



CERV Civil Dialogue - Online info session

**Call for proposals to promote civil society organisations'
awareness of, capacity building and implementation
of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights
CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI**

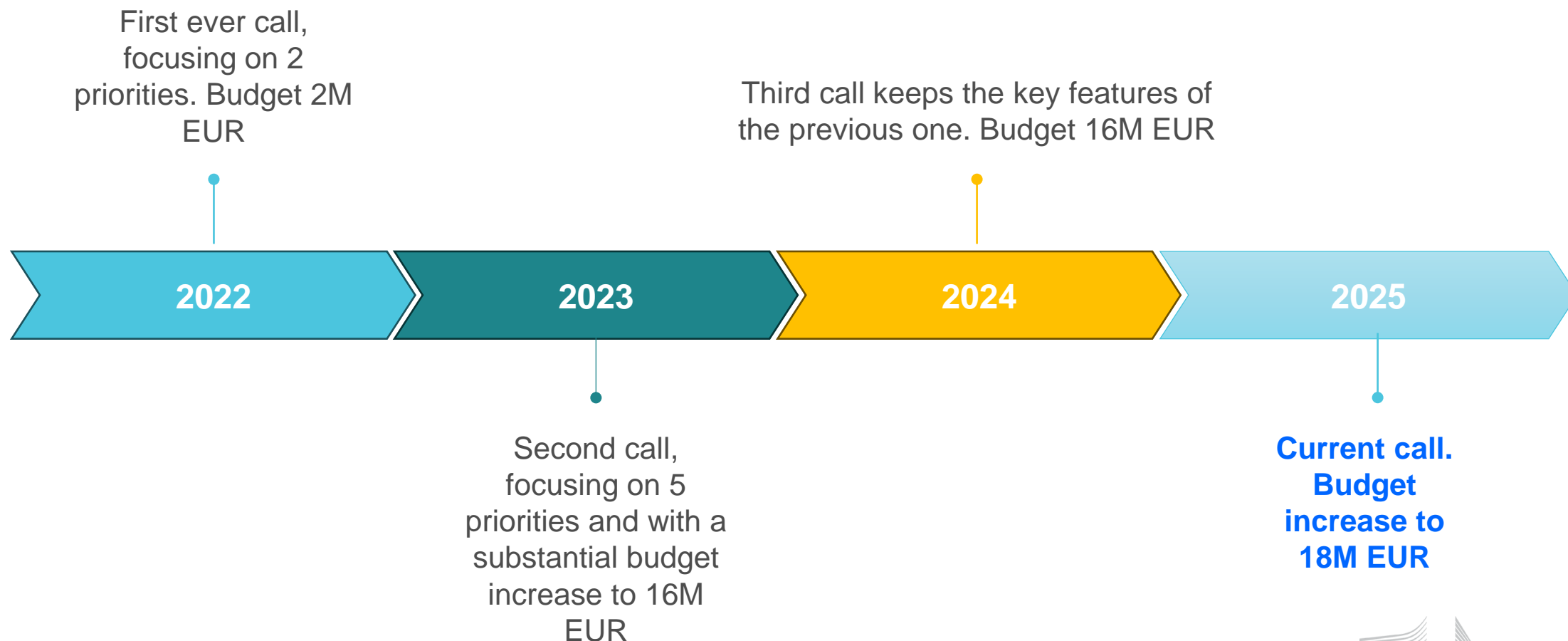
Day 2 – 'Objectives, political priorities,
expected activities and impacts'
11 June 2025

Why a specific call for proposals on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights?



- Sets out the fundamental rights of everyone in the EU.
 - Declared in 2000 and into force in 2009. This year marks the 25th anniversary.
 - Legally binding as primary EU law: always binding on the EU and on the Member States when implementing EU law.
 - Insufficiently known amongst practitioners – new Eurobarometer 2025 confirms need to increase Charter knowledge.
 - **2020 Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter sets out the Commission's policy actions to increase application from 2020 to 2030, including through funding.**
- Funding to promote rights and values by **building primarily civil society organisations capacity and awareness** on the Charter and by carrying out activities to **ensure that the Charter is upheld.**

The Charter calls: a successful uptake



Policy Priorities for the 2025 Charter call



**Capacity-building
and awareness-
raising on
the EU Charter of
Fundamental
Rights**



**Promoting rights
and values by
empowering the
civic space**



Strategic litigation



**Combating hate
speech and hate
crime**



**Supporting an
enabling
environment for
the protection of
whistleblowers**



Budget split per priority*:

Total Available budget : EUR 18 000 000

CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-CHARTER	EUR 3 600 000
CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-CIVIC	EUR 3 500 000
CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-LITIGATION	EUR 2 400 000
CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-SPEECH	EUR 6 000 000
CERV-2025-CHAR-LITI-WHISTLE	EUR 2 500 000

*We reserve the right not to award all available funds or to redistribute them between the call priorities, depending on the proposals received and the results of the evaluation.



Priority 1: Capacity-building and awareness-raising on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

Martina TÖRNVIST – DG JUST
Deborah RICCETTI – DG JUST

Supporting the Charter's implementation through capacity-building and awareness-raising

- In its **Charter strategy**, the Commission acknowledges that **capacity-building is central** for helping civil society organisations and human rights defenders assist people **in using fundamental rights**.
- This strand seeks to fund projects which aim at **promoting a good understanding of the rights enshrined in the Charter** and of **the situations in which the Charter applies**:
 - According to its **Article 51**, the Charter is applicable to Member States only when they are implementing EU law. This differs from the usual applicability of national constitutional provisions and international human rights instruments.
 - Projects can focus on the scope of application of the Charter and/or on the contents of an individual Charter right and/or several fundamental rights.
 - **Projects addressing Article 45** may cover 'Freedom of movement and of residence', as grandfathered in the Agreement on the withdrawal of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland from the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community.
- Projects are intended to **raise the fundamental rights knowledge of relevant actors**. Building on the central role of civil society organisations and human rights defenders, projects **could involve national, regional and local authorities as partners** (co-applicants), with the aim of supporting **joint capacity building and awareness raising efforts**.

Which are the expected results?

- **Capacity-building and awareness-raising activities to increase knowledge on and use of the Charter**, especially on its scope of application and the rights it contains;
- **Facilitating cooperation between civil society and other key partners** in enforcing the Charter, such as NHRIs, equality bodies, ombuds institutions and Member State authorities (at national, regional and local levels);
- **Mutual learning, exchange of good practices, development of working and learning methods, fundamental rights impact assessment guidelines**, and programmes that may be transferable to other countries;
- **Training and train-the-trainer activities**, including guidance and learning tools;
- Communication activities, including **dissemination of information and awareness-raising about fundamental rights and redress mechanisms**;
- **Analytical activities**, such as sex-disaggregated data collection and research, and the creation of tools or databases (e.g. thematic databases of fundamental rights jurisprudence).



Priority 2: Promoting rights and values by empowering the civic space

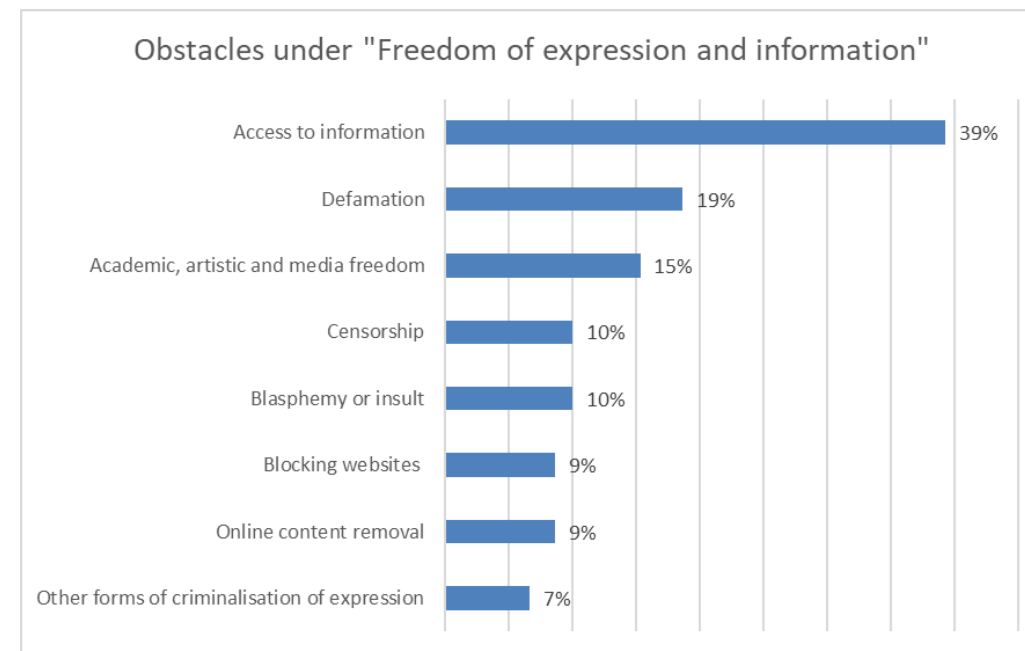
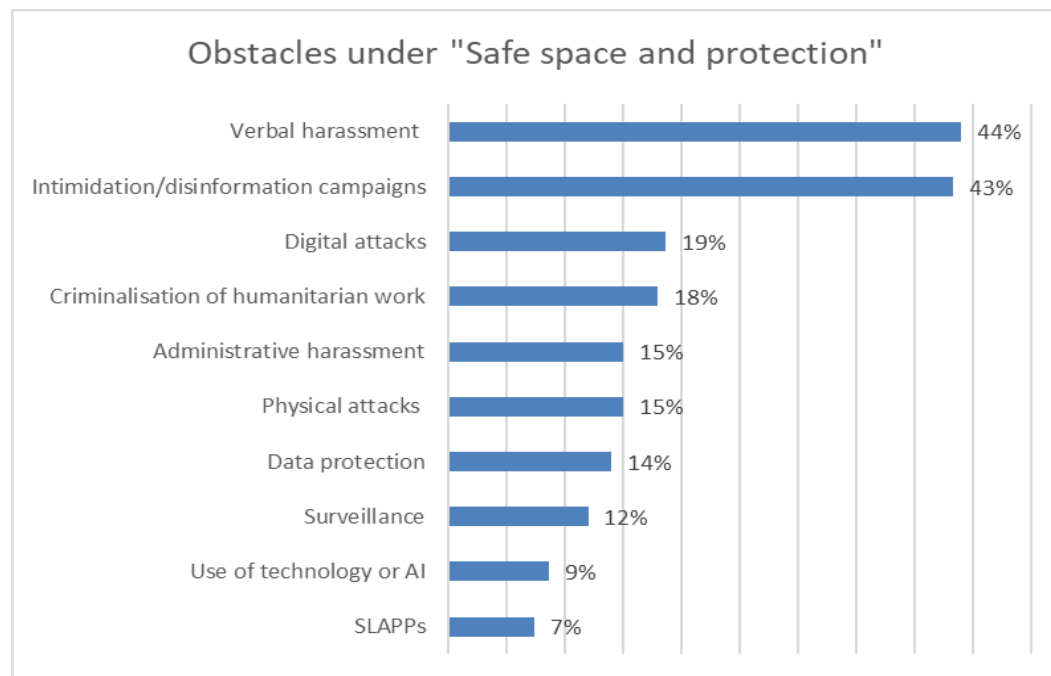
Elena HAIG – DG JUST

Commission policy: thriving civic space

- **Recognising the role** civil society organisations, and the diverse roles they play across our society and across several sectors, ranging from awareness-raising, education, providing support or services, policy monitoring and advocacy.
- They **strengthen social cohesion and preparedness**, enhance policymaking, and ensure that the voices of affected communities are heard.
- The engagement of such organisations is also a crucial **element in the system of democratic checks and balances** and the promotion and safeguarding of EU values.
- **Recognising the need** to enable them in their work, to ensure they are better protected and supported in their roles, and that their own fundamental rights are not threatened and attacked.

Commission policy: thriving civic space

Civil society organisations and rights defenders still report a **range of challenges, obstacles and restrictions** across Member States, which limit their ability to carry out their activities:



Commission policy: thriving civic space

- 2022 Annual Charter report, [A thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU](#), 2020 [Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the EU](#), Annual [Rule of law reports](#), Pillar IV: check and balances – the framework for civil society, Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) [work on civic space](#)
- In 2023, the Commission followed up on the Charter report in [a series of seminars](#) and a [final Conference](#). Participants to these events identified in the [final report](#)
 - **several areas where actions** by both Member States and EU institutions, including the European Commission, **would be recommended**; and
 - **overarching principles** that are regarded as fundamental preconditions for an effective approach to promoting and protecting thriving civic space

Upcoming work – the EU Civil Society Strategy

The **2024-2029 Political Guidelines** state that the Commission will “***step up our engagement with civil society organisations that have expertise and an important role to play in defending specific societal issues and upholding human rights***” and that “***we must ensure civil society is better protected in its work***”

- *The Commission will present an **EU Civil Society Strategy** in Autumn 2025, to protect, support and empower civil society organisations, setting a framework for action how to do so.*
- *A public consultation will be launched on 12 June and be open throughout the summer on the Commission’s Have Your Say Portal*

How would the projects support the Commission work towards a thriving civic space?

- 1. MONITORING:** creation of a systematic and comprehensive monitoring system **to regularly and consistently monitor the environment in which civil society organisations work in the national contexts**
 - Aligning with existing indicators, e.g. the Fundamental Rights Agency indicators about the shrinking civic space and of internal organisations' data
 - and in particular of breaches of CSOs and rights defenders' fundamental rights.
- 2. PROVIDING SUPPORT SERVICES:** to CSOs and their members under attack: legal, practical (medical, psychological, family, etc.) support.
 - could aim to provide an overview of existing protection mechanisms at national level or create platforms or tools to centralise information for relevant support services

Which are the expected results?

- **Increased awareness** based on sound evidence;
- **Cooperation and networks** among the actors protecting the civic space;
- **Dialogue** on the situation of the civic space, increased **public attention** to it, and the development of **positive narratives** on CSOs and HRDs;
- **Increased protection** of CSOs, their members and HRDs;
- **Increased reporting of attacks** and **targeted responses** to such attacks;
- **Increased resilience** of CSOs and HRDs against threats and attacks, including online.



Priority 3: Strategic litigation

Elena HAIG – DG JUST

Commission policy: advancing the judicial protection of fundamental rights

- What is needed for an effective litigation strategy?
 - In depth knowledge of the legal instruments + ability of develop creative legal argument
 - Communication skills
 - Advocacy
 - Community engagement
- Why is strategic litigation key to advance the protection of fundamental rights?
 - Legally binding decisions
 - Cross-border impact
 - Community impact

The LITIGATION priority: Scope and Activities

- There could be a focus on specific Charter rights? YES
- Which type of activities are covered?
 - Training, knowledge sharing, and exchange of good practices;
 - Data collection and research, and the creation of tools or data bases (e.g. thematic databases of jurisprudence);
 - Communication activities, including dissemination of information and awareness raising about rights, redress mechanisms, and strategic cases;
 - Capacity building and awareness raising activities to counter manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings against journalists and human rights defenders who engage in public participation (Strategic lawsuits against public participation).

Please note that under this priority, the **litigation fees will not be funded**.

Which are the expected results?

- **Increased awareness and knowledge** about EU law, the Charter, the existing remedies and redress mechanisms to enforce them at national and European level, including the preliminary ruling mechanism;
- **Strengthened abilities** of legal professionals and practitioners **to cooperate** and engage in litigation practices;
- **Increased awareness** on the use and of the safeguards and strategic protection against SLAPP.

SLAPPs are manifestly unfounded or abusive court proceedings. They are a particular form of harassment increasingly used against journalists, human rights defenders and others engaged in public participation in a matter of public interest and upholding democratic values and fundamental rights.



Priority 4: Combating hate speech and hate crime

Tommaso CHIAMPARINO – DG JUST

Combating hate speech and hate crime

- **2008 Framework Decision on combating racism and xenophobia** requires the criminalisation of public incitement to violence or hatred based on race, colour, religion, descent or national or ethnic origin --> (!) hate speech and hate crime are criminal offences in the EU → National laws have implemented it and often broadening the grounds to cover also anti-LGBTIQ or hatred on grounds of disability or gender.
- [6th December 2023 JOINT Communication on "No Place for Hate: a Europe united against hatred"](#)
- [21 Recommendations from the European Citizens Panel on tackling hatred in society](#)
--> (!) most recent political priorities in the fight against hate speech
- **EU policy toolbox** to help national authorities to implement EU law on the ground and to effectively counter hate speech and hate crime:
 - the **High Level Group on combating hate speech and hate crime**, with dedicated work on:
 - hate crime victims support
 - hate crime reporting, recording and data collection
 - Specialised networks of law enforcement and prosecutors with competence on hate speech and hate crime and their cooperation with CSOs.
 - the **Code of conduct+ on countering illegal hate speech online** agreed with major social media platforms and announced in January 2025 in the enforcement framework of the Digital Services Act.

The priority on combating hate speech and hate crime

Rationale for a stand-alone priority:

- Combating hate speech and hate crime is a key part of the Commission's action to promote EU values and to ensure that the Charter is upheld.
- CSOs play a crucial role in combating hate speech and hate crime, thereby safeguarding and promoting fundamental rights. There is a need to enhance cooperation between CSOs and national authorities, as well as between CSOs and other players e.g. in the private sector (IT companies; think tanks) in the response to hate speech online.

Projects should be:

- **Impactful** → good projects deliver sustainable concrete results in line with the policy instruments at EU level. Bad example: Wealth of research and mapping on legal frameworks on hate crime are already available, research activities in this field would not add particular value.
- **Pragmatic** → Extensive guidance is already available, so focus should be on action on the grounds (action plans, training, campaigns).. Bad example: production of additional toolkits, mapping, and guidance.
- **Of the right size** → bigger projects and numerous countries involved do not necessarily mean impact, often the effect is the opposite as bigger projects fail to address national specificities.
- **Replicable** → Think of activities that can, if shared with other practitioners, easily be replicated in other contexts.
- **Built on existing good practice** → Think of past successful activities which can be promoted in other countries to continue previously successful projects



Priority 5: Supporting an enabling environment for the protection of whistleblowers

Christel MERCADE PIQUERAS – DG JUST

How would the projects support the correct implementation of Whistleblowing Directive?

SUPPORTING civil society organisations in their key function **implementing the Whistleblowers' Directive** by contributing to:

- ✓ ensuring that potential whistleblowers can report without fear of retaliation,
- ✓ ensuring that persons in charge of handling whistleblowers' reports are trained adequately,
- ✓ raising awareness amongst the general public,
- ✓ providing advice and support to whistleblowers.

Which type of activities and tools?

- Activities **enhancing the effective implementation of the national law transposing the Directive**, including capacity-building by developing targeted guidance or training materials or train-the-trainer programs;
- Activities and tools to **promote awareness** raising and communication activities
- **Analytical activities**, such as data collection on whistleblower reports and cases of retaliation, development of indicators to effectively record cases, research and creation of tools and databases (on case-law, statistics etc.)
- **Mutual learning** activities and activities aimed at **exchange of good practices** on the effective implementation of the Directive,
- Activities **enhancing and facilitating cooperation** between public authorities and civil society organisations, including by elaborating national, regional or local protocols on whistleblower protection or contributing to reviews the existing systems of protection.

Which are the expected results?

- Increased **effective implementation of the national laws** and **awareness** by the general public and potential whistleblowers, of existing reporting channels and procedures, as well as of the rights provided under the Directive;
- Increased **capacity and knowledge** of civil society, relevant national authorities or practitioners, to correctly apply the Directive's rules
- Improved **effectiveness and coherence** of the Directive's application, including through improved cooperation between national, regional or local authorities and civil society.
- Enhanced **data collection** on reports and cases of retaliation and enhanced capacity of the national systems to record whistleblower reports and cases and to assess the effectiveness of the national laws transposing the Directive.



Closing remarks

Inna PETRENKO, EACEA

Thank you
For your attention

