

2018 Annual Report on the Application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

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

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Every year the European Commission reports on how the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (the Charter) has been applied in the EU and its Member States. This report looks at **2018**. It also marks the **10th anniversary of the Charter's entry into force**.

This report shows that the Charter is living up to its promise as the most modern, sophisticated and comprehensive legally binding fundamental rights instrument. The Charter is most effective, with a real impact on people's lives, when the entire enforcement chain applies it.

There is however room for improvement, especially at national level. Results of a recent Eurobarometer survey on Charter awareness show that only 42% of respondents have heard of the Charter and 12% know what it is. 60% would like more information on Charter rights and on where to turn to if their rights are violated.

It is important to make sure the Charter delivers for everyone. National authorities, including the courts, are required to apply the Charter when implementing EU law. Civil society and rights defenders play a key role in raising awareness of the rights it contains and ensuring that everyone can effectively enjoy them. There can be no effective fundamental rights protection without vibrant civil society organisations and rights defenders. In 2018, the Commission took legal action to ensure that civil society organisations can work safely and independently. It also proposed legislation to strengthen financial support for their work. Looking ahead to the May 2019 European elections, the Commission took action to make sure citizens can exercise their electoral rights freely and in a well-informed manner. A healthy democracy and respect for the rule of law are key conditions for promoting and protecting fundamental rights, and vice versa.

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