**European Commission launches campaign on EU fund to promote fundamental rights**

Today, the European Commission’s **Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers** is launching a [communication campaign](http://europa.eu/cerv-programme) to amplify the reach and impact of its [**"Citizens, Equality, Rights, and Values" (CERV)**](https://www.ireo.eu/funding-financing/eu-funding-programmes-and-financial-instruments/europe-for-citizens/)programme in Ireland. The CERV programme is the biggest-ever EU fund for civil society aiming at promoting and protecting fundamental rights in the EU. CERV underlines the important role of civil society in safeguarding and promoting the EU values of respect for human fundamental rights, rule of law and democracy. As reported in the [European Commission’s 2022 Annual report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ga/ip_22_7521), civil society organisations (CSOs) across the EU face diverse challenges that hamper their ability to carry out their work and to uphold human fundamental rights. These challenges include:

* disadvantageous legislation or restrictive implementation of laws;
* attacks on and harassment of CSOs and human rights defenders, including negative discourse aimed at delegitimising and stigmatising CSOs (offline and online);
* difficulties in accessing decision-makers and feeding into law and policymaking; and
* hurdles to accessing financial resources and ensuring sustainability – as evidenced in the above-mentioned report: A thriving civic space for upholding fundamental rights in the EU.

The CERV programme provides support to CSOs to help them uphold the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights (particularly by empowering civic space) and building their capacity and resilience to protect and promote Union values. A network of National Contact Points (NCPs) has been set up in EU Member States to help roll out the programme. Designated by national governments, the NCPs offer support by providing information about the EU programme and the possibilities it offers to fund project proposals. They also help interested entities with the application process and assist in finding potential project partners. Yet, Ireland has 1.84 applications per 100,000 inhabitants, placing the country in the twentieth position among EU countries in terms of applications per inhabitant.

Research shows that the values CERV defends matter to Irish people: the [Flash Eurobarometer 528 on Citizenship and Democracy](https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/api/deliverable/download/file?deliverableId=89834), December 2023, shows that 92% of Irish respondents consider civil society important for democracy and common values. From the [Standard Eurobarometer 101 in Spring 2024](https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3216), 80% of Irish citizens are satisfied with democracy in their country, and 92% agree that all EU Member States should uphold core EU values.

According to the [2023 Annual Report on the application of the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/ga/ip_22_7521), which focuses on effective legal protection and access to justice, many interesting aspects emerge regarding Ireland. The country has implemented various measures to support victims of crime and ensure their access to justice. In Ireland, the Criminal Injuries Compensation Tribunal makes available free interpretation into Irish sign language upon request, facilitating access to justice for the hearing impaired. Ireland also focuses on the rights of victims of discrimination through its National Human Rights Institutions and equality bodies. These institutions promote fundamental rights, provide free legal assistance to individuals experiencing discrimination, and conduct awareness-raising activities.

Public awareness of CERV as a programme supporting a Union of rights and values and seeking to maximise the impact of EU funding where it is most needed must increase. According to the [Standard Eurobarometer 101 in Spring 2024](https://europa.eu/eurobarometer/surveys/detail/3216), in the European Union, 70% of respondents would like to know more about their rights as EU citizens ('Yes, definitely' according to 26%, and 'Yes, to some extent' for 44%). In Ireland, the percentage is 72% of respondents ('Yes, definitely' according to 31%, and 'Yes, to some extent' for 41%). That is the aim of the campaign launched today. Stories of beneficiaries illustrate the concrete impact that CERV-funded projects can have on, for example, combating and preventing gender-based violence and inequality, protecting children's and women's rights, promoting the inclusion of persons with disabilities and supporting community integration. The campaign will also highlight the vital role of the NCPs in rolling out the programme at the grassroots level.

Calls for project proposals under CERV are published regularly on the [Commission’s EU Funding and Tenders Portal](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/home) to address inequalities and discrimination, to help people better understand and make better use of their rights as EU citizens, and to uphold and promote fundamental EU rights and values. The shared challenges and cross-border dimension of the CERV programme underscore the need for concerted action at the EU level.

**Background**

[The CERV programme](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv) is open to local, regional, national and transnational entities. These entities may be non-governmental organisations (NGOs), universities, research centres, public authorities, private entities or for-profit organisations. CERV supports initiatives that promote rights, non-discrimination and equality (with a strong emphasis on gender equality), engage citizens in the EU’s democratic processes, address violence (including gender-based violence and violence against children) and uphold and promote the values of the European Union.

Initiated in 2021 and set to continue until 2027, the CERV programme's pivotal mission is to allocate funding to entities committed to upholding and furthering the rights and principles encapsulated in the Treaties of the European Union, the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, and international human rights conventions.

Since CERV started in 2021, the programme has allocated a total of €2,280,286.52 in Ireland, which represents 0.88% of the funds awarded in 2021-2022. A total of 89 project proposals have been submitted, with a success rate of 35%. Key thematic areas of successful projects included preventing gender-based violence and promoting EU fundamental rights. Taking into consideration [the whole European Union](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme-performance_en#mff-2014-2020--rights-equality-and-citizenship), 3105 civil society organizations have received financial backing, over 85,000 individuals have engaged in exchange and mutual learning events, and approximately 1.5 million people have participated in CERV-related training. Some of the projects and organisations funded so far include:

* Initiatives in Germany on "Intersex Equality and Fundamental Rights" and on combating discrimination against transgender individuals.
* Sports in Sweden used as a vehicle for promoting equality, human rights, and democratic values.
* An international network set up in Italy for "An Inclusive and Democratic Europe."
* Events organised in Slovakia to bolster a sense of "A Common European Future and European Unity," emphasising peace, solidarity, and tolerance.
* An "Intersectionality Matters" project in Austria aimed at promoting equality and combating discrimination against LBQTI women and non-binary individuals.
* The Family Justice Centre model implemented in the Netherlands, providing a central platform for members and partners.

There are also upcoming projects in Germany and Italy, which will focus on empowering persons with disabilities and using public art to champion EU fundamental rights, respectively, with additional initiatives in Spain and Denmark.

To find out more about the CERV programme and how to apply, various resources are available. Funding opportunities, information about how to apply and projects supported under CERV are available on the [EU Funding & Tenders Portal](https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/programmes/cerv). You can also reach out to one of the [CERV National Contact Points](https://commission.europa.eu/funding-tenders/find-funding/eu-funding-programmes/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme-overview/cerv-national-contact-points_en) for information about the programme and assistance with the application process. The [CERV programme web page](https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/justice-and-consumers/justice-and-consumers-funding-tenders/funding-programmes/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme_ga) contains the [CERV work programme](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/c_2022_8588_1_en_annexe_acte_autonome_cp_part1_v2.pdf) and the [indicative planning for calls.](https://commission.europa.eu/system/files/2022-12/indicativeplanningcerv2023-24calls-final.pdf) To stay up to date on CERV-related events, you can sign up to [the DG JUST newsletter](https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/just/user-subscriptions/1148/create). For questions on specific calls, contact a CERV National Contact Point or write to EC-CERV-CALLS@ec.europa.eu or EACEA-CERV@ec.europa.eu as indicated in the specific call document.

**For more information:**

* [CERV campaign website](http://europa.eu/cerv-programme)
* [Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers of the European Commission](https://commission.europa.eu/about-european-commission/departments-and-executive-agencies/justice-and-consumers/justice-and-consumers-funding-tenders/funding-programmes/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme_en)
* [CERV programme statistics](https://commission.europa.eu/strategy-and-policy/eu-budget/performance-and-reporting/programme-performance-statements/citizens-equality-rights-and-values-programme-performance_en#:~:text=More%20information%20on%20the%20key%20performance%20indicators%201,carried%20out%20by%20CERV-funded%20projects.%20...%20%C3%89l%C3%A9ments%20suppl%C3%A9mentaires)
* [Annual reports on the application charter](%E2%97%8F%09https%3A/commission.europa.eu/aid-development-cooperation-fundamental-rights/your-rights-eu/eu-charter-fundamental-rights/application-charter/annual-reports-application-charter_en)