



European  
Commission



# Fundamental Rights

31 May 2012 – In a speech at the European Law Academy, Vice-President Viviane Reding explained how the Charter of Fundamental Rights has become a compass guiding all of the Union's activities. (See [SPEECH/12/403](#))

## 1. The Charter as our Compass

*"Today, Commission proposals systematically (...) undergo a detailed fundamental rights assessment."*

*"It was a political commitment to take fundamental rights more seriously in the EU institutions."*

- ✓ All Commissioners take an oath to respect the EU Charter
- ✓ Communication on a 'Charter Strategy' adopted 2010
- ✓ Introduction of fundamental rights impact assessments for all Commission proposals

## 2. Increasing Judicial application of the Charter

*"In the Test Achats ruling, the Court made crystal clear that not only do we have a legally binding Charter of Fundamental Rights for the EU, but that we also have a constitutional Court at EU level that stands ready to apply and enforce [it]."*

- ✓ The number of Court of Justice decisions quoting the Charter almost doubled, from 43 in 2011 to 87 in 2012
- ✓ References to the Charter in National courts' questions to the Court of Justice rose by over 50% as compared to 2011, from 27 to 41

## 3. Monitoring progress and improving information for citizens

*"The first and primary addressees of the Charter are the Union institutions themselves."*

*"National fundamental rights law and the EU Charter complement one another."*

- ✓ Annual Report on the application of the Charter
- ✓ Annual exchange of views with the European Parliament and the Council of the EU
- ✓ European Year of Citizens 2013

## 4. Towards a Federal Bill of Rights for the EU?

*"It took the United States 100 years – and a very bloody civil war – [for] the U.S. bill of Rights [to apply] not only to the federal level, but also [...] to the individual States. To all those who are not satisfied with the current State of Union law as regards fundamental rights, I thus say: Be patient."*

*"I would hope the 'Austrian model of Charter incorporation' might also be taken up by other constitutional courts. [...] For citizens in Austria, this means they can invoke the Charter directly."*

- ✓ Austria incorporates Charter into its Constitutional Order 2012