



PRESS RELEASE

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EU Charter of Fundamental Rights marks its 10th anniversary

On 1 December 2019, the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights will celebrate its 10th anniversary since it became legally binding, with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009. To mark this anniversary, the European Commission, together with the Finnish Presidency of the Council of the European Union and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA), is holding a conference tomorrow, with the aim of looking at how to improve the use and awareness of the Charter to bringing it to life for citizens in the EU.

The Charter upholds and protects core European values, which are reflected across all the EU's legal and policy initiatives, such as the General Data Protection Regulation and the new rules to protect victims of crime and whistleblowers. The Charter is an essential tool in making sure that people's fundamental rights are promoted and protected.

Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality, Věra **Jourová**, stated: *"We have been and we will continue working towards a culture of fundamental rights in the EU. All the actors in the Charter's enforcement chain have a role to play in making it truly effective in people's lives. The conference is a timely occasion to feed into the Commission's reflections ahead of a new Charter Strategy."*

Anna-Maja **Henriksson**, Minister of Justice of Finland, said: *"National authorities play an important role in ensuring that the rights enshrined in the Charter become a reality in people's lives. We need to think of the state apparatus as a whole, encompassing the legislative and administrative branches as well as the national courts. The recent Council Conclusions on the Charter, adopted at the JHA Council in October, provide an important tool for enhancing the implementation of the Charter both at the Council level and in the Member States."*

Michael **O'Flaherty**, Director of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, added: *"The Charter is driving change and helping improve the lives of people across Europe. But as FRA's findings repeatedly show, we still have a long way to go. We have a*

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duty to bring the rights enshrined in the Charter to life, to make them a reality for everyone – for the public at large, for Roma and Jewish communities, for newly-arrived migrants and for LGBTI people.”

Member States authorities, judges, policy makers, law enforcement bodies, legal practitioners and representatives of National Human Rights Institutions, Equality bodies, ombuds-institutions and civil society organisations will all attend tomorrow’s conference to share their views.

Moreover, the outcome of tomorrow’s conference will feed into a new Strategy on the Charter, which the Commission is expecting to publish in 2020.

Background

Earlier this year, the [Commission published a report](#) on how the EU institutions and Member States have been applying the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights. The report showed that European policy makers are increasingly aware of the importance of ensuring that initiatives are compliant with the Charter.

The Charter is however still not used to its full potential and awareness remains low. Along with this year’s report, the Commission published a [Eurobarometer survey](#), which showed that only 4 in 10 respondents have heard of the Charter and only 1 in 10 knows what it is. 6 in 10 would like to have more information.

The FRA’s [2019 Fundamental Rights Report](#) shows that Member States continue to lack national policies promoting awareness and implementation of the Charter. FRA’s findings highlight that civil society organisations and National Human Rights Institutions play a key role in ensuring that the Charter is a reality in people’s lives. But they also show these organisations are not sufficiently aware of the Charter and when it applies.

Since then entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009, the European Commission has published an annual report on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. The annual reports monitor progress in the areas where the EU has powers to act, showing how the Charter has been taken into account in actual cases, notably when new EU legislation is proposed. It addresses the role that EU institutions and Member States authorities play in making fundamental rights a reality in peoples' lives.

The Commission works with authorities at national, local and EU level to better inform people about their fundamental rights and where to find help if their rights have been infringed. Practical information is available on the [e-Justice](#) portal.

For more information

- [2019 Conference on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)
- [Commission Report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights in 2018](#)
- [Eurobarometer and factsheets on Awareness of Fundamental Rights](#)
- [FRA 2019 Fundamental Rights Report](#)
- [FRA paper on civil society organisations’ and national human rights institutions’ awareness of the Charter, prepared for the Conference](#)
- [The EU Charter of Fundamental Rights - Use and added value in EU Member States](#)