

25 YEARS OF RIGHTS: REFLECTING ON THE IMPACT OF THE CHARTER

**Conference to mark the 25th anniversary of the proclamation
of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union**

Brussels, 10-11 December 2025

#EUCharter25

DESCRIPTION

Marking the 25th anniversary of the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, on 10-11 December 2025, the European Commission, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and the Danish Presidency of the Council of the European Union are hosting a conference to discuss the impact the Charter has had on the policies of the European Union and on EU citizens and residents since its publication.

With the aim of celebrating the first quarter of a century of dedicated fundamental rights protection in the EU, the conference gathers experts, Member States delegates, civil society representatives, members of the judiciary and representatives of the EU institutions to reflect on past experience and share insights for the future application of this central fundamental rights framework. The discussions, while emphasising the progress made since the Charter's proclamation, also aim to inform the future development of Charter-related policies.

Wednesday 10 December - International Human Rights Day

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| From 9:00 | <p>Arrival and registration of participants</p> <p>Event moderated by Friso Roscam Abbing, Head of Brussels Liaison Office, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights</p> |
| 09:30 | <p>Opening remarks</p> <p>Irena Moozova, Deputy Director-General for International Dimension of Justice Policies, Rule of Law and Equality, European Commission</p> |
| 09:45-10:15 | <p>Scene setter – How the Charter of Fundamental Rights shapes EU law</p> <p>Clemens Ladenburger, Deputy Director-General of the Legal Service, European Commission.</p> |
| 10:15-10:30 | <p>The Charter today - Takeaways from the third annual CharterXchange and FRA's recent work on the Charter</p> <p>Interview with Sirpa Rautio, Director, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (online)</p> |
| 10:30-11:00 | <p>Coffee break</p> |
| 11:00-12:00 | <p>Panel 1: The Charter of Fundamental Rights and the European Convention of Human Rights – two anniversaries, two complementary protection systems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arnfinn Bårdsen, Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights• Siniša Rodin, Judge at the Court of Justice of the European Union• Exchange moderated by Professor Inge Govaere, Director of Ghent European Law Institute, Ghent University, and Director of the European Legal Studies Department, College of Europe• Questions from the audience |
| 12:00-12:15 | <p>Art performance by Lisette Ma Neza</p> |
| 12:15-13:00 | <p>Panel 2: The added value of the Charter – the Charter's role alongside international and regional human rights instruments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Christina Meinecke, Regional Representative for Europe Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)• Andriy Zayats, Head of the Liaison Office of the Council of Europe to the European Union• Exchange moderated by Kirsten Roberts Lyster, Chair of the Human Rights Program at the Central European University, Member of the FRA Scientific Committee• Questions from the audience |

13:00-14:00

Lunch

14:00-15:30

Marketplace of connections - Civil society best practice initiatives funded by the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values (CERV) programme

Participants will join thematic discussions at three different tables (chosen at registration), where CERV beneficiaries present best practices from their projects. The selected projects cover the following topics::

- Capacity building and awareness raising on the Charter
- Empowering the civic space
- Strategic litigation
- Combating hate speech and hate crime
- Whistleblower protection
- Promoting and protecting children's rights
- Violence against women
- Anti-racism and non-discrimination
- Citizens' engagement and participation

15:30-16:00

Coffee break

16:00-17:00

Panel 3: Empowering individuals - 25 years of equality and rights

- **Colm O'Cinneide**, Professor of Human Rights Law at the University College of London
- **Aleksandra Dulkiewicz**, Mayor of the City of Gdańsk
- **Beate Rudolf**, Director, National Human Rights Institution of Germany (online)
- Exchange moderated by **Delia Ferri**, Professor of Law, Maynooth University, Member of FRA Scientific Committee
- Questions from the audience

17:00-17:15

Civil society perspective on applying the Charter

Interview with **Kersty McCourt**, Senior Advocacy Advisor at Liberties (Civil Liberties Union for Europe)

17:15-19:00

Cocktail and tapas with **cultural performance by Lisette Ma Neza**, Brussels city poet, and accompanying band

Thursday 11 December

9:00

Arrival and welcome coffee

Event moderated by **Friso Roscam Abbing**, Head of Brussels Liaison Office, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

09:30-10:30

Panel 4: National actors as Charter agents - Challenges and highlights

- National authorities as guarantors of fundamental rights, **Adam Bodnar**, Senator of the Republic of Poland (online)
- Ensuring the application of the Charter in national courts, **Goran Selanec**, Judge of the Croatian Constitutional Court
- Exchange moderated by **Jonas Christoffersen**, attorney, former Director of the Danish Institute of Human Rights
- Questions from the audience

10:30-11:00

Coffee break

11:00-12:00

Panel 5: The policy framework - Insights from the Mid-term review of the Charter strategy

- Presentation of the mid-term review outcomes, **Ana Gallego**, Director-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission
- Key messages from the perspective of justice professionals, **Ingrid Derveaux**, Secretary-General of European Judicial Training Network (EJTN)
- Key messages from the perspective of National Human Rights Institutions, **Debbie Kohner**, Secretary-General of European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)
- Exchange moderated by **Ana Gallego**, Director-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission
- Questions from the audience

12:00-13:00

Panel 6: Anticipating the next 25 years

- **Javier Zarzalejos**, Chair, Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), European Parliament
- **Teresa Anjinho**, European Ombudsman
- **Kevin McCarthy**, Secretary General for the Ministry for Children, Disability and Equality of Ireland
- **Marilena Raouna**, Deputy Minister for European Affairs of Cyprus (online)
- Exchange moderated by **Gabriel N. Toggenburg**, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights
- Questions from the audience

13:00-13:15

Concluding reflections

Michael McGrath, Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection



Friso Roscam Abbing

Head of Brussels Liaison Office, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

Friso Roscam Abbing is currently the Head of the Brussels Liaison Office at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Previously, he had been the Head of the Communication Department at FRA since 2009. He has also been a Member of Cabinet of the European Commission Vice-President Jacques Barrot, where he was responsible for refugee policy, fundamental rights and citizenship issues. From 2004 to 2008, he was spokesman for European Commission Vice President Franco Frattini.



Irena Moozova

Deputy Director-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission

Irena Moozova is a senior official within the European Commission, serving since October 2023 as the Deputy Director-General for the International Dimension of Justice Policies, Rule of Law, and Equality at the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST). Previously, she was the Director for Equality and Union Citizenship, ensuring comprehensive policies for inclusion and non-discrimination. From 2010 to 2017, Irena Moozova managed the Unit for Support and Partnership at the Directorate-General for Communications (DG COMM), and prior to that, led the European Commission Representation in the Czech Republic from 2006 to 2010.



Ana Gallego

Director-General for Justice and Consumers, European Commission

Ana Gallego is the Director-General of the Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers (DG JUST) of the European Commission. Previously, she served as Director-General of International Legal Cooperation and Human Rights within the Ministry of Justice of Spain from 2018 to 2021 and as Managing Director of the Spanish Film Archive within the ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Spain from 2017 to 2018.



Clemens Ladenburger

Deputy Director-General of the Legal Service, European Commission.

Clemens Ladenburger studied law at the universities of Freiburg, Geneva and Chicago. He earned his doctor iur. from the University of Heidelberg in 1999. After an assignment as Brexit coordinator in 2017, he has been appointed as Principal Legal Advisor and Director for Justice and Home Affairs in the European Commission's Legal Service in November 2017. He has lectured and published widely on fundamental rights, justice and home affairs, economic and monetary union, Brexit, and various other topics of EU constitutional and administrative law.



Sirpa Rautio

Director, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

Sirpa Rautio is the Director of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights. She was a member of the FRA's Management Board from 2015-2020 and Chairperson of the Board from 2017. Previously, she was the first Director of the Finnish National Human Rights Institution, the Finnish Human Rights Centre that she established. She served as its Director from March 2012 until February 2024. She was also Chairperson of the European Network of Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) from March 2022 until 2024.



Arnfinn Bårdsen

Vice-President of the European Court of Human Rights

Arnfinn Bårdsen was born in Stavanger, Norway, in 1966. He graduated as Cand Jur from the University of Bergen in 1992 where he also obtained the Doctor Juris degree 1999 in International Human Rights Law. He worked as an associate professor at the University of Bergen from 1992 to 2003, while acting as deputy judge in Jæren District Court in 1994-1995. From 2003 to 2008 he served as a judge/head of department and acting chief president at Gulating Court of Appeal. He became Justice of the Norwegian Supreme court in 2008. He has been a member of several law commissions and of the Board of the Norwegian Judges' Association. He was Editor-in-chief for the Norwegian Law Commentary from 2010 to 2022. He was elected judge at the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Norway 1 January 2019 and President of Section from 1 November 2022, Vice President of the Court from 2 July 2024.



Siniša Rodin

Judge at the Court of Justice of the European Union

Siniša Rodin began his professional career in 1987 at Sveučilište u Zagrebu as a tenure track professor. Since 2003, he has been a Professor of EU law at Sveučilište u Zagrebu, where, in 2006, he was awarded the Jean Monnet Chair, of which he became an ad personam holder in 2011. Between 2006 and 2011, Mr Rodin was a member of the Croatian team that defined the negotiating framework and the process regarding the accession of Croatia to the European Union whilst also being, from 2009 to 2010, a member of the Croatian Constitutional Amendment Committee and President of the working group on Croatia's EU membership. The first Croatian judge to be appointed at the Court of Justice, Mr Rodin has served as a Judge at the Court since 4 July 2013.



Inge Govaere

Professor of EU Law, Director of the European Legal Studies Department of the College of Europe

Inge Govaere is Professor of EU Law and Director of the Ghent European Law Institute (G.E.L.I.) at Ghent University. She is also the Director of the European Legal Studies Department at the College of Europe in Bruges. She obtained her PhD at the European University Institute (EUI) in Florence (Italy). Her academic interests vary from EU external relations law to Rule of Law in the EU, Internal Market and EU intellectual property rights and she has published over 20 books on EU law. Inge Govaere was elected as member of the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium for Science and the Arts/Koninklijke Vlaamse Academie van België voor Wetenschappen en Kunsten (KVAB) in 2016.



Christina Meinecke

Regional Representative for Europe Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Christina Meinecke was appointed the Regional Representative for Europe at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in November 2024. Previously, she served for 4 years as the Senior Human Rights Adviser in the United Nations Country Team in Jordan and held diverse roles within OHCHR and with the Organization of Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). Her work in Brussels is centred on placing human rights at the core of EU internal and external action with focus on safeguarding civic space, supporting the anti-racism agenda and addressing inequalities, human rights-based migration governance, and integrating human rights in business conduct, the digital sphere and in the environment.



Andriy Zayats

Head of the Liaison Office of the Council of Europe to the European Union

Andriy Zayats was appointed Head of the Liaison Office of the Council of Europe to the European Union in July 2022. Prior to assuming this post, he served for two years as Diplomatic Adviser to the Secretary of the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine. Between 1995 and 2020, Ambassador Zayats pursued a distinguished diplomatic career in Ukraine, holding positions including State Secretary at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Director General for the Middle East and Africa, Ambassador of Ukraine to several States in Western Africa, and Head of the Private Office under four successive Ministers.



Kirsten Roberts Lyer

**Chair of the Human Rights Program at the Central European University,
Member of the FRA Scientific Committee**

Kirsten Roberts Lyer is the Chair of the Human Rights Program and Associate Professor at the CEU Department of Legal Studies. Appointed to the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights' Scientific Committee (2023–2028) and elected its Chair for 2024–25, she is a recognised expert on National Human Rights Institutions. Prior to joining CEU in 2016, she spent 15 years in human rights practice, including as a Director at the Irish Human Rights Commission and as a legal officer at the UN International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. Her research focuses on independent state-based human rights bodies, academic freedom, parliaments and human rights, and the emerging challenge of transnational repression. She also regularly advises international organisations on these issues.



Colm O'Cinneide

Professor of Human Rights Law at the University College of London

Colm O'Cinneide is Professor of Constitutional and Human Rights Law at University College London (UCL) and Vice-Dean (Research) of the Faculty of Laws. He has published extensively in the fields of comparative constitutional, human rights and anti-discrimination law. He has also acted as specialist legal adviser to the Joint Committee on Human Rights and the Women & Equalities Committee of the UK Parliament, as well as in various national and international organisations.

**Aleksandra Dulkiewicz**

Mayor of the City of Gdansk

Aleksandra Dulkiewicz studied law at the University of Gdańsk (2006) and Paris Lodron University in Salzburg (2004–2005). On 11 March 2019, she was sworn in as the first female mayor in the history of Gdańsk. Additionally, Aleksandra Dulkiewicz is a Polish delegate to the European Committee of the Regions. In October 2019, she received the Princess of Asturias Award in the category of Concord on behalf of the citizens of Gdańsk, with the jury recognising her commitment to solidarity, defence of freedom, human rights, and the protection of peace.

**Beate Rudolf**

Director, German Institute for Human Rights (National Human Rights Institution of Germany)

Professor Beate Rudolf is the Director of the German Institute for Human Rights. From 2016 to 2019, she was also Chair of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI). Since 2022, she is a member of the Board of the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), after having served on the Board from 2013–2019. Previously, she taught public law, public international law, and European law as a junior professor in the Department of Law at Freie Universität Berlin. Beate Rudolf is a specialist in women's human rights, gender equality and anti-discrimination law and was active in the German Women Lawyers' Association (djbb) and the European Women Lawyers' Association (EWLA), of which she was Vice President until the end of 2011.

**Delia Ferri**

Professor of Law, Maynooth University, Member of the FRA Scientific Committee

Delia Ferri is a Professor of Law at Maynooth University and co-Director of the ALL Institute. She is an affiliated researcher at the Dirpolis Institute of Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna (Italy) within the research cluster on social rights, social inclusion and disability, and a fellow at the Burton Blatt Institute of Syracuse University (USA). She is also a member of the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) Ethics, Politics, Law and Philosophy Committee, having previously been a member of the RIA Standing Committee in International Affairs (2018–2022). In June 2023, she has been appointed as a member of the Scientific Committee of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union. Delia Ferri has published extensively in the fields of EU law and International, European and Comparative Disability Law.



Kersty McCourt

Senior Advocacy Advisor at Liberties (Civil Liberties Union for Europe)

Kersty McCourt is a human rights lawyer with over 18 years' experience working for civil society organisations and national human rights institutions. She qualified as a lawyer in the UK, worked in Rwanda, Kenya and the Gambia and then for more than a decade in Brussels for the Open Society Justice Initiative – always with a focus on access to justice and civic space. For Liberties, Kersty McCourt supports members through advocacy, trainings, research and legal advice. Over the past years Kersty has designed and taught several courses on human rights and civic space at the Global Campus of Human Rights in Beirut, Venice and Yerevan.



Lisette Ma Neza

Slam poet and musician

Lisette Ma Neza (b. 1997) is a slam poet and musician. Originally from the Netherlands, she has made Brussels her home. She is the first Dutch-speaking poet, the first woman, and the first poet of colour to win the Belgian Poetry Slam Championship and took silver at both the European and World Championships. Her work explores themes of identity, diaspora, displacement and love, expressed through poetry, music, film, and multidisciplinary projects. In 2024, she was named the first city poet of Brussels, a role in which she gives voice to the city and uses poetry to connect people and languages.



Adam Bodnar

Senator of the Republic of Poland

Since 2021, Professor Adam Bodnar has been the Dean of the Faculty of Law at the SWPS University in Warsaw, Poland. He has held various roles in various organisations, such as the European Institute for Gender Equality, the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, and the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights. From 2015 to 2021, he served as the Commissioner for Human Rights in Poland. He was elected a senator of the Republic of Poland for in 2023 and served as the Minister of Justice from 2023 to 2025.



Goran Selanec

Judge of the Croatian Constitutional Court

Goran Selanec has been elected as a judge of the Constitutional Court in October 2017. From December 2010, he worked at the Office of the Ombudsman for Gender Equality as a senior legal adviser before being appointed Deputy Ombudsman for Gender Equality in January 2012. Before he joined the Office of the Ombudsman, he taught EU law at the Faculty of Law University of Zagreb. He has acted as a legal expert in the following EU Progress projects: «EU Charter of Fundamental Rights» (2014) and «Support for the Implementation of the Anti-discrimination Act» (2009) at the Office for National Minorities and Human Rights of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.



Jonas Christoffersen

Attorney, former Director of the Danish Institute of Human Rights

Attorney Jonas Christoffersen is a member of the European Bar Association's (CCBE) Human Rights Committee. He was the Director of Denmark's National Human Rights Institution, the Danish Institute for Human Rights, for eleven years. Jonas Christoffersen was appointed Knight of the Order of the Dannebrog in 2018. In 2019, he received the Hartmann Prize for his work in promoting human rights and the rule of law in Denmark. In 2022, he was awarded the Dreyer Foundation's Honorary Award for Lawyers.



Ingrid Derveaux

Secretary-General of European Judicial Training Network (EJTN)

Ingrid Derveaux is a French judge and a lecturer. As of January 2023, she holds the position of Secretary General of the European Judicial Training Network (EJTN) and leads the EJTN's secretariat in Brussels. She has served as Deputy Director and Head of International Affairs at the French National School for the Judiciary and has held the offices of a Vice-Prosecutor at the Paris Public Prosecutor's Office, investigative judge in Nice, and judge in civil and criminal matters in the Cambrai court. Additionally, she has been working in the cabinet of the French Minister of Justice, contributing, among other tasks, to the negotiations for establishing the European Public Prosecutor's Office ('EPPO').



Debbie Kohner

Secretary General of European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI)

Debbie Kohner has been Secretary General of ENNHRI, the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, since February 2013. As a qualified solicitor, she has practised law in London and Madrid. She has also worked in Westminster Parliament, and established a reporting system for racist incidents in New Zealand. She worked in the civil society sector, served on Boards, and co-convened a coalition of equality and human rights organisations in Northern Ireland.



Javier Zarzalejos

Chair of the LIBE Committee of the European Parliament

Javier Zarzalejos has been actively involved in politics in the Basque Country, where he served as Secretary General of the Popular Coalition. He has extensive experience in public administration, having held several positions such as Deputy Director General for Information (Ministry of the Spokesperson) and Information Adviser at the Embassy of Spain in the United Kingdom, among others. He served as Secretary General of the Office of the Prime Minister throughout the eight years of the Aznar Government. Since 2012, he has been the Director of the FAES Foundation and since July 2019, he has been a Member of the European Parliament within the European People's Party Group.



Teresa Anjinho

European Ombudsman

Teresa Anjinho is a lawyer, an independent human rights expert, and an academic specialising in public international law, gender, and equality. She was sworn in as European Ombudsman on 27 February 2025. From 2022 to 2025, she served as a Member of the Supervisory Committee of the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). She previously held the positions of Deputy Ombudsperson of Portugal (2017-2022), Secretary of State for Justice in the Portuguese Government (2015), and Member of Parliament in Portugal (2011-2015).



Kevin McCarthy

Secretary General of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality, Ireland

Kevin McCarthy is Secretary General of the Department of Children, Disability and Equality in Ireland. He took up his current role in January 2022. As Secretary General, he has overall responsibility for the effective operation of the Department and for providing advice to the Minister in delivering on the Department's mission and mandate to enhance the lives of people in Ireland by upholding rights, promoting equality of opportunity, recognising diversity and delivering supportive legislation, policies and services. He previously served as Secretary General of the Irish Department of Rural and Community Development from 2017 and as an Assistant Secretary General in the Department of Education from 2008 to 2017, where he held a number of senior leadership roles. In the earlier part of his career, he worked in a number of roles in the Irish Departments of Health and Finance and in the health sector.



Marilena Raouna

Deputy Minister for European Affairs of Cyprus

Marilena Raouna serves as Deputy Minister for European Affairs, in charge of the preparations and political oversight of the Cyprus Presidency of the Council of the EU in the first half of 2026. She studied Jurisprudence (Law) at Oxford University, holds an LLM in Public International and European Law from the London School of Economics and Political Science (Chevening Scholar) and a Diploma in French language and civilization from Sorbonne University. She worked for the European Commission, at the Directorate General for Justice, Security and Freedom, the Permanent Representation of Cyprus to the EU, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as Special Advisor of the Minister, and the Diplomatic Office of the President as Director and EU Sherpa. Her work has focused, inter alia, on EU affairs, EU-Turkey relations, and EU enlargement, and she has also participated in the UN-led negotiations for a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus question, focusing on EU matters. Ms Raouna is a mother of two, Phaidon and Neriah. She was born in 1983 in Larnaka and comes from Famagusta.



Gabriel N. Toggenburg

European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights

Gabriel N. Toggenburg is heading the Sector EU Charter, Rule of Law and Democracy at the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA). Before joining FRA in 2019, he has been working in academia for ten years. He is an Honorary Professor for European Union and Human Rights Law at the university at Graz and contributes also in his private capacity to raising the awareness of the Charter e.g. in his Series «All EU-r rights».



Michael McGrath

Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection, European Commission

Michael McGrath has been the European Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection since 2024. Previously, he served at the Irish Minister for Finance (2022-2024) and at the Irish Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform (2020-2022). He has also been the Lead Opposition Spokesperson on Finance at the Fianna Fail Party from 2011 to 2020.