062642/EU XXVIII. GP
Eingelangt am 09/03/26

Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 9 March 2026
(OR. en)

7054/26

JAI 304
FREMP 90

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council Conclusions 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- Council Conclusions (6 March 2026)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on the 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, approved by the Council at its 4159th meeting held on 6 March 2026.

www.parlament.gv.at

ANNEX

Draft Council Conclusions on the 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

Preamble

The Council of the European Union,

a. **Recalls** Article 2 of the Treaty on European Union, whereby the Union is founded on the values of respect for human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities, which are common to the Member States in a society in which pluralism, non-discrimination, tolerance, justice, solidarity and equality between women and men prevail;

b. **Stresses** that the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, having the same legal value as the Treaties pursuant to Article 6(1) TEU, is binding on the Union institutions and on the Member States when implementing Union law, in accordance with Article 51(1) of the Charter;

c. **Emphasises** that the protection and the promotion of fundamental rights and Union values cannot be taken for granted and constitute a shared responsibility requiring proactive, continuous and collective efforts from all relevant actors, including Union institutions, bodies, offices and agencies and national, regional and local authorities;

d. **Recalls** the European Commission's Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU (the "strategy")[1] and the dedicated Council conclusions approved on 8 March 2021[2], by which the Council welcomed the strategy and renewed its commitment to making the Charter a reality for all, as well as subsequent related thematic Council conclusions for the application of the Charter, the Council conclusions approved on 10 March 2023 on the role of the Civic Space[3], the Council conclusions approved on 4 March 2024 on the effective

---

1 See COM/2020/711 final.
2 See ST 6437/1/21 REV 1.
3 See ST 7388/23.

www.parlament.gv.at

legal protection and access to justice[4], and the Council conclusions approved on 7 March 2025 on the funding to promote, protect and enforce fundamental rights[5];

e. **Emphasises** that fundamental rights can only be effectively ensured in a democratic society based on the rule of law, with effective checks and balances safeguarding the independence of the judiciary, media freedom and the broader institutional and societal framework that upholds democracy, and fundamental rights;

f. **Highlights** that 2025 marked the 25th anniversary of the proclamation of the Charter, which constitutes a cornerstone of the Union's fundamental rights architecture and a symbol of shared European values;

g. **Welcomes** the European Commission's (the "Commission") 2025 Annual report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The report takes stock of the first five years of implementation of the Charter strategy and assesses progress achieved, remaining challenges and areas where further efforts are required;

h. **Recalls** that challenges persist in ensuring the effective application of the Charter across the Union, namely regarding capacity-building, coordination among relevant actors, monitoring and enforcement. It also acknowledges that civil society organisations, human rights defenders[6], and independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs continue to face pressure, in particular through shrinking civic space and practical obstacles affecting their ability to contribute effectively to the protection and promotion of fundamental rights;

i. **Recognises** the paramount importance of enabling the active participation of key stakeholders, such as civil society organisations and human rights defenders, as well as independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs, and judges, prosecutors and other justice practitioners, in the application of the Charter;

j. **Welcomes** the important contribution of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights ("FRA") in supporting the application of the Charter, including through its data collection,

---

4 See ST 7127/24.
5 See ST 6878/25.
6 As understood in accordance with relevant EU and international standards, including the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (UN General Assembly resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998).

www.parlament.gv.at

analysis, training tools and modules, expertise and awareness-raising activities, as well as in supporting evidence-based decision making in Union institutions and Member States;

k. **Recalls** that the Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (hereinafter 'ECHR') will complement the existing architecture of fundamental rights protection in the Union and promote greater consistency in the protection of fundamental rights in Europe. The Council reaffirms its commitment to finalising the Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, in accordance with Article 6, paragraph 2 of the TEU. It welcomes the Commission's submission of a request for an Opinion to the Court of Justice of the European Union on the compatibility of the draft accession agreement with the EU law. It also stresses the need for adopting the necessary internal rules to enable the Union to function effectively as a contracting party to the Convention.

l. **Deplores** the continuous and widespread gross human rights violations occurring worldwide, as outlined in the Council Conclusions on EU Priorities in UN Human Rights Fora in 2026, including the human rights violations following Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, the fourth anniversary of which is a grave reminder that fundamental rights and freedoms cannot be taken for granted, and that their protection constitutes a shared responsibility of Member States, Union institutions and other relevant international actors concerned;

The Council reaffirms its firm commitment to the application of the Charter in the implementation of Union legislation and policies and to the Charter's role as a living and practical instrument for the protection and promotion of fundamental rights in people's daily lives.

The Council approves the following conclusions:

Implementation and application of the Charter by Member States

1. The Council **recognises** that, under Union law, Member States and their respective national authorities bear primary responsibility for the correct application of Union law, a cornerstone of which is the Charter.

2. The Council **welcomes** the Commission's efforts to strengthen the application of the Charter through continuous dialogue with Member States, as well as through the annual reports on the application of the Charter. The Council **recognises** the value of the Charter reports in highlighting the relevance, scope and application of fundamental rights across Union legislation and policies. It also **encourages** Member States to strengthen capacity-building and follow-up

www.parlament.gv.at

at national, regional and local level, for instance by engaging all relevant actors, such as civil society organisations, human rights defenders, independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs, as well as judges, prosecutors and other justice practitioners, with a view to enhancing awareness, understanding and application of the Charter.

3. The Council **welcomes** the designation of national Charter focal points and acknowledges their key role in ensuring effective coordination at national level and between Member States and the Union. The Council **recognises** that national administrations are best placed to determine how the tasks of the Charter focal points are organised in their respective national contexts. The Council **welcomes** the Commission's intention to organise the work of the Charter focal points within a Commission network to support regular exchanges on the implementation and application of the Charter and encourages Member States to make use of this framework to facilitate regular exchanges on best practices.

4. The Council **highlights** the importance of promoting awareness and understanding of the Charter**.** It welcomes the ongoing efforts of Member States, to provide guidance and training, as well as to support the exchange of good practices on its implementation and application. The Council **encourages** Member States, including their regional and local authorities, to further promote awareness and understanding of the Charter, notably through training, the exchange of good practices and the use of guidance and other available resources[7]. The Council also **invites** Member States to make use of available Union-level and Union-funded materials and tools for its practical application, and in developing rights-based action plans and cooperation networks[8].

5. The Council **recognises** that civil society organisations and human rights defenders continue to face challenges in the Union. The Council **stresses** that Member States should ensure a safe, enabling and supportive environment in which civil society can operate freely at national, regional and local level, in line with and ensuring respect for fundamental rights, and calls on Member States to strengthen their efforts and to continue taking appropriate measures to this

---

[7] See the training tools and other resources on promoting the use and awareness of the Charter developed by the Commission and the FRA as cited in the European Commission's 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 (COM(2025) 751 final), Section 2.2.

[8] See dedicated training tools, such as those developed as part of the RIGHTSCITIES project funded under the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV), aimed at strengthening rights locally.

www.parlament.gv.at

end. The Council also **encourages** Member States to continue ensuring that independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs can operate in a safe, enabling and supportive environment.

6. The Council **highlights** the need for Member States, when transposing Union legislation into national law or otherwise implementing it, to ensure full respect of the Charter and relevant fundamental rights requirements, with a view to ensuring that national legislative frameworks and policies are consistent with the Charter. The Council **encourages** Member States to assess impacts on fundamental rights within impact assessments in such legislative processes.

7. The Council **encourages** Member States, when considering or assessing impacts on fundamental rights within impact assessments in the legislative process, to ensure that civil society organisations, human rights defenders and independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs, participate effectively in national legislative and policy-making processes and are consulted in a meaningful manner.

8. The Council **recognises** the importance of continuously ensuring that Union values and the Charter are effectively applied and respected in practice, and that the financial interests of the Union are safeguarded. In this regard, the Council **reiterates** that there is a clear link between the respect for the rule of law and the Charter on the one hand, and Union funding on the other hand.

9. The Council **underscores** that, based on the Financial Regulation, when implementing Union funding and the EU budget, Member States and the Commission have the responsibility to ensure compliance with the Charter in accordance with its Article 51, and to respect the Union values enshrined in Article 2 TEU that are relevant in the implementation of the budget.

10. The Council **invites** Member States to continue strengthening the arrangements in place to ensure compliance with the Charter throughout the implementation of Union-funded programmes, and recalls the horizontal enabling condition on the effective application of the Charter under the Common Provision Regulation[9]. The Council also **invites** Member States to make use of the Manual on fundamental rights in EU funding, which supports the coherent and effective implementation of the Charter horizontal enabling condition, published by the

---

[9] Regulation (EU) 2021/1060.

www.parlament.gv.at

Commission[10]. The Council **encourages** Member States to support the Commission in its efforts to ensure that relevant national, regional and local stakeholders have access to the Manual, for example by sharing it, with national monitoring committees, managing authorities, social partners, civil society organisations and independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs. In this context, the Council **welcomes** the Commission's commitment to translate the Manual into the official EU languages in order to further ensure its accessibility.

Cooperation among Union institutions, Member States and other key stakeholders

11. The Council **underscores** that the protection and promotion of fundamental rights is a shared and ongoing responsibility requiring sustained efforts among Union institutions, Member States and other key stakeholders, including civil society organisations, human rights defenders and independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs, and judges, prosecutors and other justice practitioners. The Council **recalls** the progress achieved in recent years through enhanced cooperation among these actors in strengthening the application of the Charter, although it recognises that, while progress has been made, further efforts are needed to ensure that the Charter is applied to its full potential across the Union.

12. The Council **emphasises** that continued and structured cooperation among relevant stakeholders remains essential for the remainder of the Charter strategy period and beyond, and **invites** all Union institutions, Member States and other key stakeholders to strengthen their commitment to this cooperation.

13. The Council **highlights** the important role of civil society organisations, human rights defenders, independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs, in promoting fundamental rights and supporting the application of the Charter, as well as the important role of judges, prosecutors and other justice practitioners in promoting and enforcing the Charter. It **invites** the Commission and Member States to strengthen mechanisms enabling the effective and safe participation of the above actors in the promotion, application and enforcement of the Charter, and **acknowledges** that they are an indispensable element in the system of checks and balances in a healthy democracy.

---

[10] See Manual on fundamental rights in EU funding, published by the European Commission.

www.parlament.gv.at

14. The Council **encourages** Member States, in line with their national arrangements, to promote inclusive dialogue and cooperation with both citizens and civil society organisations in Charter-related activities at national, regional and local level. In this context, the Council **welcomes** the EU Strategy for Civil Society[11], and other relevant Union-level initiatives aimed at fostering the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society in public policy-making processes[12].

15. The Council **welcomes** the Union's support for civil society through funding programmes[13] implemented in accordance with the budgetary principles enshrined in the Financial Regulation, including non-discrimination, proportionality, equal treatment and transparency[14]. The Council **underlines** the importance of the continuation of efforts to support capacity-building, cooperation and the sharing of good practices among civil society, including in relation to the Charter. In this context, the Council **underlines** the importance of continuing simplifying practices and reducing administrative burden, in order to enhance the accessibility and impact of Union funding for a broad range of civil society organisations.

16. The Council **highlights** the contribution of strong and independent NHRIs to fostering dialogue between public authorities and civil society and supporting informed consideration of Charter requirements, in particular through their monitoring, reporting and advisory activities[15]. The Council **encourages** Member States that have not yet established NHRIs to do so. The Council also **encourages** the Commission to adopt additional guidance on the role of NHRIs under EU law in accordance with the internationally agreed standards for NHRIs[16].

17. The Council **welcomes** the progress made in several Member States towards establishing or strengthening NHRIs and **highlights** the value of their cooperation and capacity-building at Union level, including through relevant European networks. It **invites** those Member States with existing NHRIs to ensure that they have adequate mandates, independence and resources to effectively carry out this role.

---

11 See ST 15434/25.

12 See for example, the Commission Recommendation (EU) 2023/2836 on promoting the engagement and effective participation of citizens and civil society organisations in public policymaking processes.

13 See for example the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values Programme (CERV).

14 Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast).

15 See ST 7388/23.

16 See Principles Relating to the Status of National Institutions ("The Paris Principles"), adopted by UNGA Resolution A/RES/48/134, 20 December 1993.

www.parlament.gv.at

18. The Council **emphasises** the collective contribution of civil society organisations, human rights defenders and independent fundamental rights bodies, including ombuds institutions, equality bodies and NHRIs in improving access to information, remedies and effective judicial protection in cases involving fundamental rights. The Council also **encourages** the continuation of their cooperation and the exchange of relevant case-law and good practices related to the Charter, in support of its effective application.

19. The Council **recognises** the importance of inclusive and transparent processes in supporting effective Charter mainstreaming. It **welcomes** the Commission's practice of engaging civil society organisations, human rights defenders, and independent fundamental rights bodies, including through decentralised forms of structured dialogue and consultation, in preparation of relevant initiatives.

20. The Council **stresses** the central role of national courts in ensuring the effective enforcement of the Charter through the interpretation and enforcement of Union law within the domestic legal order. The Council **highlights** the importance of the preliminary ruling mechanism as a means of fostering judicial dialogue and the uniform interpretation and application of Union law, including the Charter.

21. The Council **emphasises** the key role of judges, prosecutors and other justice practitioners in ensuring effective judicial protection. It **welcomes** continued support for Charter-related training through Union and national judicial training institutions. In this respect, the Council **welcomes** the Commission's European Judicial Training Strategy 2025–2030 and its stated intention to make available online training courses on the Charter, as well as its broader commitment to supporting judicial training on fundamental rights[17], with due respect to national arrangements for such training.

22. The Council also **highlights** the need to raise awareness among judges, prosecutors and other justice practitioners of available training materials, guidance and tools related to the Charter, including those developed by the Commission, the FRA and the European Judicial Training Network with due respect to judicial independence.

---

[17] See for example, the European Commission's Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU, COM/2020/711 final; the European Judicial Training Strategy 2025–2030, COM(2025) 801 final.

www.parlament.gv.at

23. The Council **takes note of** the ongoing efforts to support the good administration of justice in the digital era, including initiatives to integrate fundamental rights considerations within judicial training and practice[18]. It **encourages** reflection among all stakeholders on how best to support judges, prosecutors and other justice practitioners[19] in addressing the opportunities and challenges arising from the digitalisation of justice, including the use of Artificial Intelligence in full compliance with fundamental rights[20].

24. The Council **stresses** the importance of integrating Charter considerations and ensuring Charter compliance from the earliest stages of the Union's legislative and policy-making processes, including in preparatory work, impacts on fundamental rights within impact assessments, negotiations and decision-making, in helping to identify and prevent potential adverse impacts on fundamental rights and ensuring that Charter requirements are duly taken into account.

25. The Council **calls on** the Commission to systematically assess impacts on fundamental rights within impact assessments for all legislative proposals that have the potential to affect fundamental rights. The Council **invites** the Commission to continue making use of FRA's expertise when assessing impacts on fundamental rights in the Union's legislative process. It also **encourages** Union institutions and Member States to consider FRA's findings when assessing impact on fundamental rights within impact assessments in legislative processes[21].

26. The Council **takes note of** the Commission's invitation to the European Parliament and the Council to make full use of the tools at their disposal to support the effective application of the Charter throughout the legislative process[22], including internal guidance, procedural rules and interinstitutional arrangements[23]. In this context, the Council **highlights** previous training activities organised by successive Council Presidencies on the application of the Charter[24] and the commitment made to explore new ways to make a more efficient use of the "Guidelines on

---

18 See for example, Commission Communication(s) COM(2025) 801 final.
19 See ST 16161/23, ST 7127/24 and ST 16065/25.
20 See for example, FRA report on 'Digitalising Justice: A fundamental rights-based approach'.
21 See for example, FRA, Better legislation – Human rights impact assessments in lawmaking.
22 See COM(2025) 751 final, Section 4.
23 See for example, Guidelines on methodological steps to be taken to check fundamental rights compatibility at the Council preparatory bodies , Doc. 5377/15 of 20 January 2015, or Rule 40 of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure and the Interinstitutional agreement on better lawmaking (OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, pp. 1-14) as also cited in COM(2025) 751 final, Section 4.
24 Last training taking place in September 2024 under the Hungarian Presidency.

www.parlament.gv.at

methodological steps to be taken to check fundamental-rights compatibility"[25]. In addition, it **welcomes** initiatives aimed at strengthening exchanges of best practice between institutions, including on the assessment of impacts on fundamental rights.

27. The Council **notes** the Commission's commitment to continue informing EU staff in assessing impacts on fundamental rights, through updated guidance for its staff on applying the Charter in impact assessments[26]. It **welcomes** the Commission's intention to disseminate this guidance as a source of information to policymakers at national, regional and local level.

28. The Council **welcomes** the Commission's continuing efforts to strengthen the effective mainstreaming of the Charter throughout the Union's legislative and policy cycle, including through training activities, practical tools and other materials to support the assessment of impacts on fundamental rights. It **acknowledges** the added value of these measures in enhancing the quality, coherence and sustainability of Union legislation and policies.

29. The Council **notes** the contribution of the Commission's annual reports on the application of the Charter. In this context, it **invites** the Commission to further develop detailed, thematic overviews focusing on specific Charter-related themes or rights, with a view to improving understanding of their implementation in practice across the Union. The Council **reaffirms** its commitment to an annual exchange of views on the application of the Charter. This debate should fuel targeted and forward-looking Council Conclusions and their follow-up.

30. The Council **highlights** the cooperation between the Union institutions, since the introduction of the Strategy, in ensuring that the Charter is respected when proposing, adopting and applying new EU legislation, in accordance with their respective competences, to protect and promote specific fundamental rights[27]. It **notes** that such exchanges can facilitate mutual learning and the exchange of promising practices, as highlighted in relevant Union-level work on better law making[28].

---

25 See for example, Guidelines on methodological steps to be taken to check fundamental rights compatibility at the Council preparatory bodies, Doc. 5377/15 of 20 January 2015, or Rule 40 of the European Parliament's Rules of Procedure and the Interinstitutional agreement on better lawmaking (OJ L 123, 12.5.2016, pp. 1-14) as also cited in COM(2025) 751 final, Section 4.

26 See Revised operational guidance on taking account of fundamental rights in European Commission impact assessments (C(2025) 8354 final).

27 For example, via the adoption of Digital Services Act, and the adoption of Directive on combatting violence against Women and domestic violence.

28 See FRA, Better legislation – Human rights impact assessments in lawmaking, Luxembourg 2025.

www.parlament.gv.at

31. The Council **reaffirms** its commitment to continuing efforts to raise awareness of fundamental rights compliance within its preparatory bodies, including by promoting the consistent use of existing Council guidance on fundamental rights compliance in Council working parties and, where appropriate, by drawing on the expertise of FRA and other relevant fundamental rights bodies. Exchanges of good practises with other Union institutions are also important to continuous awareness raising.

32. The Council **highlights** the importance of ensuring coherence and mutual reinforcement between the Union's internal and external action in promoting and protecting fundamental rights, in line with the Charter and the Union's international human rights commitments. The Council **invites** the Commission to continue to take action to ensure such coherence, and to support aspiring EU members in aligning with the EU acquis and European standards on fundamental rights standards.

Public awareness on the application of the Charter

33. The Council **recognises** that raising public awareness on the protection that the Charter offers to people in the Union is vital in ensuring that individuals can effectively exercise their rights and can access appropriate remedies where those rights are infringed. This awareness-raising is a key component of the effective application of the Charter by all relevant actors.

34. The Council **takes note of** recent findings[29] indicating that, while general awareness of the Charter has increased, a significant proportion of people in the Union remain insufficiently informed about the content of Charter rights and about where to turn in cases of alleged violations. In this context, the Council **highlights** the need for continuous and targeted efforts to improve general awareness of the Charter and access to clear, accessible and practical information on Charter rights and remedies.

35. The Council **acknowledges** the importance of training programmes and awareness-raising materials on the Charter developed by the Commission and FRA in strengthening public awareness of Charter rights across society[30]. The Council **encourages** Member States to make continuous use of these resources and, where appropriate, to adapt them to national contexts.

---

[29] See the 2025 Eurobarometer survey on Charter knowledge, as cited in COM(2025) 751 final, Section 5.

[30] See for example, the relevant Erasmus+ programme and the EU DEAR Programme, as cited in COM(2025) 751 final, Section 5.

www.parlament.gv.at

36. The Council further **encourages** Member States to support dedicated awareness-raising initiatives at national, regional and local level, including via information campaigns, outreach activities and educational initiatives, with a view to improving the understanding of when and how the Charter applies and by involving and supporting civil society in such efforts.

37. The Council **invites** Member States to continue exploring innovative and complementary ways to raise public awareness among groups that may face barriers in accessing information on Charter rights, including older persons, persons with disabilities and children. In this context, the Council **invites** Member States to ensure that information on the Charter is provided in user-friendly and inclusive formats, including sign language[31], easy-to-read materials, age-appropriate content and accessible digital formats, and that this information is made available through appropriate channels, including, dedicated webpages on official websites.

---

[31] The Council highlights, in this context, FRA's work in translating all Charter provisions in International Sign Language. See the YouTube links available via Charterpedia: The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in Sign Language - YouTube.

www.parlament.gv.at