



## European Commission reports on the application of the Charter of fundamental rights in the EU in 2016

Brussels, 18 May 2017

**Today, the European Commission has published its annual Report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights.**

The report outlines the initiatives taken in 2016 by the EU to strengthen fundamental rights. It also looks at how these rights were applied across a range of EU policies and in the Member States in 2016.

First Vice-President Frans **Timmermans** said: *"The European Union is not just a market or a currency, it is first and foremost a Union of values. As guardian of the Treaties the European Commission has a special duty to uphold the fundamental rights and the rule of law throughout this Union, a responsibility which we share with all the EU's institutions and Member States."*

Věra **Jourová**, EU Commissioner for Justice, Consumers and Gender equality added: *"The European Commission has been working in all areas of EU law to safeguard fundamental rights across Europe. This includes protecting children's rights, strengthening the right to personal data protection, improving consumers' rights and guaranteeing basic conditions also for people seeking asylum or migrating. We must continue to make sure that rights are a reality for everyone across Europe. Fundamental rights are for all."*

This year's Report concludes that recent developments pose serious threats to fundamental rights. The Commission will ensure that all EU legislative proposals and all bodies bound by the Charter will continue to respect it. We will pay particular attention to the important system of checks and balances, in particular the key role of supreme courts and constitutional courts in upholding the EU's common values.

In terms of specific legislative developments, the report notes that in 2016 the EU: made important steps to ensure protection of children in cross-border parental responsibility disputes ([Brussels IIa regulation](#)) and to [help international couples](#) to clarify the rules applicable to property regimes; launched an Online Dispute Resolution [Platform](#) to help strengthen consumer protection; agreed on a [Code of Conduct](#) on countering illegal hate speech online with Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and Microsoft; and maintained an important dialogue with Member States on the rule of law.

The final adoption of the data protection reform in April 2016 established one single set of rules giving people easier access to their own personal data, a right to data portability, a clarified "right to be forgotten", and certain rights in case of a data breach. The Commission also concluded the [EU - U.S Privacy Shield](#) and [Umbrella Agreement](#) to better protect Europeans' personal data when it is transferred to the U.S. The right to a fair trial was also given concrete effect in 2016 through the adoption of a set of directives on the presumption of innocence and the right to be present at trial; on legal aid; and on procedural rights for children (see details [here](#)).

Democracies based on the rule of law need to protect fundamental rights of minorities and of the most vulnerable. The European Institutions must also comply with the Charter in all their actions. The [Directive on combatting terrorism](#) is a good example where several fundamental rights were taken into account at the drafting and negotiating phase.

### Annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights

Media freedom and pluralism are indispensable cornerstones of healthy democracies. The Commission organised the 2016 EU [Colloquium](#) on Fundamental Rights on the role of media in upholding democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law. The Colloquium conclusions identify concrete actions to foster media freedom and ensure independence from political and financial pressures, to empower and protect journalists, and to promote a diversity of voices in society.

The 2017 Colloquium on Fundamental Rights will focus on the promotion and protection of women's rights and gender equality. In a context of rising intolerance, it is important that the EU strongly reaffirms and promotes equal rights for all. It will be an opportunity to address the economic and political empowerment of women, women's rights in public and private spheres of life and the fight against violence against women in all its forms, the latter being also the topic of focused actions throughout 2017.

## Background

With the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009, the [Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#) became legally binding. The provisions of the Charter are primarily addressed to the EU institutions and then to the national authorities only when they are implementing EU law.

The Commission is working with the relevant 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. The Commission provides practical information on these rights via the [European e-Justice portal](#) and has set up a dialogue on handling fundamental rights complaints with ombudsmen, equality bodies and human rights institutions.

## For more information

2016 [Report](#) and Staff Working Document on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights  
[EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](#)

IP/17/1336

Press contacts:

[Christian WIGAND](#) (+32 2 296 22 53)

[Melanie VOIN](#) (+ 32 2 295 86 59)

General public inquiries: [Europe Direct](#) by phone [00 800 67 89 10 11](#) or by [email](#)