
European Commission: to put the Charter of Fundamental Rights into practice, “civil society organisations are essential, but need support”

The work done by civil society organisations and defenders of fundamental rights is essential to put the Charter of Fundamental Rights into practice, but “further effort needs to be made across the EU to support them, including by improving the environment in which they operate”. This is the message of the Report 2022 on the application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, published by the European Commission earlier today. Such Report specifically looks at “what the member states and the EU are doing to support civil society organisations and rights defenders, such as national human rights institutions, equality bodies and ombuds-institutions”. These are “important players to protect and promote fundamental rights” and “their impact is acutely felt during times of crisis.”. For instance, in connection with the aggression of Ukraine, they have been “instrumental in countering disinformation, mobilising support for people fleeing, and documenting atrocities, as well as relaying vital information about the needs of specific groups”. However, 61% of such organisations face obstacles limiting their “safe space”, while 43% of them are confronted with verbal, physical or online attacks. The Report also shows that “a lack of funds remains a major challenge for almost half of civil society organisations, particularly for those working on the rule of law and democracy as well as on fundamental rights more broadly”. Many member states consult them when they prepare their laws, or even have permanent modes for dialogue, though civil society organisations and rights defenders report various obstacles to their inclusion (limited access to documents and information, as well as a lack of civil dialogue). Minorities and vulnerable groups are “are not sufficiently consulted”.

Sarah Numico