

# THE COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS



COMMISSIONER  
FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

COMMISSAIRE AUX  
DROITS DE L'HOMME

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**T**oday, the system of human rights protection in Europe is one of the most advanced in the world. The European Convention on Human Rights, the Court, the different monitoring mechanisms and institutions, as well as my Office, work to ensure that States uphold their obligations to protect, respect and fulfil human rights. However, structural shortcomings and a lack of political will still hinder the full realisation of human rights.

My role as Commissioner for Human Rights is to keep states alert to the problems that may restrict people's ability to enjoy their rights, and to help them find solutions to improve human rights protection and implementation.

To achieve this goal, I work closely with all those who can make a difference - governments, national authorities, human rights defenders, journalists, NGOs, and educators. Human rights are not only a matter of states' compliance with law and standards: they also require the support of society as a whole. Each of us must engage in the everyday implementation of human rights.

Human rights are not just about being free from coercion, discrimination and abuse. They are also about living our lives to the fullest potential. Human rights oblige states to safeguard our freedoms and strive to ensure dignity, justice and inclusion for all. It is my firm intention to use my mandate to help states live up to these expectations.

***DUNJA MIJATOVIĆ***

## **COUNTRY WORK**

The Commissioner carries out visits to all member states to monitor and evaluate the human rights situation. In the course of such visits, she meets with the highest representatives of government, parliament, the judiciary, civil society and national human rights structures. She also talks to ordinary people with human rights concerns and visits places of human rights relevance, including prisons, psychiatric hospitals, centres for asylum seekers, schools, orphanages and settlements populated by vulnerable groups.

Following the visits, a report or a letter may be addressed to the authorities of the country concerned containing an assessment of the human rights situation and recommendations on how to overcome shortcomings in law and practice. The Commissioner also has the right to intervene as a third party in the proceedings of the European Court of Human Rights, either by submitting written information or taking part in its hearings.

The Commissioner also has the possibility to contribute to the execution of Court's judgments as part of her continuous dialogue with national authorities, including at regional and local level, and through written submissions.

## **THEMATIC WORK**

The Commissioner also conducts thematic work on subjects that are central to the protection of human rights in Europe. She provides advice and information on the prevention of human rights violations and releases opinions, recommendations, issue papers, reports and human rights comments.

## AWARENESS RAISING

The Commissioner promotes awareness of human rights in member states by organising and taking part in seminars and events on various human rights themes. The Commissioner engages in permanent dialogue with governments, civil society organisations and educational institutions in order to improve public awareness of human rights standards. She further contributes to the debate and the reflection on current and important human rights matters through contacts with the media, the publication of periodic articles and thematic documents.

As part of country visits, thematic work and awareness-raising activities, the Commissioner pays specific attention to the defence of human rights activists and engages in close co-operation with other Council of Europe bodies and with a broad range of international institutions, most importantly the United Nations and its specialised offices, the European Union and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The Office also co-operates closely with national human rights structures, leading human rights NGOs, universities and think tanks.



# The Commissioner for Human Rights

is an independent and impartial non-judicial institution established in 1999 by the Council of Europe to promote awareness of and respect for human rights in the member states. The activities of this institution focus on three major, closely related areas:

- › country visits and dialogue with national authorities and civil society;
- › thematic studies and advice on systematic human rights work;
- › awareness-raising activities.

The Commissioner is elected by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, from a list of three candidates drawn up by the Committee of Ministers, and serves a non-renewable term of office of six years.

The current Commissioner, Dunja Mijatović, took up her functions in April 2018. She is the fourth Commissioner, succeeding Nils Muižnieks (2012-2018), Thomas Hammarberg (2006-2012) and Álvaro Gil-Robles (1999-2006).

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## [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.

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