on fundamental rights** and legal remedies in case of fundamental rights violations.

Further efforts are needed to ensure that NHRIs can support the Charter's application in all Member States⁸⁵. The Commission therefore **invites the Member States to involve NHRIs in consultation processes** to allow them to contribute meaningfully to the assessment of impacts on fundamental rights when preparing legislation and policy in areas where the Charter applies. It also **invites the Member States to develop awareness-raising and capacity-building initiatives for the Charter at national, regional and local levels**, by drawing on the shared knowledge of the NHRIs, human rights defenders, civil society, local and regional authorities and the government.

3.3. Justice practitioners

Judges and other justice practitioners have a unique role in ensuring the application of fundamental rights. In the Charter strategy, the Commission committed to funding Charter training opportunities for judges and other justice practitioners under the **Justice programme**⁸⁶. In the **Judicial training strategy 2021-2024**, the Commission specified that

⁸³ NHRIs report that the Charter provides added value by strengthening legal arguments and advocacy and supports the interpretation of EU legal standards. The respondents report using the Charter in reporting (70%), training courses (61%), raising awareness on fundamental rights (83%), complaints handling (61%), advising state actors on new policies (52%) and draft legislation (57%), providing information on remedies or victim support (49%), campaigning (48%) and in litigation or strategic litigation (30%). Consultation of fundamental rights bodies, questions 3, 4, and 5.

⁸⁴ [Consultation contribution by ENNHRI](#); [Action plan on strengthening the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the European Union \(2021-2024\)](#); [Activities of National Human Rights Institutions in the implementation of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#).

⁸⁵ On the challenges in meaningfully contributing to the preparation of legislation with impacts on fundamental rights, respondents refer to a lack of access to public documents or information (9%), a lack of interest from the authorities in cooperating with these bodies (22%), a lack of structured coordination channels (30%), limited knowledge of the relevance of the Charter (35%) and overall workload and priorities (43%); consultation of the fundamental rights bodies, question 20; [Consultation contribution by ENNHRI](#), p. 3.

⁸⁶ The funding consisted of action grants (amounting to about EUR 4 million annually), an operating grant to the EJTN of about EUR 11.2 million annually, and procurement (less than EUR 1 million annually). About 36% of the programme budget, i.e. about EUR 15 to 16 million annually, is attributed to judicial training. The Commission also supports the activities of ERA, which raises awareness among the members of the judiciary

justice professionals should receive dedicated training on the Charter, its scope of application and the specific fundamental rights, as well as its relation with national law and the European Convention on Human Rights⁸⁷.

The Charter is increasingly referred to by national courts⁸⁸. **The number of requests for preliminary rulings referring to the Charter has increased** annually from 2020 onwards, reaching 128 requests in 2024⁸⁹. According to the consultations of justice practitioners carried out in support of this review, **the Charter is considered to add value as an additional legal standard** to constitutional provisions and international human rights obligations, in particular, in migration and asylum cases and in the application of the EU legislation on the European Arrest Warrant, data protection, child protection and taxation. The responding justice professionals also refer to applying the Charter's procedural rights (Articles 47-50)⁹⁰. Yet, practitioners report on certain difficulties which they encounter to determine the applicability of the Charter⁹¹.

Judicial training on the Charter has yet to reach a larger number of justice practitioners⁹². The most commonly cited reasons for not participating in such training are lack of awareness⁹³ or insufficient training opportunities at national and EU level⁹⁴. **The Commission will continue to support judicial training on the Charter**, also through the proposed Justice programme under the new MFF, once adopted⁹⁵. The Commission also **invites Member States to ensure that initial and continuous judicial training on the Charter is provided in their national languages**.

In the Charter strategy, the Commission also committed to supporting the development of an e-learning tool for judges. In December 2025, it will publish the '**e-capsules on EU law**', short online training courses that summarise the main features of EU law on over 40 topics, including the Charter⁹⁶. In early 2026, the Commission will also publish **53 free online learning courses on the Charter** that introduce each substantive article and the general

and lawyers on the application of the Charter. The role of the Charter is examined in ERA's training courses, including each year from 2021 to 2025. Further information is provided in [COM/2024/456](#), p. 10.

⁸⁷ [COM/2020/713](#), p. 2.

⁸⁸ FRA, 2024 [Fundamental Rights Report](#), at 122; 2023 [Fundamental Rights Report](#), p. 45; and 2022 [Fundamental Rights Report](#), p. 37.

⁸⁹ FRA, 2025 [Fundamental Rights Report](#), p. 94.

⁹⁰ Consultation of justice practitioners, question 16.

⁹¹ The difficulties raised by the legal professionals who indicated that they apply the Charter only rarely (23%) or never (20%) relate to determining the Charter's applicability to a concrete case (7.5%), lack of time to verify applicability (8.5%) and lack of added value in comparison to the ECHR (3%); consultation of justice practitioners, questions 15 and 17. 73.4% of respondents did not answer these questions, which affects the conclusiveness of the results.

⁹² 29% of responding justice practitioners report having participated in in-person training on the Charter and 21% in online training; consultation of justice practitioners, questions 4 and 6.

⁹³ 54%; consultation of justice practitioners, question 6 b.

⁹⁴ Respectively by 57% at national level and by 34% at EU level; consultation of justice practitioners, question 10. Of the responding training organisations, 61% consider the training opportunities sufficient at the national level and 89% at EU level.

⁹⁵ [COM\(2025\) 463 final](#); [COM\(2025\)801](#).

⁹⁶ Also '[Training videos for the judiciary and lawyers on the mission, jurisdiction and procedures of the Court of Justice of the European Union](#)'.

provisions of the Charter in sessions of 30 minutes. A supplementary written manual will summarise the relevant case law on each article. The courses are addressed to national and EU civil servants. All the above training will be publicly available on the ‘European training platform’ of the European e-Justice Portal.

To ensure the availability of information on the Charter, the Commission invited networks of judges and other **justice practitioners to cooperate on training and the sharing of good practices on the application of the Charter**, building on support and tools offered by the Commission, the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) and the FRA. The awareness and use of these materials have, however, remained low⁹⁷. This reflects a further need for practical guidance and case-law information on the Charter, such as databases and fact sheets, as well as exchanges of best practices on the Charter’s application and the translation of key materials into national languages⁹⁸. The Commission **will therefore continue to raise justice professionals’ awareness of the existing online training resources** on the Charter in cooperation with the FRA and invites judicial training institutions to use these resources in their training provision. It also **invites Member States to share information on existing Charter training opportunities and online tools with the judiciary**, while ensuring due respect for judicial independence. The Commission will also increase the accessibility of its new online courses on the Charter and continue to provide information about the Charter and its application on its website.

The Commission recognised that **the digitalisation of justice** has the potential to improve the capacity of courts to deal effectively with fundamental rights issues⁹⁹ and is accordingly supporting Member States’ digitalisation efforts. At the same time, the digitalisation of justice must be carried out in a manner that ensures respect for fundamental rights, also by ensuring that in-person trials are available to parties who need them to effectively exercise their fundamental rights¹⁰⁰.

4. Fostering the use of the Charter as a compass for EU institutions

In the Charter strategy, the Commission highlights that compliance with the Charter is central to the sustainability of EU legislation. It committed to **assessing the Charter compliance of key initiatives** that could have a major impact on fundamental rights from the preparatory stage and throughout the decision-making process¹⁰¹.

⁹⁷ Justice practitioners report having used the Charter tutorial on the e-Justice portal (16% of respondents), the Charterpedia (7.5%), the FRA’s Charter handbooks (13.8%) and the FRA’s and the Council of Europe’s Handbooks on the Charter and the ECHR (19.15%). 59% of the respondents have not used any of the available training tools; consultation of justice practitioners, question 7.

⁹⁸ Consultation of justice practitioners, question 11.

⁹⁹ [COM\(2025\)801 final](#); [COM\(2025\)802 final](#), p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ [COM\(2023\) 786 final](#), Effective legal protection and access to justice, p. 5.

¹⁰¹ These commitments follow continuous efforts to inform EU staff on fundamental rights requirements, see [COM/2010/057](#).

To better assist EU staff when assessing impacts on fundamental rights, the Commission has updated **the guidance for its staff on applying the Charter in impact assessments**¹⁰² and will disseminate it as a source of information for policymakers at national and local level, as committed to in the strategy. In addition to the regular Better Regulation training sessions, the Commission has developed **a dedicated training course on ‘the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in impact assessments’** to train EU staff on the Charter and guide them in assessing impacts of legislative proposals on fundamental rights in line with the Better Regulation rules¹⁰³. The FRA has also offered advice to EU institutions and Member States on the assessing the impacts of draft legislation and policies on fundamental rights. The Commission’s **online courses on the Charter** contain advice for EU staff on how to ensure compliance with fundamental rights when formulating legislative initiatives.

The Commission relies on **input from stakeholders** when preparing its initiatives, including with respect to **mainstreaming the Charter into its policies and proposals**¹⁰⁴. Civil society is also involved through a range of decentralised forms of structured dialogue and consultations and participates in numerous Commission expert groups. The new EU Strategy for Civil Society establishes a common framework to guide and strengthen the Commission’s engagement with civil society organisations.

The Commission’s **Task Force on Equality**¹⁰⁵ works to ensure the mainstreaming of equality considerations into all initiatives. The Task Force has developed processes to guide Commission staff in ensuring that EU policies, legislation and funding programmes promote equality between women and men and combat discrimination. It has also provided training to staff on equality mainstreaming¹⁰⁶. In addition, the **Union of equality strategies** help to translate equality and non-discrimination into policy actions¹⁰⁷.

¹⁰² C(2025) 8354. The guidance supplements [Tool No. 29 of the Better Regulation Toolbox](#) on ‘Fundamental rights, including the promotion of equality’. Following Tool No. 29, all Commission acts and initiatives must comply with the Charter.

¹⁰³ The course takes place online four times a year. In 2023 and 2024, approximately 170 EU staff members were trained in eight training courses. The four training courses of 2025 are ongoing.

¹⁰⁴ Including through the [Have your say - Public Consultations and Feedback](#) portal and targeted consultations. The portal has been updated into a single entry point for public consultations, the European Citizens’ Initiative and an interactive debate platform.

¹⁰⁵ It consists of representatives from Commission services and the European External Action Service, supported by a secretariat.

¹⁰⁶ By November 2024, the Task Force had organised 23 training sessions for Commission staff and contributed to increased awareness raising activities.

¹⁰⁷ [Equality and inclusion: key actions - European Commission](#). In October 2025, the Commission adopted the [2026-2030 LGBTIQ equality strategy](#). The strategy builds on the previous one to set common objectives, provide guidance, and strengthen coordination. The [Roadmap for Women’s Rights](#), adopted in March 2025, includes commitments on equality between women and men in line with Article 23 of the Charter. The 2026-2030 Gender Equality Strategy will build upon the Roadmap, presenting measures to promote gender equality. The [EU anti-racism action plan 2020-2025](#) will be followed by the new [EU anti-racism strategy 2026-2030](#). The action plan confirms that measures to combat discrimination, racism, xenophobia and other types of intolerance rests on an established EU legal framework, including equality and non-discrimination as provided for in Article 20 and 21 of the Charter. The same is highlighted in the [EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation for 2020-2030](#) in relation to action to fight antigypsyism and discrimination against Roma. The mid-term report on its implementation, published in 2024, highlights compliance with the Charter as a horizontal principle. See also [EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life \(2021 - 2030\)](#).

Human rights conventions to which the EU is a party¹⁰⁸ furthermore guide the use of the Charter by EU institutions, as the EU is obliged to comply with their standards in its law-making. EU accession thus strengthens the implementation of the Charter in the policy areas covered by these conventions¹⁰⁹. The EU's accession process to the **European Convention of Human Rights** has also continued¹¹⁰ with a view to ensuring that fundamental rights in the EU are subject to additional external scrutiny.

To develop Charter mainstreaming throughout the EU's legislative process, the Commission **invited also the European Parliament and the Council to use the tools at their disposal**¹¹¹ **to ensure that the Charter is applied effectively**. Council Presidencies have organised training on the application of the Charter to Council staff and Member State delegations. In 2024, the training focused on the role of each institution in assessing impact on fundamental rights when carrying out impact assessments. To further strengthen this work, **the Commission encourages the European Parliament and the Council to organise exchanges of best practice** to ensure that the Charter is respected throughout the legislative cycle. It **invites the Council to continue raising awareness of its guidance on fundamental rights compliance** in the Council's working parties.

In line with the Charter strategy, the Commission has continued to ensure that the EU's **internal and external actions to promote and protect fundamental rights are coherent** and mutually reinforcing. In 2020, it adopted the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy for the period 2020-2024¹¹². The plan guides the EU's bilateral and multilateral human rights work and is aligned with the Charter¹¹³.

At the multilateral level, the EU engages with the United Nations Human Rights Council, the Third Committee and the General Assembly, and supports the mandate and independence of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. Since 2020, the EU has carried out over 60 human rights dialogues and consultations with third parties¹¹⁴.

¹⁰⁸ Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence ([EU accession to the Istanbul Convention | EUR-Lex](#)). The Istanbul Convention became the second international human rights convention that the EU acceded to, following the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities ([Decision - 2010/48 - EN - EUR-Lex](#)) (UNCRPD).

¹⁰⁹ In particular its Article 21 on non-discrimination, Article 23 on equality between women and men and Article 26 on integration of persons with disabilities. The [Strategy on the rights of persons with disabilities](#) contains actions to implement the UNCRPD in the EU in line with the fundamental rights of persons with disabilities.

¹¹⁰ Request for an opinion pursuant to Article 218(11) TFEU of 21 November 2025.

¹¹¹ Such as, Council guidelines on fundamental rights compliance checks, Doc. 5377/15 of 20 January 2015, or Rule 40 of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure and the Interinstitutional agreement on better law-making (OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, pp. 12-15).

¹¹² The EU reports on the implementation of the [action plan](#) in the Annual Reports on Human Rights and Democracy in the World. See, for instance, [2024 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World](#). It uses all tools at its disposal to implement it, including the EU Human Rights Guidelines, Council Conclusions, demarches, strategic communications and human rights dialogues.

¹¹³ In 2023, a mid-term review concluded that the action plan had been effective in guiding the external human rights and democracy actions. As a result, in 2024, the action plan was extended until December 2027. [The EU extends its Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy until 2027](#).

¹¹⁴ The Commission has been supported by the FRA, which has provided examples of how the EU safeguards the Charter.

In line with its commitment to take the **Charter into account when preparing and negotiating trade and investment agreements**, the EU has continued to monitor non-EU countries' compliance with international standards on human rights¹¹⁵. The EU implements its trade policy, including the trade and sustainable development chapters of its trade agreements, guided by the 2022 Communication on the '*Power of trade partnerships: together for green and just economic growth*'¹¹⁶ and the 2022 Communication on '*decent work worldwide*'¹¹⁷. The Commission has continued to examine stakeholder complaints regarding partners' non-compliance with commitments undertaken by parties to trade agreements¹¹⁸.

The Commission has also continued to support **enlargement countries in aligning with EU fundamental rights standards**. Candidate countries need to gradually align with the provisions of the Charter, in view of achieving full alignment by the date of accession. The Commission provides support in the form of financial and technical assistance in this regard and monitors progress through the annual enlargement package¹¹⁹.

Candidate countries and countries with an association agreement can request **observer status at the FRA** to help them align their legislation and policies with the fundamental rights *acquis*. Albania, North Macedonia and Serbia currently have observer status and further candidate countries have expressed their interest in obtaining it¹²⁰.

5. Strengthening people's awareness of their rights under the Charter

The last strand of the Charter strategy focuses on public awareness. A **Eurobarometer survey on Charter knowledge**, carried out in spring 2025¹²¹, indicates that 49% of people had heard about the Charter¹²², which shows modest progress since 2019. However, only 12% of respondents felt well informed about their rights under the Charter, indicating a further need to raise awareness. Respondents are interested in hearing more about where to turn in cases of breach of their rights (64%)¹²³, the content of the Charter (62%) and when it applies

¹¹⁵ [Generalised Scheme of Preferences](#). The work is carried out under the Special Incentive Arrangement for Sustainable Development and Good Governance (GSP+) and through engagement under the 'Everything But Arms' arrangement. In addition, respecting, promoting and putting into practice the International Labour Organization's principles on fundamental rights at work is part of the commitments taken by parties to trade agreements. These relate to ensuring the freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining, elimination of all forms of forced or compulsory labour, abolition of child labour, elimination of discrimination in employment and occupation, and a safe and healthy working environment.

¹¹⁶ [COM/2022/409](#).

¹¹⁷ [COM/2022/66](#).

¹¹⁸ [Single Entry Point | Access2Markets](#).

¹¹⁹ The Commission expects the Enlargement policy partners to set up institutions and frameworks that mirror those required for Member States. It assesses the state of play and the progress made.

¹²⁰ Participating as an observer in the FRA is beneficial, for example, for improving data collection, training and capacity building.

¹²¹ Special Eurobarometer 563; the survey is based on interviews of 26 319 people across the EU.

¹²² Knowledge of the Charter has increased in 24 out of 27 Member States compared to the 2019 survey (Special Eurobarometer 487b). Malta (+24 percentage points), Cyprus (+17 pp.) and Hungary (+15 pp.) saw the largest increase in knowledge. Numbers declined in Austria (-4 pp.) and Romania (-3 pp.), while they remained unchanged in Greece. This constitutes a 6 pp. increase in comparison with 2019 and a 10 pp. increase in comparison with the earliest available data from 2012.

¹²³ A 3 pp. increase compared with the 2019 survey.

(62%)¹²⁴.

Effective legal protection is essential, as it allows individuals to assert their fundamental rights. The 2025 Eurobarometer survey shows that if their Charter rights were violated, 23 % of people would complain to the police, followed by 21 % who would turn to an EU institution, and 18 % who would turn to a national court. Only 5 % would contact a civil society organisation. These results differ only slightly from the 2019 survey.

As early as the 2010 strategy, the Commission noted how difficult it was for people to know the appropriate legal remedies in cases where the Charter is violated. The Commission receives on average 1 500 letters from citizens per year on fundamental rights violations, which mostly relate to situations for which it has no competence because those situations have no connection to EU law. Since Member States have a primary responsibility to provide remedies in individual cases, in the Charter strategy, the Commission invited them to develop initiatives to promote people's awareness of their Charter rights and of where to turn when their rights are breached, in particular, by empowering local representatives. Such initiatives remain however largely unknown to the public¹²⁵. There is thus potential to **provide the public with more information on how to find effective remedies**. The Commission therefore **invites the Member States to work with independent fundamental rights institutions and civil society to share information on fundamental rights** and the remedies available in cases of fundamental rights violations at all levels.

In the Charter strategy, the Commission also highlighted **the vital role of local authorities in raising awareness of the Charter**. Local and regional authorities are well-placed to organise awareness-raising initiatives, including information campaigns, community engagement activities, training for local officials and educational outreach such as 'Charter Days'. Even if this potential is currently underused¹²⁶, these efforts remain relevant for bringing the Charter closer to people.

The Commission also took note of the importance of explaining fundamental rights to people through real-life stories. From 2021 to 2022, it carried out an awareness-raising campaign to inform people about their Charter rights¹²⁷. In 2025, to mark the **25th anniversary of the**

¹²⁴ A 1 pp. increase compared with the 2019 survey. Only 11% of respondents could define when the Charter applies, i.e. when EU institutions act and when Member States implement EU law. This nevertheless presents an improvement compared with the 7% in the 2019 survey. Special Eurobarometer 563, pp. 18, 35; Special Eurobarometer 487b, p. 15.

¹²⁵ 92% of the responding focal points mention sharing information and best practice on the Charter, but no information is available on providing information to the public. Only 20% of responding civil society organisations report promoting the Charter by providing information on available remedies; consultation of civil society, question 20.

¹²⁶ Consultation of local and regional authorities, questions 12 and 13, where 4% of respondents report having carried out communication activities on fundamental rights with their community, and 6% with local politicians.

¹²⁷ [#RightHereRightNow](#). The campaign covered five fundamental rights with focus audiences from the age groups 15-24 and 25-39 in CY, MT, NL, and SE. Individuals exposed to the campaign were 30% more likely to know about the Charter and 14.85% more likely to be aware of the EU's role in protecting fundamental rights.

Charter's proclamation, the Commission runs a social media campaign to raise awareness about the individual Charter articles and what fundamental rights mean to people¹²⁸.

The Erasmus+ programme has also supported projects on fundamental rights and **communicating Charter rights to young people**¹²⁹. In addition, fundamental values and human rights education is a key part of the global citizenship education agenda in the Development education and awareness-raising (DEAR) programme¹³⁰.

In the Charter strategy, the Commission also committed to **raising children's awareness of their rights** under the EU Strategy on the rights of the child¹³¹. The strategy, adopted in 2021, was developed with and for children to bring EU policies and legislation closer to children¹³². Children also contributed to drafting guidelines on making documents simpler and more accessible¹³³. Since the **EU Children's Participation Platform** was set up in 2022¹³⁴, children have been consulted on selected policy initiatives and involved in 'translating' these initiatives into child-friendly formats.

To further strengthen the provision of information and awareness raising on the Charter, **the Commission will continue funding such efforts at national, local and regional levels** through the CERV programme and its successor, the proposed AgoraEU programme's CERV+ strand, once adopted; and by carrying out its own awareness raising, including communication activities and a conference to mark the 25th anniversary of the Charter.

6. Conclusion

A quarter of a century after its proclamation, **the Charter firmly guides EU policies and legislation and their implementation and application in the Member States**. This mid-term review shows that most of the policy commitments in the Charter strategy have been fulfilled. The Commission has strengthened cooperation with Member States, supported civil society and independent fundamental rights bodies, promoted judicial training, and reinforced the use of the Charter in the legislative processes. The consultations carried out for this review furthermore confirm that stakeholders across the EU are taking meaningful action in line with the strategy.

At the same time, challenges in ensuring the effective application of the Charter remain. Awareness of the Charter among public authorities, professionals and the wider public needs to be improved. Sustained capacity-building, improved access to information, and monitoring and enforcement remain essential to ensuring that the Charter is consistently implemented and applied at all levels. In particular, efforts should focus on scaling up the provision of information and training so that many more civil servants, civil society stakeholders and

¹²⁸ EU Rights | LinkedIn; [EU Justice and Consumers | Facebook](#).

¹²⁹ [COM/2024/456 final](#), pp. 13-15.

¹³⁰ [Projects – EU DEAR Programme](#).

¹³¹ [EU strategy on the rights of the child](#), [COM/2021/142](#).

¹³² See [The European Union's plan for children's rights](#), an easy-to-read version of the strategy for children.

¹³³ [Creating child-friendly versions of written documents, a guide](#).

¹³⁴ [EU Children's Participation Platform | European Union](#). The Platform's website provides information for children and about their rights in a child-centred and child-friendly way. The Platform promotes and puts into practice children's right to be heard.

justice professionals can benefit from such measures and help increase the overall application of the Charter. This mid-term review sets out further measures in these areas.

During the second half of the Charter strategy's implementation, the Commission will further develop its annual Charter reports and take strengthened measures to support the Charter's implementation and application in the Member States. It will organise the work of Charter focal points as a Commission network to support them in ensuring effective coordination and cooperation on the application of the Charter and launch a mutual learning programme to help national stakeholders exchange best practice on the Charter at all levels. Further efforts are likewise needed to ensure that civil society, human rights defenders and independent fundamental rights bodies continue to be empowered to support the Charter's application. The Commission will implement the actions under the EU Strategy for Civil Society and explore the need for additional guidance as regards the role of NHRIs under EU law.

Determined action is needed to strengthen the respect for and protection of the Charter rights across all EU policy areas. Member States and other stakeholders are therefore encouraged to distribute this report at national, regional and local levels. Continued cooperation among EU institutions, Member States and other stakeholders is required to ensure that the Charter is implemented and applied from 2026 to 2030 and beyond.