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European Commission acts to bolster the EU's system of protecting fundamental rights

The Commission has today proposed negotiation directives for the Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The Lisbon Treaty provides for the legal basis for the EU to accede to the ECHR, which is the most important instrument to protect human rights and fundamental freedoms in Europe. The EU's accession to the Convention will further strengthen the EU's system of protection of fundamental rights.

"Accession to the ECHR has political, legal and symbolic importance", said President José Manuel Barroso. "The EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights will provide a coherent system of fundamental rights protection throughout the continent. It will complete the level of protection introduced by the Lisbon Treaty through the legally binding Charter of Fundamental Rights."

The EU's accession to the ECHR will introduce an additional judicial control in the field of the protection of fundamental rights in the EU. It will make the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg competent to review acts of the EU institutions, bodies and agencies, including rulings by the European Court of Justice, for respect of the European Convention on Human Rights. Accession will also provide a new possibility of remedies for individuals. They will be able to bring complaints – after they have exhausted domestic remedies – about the infringement of fundamental rights by the EU before the European Court of Human Rights. Accession will also:

- Help develop a common culture of fundamental rights in the EU.
- Reinforce the credibility of the EU's human rights' system and EU external policy.
- Show that the EU puts its weight behind the Strasbourg system of fundamental rights protection.
- Ensure that there is a harmonious development of the case law of the European Court of Justice and the European Court of Human Rights.

Background

Accession became possible with the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009. The Lisbon Treaty provides the legal basis in EU law for accession in Article 6(2). The EU would become the 48th Contracting Party of the Convention, without becoming a member of the Council of Europe. All 47 members of the Council of Europe, including all EU Member States, have ratified the Convention. The Convention established the European Court of Human Rights, which enforces Members States' adherence to human rights principles.

For more information: [MEMO/10/84](#)