

SHRC

Scottish
Human Rights
Commission

Speech: Strengthening Social Rights Implementation – Stocktaking of the Charter System Reform

March 2026

Angela O'Hagan, Chair of Scottish Human Rights Commission, Head of Delegation for ENNHRI

Session 3 of ENNHRI High-Level Conference

Chisinau, Moldova

Chair, Excellencies, colleagues,

I am honoured to speak on behalf of ENNHRI, the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, representing more than 51 NHRIs across Europe. I am privileged to lead one of those NHRIs, the Scottish Human Rights Commission, where I have served as Chair since August 2024.

As we reflect on strengthening implementation of the European Social Charter, we should recognise the unique role that NHRIs play within it. NHRIs are independent state bodies with a broad mandate to promote and protect the full range of human rights at national level. This positions them as a crucial bridge between international standards and domestic implementation.

Within the Charter framework, NHRIs contribute in distinct and practical ways, including by providing independent analysis in national reporting, by engaging with the European Committee of Social Rights, by monitoring legislative and policy compliance, and through bringing forward the lived realities of individuals and groups affected by gaps in social rights protections. Importantly, NHRIs help ensure that Charter commitments translate into concrete improvements in areas such as housing, social protection, health, decent work, and protection against poverty.

As highlighted in the earlier sessions, we face many major challenges, from the cost-of-living crisis to the impact of new technologies. This makes NHRIs' independent monitoring and advisory function even more vital. Effective implementation requires evidence-based policymaking, transparency, and accountability which are all areas where NHRIs add value.

We welcome the ongoing reform of the Charter system as it offers an opportunity to further strengthen structured engagement with NHRIs, recognising them as key national actors in follow-up and implementation.

ENNHRI will continue to support its NHRI members in this role by facilitating peer exchange, coordinating engagement with the European Committee of Social Rights, and amplifying NHRIs' collective voice at the European level.

We firmly believe that the European Social Charter remains a cornerstone of Europe's human rights architecture. By reinforcing the role of NHRIs within its system, we can strengthen social rights implementation, and help ensure continued democratic resilience.

ENNHRI stands ready to continue its close work with the Council of Europe, States, and partners to ensure that the Charter system delivers tangible improvements for people across Europe.

Thank you.