



EU Values

The European Union and the protection of fundamental rights

Connecting spheres Academy

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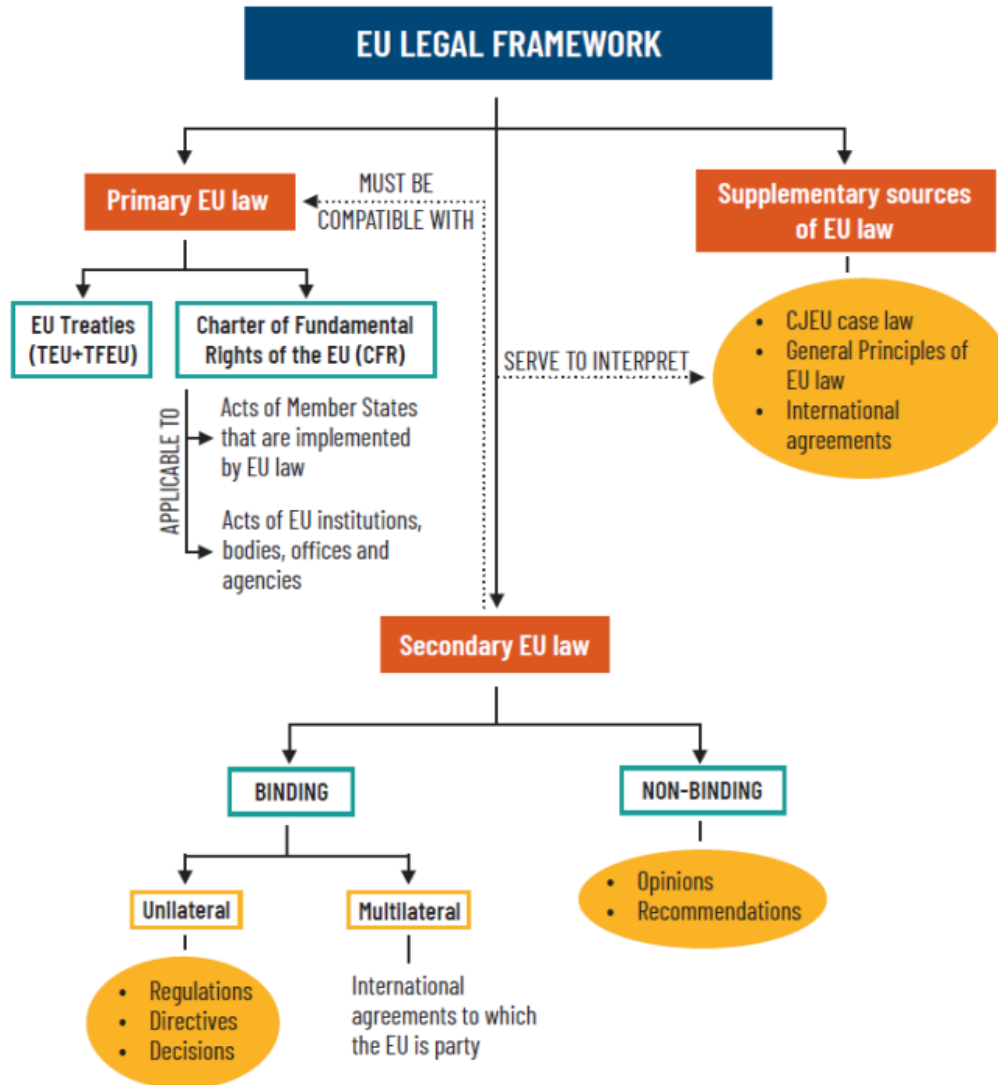
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What we will be discussing today

Part 1 – The EU's value system. The EU's legal framework. EU anti-discrimination law. The rights of LGBTQIA+ people within the EU framework

Part 2 – EU values in action. The CERV programme and its objectives. CERV programming. Examples of CERV calls: how to contextualise the background of a proposal

Part 1 – The EU's value system



Part 1 – The EU's value system

The EU legal hierarchy

The TEU (Treaty on European Union) and the TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) form the primary foundations of EU law

Art. 2 TEU → Values of the Union

- Human dignity
- Freedom
- Democracy
- Equality
- The rule of law
- Respect for human rights, including the rights of persons belonging to minorities

Part 1 – The EU's value system

The EU legal framework

Art. 3 TEU Objectives of the Union

- To promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples
- The Union offers its citizens an area of freedom, security and justice without internal borders
- The Union establishes an internal market.
- It combats social exclusion and discrimination and promotes social justice and protection, equality between women and men, solidarity between generations and the protection of the rights of the child
- It promotes economic, social and territorial cohesion
- It respects its rich cultural and linguistic diversity
- The Union establishes an economic and monetary union whose currency is the euro
- In its relations with the rest of the world, the Union affirms and promotes its values and interests and contributes to the protection of its citizens

Part 1 – The EU's value system

The European Union and fundamental rights

The Treaties contain numerous prohibitions on discrimination which, in specific circumstances, address particular aspects of the general principle of equality.

The role of the Court of Justice of the European Union

The Treaty of Lisbon and Article 6 TEU subjects the actions of the EU institutions and Member States, insofar as they apply and implement EU law, to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, which has been made legally binding at EU level by a reference in that article.

The EU and the CEDU system:

The EU's accession to the Convention is now specifically provided for in Article 6(2) TEU. Accession negotiations were reopened in 2010. In spring 2013, an agreement was reached on the draft accession agreement. The Commission forwarded this draft to the Court of Justice and requested an opinion on its compatibility with EU law.

Part 1 – The EU's value system

The European Union and fundamental rights: the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

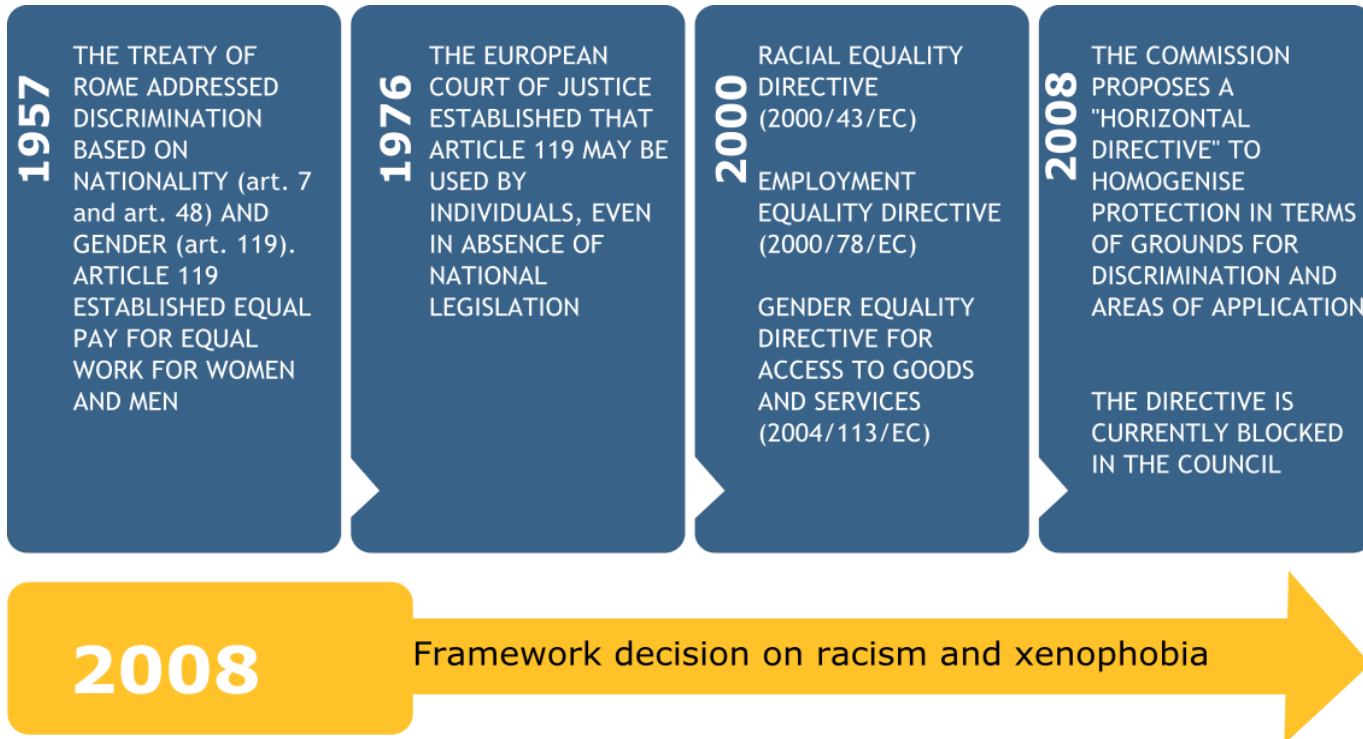
The initial draft of the Charter

Draft solemnly proclaimed the 'Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union' by the Presidents of the European Parliament, the Council and the European Commission at the start of the Nice European Council on 7 December 2000. During the negotiations on a European Constitution, the Charter of Fundamental Rights was revised and made an integral part of the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe of 29 October 2004.

Failure of the referendum

The Charter of Fundamental Rights was once again solemnly proclaimed the "Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union" in 2007 Treaty of Lisbon Charter of Fundamental Rights legally binding and fundamental rights enforceable under EU law
BUT structural weakness of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights

Part 1 – The EU's value system



Part 1 – The EU's value system

EU anti-discrimination law – Origins and evolution over time

- In the European Union, anti-discrimination legislation was introduced to facilitate the smooth functioning of the internal market (traditionally limited to the workplace).
- In 2000, with the adoption of the Racial Equality Directive, this scope was extended to include access to goods and services, on the one hand, and access to the national social security system, on the other. The Directive on equal treatment between men and women in the access to goods and services was then introduced to safeguard gender equality in this sector.
- The Employment Equality Directive adopted in 2000, which prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, disability, age and religion or belief, applies only in the context of employment

Part 1 – The EU's value system

EU anti-discrimination law – Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU

Two key provisions:

Art. 21: '1. Any form of discrimination based, in particular, on sex, race, colour, ethnic or social origin, genetic features, language, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, membership of a national minority, property, birth, disability, age or sexual orientation shall be prohibited. [...]

Art. 23: "Equality between men and women must be ensured in all areas, including in matters of employment, work and pay. The principle of equality shall not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in favour of the under-represented sex."

Part 1 – The EU's value system

EU anti-discrimination law – Scope of application:

The protection afforded by the EU's anti-discrimination directives varies in scope:

- race and ethnic origin enjoy the broadest protection, as it applies to employment, social security and goods and services;
- discrimination on grounds of sex is prohibited in the context of employment, social security (more limited than the general social security system) and goods and services;
- sexual orientation, disability, religion or belief, and age are currently protected only in the context of employment.



Part 1 – The EU's value system

EU anti-discrimination law – the perspective of the Horizontal Directive

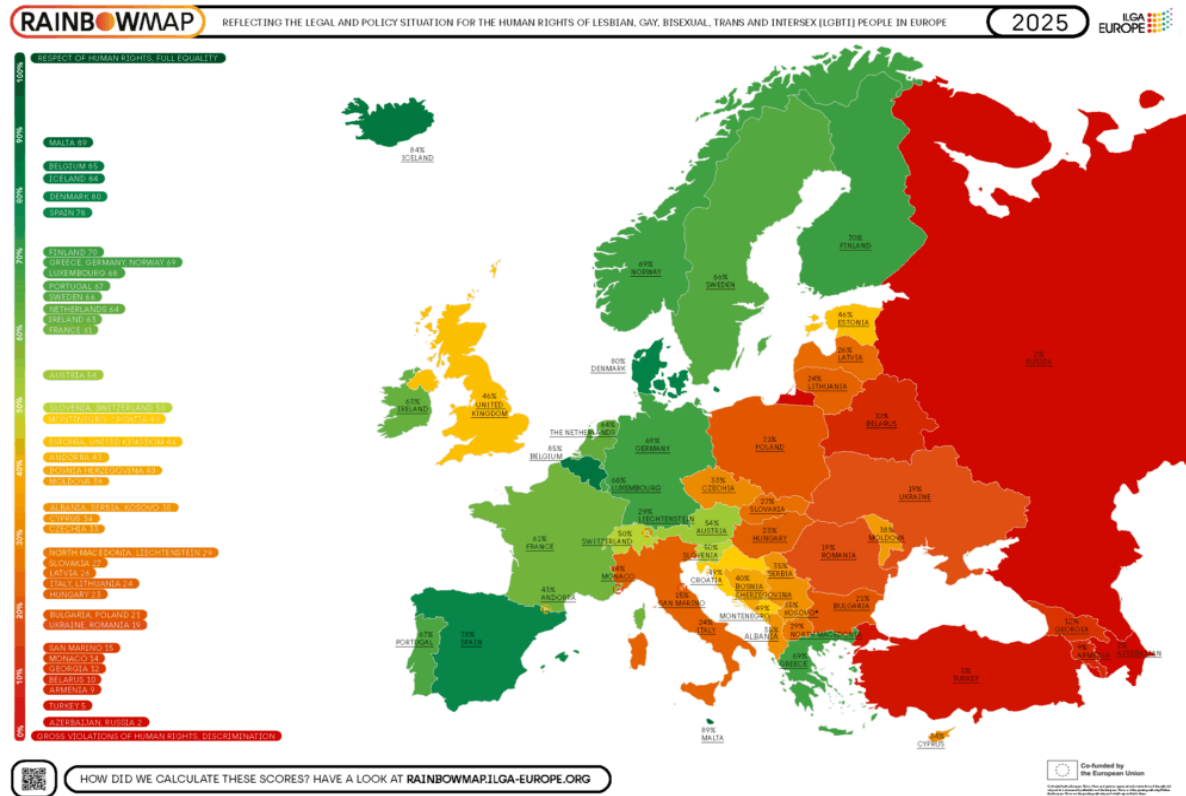
- 2008: Proposal for a 'Council Directive on implementing the principle of equal treatment outside the labour market, irrespective of age, disability, sexual orientation or religious belief, which aims to extend protection against discrimination through a horizontal approach'
- 2018: Recommendation by the European Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- 2023: European Parliament resolution
- 2024: the compromise solution proposed by the Belgian Presidency

Reasons for Member States' opposition:

- Proposal deemed to infringe upon national competences
- Opposition to the inclusion of social protection and education
- Reservations regarding the feasibility of incorporating the concept of multiple discrimination
- Budgetary implications and implementation costs, particularly with regard to disability

Part 1 – The EU's value system

The rights of LGBTQIA+ people within the EU system



Part 1 – The EU's value system

The rights of LGBTQIA+ people within the EU system

Legal basis:

- Article 21 of the Charter: explicitly prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation
- Article 19 TFEU: allows for measures to be taken to combat this type of discrimination (although it refers to 'sex' rather than 'gender').

Since 2000, discrimination based on sexual orientation in employment and working conditions has been prohibited by Directive 2000/78/EC. This means that:

- You are protected by law if, for example, you feel you are being treated unfairly when applying for a job because of your sexual orientation.
- You are protected by law if, for example, you have a job where your colleagues treat you badly, for instance by insulting you or making jokes at your expense because of your sexual orientation.
- You are protected by law if, for example, you are denied a promotion or training because of your sexual orientation

Part 1 – The EU's value system

The rights of LGBTQIA+ people within the EU system: Other legal instruments providing protection

- Directive on Free Movement (Directive 2004/38/EC): due to the definition of 'spouse' and 'family members', as well as the recognition of same-sex marriages and registered partnerships entered into in other Member States
Family Reunification
- Directive (Directive 2003/86/EC): in relation to the rights of entry and residence of LGBTI third-country nationals
- Directive 2011/95/EU on the criteria for granting refugee status: regarding the granting of asylum on the basis of membership of a specific 'social group', including explicit references to sexual orientation and gender identity
- Important: the protection of transgender and intersex people

Part 1 – The EU's value system

LGBTQIA+ rights within the EU system: Practical tools for protection

- November 2020: EU Strategy for LGBTIQ Equality 2020–2025
- October 2025: Strategy for LGBTIQ+ Equality 2026–2030 LGBTIQ Equality Sub-Group within the High-Level Group on Non-Discrimination, Equality and Diversity
- Guidelines for strategies and action plans to improve LGBTIQ equality and the associated monitoring checklist

Part 2 – EU values in action

The CERV programme (Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values) and its objectives:

Funded by the European Commission's Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers Launched in 2021 and running until 2027.

4 objectives:



Safeguarding and promoting the values of the Union



Promoting rights, non-discrimination and equality



Promoting civic engagement and participation



Combating violence, including gender-based violence

Part 2 – EU values in action

CERV Programming

Useful documents:

- CERV Indicative Planning 2026
- CERV Work Programme 2026–2027

Good to know! In the EU's Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2021–2027, LGBTIQIA+ rights are covered by Heading 2 – Cohesion, Resilience and Values – under the Justice, Rights and Values Fund. This fund is divided into the Justice (JUST) programme and the CERV programme.

The CERV programme receives €641.7 million plus an additional €912 million from 2022 onwards, bringing the total to €1,553.7 million.

Part 2 – EU values in action

Examples of CERV calls: how to provide context for the proposal

Call: CERV-2025-EQUAL – Call for proposals to promote equality and to fight against racism, xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination

EU Grants: Call document (CERV): V1.0 – 26.06.2025

1. Background

The Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme provides funding for citizens' engagement, equality for all and the implementation of rights and EU values. The programme's main objective is to promote and protect rights and values as enshrined in the EU treaties, particularly by supporting civil society organisations, public authorities, and other stakeholders in their efforts to uphold these principles. The programme aims to strengthen democratic participation, promote gender equality and non-discrimination, tackle racism and xenophobia, and protect the rights of children and other vulnerable groups. The European Commission is committed to promoting inclusion and equality for all in all its forms. To tackle discrimination and to promote diversity, the European Commission has adopted several key policy initiatives for equality in Europe. This call for proposals is one of the ways in which the Commission is supporting these initiatives.

Calls such as this one are competitive and require applicants to demonstrate how their projects will effectively address the key challenges and priorities described below.

Projects funded through the CERV programme are closely monitored to ensure they deliver tangible results and contribute to the broader aims of equality, rights, and values in the EU. Successful projects often involve cross-border collaboration, fostering innovative solutions, and sharing best practices among stakeholders across different EU Member States and participating third countries.

Overall, the Citizens, Equality, Rights and Values programme is a crucial instrument in the EU's strategy to promote an inclusive and equitable society, supporting initiatives that safeguard fundamental rights and foster a sense of shared European citizenship. This call plays an important role in that.

2. Objectives – Themes and priorities – Activities that can be funded – Expected impact

Objectives

The objectives of the call are:

- Promoting equality and preventing and combating inequalities and discrimination on the grounds of sex, racial or ethnic origin, religion or belief, disability, age or sexual orientation and respecting the principle of non-discrimination on the grounds provided for in Article 21 of [the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union](#).
- Supporting, advancing and implementing comprehensive policies and an intersectional approach to combat racism, xenophobia, antigypsyism, LGBTQ-phobia, antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of discrimination and intolerance, both online and offline⁴.

Policy initiatives supported:

- the [EU Anti-racism action plan \(2020-2025\)](#)
- the [EU Roma strategic framework for equality, inclusion and participation](#) (2020-2030)
- the [EU Strategy on combating antisemitism and fostering Jewish life](#) (2021 – 2030)

⁴ Taking into account also other relevant instruments such as the European Convention on Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Call: CERV-2025-EQUAL – Call for proposals to promote equality and to fight against racism, xenophobia and all other forms of discrimination

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- the [LGBTIQ Equality Strategy](#) (2020-2025)
- the [EU Strategy on victims' rights](#) (2020-2025)
- the [Gender Equality Strategy](#) (2020-2025)

It is important to bear in mind that the policy initiatives listed above will be followed up by new strategies and action plans, as outlined in the [mission letter](#) of the Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, Hadja Lahbib, in the [mission letter](#) of the Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection, Michael McGrath, and in the [Commission work programme 2025](#). This therefore needs to be taken into account when preparing proposals and for the lifetime of projects.

Themes and priorities (scope)

In view of the overall objectives stipulated above, the call will support the following priorities:

Priority 1 - Fighting against discrimination and racism, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance, including antigypsyism, anti-Black and anti-Asian racism [P1-discrimination and racism]

This priority supports holistic and intersectional responses⁵ to discrimination and intolerance - in particular on grounds of racial or ethnic origin, colour and religion - as well as to racism and xenophobia, antigypsyism intolerance, including their manifestations on the ground. Such responses should aim to build trust between individuals, communities and national authorities.

The priority will support projects that help to effectively implement:

- the [EU Anti-racism action plan](#), which aims to combat structural forms of racism faced in particular by people of colour and people of African descent, Muslims or people perceived as such, Roma as well as people of Asian descent.
- the [Racial Equality Directive](#) (Council Directive 2000/43/EC), which aims to lay down a framework for combating discrimination on the grounds of racial or ethnic origin, with a view to putting into effect in the Member States the principle of equal treatment.
- the [EU Roma strategic framework](#), which aims to promote effective equality, socio-economic inclusion and meaningful participation of Roma, and
- the [Council Recommendation on Roma equality, inclusion and participation](#), which aims to have Member States adopt national Roma strategic frameworks; adopt and implement measures to promote equality and effectively prevent and combat discrimination, antigypsyism, social and economic exclusion, the extremely high at-risk-of-poverty rate and material and social deprivation among the Roma population; and step up meaningful participation by and consultation of Roma people.

We are looking for projects that focus on:

- multisectoral cooperation between civil society organisations, public and private organisations and local authorities to address systemic and structural racism in areas related to access to quality housing, employment (i.e. skills, vocational training-) and social inclusion (fight against poverty, etc.).

⁵ If an applicant's proposal is intersectional and covers more than one priority, the applicant must apply under the priority which their proposal most addresses.

Part 2 – EU values in action

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Project summary

See Abstract (Application Form Part A).

#\$PRJ-SUM-PS\$# #@REL-EVA-RE@# #@PRJ-OBJ-PO@#

1. RELEVANCE

1.1 Background and general objectives

Background and general objectives

Describe the background and rationale of the project.

How is the project relevant to the scope of the call? How does the project address the general objectives of the call?

What is the project's contribution to the priorities of the call?

Which target groups will be supported/assisted by/in the project. Why have you chosen to focus on them?

|

1.2 Needs analysis and specific objectives

Needs analysis and specific objectives *(n/a for Programme Contact Points)*

Provide a needs assessment. A need is a gap between what is and what should/ would be helpful or useful.

The needs assessment should be your starting point. Specify what needs will be addressed and how they have been identified. It should be specific and focus on the actual needs of the target group. It should include relevant, reliable data and, a robust analysis clearly demonstrating the need for the action (therefore, avoid references to generic statements and information about the problems and needs of the target group). The needs assessment should incorporate gender equality issues and non-discrimination considerations that identify the differences between and among women and men, girls and boys, in terms of their relative position in society and the distribution of resources, opportunities, constraints and power in a given context. The data supporting the needs assessment should be disaggregated by sex, as well as age or disability, whenever possible. You can refer to existing research, studies and previous projects that already demonstrate the need for action.

If your project is supported by a public authority, annex the Letter of support.

Examples of CERV calls: how to provide context for the proposal

Thank you!