

Situation of fundamental rights in the EU in 2017

2017 was a year during which the EU saw both progress and setbacks in fundamental rights protection. For example, while the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights was a further step towards more equality, setbacks were encountered in the area of the independence of the judiciary, the work of civil society organisations and women's rights. The Commission, the EU Fundamental Rights Agency and the Parliament regularly monitor the situation of fundamental rights in the EU. A LIBE committee report on the situation of fundamental rights in 2017 is scheduled for debate in plenary during January.

Background

The EU is founded on the values of human dignity, freedom, democracy, equality, the rule of law and respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities. The EU, and its Member States when acting within the scope of EU law, must respect the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, which enshrines all the personal, civil, political, economic and social rights enjoyed by people living in the EU. In addition, the European Convention on Human Rights ensures that EU Member States respect human rights even when acting outside the scope of EU law. Research has shown that EU [citizens](#) perceive human rights as one of the most important values for them personally and as one of the values that best represent the EU. Several stakeholders, including the [Commission](#), the [EU Agency for Fundamental Rights](#) (FRA) and the [Parliament](#), monitor the situation of fundamental rights in the EU. Their annual reports give an overview of the developments in the past year and guidance for further action to improve the situation in the future.

Fundamental rights in 2017 according to the Commission and FRA reports

Although there was some progress, there were also setbacks and challenges. FRA [reports](#) that the Charter's potential was again not fully exploited, with no significant improvement in its use by the judiciary or in legislative processes. The independence of the judiciary was threatened in some Member States, which led the Commission to propose to the Council to activate [Article 7 of the Treaty on European Union \(TEU\)](#) against a Member State for the first time. The work of civil society organisations was questioned and made more difficult in some Member States, and there was a continuation of the [backlash](#) against women's rights. In December 2017, FRA published a second [survey](#) on minorities and discrimination, which showed that even after numerous actions to combat discrimination, it was still a reality for many people in the EU, along with hate-motivated harassment and violence. [Child poverty](#) was also an issue, as well as the risk of [radicalisation](#) and violent extremism among young people. However, progress was achieved in the improvement of [victims' rights](#), [data protection](#) and [cybersecurity](#). The EU dedicated a lot of effort to combat [fake news](#) and [illegal hate speech online](#) in particular. The adoption of the [European Pillar of Social Rights](#) in November 2017 was an important step forward towards reducing inequalities and exclusion. LGBTI rights were furthered, especially in [regulating](#) the civil status of same-sex couples.

European Parliament position

The European Parliament's Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE) adopted its [report](#) on 3 December 2018. It draws attention to several key areas where the rule of law and fundamental rights have been under attack, such as migration, women's rights, freedom of expression and minorities' rights. It also advocates the strengthening of the role and mandate of the Fundamental Rights Agency, and urges the Member States to take account of its recommendations.

Own-initiative report: [2018/2103\(INI\)](#); Committee responsible: LIBE; Rapporteur: Josep-Maria Terricabras (Greens/EFA, Spain).

