

Explanations relating to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union (Version 2007)

Caption: Explanations relating to the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. These explanations were initially provided by the Praesidium of the Convention which drew up the Charter, and were updated under the responsibility of the Praesidium of the European Convention to take into account the adaptations made to the text of the Charter and the developments in EU law.

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EXPLANATIONS (*) RELATING TO THE CHARTER OF FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS

(2007/C 303/02)

These explanations were originally prepared under the authority of the Praesidium of the Convention which drafted the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union. They have been updated under the responsibility of the Praesidium of the European Convention, in the light of the drafting adjustments made to the text of the Charter by that Convention (notably to Articles 51 and 52) and of further developments of Union law. Although they do not as such have the status of law, they are a valuable tool of interpretation intended to clarify the provisions of the Charter.

TITLE I — DIGNITY

Explanation on Article 1 — Human dignity

The dignity of the human person is not only a fundamental right in itself but constitutes the real basis of fundamental rights. The 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights enshrined human dignity in its preamble: 'Whereas recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world.' In its judgment of 9 October 2001 in Case C-377/98 *Netherlands v European Parliament and Council* [2001] ECR I-7079, at grounds 70 — 77, the Court of Justice confirmed that a fundamental right to human dignity is part of Union law.

It results that none of the rights laid down in this Charter may be used to harm the dignity of another person, and that the dignity of the human person is part of the substance of the rights laid down in this Charter. It must therefore be respected, even where a right is restricted.

Explanation on Article 2 — Right to life

1. Paragraph 1 of this Article is based on the first sentence of Article 2(1) of the ECHR, which reads as follows:

'1. Everyone's right to life shall be protected by law ...'

2. The second sentence of the provision, which referred to the death penalty, was superseded by the entry into force of Article 1 of Protocol No 6 to the ECHR, which reads as follows:

'The death penalty shall be abolished. No-one shall be condemned to such penalty or executed.'

Article 2(2) of the Charter is based on that provision.

3. The provisions of Article 2 of the Charter correspond to those of the above Articles of the ECHR and its Protocol. They have the same meaning and the same scope, in accordance with Article 52(3) of the Charter. Therefore, the 'negative' definitions appearing in the ECHR must be regarded as also forming part of the Charter:

(a) Article 2(2) of the ECHR:

'Deprivation of life shall not be regarded as inflicted in contravention of this article when it results from the use of force which is no more than absolutely necessary:

(a) in defence of any person from unlawful violence;

(b) in order to effect a lawful arrest or to prevent the escape of a person lawfully detained;

(*) Editor's note: References to article numbers in the Treaties have been updated and some minor technical errors have been corrected.

(c) in action lawfully taken for the purpose of quelling a riot or insurrection.’

(b) Article 2 of Protocol No 6 to the ECHR:

‘A State may make provision in its law for the death penalty in respect of acts committed in time of war or of imminent threat of war; such penalty shall be applied only in the instances laid down in the law and in accordance with its provisions...’.

Explanation on Article 3 — Right to the integrity of the person

1. In its judgment of 9 October 2001 in Case C-377/98 *Netherlands v European Parliament and Council* [2001] ECR-I 7079, at grounds 70, 78 to 80, the Court of Justice confirmed that a fundamental right to human integrity is part of Union law and encompasses, in the context of medicine and biology, the free and informed consent of the donor and recipient.
2. The principles of Article 3 of the Charter are already included in the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine, adopted by the Council of Europe (ETS 164 and additional protocol ETS 168). The Charter does not set out to depart from those principles, and therefore prohibits only reproductive cloning. It neither authorises nor prohibits other forms of cloning. Thus it does not in any way prevent the legislature from prohibiting other forms of cloning.
3. The reference to eugenic practices, in particular those aiming at the selection of persons, relates to possible situations in which selection programmes are organised and implemented, involving campaigns for sterilisation, forced pregnancy, compulsory ethnic marriage among others, all acts deemed to be international crimes in the Statute of the International Criminal Court adopted in Rome on 17 July 1998 (see its Article 7(1)(g)).

Explanation on Article 4 — Prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

The right in Article 4 is the right guaranteed by Article 3 of the ECHR, which has the same wording: ‘No one shall be subjected to torture or to inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment’. By virtue of Article 52(3) of the Charter, it therefore has the same meaning and the same scope as the ECHR Article.

Explanation on Article 5 — Prohibition of slavery and forced labour

1. The right in Article 5(1) and (2) corresponds to Article 4(1) and (2) of the ECHR, which has the same wording. It therefore has the same meaning and scope as the ECHR Article, by virtue of Article 52(3) of the Charter. Consequently:

- no limitation may legitimately affect the right provided for in paragraph 1,
- in paragraph 2, ‘forced or compulsory labour’ must be understood in the light of the ‘negative’ definitions contained in Article 4(3) of the ECHR:

‘For the purpose of this article the term “forced or compulsory labour” shall not include:

- (a) any work required to be done in the ordinary course of detention imposed according to the provisions of Article 5 of this Convention or during conditional release from such detention;
- (b) any service of a military character or, in case of conscientious objectors in countries where they are recognised, service exacted instead of compulsory military service;

- (c) any service exacted in case of an emergency or calamity threatening the life or well-being of the community;
 - (d) any work or service which forms part of normal civic obligations.’
2. Paragraph 3 stems directly from human dignity and takes account of recent developments in organised crime, such as the organisation of lucrative illegal immigration or sexual exploitation networks. The Annex to the Europol Convention contains the following definition which refers to trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation: ‘traffic in human beings: means subjection of a person to the real and illegal sway of other persons by using violence or menaces or by abuse of authority or intrigue with a view to the exploitation of prostitution, forms of sexual exploitation and assault of minors or trade in abandoned children’. Chapter VI of the Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement, which has been integrated into the Union’s *acquis*, in which the United Kingdom and Ireland participate, contains the following wording in Article 27(1) which refers to illegal immigration networks: ‘The Contracting Parties undertake to impose appropriate penalties on any person who, for financial gain, assists or tries to assist an alien to enter or reside within the territory of one of the Contracting Parties in breach of that Contracting Party’s laws on the entry and residence of aliens.’ On 19 July 2002, the Council adopted a framework decision on combating trafficking in human beings (OJ L 203, 1.8.2002, p. 1) whose Article 1 defines in detail the offences concerning trafficking in human beings for the purposes of labour exploitation or sexual exploitation, which the Member States must make punishable by virtue of that framework decision.

TITLE II — FREEDOMS

Explanation on Article 6 — Right to liberty and security

The rights in Article 6 are the rights guaranteed by Article 5 of the ECHR, and in accordance with Article 52(3) of the Charter, they have the same meaning and scope. Consequently, the limitations which may legitimately be imposed on them may not exceed those permitted by the ECHR, in the wording of Article 5:

- ‘1. Everyone has the right to liberty and security of person. No one shall be deprived of his liberty save in the following cases and in accordance with a procedure prescribed by law:
- (a) the lawful detention of a person after conviction by a competent court;
 - (b) the lawful arrest or detention of a person for non-compliance with the lawful order of a court or in order to secure the fulfilment of any obligation prescribed by law;
 - (c) the lawful arrest or detention of a person effected for the purpose of bringing him before the competent legal authority on reasonable suspicion of having committed an offence or when it is reasonably considered necessary to prevent his committing an offence or fleeing after having done so;
 - (d) the detention of a minor by lawful order for the purpose of educational supervision or his lawful detention for the purpose of bringing him before the competent legal authority;
 - (e) the lawful detention of persons for the prevention of the spreading of infectious diseases, of persons of unsound mind, alcoholics or drug addicts or vagrants;
 - (f) the lawful arrest or detention of a person to prevent his effecting an unauthorised entry into the country or of a person against whom action is being taken with a view to deportation or extradition.

2. Everyone who is arrested shall be informed promptly, in a language which he understands, of the reasons for his arrest and of any charge against him.
3. Everyone arrested or detained in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 1.c of this Article shall be brought promptly before a judge or other officer authorised by law to exercise judicial power and shall be entitled to trial within a reasonable time or to release pending trial. Release may be conditioned by guarantees to appear for trial.
4. Everyone who is deprived of his liberty by arrest or detention shall be entitled to take proceedings by which the lawfulness of his detention shall be decided speedily by a court and his release ordered if the detention is not lawful.
5. Everyone who has been the victim of arrest or detention in contravention of the provisions of this Article shall have an enforceable right to compensation.'

The rights enshrined in Article 6 must be respected particularly when the European Parliament and the Council adopt legislative acts in the area of judicial cooperation in criminal matters, on the basis of Articles 82, 83 and 85 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, notably to define common minimum provisions as regards the categorisation of offences and punishments and certain aspects of procedural law.

Explanation on Article 7 — Respect for private and family life

The rights guaranteed in Article 7 correspond to those guaranteed by Article 8 of the ECHR. To take account of developments in technology the word 'correspondence' has been replaced by 'communications'.

In accordance with Article 52(3), the meaning and scope of this right are the same as those of the corresponding article of the ECHR. Consequently, the limitations which may legitimately be imposed on this right are the same as those allowed by Article 8 of the ECHR:

- '1. Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence.
2. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security, public safety or the economic well-being of the country, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.'

Explanation on Article 8 — Protection of personal data

This Article has been based on Article 286 of the Treaty establishing the European Community and Directive 95/46/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 281, 23.11.1995, p. 31) as well as on Article 8 of the ECHR and on the Council of Europe Convention of 28 January 1981 for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, which has been ratified by all the Member States. Article 286 of the EC Treaty is now replaced by Article 16 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 39 of the Treaty on European Union. Reference is also made to Regulation (EC) No 45/2001 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by the Community institutions and bodies and on the free movement of such data (OJ L 8, 12.1.2001, p. 1). The above-mentioned Directive and Regulation contain conditions and limitations for the exercise of the right to the protection of personal data.

Explanation on Article 9 — Right to marry and right to found a family

This Article is based on Article 12 of the ECHR, which reads as follows: 'Men and women of marriageable age have the right to marry and to found a family according to the national laws governing the exercising of this right.' The wording of the Article has been modernised to cover cases in which national legislation recognises arrangements other than marriage for founding a family. This Article neither prohibits nor imposes the granting of the status of marriage to unions between people of the same sex. This right is thus similar to that afforded by the ECHR, but its scope may be wider when national legislation so provides.

Explanation on Article 10 — Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

The right guaranteed in paragraph 1 corresponds to the right guaranteed in Article 9 of the ECHR and, in accordance with Article 52(3) of the Charter, has the same meaning and scope. Limitations must therefore respect Article 9(2) of the Convention, which reads as follows: 'Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs shall be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of public safety, for the protection of public order, health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.'

The right guaranteed in paragraph 2 corresponds to national constitutional traditions and to the development of national legislation on this issue.

Explanation on Article 11 — Freedom of expression and information

1. Article 11 corresponds to Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, which reads as follows:
 1. Everyone has the right to freedom of expression. This right shall include freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers. This Article shall not prevent States from requiring the licensing of broadcasting, television or cinema enterprises.
 2. The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society, in the interests of national security, territorial integrity or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals, for the protection of the reputation or rights of others, for preventing the disclosure of information received in confidence, or for maintaining the authority and impartiality of the judiciary.'

Pursuant to Article 52(3) of the Charter, the meaning and scope of this right are the same as those guaranteed by the ECHR. The limitations which may be imposed on it may therefore not exceed those provided for in Article 10(2) of the Convention, without prejudice to any restrictions which the competition law of the Union may impose on Member States' right to introduce the licensing arrangements referred to in the third sentence of Article 10(1) of the ECHR.

2. Paragraph 2 of this Article spells out the consequences of paragraph 1 regarding freedom of the media. It is based in particular on Court of Justice case-law regarding television, particularly in Case C-288/89 (judgment of 25 July 1991, *Stichting Collectieve Antennevoorziening Gouda and others* [1991] ECR I-4007), and on the Protocol on the system of public broadcasting in the Member States annexed to the EC Treaty and now to the Treaties, and on Council Directive 89/552/EC (particularly its seventeenth recital).

Explanation on Article 12 — Freedom of assembly and of association

1. Paragraph 1 of this Article corresponds to Article 11 of the ECHR, which reads as follows:

- '1. Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests.
2. No restrictions shall be placed on the exercise of these rights other than such as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, for the prevention of disorder or crime, for the protection of health or morals or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others. This article shall not prevent the imposition of lawful restrictions on the exercise of these rights by members of the armed forces, of the police or of the administration of the State.'

The meaning of the provisions of paragraph 1 of this Article 12 is the same as that of the ECHR, but their scope is wider since they apply at all levels including European level. In accordance with Article 52(3) of the Charter, limitations on that right may not exceed those considered legitimate by virtue of Article 11(2) of the ECHR.

2. This right is also based on Article 11 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers.
3. Paragraph 2 of this Article corresponds to Article 10(4) of the Treaty on European Union.

Explanation on Article 13 — Freedom of the arts and sciences

This right is deduced primarily from the right to freedom of thought and expression. It is to be exercised having regard to Article 1 and may be subject to the limitations authorised by Article 10 of the ECHR.

Explanation on Article 14 — Right to education

1. This Article is based on the common constitutional traditions of Member States and on Article 2 of the Protocol to the ECHR, which reads as follows:

'No person shall be denied the right to education. In the exercise of any functions which it assumes in relation to education and to teaching, the State shall respect the right of parents to ensure such education and teaching in conformity with their own religious and philosophical convictions.'

It was considered useful to extend this Article to access to vocational and continuing training (see point 15 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers and Article 10 of the Social Charter) and to add the principle of free compulsory education. As it is worded, the latter principle merely implies that as regards compulsory education, each child has the possibility of attending an establishment which offers free education. It does not require all establishments which provide education or vocational and continuing training, in particular private ones, to be free of charge. Nor does it exclude certain specific forms of education having to be paid for, if the State takes measures to grant financial compensation. In so far as the Charter applies to the Union, this means that in its training policies the Union must respect free compulsory education, but this does not, of course, create new powers. Regarding the right of parents, it must be interpreted in conjunction with the provisions of Article 24.

2. Freedom to found public or private educational establishments is guaranteed as one of the aspects of freedom to conduct a business but it is limited by respect for democratic principles and is exercised in accordance with the arrangements defined by national legislation.

Explanation on Article 15 — Freedom to choose an occupation and right to engage in work

Freedom to choose an occupation, as enshrined in Article 15(1), is recognised in Court of Justice case-law (see *inter alia* judgment of 14 May 1974, Case 4/73 *Nold* [1974] ECR 491, paragraphs 12 to 14 of the grounds; judgment of 13 December 1979, Case 44/79 *Hauer* [1979] ECR 3727; judgment of 8 October 1986, Case 234/85 *Keller* [1986] ECR 2897, paragraph 8 of the grounds).

This paragraph also draws upon Article 1(2) of the European Social Charter, which was signed on 18 October 1961 and has been ratified by all the Member States, and on point 4 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers of 9 December 1989. The expression ‘working conditions’ is to be understood in the sense of Article 156 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Paragraph 2 deals with the three freedoms guaranteed by Articles 26, 45, 49 and 56 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, namely freedom of movement for workers, freedom of establishment and freedom to provide services.

Paragraph 3 has been based on Article 153(1)(g) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and on Article 19(4) of the European Social Charter signed on 18 October 1961 and ratified by all the Member States. Article 52(2) of the Charter is therefore applicable. The question of recruitment of seamen having the nationality of third States for the crews of vessels flying the flag of a Member State of the Union is governed by Union law and national legislation and practice.

Explanation on Article 16 — Freedom to conduct a business

This Article is based on Court of Justice case-law which has recognised freedom to exercise an economic or commercial activity (see judgments of 14 May 1974, Case 4/73 *Nold* [1974] ECR 491, paragraph 14 of the grounds, and of 27 September 1979, Case 230-78 *SpA Eridiana and others* [1979] ECR 2749, paragraphs 20 and 31 of the grounds) and freedom of contract (see *inter alia* *Sukkerfabriken Nykøbing* judgment, Case 151/78 [1979] ECR 1, paragraph 19 of the grounds, and judgment of 5 October 1999, C-240/97 *Spain v Commission* [1999] ECR I-6571, paragraph 99 of the grounds) and Article 119(1) and (3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which recognises free competition. Of course, this right is to be exercised with respect for Union law and national legislation. It may be subject to the limitations provided for in Article 52(1) of the Charter.

Explanation on Article 17 — Right to property

This Article is based on Article 1 of the Protocol to the ECHR:

‘Every natural or legal person is entitled to the peaceful enjoyment of his possessions. No one shall be deprived of his possessions except in the public interest and subject to the conditions provided for by law and by the general principles of international law.

The preceding provisions shall not, however, in any way impair the right of a State to enforce such laws as it deems necessary to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest or to secure the payment of taxes or other contributions or penalties.’

This is a fundamental right common to all national constitutions. It has been recognised on numerous occasions by the case-law of the Court of Justice, initially in the *Hauer* judgment (13 December 1979, [1979] ECR 3727). The wording has been updated but, in accordance with Article 52(3), the meaning and scope of the right are the same as those of the right guaranteed by the ECHR and the limitations may not exceed those provided for there.

Protection of intellectual property, one aspect of the right of property, is explicitly mentioned in paragraph 2 because of its growing importance and Community secondary legislation. Intellectual property covers not only literary and artistic property but also *inter alia* patent and trademark rights and associated rights. The guarantees laid down in paragraph 1 shall apply as appropriate to intellectual property.

Explanation on Article 18 — Right to asylum

The text of the Article has been based on TEC Article 63, now replaced by Article 78 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, which requires the Union to respect the Geneva Convention on refugees. Reference should be made to the Protocols relating to the United Kingdom and Ireland, annexed to the Treaties, and to Denmark, to determine the extent to which those Member States implement Union law in this area and the extent to which this Article is applicable to them. This Article is in line with the Protocol on Asylum annexed to the Treaties.

Explanation on Article 19 — Protection in the event of removal, expulsion or extradition

Paragraph 1 of this Article has the same meaning and scope as Article 4 of Protocol No 4 to the ECHR concerning collective expulsion. Its purpose is to guarantee that every decision is based on a specific examination and that no single measure can be taken to expel all persons having the nationality of a particular State (see also Article 13 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights).

Paragraph 2 incorporates the relevant case-law from the European Court of Human Rights regarding Article 3 of the ECHR (see *Ahmed v. Austria*, judgment of 17 December 1996, 1996-VI, p. 2206, and *Soering*, judgment of 7 July 1989).

TITLE III — EQUALITY

Explanation on Article 20 — Equality before the law

This Article corresponds to a general principle of law which is included in all European constitutions and has also been recognised by the Court of Justice as a basic principle of Community law (judgment of 13 November 1984, Case 283/83 *Racke* [1984] ECR 3791, judgment of 17 April 1997, Case C-15/95 *EARL* [1997] ECR I-1961, and judgment of 13 April 2000, Case C-292/97 *Karlsson* [2000] ECR 2737).

Explanation on Article 21 — Non-discrimination

Paragraph 1 draws on Article 13 of the EC Treaty, now replaced by Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 14 of the ECHR and Article 11 of the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine as regards genetic heritage. In so far as this corresponds to Article 14 of the ECHR, it applies in compliance with it.

There is no contradiction or incompatibility between paragraph 1 and Article 19 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which has a different scope and purpose: Article 19 confers power on the Union to adopt legislative acts, including harmonisation of the Member States' laws and regulations, to combat certain forms of discrimination, listed exhaustively in that Article. Such legislation may cover action of Member State authorities (as well as relations between private individuals) in any area within the limits of the Union's powers. In contrast, the provision in Article 21(1) does not create any power to enact anti-discrimination laws in these areas of Member State or private action, nor does it lay down a sweeping ban of discrimination in such wide-ranging areas. Instead, it only addresses discriminations by the institutions and bodies of the Union themselves, when exercising powers conferred under the Treaties, and by Member States only when they are implementing Union law. Paragraph 1 therefore does not alter the extent of powers granted under Article 19 nor the interpretation given to that Article.

Paragraph 2 corresponds to the first paragraph of Article 18 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and must be applied in compliance with that Article.

Explanation on Article 22 — Cultural, religious and linguistic diversity

This Article has been based on Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union and on Article 151(1) and (4) of the EC Treaty, now replaced by Article 167(1) and (4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, concerning culture. Respect for cultural and linguistic diversity is now also laid down in Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union. The Article is also inspired by Declaration No 11 to the Final Act of the Amsterdam Treaty on the status of churches and non-confessional organisations, now taken over in Article 17 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Explanation on Article 23 — Equality between women and men

The first paragraph has been based on Articles 2 and 3(2) of the EC Treaty, now replaced by Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union and Article 8 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which impose the objective of promoting equality between men and women on the Union, and on Article 157(1) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. It draws on Article 20 of the revised European Social Charter of 3 May 1996 and on point 16 of the Community Charter on the rights of workers.

It is also based on Article 157(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and Article 2(4) of Council Directive 76/207/EEC on the implementation of the principle of equal treatment for men and women as regards access to employment, vocational training and promotion, and working conditions.

The second paragraph takes over in shorter form Article 157(4) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union which provides that the principle of equal treatment does not prevent the maintenance or adoption of measures providing for specific advantages in order to make it easier for the under-represented sex to pursue a vocational activity or to prevent or compensate for disadvantages in professional careers. In accordance with Article 52(2), the present paragraph does not amend Article 157(4).

Explanation on Article 24 — The rights of the child

This Article is based on the New York Convention on the Rights of the Child signed on 20 November 1989 and ratified by all the Member States, particularly Articles 3, 9, 12 and 13 thereof.

Paragraph 3 takes account of the fact that, as part of the establishment of an area of freedom, security and justice, the legislation of the Union on civil matters having cross-border implications, for which Article 81 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union confers power, may include notably visiting rights ensuring that children can maintain on a regular basis a personal and direct contact with both of their parents.

Explanation on Article 25 — The rights of the elderly

This Article draws on Article 23 of the revised European Social Charter and Articles 24 and 25 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers. Of course, participation in social and cultural life also covers participation in political life.

Explanation on Article 26 — Integration of persons with disabilities

The principle set out in this Article is based on Article 15 of the European Social Charter and also draws on point 26 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers.

TITLE IV — SOLIDARITY

Explanation on Article 27 — Workers' right to information and consultation within the undertaking

This Article appears in the revised European Social Charter (Article 21) and in the Community Charter on the rights of workers (points 17 and 18). It applies under the conditions laid down by Union law and by national laws. The reference to appropriate levels refers to the levels laid down by Union law or by national laws and practices, which might include the European level when Union legislation so provides. There is a considerable Union *acquis* in this field: Articles 154 and 155 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and Directives 2002/14/EC (general framework for informing and consulting employees in the European Community), 98/59/EC (collective redundancies), 2001/23/EC (transfers of undertakings) and 94/45/EC (European works councils).

Explanation on Article 28 — Right of collective bargaining and action

This Article is based on Article 6 of the European Social Charter and on the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers (points 12 to 14). The right of collective action was recognised by the European Court of Human Rights as one of the elements of trade union rights laid down by Article 11 of the ECHR. As regards the appropriate levels at which collective negotiation might take place, see the explanation given for the above Article. The modalities and limits for the exercise of collective action, including strike action, come under national laws and practices, including the question of whether it may be carried out in parallel in several Member States.

Explanation on Article 29 — Right of access to placement services

This Article is based on Article 1(3) of the European Social Charter and point 13 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers.

Explanation on Article 30 — Protection in the event of unjustified dismissal

This Article draws on Article 24 of the revised Social Charter. See also Directive 2001/23/EC on the safeguarding of employees' rights in the event of transfers of undertakings, and Directive 80/987/EEC on the protection of employees in the event of the insolvency of their employer, as amended by Directive 2002/74/EC.

Explanation on Article 31 — Fair and just working conditions

1. Paragraph 1 of this Article is based on Directive 89/391/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health of workers at work. It also draws on Article 3 of the Social Charter and point 19 of the Community Charter on the rights of workers, and, as regards dignity at work, on Article 26 of the revised Social Charter. The expression 'working conditions' is to be understood in the sense of Article 156 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.
2. Paragraph 2 is based on Directive 93/104/EC concerning certain aspects of the organisation of working time, Article 2 of the European Social Charter and point 8 of the Community Charter on the rights of workers.

Explanation on Article 32 — Prohibition of child labour and protection of young people at work

This Article is based on Directive 94/33/EC on the protection of young people at work, Article 7 of the European Social Charter and points 20 to 23 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers.

Explanation on Article 33 — Family and professional life

Article 33(1) is based on Article 16 of the European Social Charter.

Paragraph 2 draws on Council Directive 92/85/EEC on the introduction of measures to encourage improvements in the safety and health at work of pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding and Directive 96/34/EC on the framework agreement on parental leave concluded by UNICE, CEEP and the ETUC. It is also based on Article 8 (protection of maternity) of the European Social Charter and draws on Article 27 (right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and equal treatment) of the revised Social Charter. 'Maternity' covers the period from conception to weaning.

Explanation on Article 34 — Social security and social assistance

The principle set out in Article 34(1) is based on Articles 153 and 156 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, Article 12 of the European Social Charter and point 10 of the Community Charter on the rights of workers. The Union must respect it when exercising the powers conferred on it by Articles 153 and 156 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The reference to social services relates to cases in which such services have been introduced to provide certain advantages but does not imply that such services must be created where they do not exist. 'Maternity' must be understood in the same sense as in the preceding Article.

Paragraph 2 is based on Articles 12(4) and 13(4) of the European Social Charter and point 2 of the Community Charter of the Fundamental Social Rights of Workers and reflects the rules arising from Regulation (EEC) No 1408/71 and Regulation (EEC) No 1612/68.

Paragraph 3 draws on Article 13 of the European Social Charter and Articles 30 and 31 of the revised Social Charter and point 10 of the Community Charter. The Union must respect it in the context of policies based on Article 153 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Explanation on Article 35 — Health care

The principles set out in this Article are based on Article 152 of the EC Treaty, now replaced by Article 168 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and on Articles 11 and 13 of the European Social Charter. The second sentence of the Article takes over Article 168(1).

Explanation on Article 36 — Access to services of general economic interest

This Article is fully in line with Article 14 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union and does not create any new right. It merely sets out the principle of respect by the Union for the access to services of general economic interest as provided for by national provisions, when those provisions are compatible with Union law.

Explanation on Article 37 — Environmental protection

The principles set out in this Article have been based on Articles 2, 6 and 174 of the EC Treaty, which have now been replaced by Article 3(3) of the Treaty on European Union and Articles 11 and 191 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

It also draws on the provisions of some national constitutions.

Explanation on Article 38 — Consumer protection

The principles set out in this Article have been based on Article 169 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

TITLE V — CITIZENS' RIGHTS

Explanation on Article 39 — Right to vote and to stand as a candidate at elections to the European Parliament

Article 39 applies under the conditions laid down in the Treaties, in accordance with Article 52(2) of the Charter. Article 39(1) corresponds to the right guaranteed in Article 20(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (cf. also the legal base in Article 22 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union for the adoption of detailed arrangements for the exercise of that right) and Article 39(2) corresponds to Article 14(3) of the Treaty on European Union. Article 39(2) takes over the basic principles of the electoral system in a democratic State.

Explanation on Article 40 — Right to vote and to stand as a candidate at municipal elections

This Article corresponds to the right guaranteed by Article 20(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (cf. also the legal base in Article 22 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union for the adoption of detailed arrangements for the exercise of that right). In accordance with Article 52(2) of the Charter, it applies under the conditions defined in these Articles in the Treaties.

Explanation on Article 41 — Right to good administration

Article 41 is based on the existence of the Union as subject to the rule of law whose characteristics were developed in the case-law which enshrined *inter alia* good administration as a general principle of law (see *inter alia* Court of Justice judgment of 31 March 1992 in Case C-255/90 P *Burban* [1992] ECR I-2253, and Court of First Instance judgments of 18 September 1995 in Case T-167/94 *Nölle* [1995] ECR II-2589, and 9 July 1999 in Case T-231/97 *New Europe Consulting and others* [1999] ECR II-2403). The wording for that right in the first two paragraphs results from the case-law (Court of Justice judgment of 15 October 1987 in Case 222/86 *Heylens* [1987] ECR 4097, paragraph 15 of the grounds, judgment of 18 October 1989 in Case 374/87 *Orkem* [1989] ECR 3283, judgment of 21 November 1991 in Case C-269/90 *TU München* [1991] ECR I-5469, and Court of First Instance judgments of 6 December 1994 in Case T-450/93 *Lisrestal* [1994] ECR II-1177, 18 September 1995 in Case T-167/94 *Nölle* [1995] ECR II-2589) and the wording regarding the obligation to give reasons comes from Article 296 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (cf. also the legal base in Article 298 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union for the adoption of legislation in the interest of an open, efficient and independent European administration).

Paragraph 3 reproduces the right now guaranteed by Article 340 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Paragraph 4 reproduces the right now guaranteed by Article 20(2)(d) and Article 25 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. In accordance with Article 52(2) of the Charter, those rights are to be applied under the conditions and within the limits defined by the Treaties.

The right to an effective remedy, which is an important aspect of this question, is guaranteed in Article 47 of this Charter.

Explanation on Article 42 — Right of access to documents

The right guaranteed in this Article has been taken over from Article 255 of the EC Treaty, on the basis of which Regulation (EC) No 1049/2001 has subsequently been adopted. The European Convention has extended this right to documents of institutions, bodies and agencies generally, regardless of their form (see Article 15(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union). In accordance with Article 52(2) of the Charter, the right of access to documents is exercised under the conditions and within the limits for which provision is made in Article 15(3) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Explanation on Article 43 — European Ombudsman

The right guaranteed in this Article is the right guaranteed by Articles 20 and 228 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. In accordance with Article 52(2) of the Charter, it applies under the conditions defined in these two Articles.

Explanation on Article 44 — Right to petition

The right guaranteed in this Article is the right guaranteed by Articles 20 and 227 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. In accordance with Article 52(2) of the Charter, it applies under the conditions defined in these two Articles.

Explanation on Article 45 — Freedom of movement and of residence

The right guaranteed by paragraph 1 is the right guaranteed by Article 20(2)(a) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (cf. also the legal base in Article 21; and the judgment of the Court of Justice of 17 September 2002, Case C-413/99 *Baumbast* [2002] ECR I-7091). In accordance with Article 52(2) of the Charter, those rights are to be applied under the conditions and within the limits defined by the Treaties.

Paragraph 2 refers to the power granted to the Union by Articles 77, 78 and 79 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. Consequently, the granting of this right depends on the institutions exercising that power.

Explanation on Article 46 — Diplomatic and consular protection

The right guaranteed in this Article is the right guaranteed by Article 20 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (cf. also the legal base in Article 23). In accordance with Article 52(2) of the Charter, it applies under the conditions defined in these two Articles.

TITLE VI — JUSTICE

Explanation on Article 47 — Right to an effective remedy and to a fair trial

The first paragraph is based on Article 13 of the ECHR:

‘Everyone whose rights and freedoms as set forth in this Convention are violated shall have an effective remedy before a national authority notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity.’

However, in Union law the protection is more extensive since it guarantees the right to an effective remedy before a court. The Court of Justice enshrined that right in its judgment of 15 May 1986 as a general principle of Union law (Case 222/84 *Johnston* [1986] ECR 1651; see also judgment of 15 October 1987, Case 222/86 *Heylens* [1987] ECR 4097 and judgment of 3 December 1992, Case C-97/91 *Borelli* [1992] ECR I-6313). According to the Court, that general principle of Union law also applies to the Member States when they are implementing Union law. The inclusion of this precedent in the Charter has not been intended to change the system of judicial review laid down by the Treaties, and particularly the rules relating to admissibility for direct actions before the Court of Justice of the European Union. The European Convention has considered the Union’s system of judicial review including the rules on admissibility, and confirmed them while amending them as to certain aspects, as reflected in Articles 251 to 281 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, and in particular in the fourth paragraph of Article 263. Article 47 applies to the institutions of the Union and of Member States when they are implementing Union law and does so for all rights guaranteed by Union law.

The second paragraph corresponds to Article 6(1) of the ECHR which reads as follows:

'In the determination of his civil rights and obligations or of any criminal charge against him, everyone is entitled to a fair and public hearing within a reasonable time by an independent and impartial tribunal established by law. Judgment shall be pronounced publicly but the press and public may be excluded from all or part of the trial in the interests of morals, public order or national security in a democratic society, where the interests of juveniles or the protection of the private life of the parties so require, or to the extent strictly necessary in the opinion of the court in special circumstances where publicity would prejudice the interests of justice.'

In Union law, the right to a fair hearing is not confined to disputes relating to civil law rights and obligations. That is one of the consequences of the fact that the Union is a community based on the rule of law as stated by the Court in Case 294/83, *'Les Verts' v European Parliament* (judgment of 23 April 1986, [1986] ECR 1339). Nevertheless, in all respects other than their scope, the guarantees afforded by the ECHR apply in a similar way to the Union.

With regard to the third paragraph, it should be noted that in accordance with the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights, provision should be made for legal aid where the absence of such aid would make it impossible to ensure an effective remedy (ECHR judgment of 9 October 1979, *Airey*, Series A, Volume 32, p. 11). There is also a system of legal assistance for cases before the Court of Justice of the European Union.

Explanation on Article 48 — Presumption of innocence and right of defence

Article 48 is the same as Article 6(2) and (3) of the ECHR, which reads as follows:

2. Everyone charged with a criminal offence shall be presumed innocent until proved guilty according to law.
3. Everyone charged with a criminal offence has the following minimum rights:
 - (a) to be informed promptly, in a language which he understands and in detail, of the nature and cause of the accusation against him;
 - (b) to have adequate time and facilities for the preparation of his defence;
 - (c) to defend himself in person or through legal assistance of his own choosing or, if he has not sufficient means to pay for legal assistance, to be given it free when the interests of justice so require;
 - (d) to examine or have examined witnesses against him and to obtain the attendance and examination of witnesses on his behalf under the same conditions as witnesses against him;
 - (e) to have the free assistance of an interpreter if he cannot understand or speak the language used in court.'

In accordance with Article 52(3), this right has the same meaning and scope as the right guaranteed by the ECHR.

Explanation on Article 49 — Principles of legality and proportionality of criminal offences and penalties

This Article follows the traditional rule of the non-retroactivity of laws and criminal sanctions. There has been added the rule of the retroactivity of a more lenient penal law, which exists in a number of Member States and which features in Article 15 of the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

Article 7 of the ECHR is worded as follows:

1. No one shall be held guilty of any criminal offence on account of any act or omission which did not constitute a criminal offence under national or international law at the time when it was committed. Nor shall a heavier penalty be imposed than the one that was applicable at the time the criminal offence was committed.
2. This Article shall not prejudice the trial and punishment of any person for any act or omission which, at the time when it was committed, was criminal according to the general principles of law recognised by civilised nations.'

In paragraph 2, the reference to 'civilised' nations has been deleted; this does not change the meaning of this paragraph, which refers to crimes against humanity in particular. In accordance with Article 52(3), the right guaranteed here therefore has the same meaning and scope as the right guaranteed by the ECHR.

Paragraph 3 states the general principle of proportionality between penalties and criminal offences which is enshrined in the common constitutional traditions of the Member States and in the case-law of the Court of Justice of the Communities.

Explanation on Article 50 — Right not to be tried or punished twice in criminal proceedings for the same criminal offence

Article 4 of Protocol No 7 to the ECHR reads as follows:

1. No one shall be liable to be tried or punished again in criminal proceedings under the jurisdiction of the same State for an offence for which he has already been finally acquitted or convicted in accordance with the law and penal procedure of that State.
2. The provisions of the preceding paragraph shall not prevent the reopening of the case in accordance with the law and the penal procedure of the State concerned, if there is evidence of new or newly discovered facts, or if there has been a fundamental defect in the previous proceedings, which could affect the outcome of the case.
3. No derogation from this Article shall be made under Article 15 of the Convention.'

The '*non bis in idem*' rule applies in Union law (see, among the many precedents, the judgment of 5 May 1966, Joined Cases 18/65 and 35/65 *Gutmann v Commission* [1966] ECR 149 and a recent case, the decision of the Court of First Instance of 20 April 1999, Joined Cases T-305/94 and others *Limburgse Vinyl Maatschappij NV v Commission* [1999] ECR II-931). The rule prohibiting cumulation refers to cumulation of two penalties of the same kind, that is to say criminal-law penalties.

In accordance with Article 50, the '*non bis in idem*' rule applies not only within the jurisdiction of one State but also between the jurisdictions of several Member States. That corresponds to the *acquis* in Union law; see Articles 54 to 58 of the Schengen Convention and the judgment of the Court of Justice of 11 February 2003, C-187/01 *Gözütok* [2003] ECR I-1345, Article 7 of the Convention on the Protection of the European Communities' Financial Interests and Article 10 of the Convention on the fight against corruption. The very limited exceptions in those Conventions permitting the Member States to derogate from the '*non bis in idem*' rule are covered by the horizontal clause in Article 52(1) of the Charter concerning limitations. As regards the situations referred to by Article 4 of Protocol No 7, namely the application of the principle within the same Member State, the guaranteed right has the same meaning and the same scope as the corresponding right in the ECHR.

TITLE VII — GENERAL PROVISIONS GOVERNING THE INTERPRETATION AND APPLICATION OF THE CHARTER

Explanation on Article 51 — Field of application

The aim of Article 51 is to determine the scope of the Charter. It seeks to establish clearly that the Charter applies primarily to the institutions and bodies of the Union, in compliance with the principle of subsidiarity. This provision was drafted in keeping with Article 6(2) of the Treaty on European Union, which required the Union to respect fundamental rights, and with the mandate issued by the Cologne European Council. The term ‘institutions’ is enshrined in the Treaties. The expression ‘bodies, offices and agencies’ is commonly used in the Treaties to refer to all the authorities set up by the Treaties or by secondary legislation (see, e.g., Articles 15 or 16 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union).

As regards the Member States, it follows unambiguously from the case-law of the Court of Justice that the requirement to respect fundamental rights defined in the context of the Union is only binding on the Member States when they act in the scope of Union law (judgment of 13 July 1989, Case 5/88 *Wachauf* [1989] ECR 2609; judgment of 18 June 1991, Case C-260/89 *ERT* [1991] ECR I-2925; judgment of 18 December 1997, Case C-309/96 *Annibaldi* [1997] ECR I-7493). The Court of Justice confirmed this case-law in the following terms: ‘In addition, it should be remembered that the requirements flowing from the protection of fundamental rights in the Community legal order are also binding on Member States when they implement Community rules ...’ (judgment of 13 April 2000, Case C-292/97 [2000] ECR I-2737, paragraph 37 of the grounds). Of course this rule, as enshrined in this Charter, applies to the central authorities as well as to regional or local bodies, and to public organisations, when they are implementing Union law.

Paragraph 2, together with the second sentence of paragraph 1, confirms that the Charter may not have the effect of extending the competences and tasks which the Treaties confer on the Union. Explicit mention is made here of the logical consequences of the principle of subsidiarity and of the fact that the Union only has those powers which have been conferred upon it. The fundamental rights as guaranteed in the Union do not have any effect other than in the context of the powers determined by the Treaties. Consequently, an obligation, pursuant to the second sentence of paragraph 1, for the Union’s institutions to promote principles laid down in the Charter may arise only within the limits of these same powers.

Paragraph 2 also confirms that the Charter may not have the effect of extending the field of application of Union law beyond the powers of the Union as established in the Treaties. The Court of Justice has already established this rule with respect to the fundamental rights recognised as part of Union law (judgment of 17 February 1998, C-249/96 *Grant* [1998] ECR I-621, paragraph 45 of the grounds). In accordance with this rule, it goes without saying that the reference to the Charter in Article 6 of the Treaty on European Union cannot be understood as extending by itself the range of Member State action considered to be ‘implementation of Union law’ (within the meaning of paragraph 1 and the above-mentioned case-law).

Explanation on Article 52 — Scope and interpretation of rights and principles

The purpose of Article 52 is to set the scope of the rights and principles of the Charter, and to lay down rules for their interpretation. Paragraph 1 deals with the arrangements for the limitation of rights. The wording is based on the case-law of the Court of Justice: ‘... it is well established in the case-law of the Court that restrictions may be imposed on the exercise of fundamental rights, in particular in the context of a common organisation of the market, provided that those restrictions in fact correspond to objectives of general interest pursued by the Community and do not constitute, with regard to the aim pursued, disproportionate and unreasonable interference undermining the very substance of those rights’ (judgment of 13 April 2000, Case C-292/97, paragraph 45 of the grounds). The reference to general interests recognised by the Union covers both the objectives mentioned in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union and other interests protected by specific provisions of the Treaties such as Article 4(1) of the Treaty on European Union and Articles 35(3), 36 and 346 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

Paragraph 2 refers to rights which were already expressly guaranteed in the Treaty establishing the European Community and have been recognised in the Charter, and which are now found in the Treaties (notably the rights derived from Union citizenship). It clarifies that such rights remain subject to the conditions and limits applicable to the Union law on which they are based, and for which provision is made in the Treaties. The Charter does not alter the system of rights conferred by the EC Treaty and taken over by the Treaties.

Paragraph 3 is intended to ensure the necessary consistency between the Charter and the ECHR by establishing the rule that, in so far as the rights in the present Charter also correspond to rights guaranteed by the ECHR, the meaning and scope of those rights, including authorised limitations, are the same as those laid down by the ECHR. This means in particular that the legislator, in laying down limitations to those rights, must comply with the same standards as are fixed by the detailed limitation arrangements laid down in the ECHR, which are thus made applicable for the rights covered by this paragraph, without thereby adversely affecting the autonomy of Union law and of that of the Court of Justice of the European Union.

The reference to the ECHR covers both the Convention and the Protocols to it. The meaning and the scope of the guaranteed rights are determined not only by the text of those instruments, but also by the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights and by the Court of Justice of the European Union. The last sentence of the paragraph is designed to allow the Union to guarantee more extensive protection. In any event, the level of protection afforded by the Charter may never be lower than that guaranteed by the ECHR.

The Charter does not affect the possibilities of Member States to avail themselves of Article 15 ECHR, allowing derogations from ECHR rights in the event of war or of other public dangers threatening the life of the nation, when they take action in the areas of national defence in the event of war and of the maintenance of law and order, in accordance with their responsibilities recognised in Article 4(1) of the Treaty on European Union and in Articles 72 and 347 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union.

The list of rights which may at the present stage, without precluding developments in the law, legislation and the Treaties, be regarded as corresponding to rights in the ECHR within the meaning of the present paragraph is given hereafter. It does not include rights additional to those in the ECHR.

1. Articles of the Charter where both the meaning and the scope are the same as the corresponding Articles of the ECHR:
 - Article 2 corresponds to Article 2 of the ECHR,
 - Article 4 corresponds to Article 3 of the ECHR,
 - Article 5(1) and (2) corresponds to Article 4 of the ECHR,
 - Article 6 corresponds to Article 5 of the ECHR,
 - Article 7 corresponds to Article 8 of the ECHR,
 - Article 10(1) corresponds to Article 9 of the ECHR,
 - Article 11 corresponds to Article 10 of the ECHR without prejudice to any restrictions which Union law may impose on Member States' right to introduce the licensing arrangements referred to in the third sentence of Article 10(1) of the ECHR,

- Article 17 corresponds to Article 1 of the Protocol to the ECHR,
 - Article 19(1) corresponds to Article 4 of Protocol No 4,
 - Article 19(2) corresponds to Article 3 of the ECHR as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights,
 - Article 48 corresponds to Article 6(2) and(3) of the ECHR,
 - Article 49(1) (with the exception of the last sentence) and (2) correspond to Article 7 of the ECHR.
2. Articles where the meaning is the same as the corresponding Articles of the ECHR, but where the scope is wider:
- Article 9 covers the same field as Article 12 of the ECHR, but its scope may be extended to other forms of marriage if these are established by national legislation,
 - Article 12(1) corresponds to Article 11 of the ECHR, but its scope is extended to European Union level,
 - Article 14(1) corresponds to Article 2 of the Protocol to the ECHR, but its scope is extended to cover access to vocational and continuing training,
 - Article 14(3) corresponds to Article 2 of the Protocol to the ECHR as regards the rights of parents,
 - Article 47(2) and (3) corresponds to Article 6(1) of the ECHR, but the limitation to the determination of civil rights and obligations or criminal charges does not apply as regards Union law and its implementation,
 - Article 50 corresponds to Article 4 of Protocol No 7 to the ECHR, but its scope is extended to European Union level between the Courts of the Member States,
 - Finally, citizens of the European Union may not be considered as aliens in the scope of the application of Union law, because of the prohibition of any discrimination on grounds of nationality. The limitations provided for by Article 16 of the ECHR as regards the rights of aliens therefore do not apply to them in this context.

The rule of interpretation contained in paragraph 4 has been based on the wording of Article 6(3) of the Treaty on European Union and takes due account of the approach to common constitutional traditions followed by the Court of Justice (e.g., judgment of 13 December 1979, Case 44/79 *Hauer* [1979] ECR 3727; judgment of 18 May 1982, Case 155/79 *AM&S* [1982] ECR 1575). Under that rule, rather than following a rigid approach of ‘a lowest common denominator’, the Charter rights concerned should be interpreted in a way offering a high standard of protection which is adequate for the law of the Union and in harmony with the common constitutional traditions.

Paragraph 5 clarifies the distinction between ‘rights’ and ‘principles’ set out in the Charter. According to that distinction, subjective rights shall be respected, whereas principles shall be observed (Article 51(1)). Principles may be implemented through legislative or executive acts (adopted by the Union in accordance with its powers, and by the Member States only when they implement Union law); accordingly, they become significant for the Courts only when such acts are interpreted or reviewed. They do not however give rise to direct claims for positive action by the Union’s institutions or Member States authorities. This is consistent both with case-law of the Court of Justice (cf. notably case-law on the ‘precautionary principle’ in Article 191(2) of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union: judgment of the CFI of 11 September 2002, Case T-13/99 *Pfizer v Council*, with numerous references to earlier case-law; and a series of judgments on Article 33 (ex-39) on the principles of agricultural law, e.g. judgment of the Court of Justice in Case 265/85 *Van den Berg* [1987] ECR 1155: scrutiny of the principle of market stabilisation and of reasonable expectations) and with the approach of the Member States’ constitutional systems to ‘principles’, particularly in the field of social law. For illustration, examples for principles, recognised in the Charter include e.g. Articles 25, 26 and 37. In some cases, an Article of the Charter may contain both elements of a right and of a principle, e.g. Articles 23, 33 and 34.

Paragraph 6 refers to the various Articles in the Charter which, in the spirit of subsidiarity, make reference to national laws and practices.

Explanation on Article 53 — Level of protection

This provision is intended to maintain the level of protection currently afforded within their respective scope by Union law, national law and international law. Owing to its importance, mention is made of the ECHR.

Explanation on Article 54 — Prohibition of abuse of rights

This Article corresponds to Article 17 of the ECHR:

‘Nothing in this Convention may be interpreted as implying for any State, group or person any right to engage in any activity or perform any act aimed at the destruction of any of the rights and freedoms set forth herein or at their limitation to a greater extent than is provided for in the Convention.’
