

## **Summary of survey results**

### **Targeted European Commission consultation of civil society representatives on the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights**

*Summary of the responses to an online survey carried out between 24 April-13 June 2025.*

#### **Background**

December 2025 marks the 25th anniversary of the proclamation of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. This is also when the European Commission assesses the implementation of its Strategy to strengthen the application of the Charter in the EU, adopted in 2020 and in force until 2030. For this purpose, the European Commission sought input from one of the key stakeholders that play an important role for the Charter's application – civil society organisations (CSOs). To gain insight into their experiences when it comes to the application of the Charter, the European Commission ran an online consultation with CSOs that operate in the EU Member States or in Albania, North Macedonia or Serbia (enlargement countries that have observer rights in the Management Board of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) and whose CSOs can therefore participate in its Fundamental Rights Platform (FRP)). The results of this consultation have informed the Commission's mid-term review of the Charter strategy.

The questionnaire was administered online, via the *EUSurvey* platform. The call for consultation was sent to all participants in the FRP. A total of 101 responses were received between 24 April and 13 June 2025, of which 95 responses qualified as representing organisations operating within the EU or the three above-mentioned enlargement countries (23 countries overall).

#### **Respondents' profile**

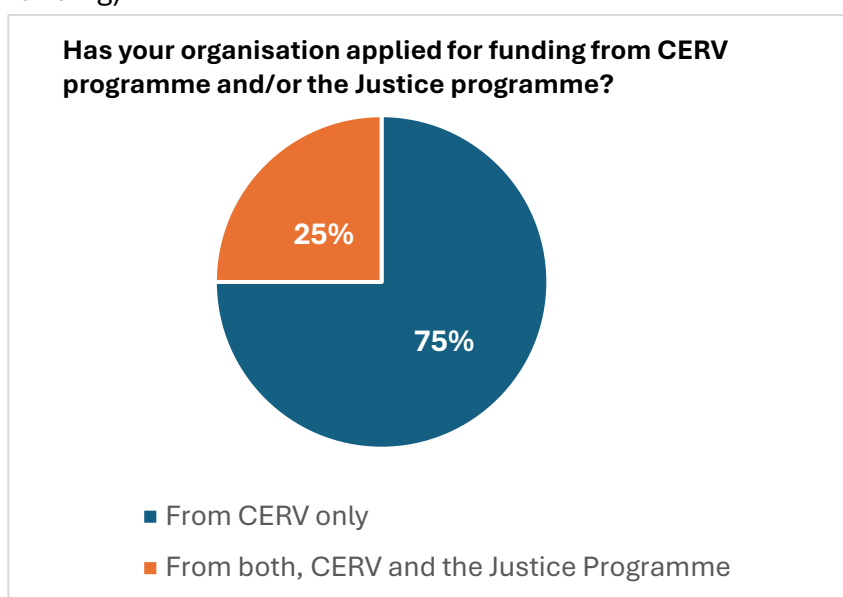
The responses predominantly reflect the views of the CSOs working at national level (76.8%), while only 22.1% said they operate on EU or international level. One responding organisation reported being active on the regional level (1%). The majority of the respondents represent CSOs (83.2%), the remaining respondents (16.8%) represent faith-based and non-confessional organisations, trade unions, universities as well as social and professional organisations.

## **Key take-aways and learning points**

- More than four in ten responding organisations said they had applied for EU-funding to improve Charter awareness, training or capacity building. Of all those who applied for EU funds, all did so under the Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV).
- However, the survey data also reveal that for many CSOs, seeking EU-funding for Charter activities is not on their agenda. The responses indicate that rather low levels of awareness of Charter promotion activities, sporadic Charter training provided and little engagement of their organisation with government authorities may be the cause. Looking at the responses received, stronger engagement of CSOs in the efforts led by their national governments to promote the Charter – supported by their NHRIs, ombudspeople and equality bodies – seems to result in a greater number of applications for Charter-related EU funding.
- Charter training is not common among the respondents. Those organisations whose employees or volunteers had not received Charter training in the past five years were also unlikely to apply for Charter-related EU funding.
- Those respondents who are aware of the Charter tools and the Commission's Annual reports on the application of the Charter also use them in their work. This is especially true for the guidance tools authored or co-authored by the FRA and the material available on the European Commission's e-Justice portal.
- The survey results uncover the need for further, better targeted promotional work – addressing, in the first line, organisations operating on local level – to raise CSOs' awareness of the Charter. This would include not only promoting the nature and content of the Charter but also guidance about how to secure funding in order to advance its application.

## Summary of the responses provided

- More than four in ten respondents (46%) said their organisation had applied for EU-funding, either from the CERV or from the Justice Programme (see Fig 1). The survey results reveal that CERV is clearly the go-to resource for CSOs when it comes to seeking funding to advance Charter-related awareness, securing training and capacity-building. Of those that had applied for EU-funding, 75% turned to CERV only. Those 25% who turned to the Justice Programme had all applied with CERV as well. Among those organisations that had applied for funding from these programmes, the absence of local-level CSOs is noticeable (only 27.3% of the CSOs with local-level operations reported having applied for funding).

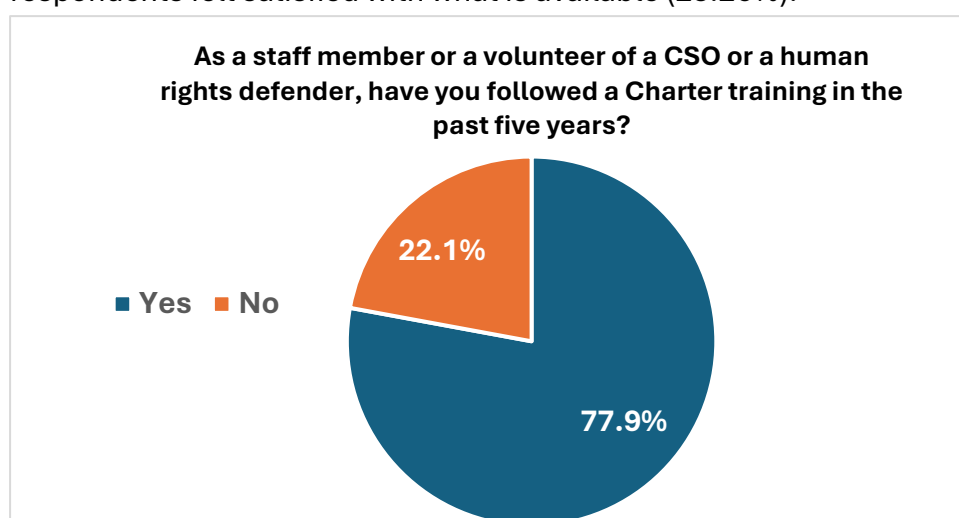


**Fig.1:** For those organisations that had applied for EU-funding, the Citizenship, Equality, Rights and Values programme (CERV) was the go-to resource.

- Being engaged in training and outreach activities related to the Charter, especially when led by the respondent's national government, had a major positive effect on fund-seeking on the side of the respondents. Among those respondents whose organisation had participated in or benefited from such activities, the likelihood of applying for funding almost doubled. Interestingly, cooperation with their equality body, NHRI or ombud's office did not seem to affect the respondents' fund-seeking behaviour (47.7% of those who cooperated applied for funding vs 45% of those who did not apply). Almost all respondents (96.8%) agreed that being invited to events, training or advocacy activities organised by their NHRI, equality body or ombud's office on the Charter could help to improve the relationship between

them and, as a result, may lead to more active fund-seeking to help defend the rights protected under the Charter.

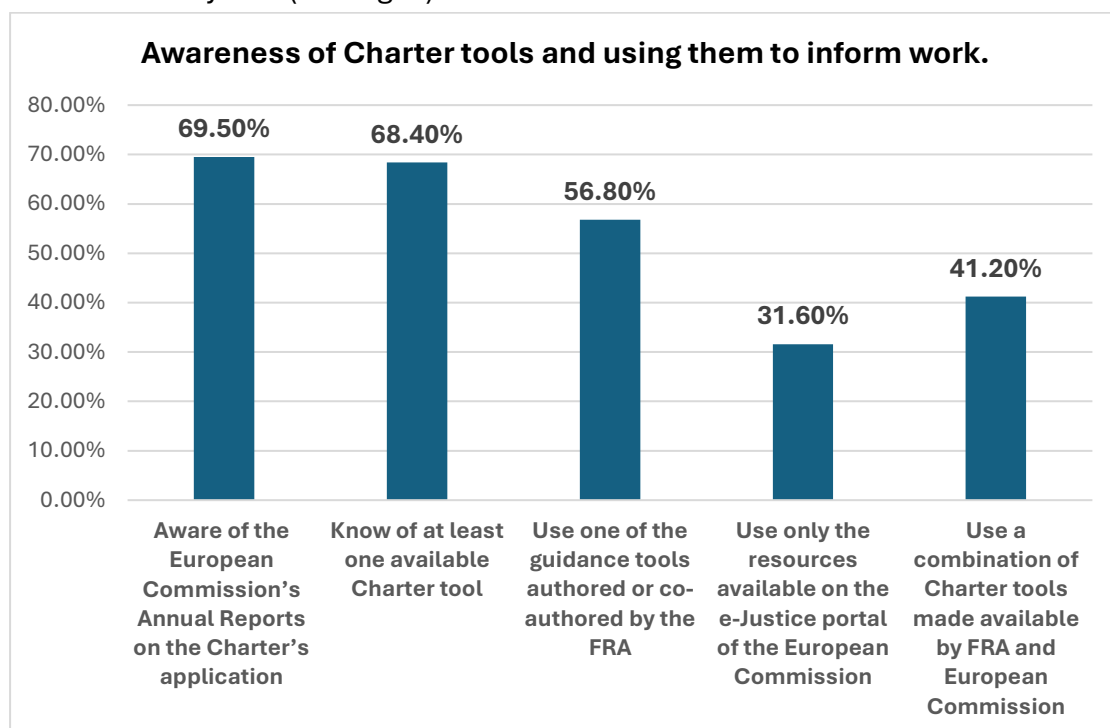
- Charter training is not a widespread practice among those working or volunteering at a CSO or a human rights defender – almost eight in ten respondents (77.9%) said they had not received any Charter training in the past five years (see Fig. 2) as their organisation had not offered it, in any kind of format (not in-person, online nor hybrid). Notably, lack of Charter training does seem to correlate with relative inactivity in applying for EU-funding – respondents whose organisations had not applied for funding almost invariably had not received any Charter training in the past five years (86.3%). As for the reasons for not receiving any Charter training, the majority of the respondents (71.58%) stated that they were not aware of such opportunities. Of those who expressed views in that regard, more than one-half (54.7%) rated the available training opportunities as insufficient. This is especially true for what is being offered at national level – only 8.4% found Charter training opportunities available nationally to be sufficient. This sentiment was much more positive when it comes to online Charter training opportunities as one in four respondents felt satisfied with what is available (25.26%).



**Fig. 2:** Charter training is not a widespread practice among those working or volunteering at a CSO or human rights defender.

- Civil society representatives who were aware of the available Charter tools and reports do also use them. Somewhat surprisingly, against the backdrop of self-reported lack of Charter awareness and little Charter-training, the respondents reported being aware of the Commission's Annual reports on the Charter (69.5%) and knew of at least one available Charter tool (68.4%). Of those who were aware of at least one Charter tool, almost seven out of ten (67.4%) said they also make use of the Charter in their work – either often or sometimes. When making use of the Charter in their work, the respondents most commonly (56.8%) reach for one of the guidance tools authored or co-authored by the FRA: FRA Charter Handbook,

Charterpedia, Charter e-guidance, and FRA-Council of Europe's thematic Handbooks on Charter and ECHR. Almost one-half of the respondents (46.1%) said they utilise the resources available on the e-Justice portal of the European Commission: Fundamental Rights Interactive Tool, Charter checklist and Charter tutorial – as a stand-alone resource or in combination with the tools authored or co-authored by FRA (see Fig. 3).



**Fig. 3:** Survey respondents are aware of Charter reports and Charter tools. Those who use the tools made available by European Commission or the FRA often use a combination of these tools.

- Respondents said there is still ample room for improvement when it comes to CSOs' knowledge about the Charter. This holds true for the conditions of the Charter's application as well as for the substance relating to the individual Charter provisions – on both accounts, only about four out of ten agreed that their organisation was well-informed.
- In terms of measures the national governments could take to assist civil society in effectively applying the Charter in their work, the respondents suggested that Charter training free of charge and technical assistance with the applications for EU funds could help, as would stepping up efforts to inform CSOs of funding, training and capacity building opportunities.