

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Highlights 2015



Guardian of human rights,
democracy and
the rule of law

Activity report

Cover portraits:

(upper left): **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni** was re-elected Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe on 23 June 2015.

(upper right): The Democracy Innovation Award, was awarded to "More Than One Story", a card game to promote integration and inclusion by **Seth Selleck** (Sweden), at the World Forum for Democracy (Strasbourg, 20 November 2015).

(lower right): The Secretary General met **Astrid Thors**, the High Commissioner on National Minorities of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (Strasbourg, 2 February 2015).

(lower left): **Ban Ki-moon**, Secretary-General of the United Nations (Strasbourg, 23 June 2015).

Main picture:

Unity Rally for the victims of the Charlie Hebdo attack (Paris, 11 January 2015)

French edition

*Conseil de l'Europe:
points forts 2015*

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Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, during the ceremonies for International Roma Holocaust Remembrance Day (June 2015)

Foreword

Thorbjørn Jagland

Secretary General of the Council of Europe

These are not easy days for internationalists. Across European societies, ongoing economic hardship, the threat of terrorism and the refugee crisis have created fertile ground for populists and xenophobes. It is more important than ever for our Organisation to demonstrate that Europe is most secure when our nations work together, upholding the rule of law.

■ The year 2015 saw some important achievements. Faced with the urgent problem of foreign terrorist fighters, the Council of Europe negotiated, in record time, a treaty to clamp down on their movements, while safeguarding fundamental freedoms. Important projects have been launched to counter the radicalisation of young people in schools, online and in prisons.

■ As migrants and refugees have continued to arrive in Europe, we have championed the universal human rights that all in Europe must enjoy and which are the basis of inclusive and well-integrated societies. I have appointed a new Special Representative to help states ensure that their asylum laws and practices meet international standards.

■ Despite continued tensions in eastern Ukraine, the Council of Europe has continued providing support for political and constitutional reform within the country. Elsewhere, we are helping our member states build institutions which better command their citizens' trust. Action to boost judicial independence has been at the top of our agenda after my annual report identified widespread shortcomings in Europe's courts.

■ The Organisation has been more active than ever in promoting free media. The Platform for the Protection of Journalists has become a tool unlike any other. It enables journalists who are under threat to sound the alarm and the governments in question are then expected to respond.

■ A new monitoring mechanism has been established for the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. Our groundbreaking Istanbul Convention outlaws all types of violence against women. Nineteen states were party to it by the end of December 2015. This new monitoring body will help drive real reform on the ground.

■ What unites these and our many other recent achievements is the presence of political will. The European Convention on Human Rights and the Strasbourg Court are only ever as strong as the commitment of member states' governments. Populists will continue to challenge international co-operation and universal human rights. With the clear backing of our member states, however, the Council of Europe can continue to show that our nations are stronger and safer together than we are apart.



Handover between outgoing Chairperson **Didier Reynders**, Minister for Foreign Affairs and European Affairs of Belgium, and **Igor Crnadak**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina (Brussels, 19 May 2015)



Handover between outgoing Chairperson **Igor Crnadak**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and **Daniel Mitov**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria (Strasbourg, 10 November 2015)

Committee of Ministers

The texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2015 can be consulted at: www.coe.int/t/cm

The Committee of Ministers acts as the main decision-making body of the Council of Europe. It is made up of member states' foreign ministers or their permanent diplomatic representatives in Strasbourg.

In 2015, the Committee of Ministers was chaired until 19 May by Belgium, then by Bosnia and Herzegovina until 10 November and thereafter by Bulgaria.

The fight against terrorism was a top priority for the Committee of Ministers in 2015. Following the terrorist attacks in Paris in January and Copenhagen in February, the Committee made statements condemning these acts and called for the reinforcement of Council of Europe activities. The Committee endorsed proposals by the Secretary General for immediate action to combat violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism. Subsequently, at the 125th Ministerial Session on 19 May, the Committee of Ministers adopted an Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention for the Prevention of Terrorism¹ to address the issue of foreign terrorist fighters. It further adopted a declaration and an action plan on the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism. The action plan sets out a series of practical steps to reinforce the legal framework against terrorism and violent extremism and to prevent and fight radicalisation through concrete measures in the public sector, in particular in schools and prisons, and on the Internet. Following the terrorist attacks in Paris on

13 November, the Committee of Ministers adopted a statement condemning these barbaric acts, underlining that it would continue to give the highest priority to the action plan, the implementation of which was subsequently reviewed in December.

■ A major issue addressed at the Ministerial Session was the role of the Council of Europe in response to the current crises and conflicts in Europe. The report presented by the Secretary General at the session on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe pointed to several concrete challenges while proposing possible lines of action to address them. The session also looked at the contribution to democratic security in **Ukraine** and the **conflict in Georgia**. The progress made in the implementation of the **policy of the Council of Europe towards neighbouring regions** was also welcomed. In this respect, Neighbourhood Partnerships were approved early in the year with Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia for 2015-2017, an important step in reinforcing co-operation with these countries. The Committee of Ministers also endorsed priorities for co-operation with the Kyrgyz Republic for the period 2015-2017.

1. To date, the Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, opened for signature on 22 October 2015, in Riga (Latvia), has been signed by 20 member states and the European Union.



125th Session of the Committee of Ministers,
in Brussels (Belgium, 19 May 2015)

■ **Guaranteeing the long-term effectiveness of the European Court of Human Rights system** was also addressed at the Ministerial Session. The Committee welcomed the results achieved to date by all relevant stakeholders in the framework of the reform of the Convention system and, in particular, the measures taken by the Court to further increase the effectiveness of its work and the swift implementation of Protocol No. 14, and the resulting decrease in the number of pending cases. It noted, however, the current challenges, among them the backlog of potentially admissible and well-founded cases pending before the Court, the repetitive applications resulting from non-execution of Court judgments, as well as the increasing workload of the Committee of Ministers in its function of supervision of the execution of judgments. The Committee endorsed the declaration unanimously adopted on the occasion of the High-level Conference – “The Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights, our shared responsibility” (Brussels 26-27 March 2015). It invited the states parties, the Court and the Secretary General to implement the Brussels Declaration and to inform the Committee of the progress made by 30 June 2016.

■ The Committee of Ministers met on four occasions to supervise the execution of Court judgments with 1 048 being closed in 2015. Details concerning the Committee’s work in this area can be found on the website of the Committee of Ministers. In February and October, the Committee of Ministers held an exchange of views with the **President of the European Court of Human Rights**. The Committee also held several exchanges of views with the **Commissioner for Human Rights** during the year.

■ **The situation in Ukraine** remained of great concern. In April, the Committee adopted several decisions in this respect, in particular calling upon all parties concerned to strictly respect the Minsk Agreements and to take the necessary further steps for their swift and full implementation. It also expressed, *inter alia*, its serious concern regarding the continued deterioration of the human rights situation in eastern Ukraine and Crimea and the need to secure respect for all human rights and to ensure that the relevant human rights monitoring bodies can carry out their activities unimpeded. Finally, it welcomed the reforms conducted by the Ukrainian authorities to consolidate the functioning of democratic institutions, the protection of human rights and the rule of law while underlining the importance of bringing forward these reforms. It reiterated the willingness of the Organisation to provide further assistance under the Action Plan for Ukraine for the period 2015-2017 launched in Kyiv on 18 March 2015. The Committee also held two exchanges of views with Sir Nicolas Bratza, Chair of the **International Advisory Panel on Ukraine** – in April following the publication of the panel’s report regarding the investigations conducted on the violent incidents which took place in Maidan at the end of 2013, and in November, on the basis of the report published by the panel regarding the investigations into the events which took place in Odessa on 2 May 2014.

■ Concerning specific co-operation with other member states, the Committee of Ministers reviewed the progress made by **Serbia** as regards the fulfilment of its statutory commitments. While noting that some reforms remained to be completed, it decided to discontinue the regular stocktaking procedure concerning Serbia. The Committee also approved an action plan for **Bosnia and Herzegovina** to provide assistance for the period 2015-2017 in fulfilling its statutory and specific obligations as a member state. Regarding **Albania**, a programmatic co-operation document

was approved, also aimed at providing assistance for the period 2015-2017. In June, the Committee approved assistance programmes in view of the local elections being held in the **Republic of Moldova** on 14 June 2015 and in Albania on 21 June 2015. Finally, in September it approved a new action plan aimed at providing continued assistance to **Armenia**.

■ In October, the Committee of Ministers reviewed the state of implementation of the commitments entered into by **Azerbaijan**. It expressed serious concerns at the deterioration of the legal and administrative framework in which civil society and independent media operate, and at the increased number of prosecution procedures against human rights defenders and journalists. At the same time, it welcomed the progress made by Azerbaijan in some areas. It reiterated its commitment to continue to provide assistance to Azerbaijan and the importance of the effective implementation of the 2014-2016 Action Plan.

■ With regard to **Georgia**, at the Ministerial Session in May the Committee took note of the consolidated report of the Secretary General on the conflict in Georgia covering the period from November 2014 to March 2015 in the light of which a number of decisions had been taken. In particular, the Committee stated that the so-called treaties signed between the Russian Federation and the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia respectively were detrimental to the ongoing efforts to strengthen security and stability in the region, clearly violated Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity and had no legal validity. It called on the Russian Federation to facilitate and grant unrestricted access to the Council of Europe bodies to the areas affected by the conflict. In November, the Committee held an exchange of views on the subsequent (12th) consolidated report on the conflict. In 2015, the Committee also took note of a report on the Council of Europe's co-operation activities in **Kosovo**.²

■ During the year, the Committee held three **thematic debates**, which gave rise to a number of operational decisions. The first one concerned "Council of Europe action against extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism", the second "Migration challenges for Europe: need for collective action", and the third "Freedom of assembly and association: current challenges and the response from the Council of Europe".

■ A number of other priority fields were addressed in 2015. Throughout the year, the Committee of Ministers, through various decisions and declarations

reiterated its objective to create a **death penalty-free** zone in Europe, and promote a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty. It deplored executions carried out in Japan and the United States, two Council of Europe observer states as well as in Jordan and Belarus. In January, the Committee took note of a report on the implementation of the Council of Europe **Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017** and invited the Secretary General to ensure the follow-up of this report. In May, the Committee of Ministers decided to establish 18 November as the European Day on the Protection of **Children** against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, the aim of which is to raise awareness of such crimes and of the need to prevent such acts, to promote the ratification and implementation of the Lanzarote Convention by member states and to prevent the stigmatisation of victims. The first such day took place in 2015. With regard to **Roma**, the Committee agreed on strategic orientations with regard to "Updating the Council of Europe's agenda on Roma inclusion (2015-2019)" and agreed in principle to the establishment of a European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (working title).

■ The **Council of Europe Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs** was opened for signature at a high-level international conference held in Santiago de Compostela on 25 March 2015. Fourteen member states signed it on that occasion.

■ Finally, the **annual exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue**, held in early November in Sarajevo, focused in particular on the role of religions and non-religious beliefs in preventing radicalisation and violent extremism.

■ **Co-operation with other international bodies** remained a priority for the Committee in 2015. At the Ministerial Session in May, the Committee took note with satisfaction of the increase in co-operation between the Council of Europe and the **European Union** in the light of a report presented on this matter. In February, the Committee held its annual exchange of views with experts on human rights questions dealt with in the **United Nations** framework. With regard to the **OSCE**, the Co-ordination Group between the two organisations held two meetings in 2015 to review co-operation. The Committee also held an exchange of views with Ms Astrid Thors, OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities in December.

■ Finally, in November, the Committee approved the **Council of Europe's Programme and Budget 2016-2017**, the Organisation's third biennial programme and budget. In this context, Turkey's initiative to become a major contributor in 2016 brought significant additional means to the Organisation, allowing it to strengthen its operational capacity.

2. All reference to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Anne Brasseur,
President of the
Parliamentary Assembly
of the Council of Europe



Top row, left to right:
Aleksandar Vučić,
Prime Minister of Serbia
Ángel Gurría, Secretary-General
of the Organisation for Economic
Co-operation and Development
Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General
of the United Nations
Denis Zvizdić, Chairperson of
the Council of Ministers of Bosnia
and Herzegovina

2nd row, left to right:
Didier Reynders, Minister for
Foreign Affairs and European
Affairs of Belgium
Guy Ryder, Director-General of
the International Labour
Organization
Helena Dalli, Minister for Social
Dialogue, Consumer Affairs and
Civil Liberties of Malta
Igor Crnadak, Minister for
Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and
Herzegovina

3rd row, left to right:
Laura Boldrini, Speaker of the
Chamber of Deputies of Italy
Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca,
President of Malta
Michael D. Higgins, President
of Ireland
Mladen Ivanić, Chairman of
the Presidency of Bosnia and
Herzegovina

Bottom row, left to right:
His Majesty Philippe I, King of
the Belgians
His Royal Highness Henri,
Grand Duke of Luxembourg
Lyudmila Alexeyeva is
awarded the Václav Havel
Human Rights Prize (Strasbourg,
28 September 2015)

Parliamentary Assembly

The functioning of the Parliamentary Assembly, its rules, work, events, calendar, the profiles of its members and their activities within the Assembly as well as the texts adopted by the Assembly in 2015 can be found on the Assembly website: <http://assembly.coe.int>

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, consisting of representatives from the 47 national parliaments, provides a forum for debate and proposals on Europe's social and political issues. Many Council of Europe conventions originate from the Assembly, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

**President of the Parliamentary Assembly
Ms Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg)**

During its four part-sessions and three meetings of the Standing Committee in 2015, the Parliamentary Assembly debated issues of major political relevance in Europe, adopting 57 resolutions, 23 recommendations and two opinions on Council of Europe draft conventions.

How to tackle terrorism while respecting Council of Europe standards stood out as a crucial priority throughout the year, leading to the adoption of several resolutions and the adoption of an opinion on the draft additional protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism.

■ The conflict in Ukraine continued to be at the centre of the Assembly's preoccupations. The Assembly addressed several facets of this question, including its humanitarian aspects. It also held a current affairs debate on the political and security situation in Ukraine and its implications.

■ In the light of the role played by the Russian Federation in the conflict in eastern Ukraine and its illegal annexation of Crimea, on the basis of reports by its Monitoring Committee, the Assembly confirmed its previous position to ratify the credentials of the Russian delegation while maintaining the suspension of some of its rights for the entire year, including the suspension of voting rights.

■ The Assembly paid considerable attention to the issues of asylum and migration, with the adoption of resolutions focusing on the strain placed on European states by the large-scale influx of Syrian refugees, the need for member states to uphold their obligations as regards international protection and the necessity for the European Union to review the Dublin Regulation.

■ In 2015, the Assembly took a close look at the situation in some member states, including Azerbaijan and Hungary. It decided to move from a full monitoring procedure to post-monitoring dialogue in respect of Montenegro and to close its post-monitoring dialogue with Monaco. The Assembly also held a periodic review of the honouring of membership obligations by Andorra, Belgium, Croatia and Cyprus.

■ Some leading dignitaries chose the Assembly as a forum for delivering political messages, including Mr Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations.



Anne Brasseur,
President of the Assembly,
visits a Syrian refugee camp in Kilis,
Turkey (9 April 2015)

■ The Assembly awarded its annual Václav Havel Human Rights Prize to Ludmilla Alexeeva, a veteran human rights defender from the Russian Federation. It celebrated the 60th anniversary of the Europe Prize, which was awarded in 2015 to the cities of **Dresden in Germany and Vara in Sweden**. The Council of Europe Museum Prize went to the Musée des Civilisations de l'Europe et de la Méditerranée (MuCEM) in Marseille, France.

■ In 2015, the Assembly observed parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan, Kyrgyzstan and Turkey. For the first time since 2001, it observed the presidential election in Belarus. It also observed the referendum on constitutional reforms in Armenia and, under the aegis of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities to the Council of Europe, the local elections in Ukraine. In June, the Assembly, in close co-operation with the Venice Commission and the National Assembly of France, organised a parliamentary conference on the implementation of the right to free elections.

■ The Assembly re-elected Ms Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni as Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and Mr Wojciech Sawicki as the Assembly's Secretary General, both for a five-year term. It elected judges to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Ireland, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Monaco, Serbia and the Slovak Republic.

■ The Assembly's committees carried out the preparatory work leading to plenary debates, often enriching and complementing it with the organisation of conferences and other events.

■ In preparation of the report "Terrorist attacks in Paris: together for a democratic response", the **Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy** held a hearing with the participation of the journalist Ms Caroline Fourest and the sociologist Mr Driss Ajbali. The Committee closely followed up the situation with its report "Foreign Fighters in Syria and Iraq", the preparation of which included an exchange of views with Mr Gilles de Kerchove, European Union Counter-Terrorism Coordinator. The preparation of the report "The political consequences of the crisis in Ukraine" was also a major focus, with the rapporteur organising several hearings and carrying out many fact-finding visits to Ukraine. The Committee continued to follow the political situation in Europe's neighbouring regions and co-organised a conference on current political challenges and opportunities in the Mediterranean region, in Rome.

■ In the context of its work on terrorism, **the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights** recommended mass encryption as a response to mass surveillance while waiting for an appropriate legal framework to be implemented at national and international levels. In its report “Drones and targeted killings”, the Committee insisted on appropriate legal safeguards to avoid sacrificing fundamental rights on the altar of the war on terror. In a related report, the Committee recommended improving the protection of whistle-blowers, including in the field of national security, and held a hearing with Edward Snowden by video conference. The Committee also requested the Venice Commission’s opinion on the draft law of the Russian Federation which would empower the Constitutional Court to determine whether findings by the international bodies on protection of human rights and freedoms are to be implemented.

■ In addition to the reports that it presented for plenary debate, **the Monitoring Committee** presented to the Bureau of the Assembly its opinion on the request for the opening of a monitoring procedure in respect of France. Its co-rapporteurs conducted fact-finding visits to Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, Monaco, Montenegro, “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Turkey.

■ **The Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development** covered a broad range of issues, comprising social rights as guaranteed by the European Social Charter, the rights of children and other groups in need of special protection, the human rights implications of public health, environmental and sustainable development policies, as well as issues related to good governance at the local level. The Committee promoted the MEDICRIME Convention and participated in the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Paris. It also continued to lead the parliamentary dimension of the ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children, including the pilot project implemented in Cyprus.

■ Media freedom and the search for adequate responses to the new challenges posed by the information society remained two priorities of the **Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media**. After supporting the launch of the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists, the committee finalised its work on issues such as transparency of media ownership, responsibility and ethics of the media, and the fight against cyber-terrorism. Furthermore, the Committee focused its

work on freedom of religion, living together in a democratic society and the development of a European competence framework for democratic citizenship and human rights. Finally, the report on the reform of football governance highlighted the need for further reflection on FIFA’s serious legitimacy crisis.

■ **The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons** organised two parliamentary conferences with the participation of parliamentarians from the countries of origin of migrants, and a parliamentary conference on a comprehensive humanitarian and political response to the migration and refugee crisis in Europe. It launched the Parliamentary Campaign to End Immigration Detention of Children, organised in the framework of the global campaign under the aegis of the United Nations; it continued the training for parliamentarians visiting immigration detention centres and co-ordinated parliamentary visits on the occasion of International Migrants’ Day.

■ The activities of the **Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination** focused on the fight against racism, intolerance and hate speech with the setting up of the No Hate Parliamentary Alliance, which engaged parliamentarians in these questions through thematic hearings and promotion activities directed at civil society and political partners. The Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence continued its awareness-raising activities and discussed ways to enable national parliaments to monitor the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The General Rapporteur on the rights of LGBTs took a position against restrictions on the freedom of assembly and against the pathologisation of transgender persons. Lastly, the Committee presented reports on various subject matters, such as discrimination against transgender persons, the rights of persons with disabilities, shared parental responsibility and neo-racism.

■ **The Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs** was concerned with matters such as sanctions taken by states or international organisations against parliamentarians, and threats to freedom of movement of Assembly members which are prejudicial to the performance of their duties. The Committee submitted to the Bureau of the Assembly its opinion concerning the diplomatic immunity of Ms Nadiia Savchenko, a member of the Ukrainian delegation to the Assembly. It also contributed to promoting parliamentary ethics, by organising the Anti-Corruption Platform and arranging information and awareness-raising seminars on transparency and accountability of the parliamentary institution, as well as on financing political parties and electoral campaigns.



Jean-Claude Frécon
(France, SOC), President of the Congress

Young people, aged 16 to 30 and from 39 Council of Europe member states, took part in the Congress' 29th Session (Strasbourg, 20-22 October 2015)



Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

*The texts adopted by the Congress in 2015
can be found on its website: www.coe.int/t/Congress*

The Congress is an assembly of local and regional representatives, with 648 members. It speaks for the 200 000 local and regional authorities in the Council of Europe's 47 member states.

The task of the Congress is to monitor the state of local and regional democracy in member states by assessing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government.

The charter is an international treaty that sets out the main principles governing the fundamental rights of local and regional authorities.

President of the Congress: Jean-Claude Frécon (France)

In October 2015, during its 29th Session, the Congress celebrated the 30th anniversary of the opening of the charter for signature. Events were also held in Poland, Albania and Ukraine to mark the anniversary. The charter has been ratified by all Council of Europe member states and the Congress's priority is now to get national governments to ratify all its provisions and establish a harmonised European area of local democracy.

QUALITY OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY

■ The European Charter of Local Self-Government is the reference text underpinning the Congress's activities to monitor and promote local and regional democracy in Europe. In 2015, the Congress continued its monitoring with visits to Luxembourg, France, Montenegro and the Slovak Republic and adopted recommendations on the situation of local and regional democracy in Greece, Poland, Norway, Luxembourg and Montenegro.

■ The Congress also observes local and regional elections when invited to do so by the states concerned. In 2015, it observed the local elections in the Republic of Moldova and Albania, as well as those in Ukraine on 25 October. The latter was a large-scale observation exercise in which members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and members of the European Union Committee of the Regions took part in the Congress delegation.



International Conference of Local Authorities on the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism,

co-organised by the Congress and the European Forum for Urban Security (Efus), in partnership with the cities of Aarhus and Rotterdam (Aarhus, Denmark, 18 November 2015)

■ In connection with monitoring of the implementation of its recommendations, the Congress stepped up its post-monitoring dialogue with the authorities in several countries, in particular those of Ukraine, leading to the signing in May of a road map on implementation of the Congress recommendations. In addition, the Congress helped with the drafting of the law on decentralisation, which was passed by the Ukrainian parliament on 31 August 2015.

■ In September and December 2015, road maps were also signed with the governments of Portugal and Georgia. Post-monitoring dialogues are in progress with the governments of Armenia and the Republic of Moldova. These advances demonstrate governments' growing willingness to engage in political dialogue about the situation of local and regional democracy in their countries and the importance they attach to improving its implementation.

■ Most of the Congress's activities, in particular co-operation activities, are based on political monitoring, supplemented by the observation of local elections. For several years now, the Congress has been contributing to the Council of Europe's action plans and co-operation programmes in member states. These activities have expanded steadily. In particular, the Congress offers its members expert advice on a peer-to-peer basis.

■ As part of its co-operation activities in Ukraine, it organised onsite training courses in Kyiv and regional workshops elsewhere in the country for young people involved in politics or civil society, workshops for newly elected mayors and study visits for young local leaders from Ukraine.

■ The Congress also helped to prepare and implement the Council of Europe's action plans in Albania and Armenia.

COMBATING RADICALISATION

■ Local and regional authorities played a key part in dealing with the crises and tensions which affected European societies in 2015. Their specific responses and expertise and their proximity to the grass roots have made them key partners for national governments.

■ The year 2015 saw an upsurge in terrorist attacks in Europe. In the wake of the attack on the offices of the *Charlie Hebdo* magazine in Paris in January, the Congress began looking, in the broader context of the Council of Europe, at ways of combating radicalisation leading to terrorism.

■ It adopted a strategy and a recommendation at the March 2015 session and held a debate on towns and cities against terrorism, during which the mayor of Kobanê (Syria) was invited to describe the struggle and desecration of his city, which had been confronted with terrorist violence.

■ The Congress sought to identify practical ways of implementing its recommendations on the ground, and at the October session adopted a series of guidelines based on two approaches: prevention and reintegration of radicalised individuals. The guidelines call upon European towns and regions to design local inter-institutional strategies involving local partners with a view to building inclusive, solidarity-based societies.

■ The Congress also launched an initiative involving an "Alliance of European Cities and Regions against Violent Extremism" as a platform for exchanges to facilitate co-operation between towns to prevent radicalisation. In connection with this initiative and



Conference to mark the 30th anniversary of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, organised by the Polish authorities in partnership with the Congress (Warsaw, 18 September 2015)

Jean-Claude Frécon, President of the Congress, meets with **Mustapha Abdi**, Mayor of Kobané (Syria), during the 28th Session (Strasbourg, 25-26 March 2015)

together with the European Forum for Urban Security and the Mayor of Aarhus, it held a Conference of Local Authorities on the Prevention of Radicalisation Leading to Violent Extremism in November.

authorities practical assistance with tackling the crisis. The theme of the two 2015 sessions was “Local responses to human rights challenges – migration, discrimination and social inclusion”.

■ An educational toolkit for use by local elected representatives when organising intercultural and inter-religious activities is also being prepared and will be adopted in March 2016.

HUMAN RIGHTS AWARENESS RAISING

■ As in previous years, the Congress was closely involved in the preparation and organisation of the World Forum for Democracy in November, the theme of which was “Freedom vs control: For a democratic response”. Congress members spoke at the labs on “Intercultural responses”, “Freedom games” and “Countering radicalisation”.

■ In the area of human rights awareness raising, the Congress held an international forum in Graz in May under the heading “Focusing on Human Rights”. The participants adopted a declaration underlining the need to respond to the threats to fundamental rights and liberties by reinforcing the co-operation between authorities at all levels in order to pursue a common strategy to enhance inclusion and make human rights a reality in Europe’s cities and regions. The declaration provides the basis for the Congress’s future work in this area.

MANAGING THE INFLUX OF REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS AND INTEGRATION

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

■ In 2015, European states and local and regional authorities had to contend with a mass influx of refugees and migrants. During the March and October sessions, the Congress held debates in the presence of several local elected representatives, in particular the mayors of Calais, Lampedusa, Kos and Şanlıurfa, who described the difficulties they were facing.

■ Citizen participation, in particular youth participation, in local, national and European decision-making processes is one of the Congress’s priority objectives. At the March and October 2015 sessions, the Congress invited one youth delegate per national delegation to participate in its work and discussions. A working group was also set up to look into ways of involving young people in the Congress’s discussions and work on a lasting basis.

■ This is a problem to which governments and the European institutions must adopt a concerted approach. But the issue is also of prime importance for local and regional authorities, as it is towns, cities and regions which bear the main responsibility for providing emergency reception facilities and integrating these groups once they have crossed national borders. The Congress held discussions at its two sessions in 2015 with a view to offering governments and local

■ European Local Democracy Week 2015 was held from 12 to 18 October under the theme of “Living together in multicultural societies: respect, dialogue, interaction”. This slogan picked up on the main theme of the Congress sessions in 2015, which focused on local responses to human rights challenges.



Guido Raimondi succeeded Dean Spielmann as President of the European Court of Human Rights on 21 September 2015

Launch of the Superior Courts Network (seated L-R): **Bertrand Louvel**, President of the Cour de Cassation; **Dean Spielmann**, President of the Court; **Bernard Stirn**, President of the Judicial Division, Conseil d'Etat (5 October 2015)



European Court of Human Rights

www.echr.coe.int

The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights in the 47 Council of Europe member states. Individuals can bring complaints of human rights violations to the Strasbourg Court once all possibilities of appeal have been exhausted in the member state concerned.

Presidents of the Court: Dean Spielmann (Luxembourg) until 31 October, then Guido Raimondi (Italy)

REFORM OF THE COURT

■ A major event concerning the Court in 2015 was the high-level Brussels Conference that took place in March, entitled “The Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights, our shared responsibility”. Compared to the previous reform conferences, greater emphasis was placed this time on the aspects of implementation of the Convention at the domestic level, and improving the process of execution of judgments, as supervised by the Committee of Ministers. Part of the action plan adopted is addressed to the Court, with states inviting it to develop the practice of providing applicants with more detailed reasons for decisions taken by the Single Judge. By the end of the year, preparations to introduce this practice were at an advanced stage, the intention being to put it into effect in early 2016.

CO-OPERATION AND DIALOGUE

■ The Brussels Declaration also refers to an initiative taken by the Court in 2015. This is the creation of a mechanism to allow for the exchange of legal materials between the Court and superior national courts: from the Court, primarily information about Convention case law as well as information gathered on comparative and international law; from the other courts in the network, information about relevant domestic laws and judicial practice. The network was formally launched at the Court in October. In its initial trial phase, two national courts are taking part – the Cour de Cassation and the Conseil d’Etat of France. The intention is to progressively extend the network as from 2016, several national courts having already indicated their interest in taking part. The network will operate in full respect for the judicial independence of the member courts, and for their respective rules on the confidentiality of internal documents.



The European Convention on Human Rights and General International Law, conference organised in conjunction with the European Society of International Law (Strasbourg, 5 June 2015)

■ The new network is intended to enhance interaction and dialogue between courts at the different levels and should thus be seen in the context of the advisory opinion procedure to be introduced by Protocol No. 16. The year 2015 saw the first ratifications of the protocol, with six states accepting it – Albania, Finland, Georgia, Lithuania, San Marino and Slovenia. The protocol will enter into force following the 10th ratification. In preparation for this, the Court drew up draft rules to govern the procedure and organised a consultation exercise involving all member states and a number of civil society organisations.

■ Dialogue with superior national courts proceeded in 2015 as before, with visits to Strasbourg by members of supreme and constitutional courts from a series of European states. The Court also received a visit from a delegation of judges of the International Court of Justice, the first such meeting between these two international courts. Still on the theme of international law, a conference was organised at the Court in conjunction with the European Society of International Law, under the title “The European Court of Human Rights and general international law”. The proceedings can be viewed on the ESIL website.

PROGRESS AND CHALLENGES

■ In 2015 the Court achieved a key objective of eliminating the filtering backlog, i.e. cases allocated to the Single Judge formation for rejection as clearly inadmissible, which were pending for more than one year. In 2011, there were just over 100 000 cases at this level, many of which had been awaiting decision for more than a year. By the end of 2015, the number of pending Single Judge cases was just under 3 000, and the time taken to deal with such cases was greatly reduced thanks to more effective working methods. There were positive developments regarding other categories of cases, the overall number of pending cases decreasing by 7% over the course of the year to about 65 000, due in large part to a substantial fall-off in the number of new cases entering the system (a decrease of some 30%). Yet the number of cases pending at chamber level, i.e. cases raising substantive legal issues, remains very high and represents a great challenge for the Convention mechanism.

■ Another challenge lies in the phenomenon of repetitive cases, which affects a number of member states. One of the Court's responses to this is the pilot procedure. This entails selecting one or several cases to be examined as a matter of priority, leading to a pilot judgment in which the underlying problem is identified. Such judgments also indicate the types of measures required to solve the problem, and often set a time frame for the domestic authorities to act. Pending action at the domestic level, the Court usually adjourns its examination of the other cases stemming from the same cause. If adequate means of redress are introduced at national level, these can ultimately be referred back to the state concerned for resolution. Pilot judgments were given in 2015 concerning very poor prison conditions in Bulgaria (the Neshkov case) and Hungary (the Varga case). Pilot cases were also decided concerning the problem of excessive delay in judicial proceedings in Poland (the Rutkowski case) and Hungary (the Gaszo case).

■ As part of its policy to improve public knowledge and understanding of the Convention, the Court developed its existing collection of digital and paper resources with video presentations on legal subjects, entitled "COURTalks-disCOURS". The first talk explains the admissibility criteria. Produced in co-operation with the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) programme of the Council of Europe, the talk has been subtitled in 14 different languages.

■ The 65th anniversary of the Convention was marked in Rome, where the treaty was opened for signature on 4 November 1950, by a conference on human rights protection in Europe. The Court was represented at the event by its President.

Guido Raimondi, President of the Court, and **Sergio Mattarella**, President of Italy, at the 65th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights (Rome, 1 December 2015)





Nils Muižnieks,
the Commissioner for Human Rights

Commissioner for Human Rights

Information on the Commissioner's work in 2015 can be found on his website: www.coe.int/web/commissioner/
The Commissioner's Twitter account is @CommissionerHR.

The Commissioner for Human Rights independently addresses and brings attention to human rights violations in Europe.

Nils Muižnieks (Latvia) since April 2012

COUNTRY MONITORING

■ The Commissioner carried out 12 visits and published nine country reports in 2015. From 13 to 16 January he visited Melilla and Madrid in order to discuss issues pertaining to the human rights of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. The main issue raised by the Commissioner during his visit was the draft amendment to the Aliens' Act aimed at allowing immediate returns of migrants arriving in Ceuta and Melilla. The Commissioner urged the Spanish authorities to ensure that legislation fully ensures full access to an effective asylum procedure, provides protection against *refoulement* and refrains from collective expulsions. He also recalled Spain's obligation to ensure that no push-backs of migrants occur and to thoroughly investigate allegations regarding the excessive use of force against migrants at the border by law-enforcement officials.

■ On 24 April and from 4 to 8 May the Commissioner carried out a visit to Germany, focusing on the human rights of asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants, on the fight against racism and extremism and on the legal and institutional framework for the protection and promotion of human rights. After the visit and in his subsequent report presented in Berlin the Commissioner commended Germany's action in the field of asylum in recent years, but highlighted the need to address remaining difficulties in some areas, including the registration of asylum claims, long delays in asylum proceedings, the lack of formal language courses and the access of asylum seekers to health care in a number of *Länder* (states). He also encouraged the German authorities to better address racism and extremism. The report was published in October.

■ From 29 June to 3 July the Commissioner carried out a visit to Ukraine focusing on the humanitarian situation in the east of the country. As part of this mission, he travelled to Kyiv, Dnipropetrovsk, Donetsk and Kramatorsk. Both in Kyiv and Donetsk, the Commissioner urged his interlocutors to facilitate the access of international humanitarian organisations and the delivery of humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable groups residing in non-government-controlled territories, in the vicinity of the contact line and in the buffer zone, including by creating special humanitarian corridors. He encouraged the authorities to take steps to minimise the existing barriers severely affecting freedom of movement across the contact line. The Commissioner also discussed questions related to the issuing of birth certificates, passports, school certificates and other documents to children born and living in non-government-controlled territories. The report was published in November.

■ The Commissioner visited Hungary from 24 to 27 November in order to discuss the human rights situation of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, following sweeping changes introduced in Hungarian law and practice in this field over the summer of 2015. The Commissioner underscored that Hungary had been confronted with an unprecedented task in this field. However, a series of swift measures taken had rendered access to international protection extremely difficult and had unjustifiably criminalised immigrants and asylum seekers. The Commissioner urged the authorities to replace the new measures with a fully human rights-compliant asylum procedure.



Nils Muižnieks in the yard of hospital No. 21 in Kuybyshev district of the city of Donetsk (Ukraine, 2 July 2015)

■ The Commissioner also carried out visits to Norway (human rights of people with disabilities, situation of Norwegian Travellers, Norwegian Roma and Roma immigrants, and the human rights protection system); Bulgaria (media freedom, the human rights of persons in institutions, the human rights of migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees); Serbia (transitional justice, action against discrimination, and freedom of the media); San Marino (media freedom, the national human rights architecture, the human rights of persons with disabilities, violence against women and women's rights, and the human rights of LGBTI persons); the Slovak Republic (human rights protection system and the human rights of Roma, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons); Belgium (human rights of asylum seekers, refugees and immigrants, the human rights of persons with disabilities, and the human rights of Roma and Travellers); Georgia (administration of justice, tolerance, non-discrimination and the situation of ethnic and religious minorities); Cyprus (human rights of immigrants and asylum seekers, and the impact of the economic crisis on human rights, in particular on women, children and older persons).

■ The Commissioner also published two reports on visits carried out in 2014. The first one, in February 2015, concerned his visit to France in September 2014. The report focused on issues pertaining to the fight against intolerance and racism, and to the protection of the human rights of migrants, Travellers, Roma and persons with disabilities. The Commissioner urged the authorities to continue to fight resolutely against discrimination, hate speech and anti-Gypsyism, and to improve law and practice in the field of asylum and immigration.

■ On 10 March the Commissioner published a report following his visit to Armenia from 5 to 9 October 2014. The report focused on the administration of justice and the protection of human rights in the justice system, as well as the rights of women and gender equality. The Commissioner recommended enhancing the independence, impartiality and effectiveness of the judiciary. He also recommended more resolute action to combat the impunity which characterises cases of torture and ill-treatment committed by the police and other law-enforcement agencies.

■ On 9 July, the Commissioner published an updated opinion on the legislation and practice in the Russian Federation on non-commercial organisations in light of Council of Europe standards. The Commissioner observed that the legislative amendments introduced since the first opinion of 2013 have amplified the already serious problems related to the lack of legal certainty, arbitrariness and disproportionate sanctions illustrated by the wide discretionary powers granted to the Prosecutor's Office and the executive authorities in implementing the legislation.

THEMATIC WORK

■ The Commissioner's main focus was on the human rights of immigrants, asylum seekers and refugees, through both meetings with political leaders and awareness-raising activities, such as articles, interviews, statements and public conferences.

■ In particular, the Commissioner's concerns about the failure of European countries and of the European Union to uphold the human rights of migrants were expressed in a guest editorial published on 29 June in the *International New York Times*, where he called on European countries and the European Union to develop a more human rights-compliant response to the challenges posed by migratory flows, in particular by increasing the legal avenues available to migrants to seek asylum and apply for family reunification, as well as by addressing public anxiety on migration and asylum from a principled standpoint.

■ Another theme on which the Commissioner has worked extensively has been counter-terrorism and human rights protection. On 5 June, the Commissioner published the issue paper "Democratic and effective oversight of national security services", which aims to provide guidance for strengthening human rights protection in the field of security service operations.

■ In an opinion piece published in the *New York Times* on 27 October, the Commissioner warned about the intrusive surveillance measures being adopted by many European countries. He cautioned member states against such measures, highlighting the need to limit surveillance and the use of data in a way that strictly respects the right to privacy. He also underscored the need to ensure that rigorous procedures for the examination, use and storage of all data obtained are in place, and to provide those subjected to surveillance with the opportunity to exercise their legal right to appeal.

■ Another topic on which the Commissioner has worked extensively has been freedom of expression and media freedom. Through reports, interviews, articles, public conferences and statements, the Commissioner has kept high on the member states' agendas their duty to protect journalists and to ensure that legislation and practice do not hinder the rights of the media. On the occasion of World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, the Commissioner published a statement in which he urged European leaders to improve the conditions in which the press works, in particular by removing all legislative obstacles which impinge on the rights of the press, freeing journalists who are imprisoned for what they have reported and refraining from violent or intimidating reactions against journalists.

■ The Commissioner also continued his work on human rights defenders. In particular, he submitted five third-party interventions before the European Court of Human Rights on cases relating to human rights defenders in Azerbaijan, which underlined systematic deficiencies in the area of freedom of expression and association in Azerbaijan, including judicial harassment of critical voices and a pattern of retaliatory measures against those who co-operate with international organisations to expose human rights violations in the country.

■ On 6 and 7 July, the Commissioner organised a round table with human rights defenders on women's rights and gender equality in Europe, in Vilnius,



Centre for asylum seekers in Berlin (AWO Refugium
Gotenburger Strasse)
(Germany, 10 May 2015)

Lithuania. Over 20 human rights defenders from European countries participated in the event, addressing a number of specific issues related to gender equality and the enjoyment of human rights by women, and assessing the situation of women's rights defenders working in the Council of Europe area.

■ The Commissioner published a series of Human Rights Comments addressing issues as diverse as migration, children's rights, the human rights of the Roma and Travellers, trafficking, women's rights, the UN development agenda, inclusive education and the Armenian-Turkish efforts to reconnect.

■ An issue paper on the rights of intersex people was also published in May, informing governments and practitioners about current human rights developments, including global best practices already taken to protect and empower intersex people, for example through reforms of equal treatment legislation. It also contains the Commissioner's recommendations on ways to move forward in particular in the legal and medical fields.

■ The country and thematic work was further pursued through intense activity on social media, where the Commissioner's Twitter account, @CommissionerHR, and Facebook page have considerably increased their visibility.



Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, and **Thorbjørn Jagland**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

External relations

www.coe.int/DER

POLICY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE TOWARDS NEIGHBOURING REGIONS

■ The implementation of the policy towards neighbouring regions continued in 2015 in close co-operation with the European Union. On 4 February 2015, the Committee of Ministers approved Neighbourhood Partnership documents for 2015-2017 with the Council of Europe's closest partners, namely Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia, giving a new dynamic to this policy. The Neighbourhood Partnerships combine and strengthen the two pillars of the policy – dialogue and co-operation. In Central Asia, co-operation has further developed with Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic through Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities. Regional Activities also continued. Council of Europe conventions are now more widely adhered to by neighbouring countries.

RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE UN AND THE OSCE

European Union

■ Co-operation and co-ordination of actions between the two organisations further intensified on the basis of the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). High-level political dialogue continued, and implementation of the MoU was regularly assessed by the Ministers' Deputies. The strategic partnership with the European Union was further strengthened through its three pillars – political dialogue, legal co-operation and co-operation projects. As in previous years, a substantial part of joint activities was carried out through Joint Programmes in Council of Europe member states and in the neighbouring regions. Implementation of the new Programmatic Cooperation Framework (PCF) for co-operation in the countries of the Eastern Partnership in 2015-2017 started in January. The Council of Europe Liaison Office in Brussels and the Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe further facilitated the reinforcement of the co-operation described above.

United Nations

■ The UN Secretary-General visited the Organisation in June. The Council of Europe contributed to the discussions leading to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda. The co-operation focused on human rights within the Universal Periodic Review, the UN Commission on the Status of Women and the fight against terrorism, both at intergovernmental and parliamentary level. Co-operation between the two organisations also continued to increase thanks to the Council of Europe Liaison Offices in Geneva and Vienna.

OSCE

■ Relations with the OSCE focused on a broad spectrum of human dimension activities “in the field”, at intergovernmental and parliamentary level or between institutions and specialised bodies. In April 2015, the Council of Europe Secretariat and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) exchanged letters aimed at enhancing mutual co-operation. The Council of Europe Liaison Offices in Vienna and Warsaw facilitated the co-operation.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS/COUNTRIES

■ The Council of Europe maintained regular contact and relations with other organisations active in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, such as La Francophonie, the League of Arab States, the Order of Malta and International IDEA. Active preferential relations with the observer states (Holy See, Canada, Japan, Mexico and the USA) were complemented by relations with more than 70 non-member states and focused on the fields where the Council of Europe's *acquis* presents a global comparative advantage.



PROTECTION OF JOURNALISM SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

The Platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists, launched on 1 April 2015, collects and publishes alerts on threats to media freedom and information on action taken by the member states and the Council of Europe in response to these alerts



Debates on democratic security:
Alexey Venediktov, Editor-in-Chief of the radio station Echo of Moscow, "Free and independent media to guarantee freedom of expression and democratic security in Europe" (Strasbourg, 12 November 2015)

Policy planning and political advice

POLICY PLANNING

■ The second annual report of the Secretary General, entitled “A shared responsibility for democratic security in Europe”, was launched in 2015 ahead of the May session of the Committee of Ministers in Brussels, Belgium. The report assessed the capacities of the member states to guarantee and enhance democratic security within their borders, and collectively, across the continent. It measured the extent to which the Council of Europe’s 47 member states are able to make the five pillars of democratic security a reality, namely: an efficient and independent judiciary; freedom of expression; freedom of assembly and association; the functioning of democratic institutions; and inclusive society and democratic citizenship. The report also drew on the Council of Europe’s capacity to monitor and evaluate performance in terms of democracy, human rights and rule of law and to identify remedies for shortcomings and provide assistance in their implementation. It has received highly positive feedback from the ministers in Brussels.



Second report of the Secretary General Jagland on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe

■ A meeting of directors of policy planning from Council of Europe member states was held in 2015, with the participation of prominent external academic experts, on democratic security themes, which helped to clarify the concept and served as a curtain raiser for the Secretary General’s report.

■ In December 2014 the Council of Europe launched the Internet platform for the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists. The platform became operational in April 2015, enabling trusted partner organisations to issue alerts when journalists are under threat, and helping the Council of Europe to react more effectively to these alerts. By the end of 2015 it had received over 100 alerts from partner organisations. There is a continuous dialogue between the offices of the Secretary General, the Human Rights Commissioner, the Parliamentary Assembly and the member states on the follow-ups to these alerts, both thematic and country-specific. The platform has been presented and featured prominently at the PACE sessions, the World Forum for Democracy and several important freedom-of-expression events. This initiative responds to the trend highlighted in the second Secretary General’s report which noted that threats to freedom of expression and notably threats to media freedom and protection of journalists are greater, deeper and geographically more widespread than had been previously understood.

■ A new series of conferences has been launched with the focus on democratic security; two well-attended sessions have been held so far, moderated by Dr Ismail Serageldin, Director of Library of Alexandria and Aleksey Venediktov, Editor in Chief of the radio station Echo of Moscow.

SCHOOLS OF POLITICAL STUDIES

■ Entering its 21st year of activity, the Council of Europe Network of Schools of Political Studies continues to offer high-level training to emerging leaders in 24 countries throughout the European continent and in the Southern Mediterranean region. Information on the schools' activities is disseminated through regular newsletters. In addition to supporting annual training cycles for each school, the capacity of the network to bring together participants from countries experiencing frozen conflicts who rarely have an opportunity to communicate with each other has been further developed. Examples of this include a joint seminar of the Greek and Turkish schools, "Exploring Politics of Friendship", and a pilot event in Cyprus, "The scope and prospects of a School of Political Studies in Cyprus", held with young leaders from both communities on the island.

■ This year also saw the launch of the South Programme II, which has enabled the schools in Tunisia and Morocco to consolidate their foothold as active participants in democratic governance and progress in the region.

■ Several schools continue to experience political barriers which prevent them from carrying out their mission. The Moscow School of Civic Education, which was the first ever School of Political Studies, remains registered under the "foreign agent legislation" by the Russian authorities. The network as a whole has responded to this challenge with major events including a joint seminar in Tbilisi, Georgia, an exchange programme with the Visegrád school and a civic forum entitled "In Search of Lost Universalism", organised by the Association of Schools of Political Studies together with the Robert Bosch Foundation. At the same time the Moscow school has launched an online platform to broadcast discussions with eminent Russian and foreign experts on the challenges that humanity is facing today.

■ Ilgar Mammadov, Director of the Baku school, has now been imprisoned for over three years while the definitive ruling of the European Court of Human Rights is ignored by the authorities. Such situations have inspired the Secretary General to launch an official inquiry into Azerbaijan's implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights.

■ Two events gave participants from the entire network an opportunity to meet each other and exchange knowledge and good practices. The 2nd International Alumni Seminar of Schools of Political Studies brought together some 50 selected participants to discuss "Defending Democracy, Freedom and Human Dignity against Internal and External Threats".



International Seminar of alumni of the Schools of Political Studies entitled "Defending Democracy, Freedom and Human Dignity against Internal and External Threats" (Mostar Bridge, Sarajevo, 25-26 June 2015)

Their findings constituted an initial contribution to the 2015 Strasbourg World Forum for Democracy. The forum included 500 participants from the Schools of Political Studies, who explored the necessary balance between security and freedom in a democratic society under threat. Furthermore, the event provided opportunities for the schools' participants to meet together in a series of events specifically organised for them.

POLITICAL AFFAIRS

■ As in previous years, the Directorate of Political Affairs (DPA) contributed to the preparation of the 11th and 12th consolidated reports of the Secretary General on the conflict in Georgia, which were presented to, and debated by, the Committee of Ministers. In line with the decisions of the Committee, the reports took stock of the situation in Georgia following the August 2008 conflict, provided information on the related activities of the Council of Europe and put forward further action for the Organisation in terms of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the region affected by the consequences of the conflict.

■ Following a September 2014 DPA working visit to Belgrade concerning the preparation of the second dialogue-based regular stocktaking report on co-operation and progress with the fulfilment of statutory commitments and democratic processes by Serbia, this report was presented and debated by the Committee in 2015. In light of the report's conclusions, the Deputies took the decision to discontinue the dialogue on the understanding that the Serbian authorities will complete the reforms recommended by the Committee of Ministers.

■ As regards other country-specific monitoring follow-up undertaken by the Committee, the DPA carried out a fact-finding mission to Azerbaijan in April 2015 and the report on the state of implementation of the commitments entered into by Azerbaijan was presented and debated by the Committee from June to October and resulted in the adoption of a decision by the Deputies in which they reiterated their call to Azerbaijan to implement its commitments, paying special attention to the human rights situation in the country.

■ Furthermore, in the framework of the same monitoring-related activities and following a DPA working visit to Armenia in July 2015, a report on the state of implementation of the commitments entered into by Armenia has been presented to the Permanent Representatives with a view to its examination and the preparation of a draft decision.

■ Regarding co-operation with Belarus, in 2015 the Information Point in Minsk – a project implemented by the Council of Europe under the general co-ordination of the DPA – further consolidated action and visibility of the Organisation in the country. Information on Council of Europe standards and policies was disseminated extensively through 45 activities (lectures, round tables and conferences), in which around 1 200 local representatives took part. These activities covered the following issues, which are of particular relevance for the Council of Europe: ways of introducing a moratorium or abolition of the death penalty; criminal procedure and human rights; the work of national human rights institutions; gender equality and participation of women in public life (a new topic in 2015); youth policy; cultural heritage; cybercrime; and human rights education. A number of monitoring visits to the country were supported by the Information Point (T-DO, GRECO). Moreover, with the support of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Council of Europe organised successfully a specialist conference on legal standards and conventions developed by the Organisation. It further organised an event, in co-operation with the Ministry of Education, aimed at discussing Belarus's accession to the Bologna Process, and followed the accession process closely throughout the year. Finally, special attention has been paid to the mass media: winners of an essay competition among journalism students took part in the work of the 2015 World Forum for Democracy, regional journalists took part in one of the sessions of the Congress and a study visit to the Council of Europe was organised for the representatives of the press services of specific Belarusian ministries and bodies dealing with Council of Europe issues.



“Interactive methods of teaching the English language” for teachers of English from Sukhumi, Gali and Tbilisi (Istanbul, 30 November-3 December 2015)

■ The DPA continued to implement CBMs in the post-conflict, frozen or protracted conflict zones. In 2015, this programme supported the dissemination of Council of Europe standards and contributed to dialogue and capacity building of professionals in the affected regions. The main beneficiaries of the programme are the representatives of both banks of the river Nistru/Dniester in the Republic of Moldova as well as representatives from the South Caucasus, including from Abkhazia and South Ossetia. The co-operation between health professionals from both banks of the river Nistru/Dniester led to the adoption of an action plan to fight tuberculosis and other transmissible diseases in penitentiary institutions. In 2015, the dialogue between ombudsmen from Tbilisi and Sukhumi and civil society continued with fruitful discussions in a number of specific areas (health care, freedom of movement, rights of prisoners, fight against domestic violence and violence against women, and human rights awareness raising) which resulted in concrete operational proposals for future common actions. Also in 2015, a series of four presentations took place in Sukhumi by Council of Europe experts and officials on human rights-related issues, as well as co-operation between professionals in Tbilisi and Sukhumi on drug prevention and treatment.



One of numerous interviews carried out by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (January 2015)

Directorate General

Human Rights and the Rule of Law

www.coe.int/en/web/human-rights-rule-of-law/home

PROTECTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Monitoring bodies

Execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights

■ The Department for the Execution of Judgments assists the Committee of Ministers with advice and assistance in its functions of supervision of the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and provides support to the member states in their efforts to achieve full, effective and prompt execution of the judgments. Experiences in 2015 confirmed the positive trends observed over the last few years and suggest that the efforts made since the adoption of new working methods by the Committee of Ministers in 2011 continue to bear fruit.

■ The statistics indicated are provisional; the final figures will be provided in the annual report of the Committee of Ministers on the supervision of the execution of judgments and decisions of the European Court of Human Rights.

■ The year 2015 saw a new record number of cases closed, 1 532 (1 502 in 2014), which also decreased the number of pending cases to 10 616 (10 904 in 2014); among pending cases, those concerned with structural problems rose, however, from 1 513 in 2014 to 1 537. New cases received from the Court decreased to 1 179 (210 fewer than in 2014), including 195 that revealed new structural problems (16 fewer than in 2014), the other cases being mainly repetitive.

■ Supervision and assistance activities that focused on the 332 cases under the enhanced supervision procedure (328 in 2014) applied to interstate cases and cases concerned with important structural problems or otherwise complex problems, or a need for urgent individual measures. Most cases under this procedure related to prison overcrowding and poor detention conditions, non-enforcement of final domestic judicial decisions, excessive length of judicial proceedings, issues linked with use of force by security forces and excessive recourse to deprivation of liberty. Numerous cases also related to elections, freedom of assembly, association and expression, or property rights. In the context of this supervision, the Committee adopted decisions in 106 cases, to support and encourage ongoing execution efforts and to help overcome complex legal and political obstacles.

Prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment (CPT)

■ In 2015, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) carried out 10 periodic visits (to Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, France, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland) and seven ad hoc visits (Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Turkey, Kosovo³), totalling 160 days in the field. Four of these ad hoc visits included a particular focus on immigration detainees. The visits to Greece, Hungary and Turkey examined the treatment and detention conditions of foreign nationals detained under legislation on aliens. The visit to Italy included the presence of a CPT delegation on a FRONTEX-co-ordinated return flight to Lagos (Nigeria).

■ On 2 March 2015, the CPT organised a conference on the occasion of its 25th anniversary to examine different aspects of the prevention of torture and

3. All reference to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.



Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals “HELP Network Conference” (Strasbourg, 4-5 June 2015)

ill-treatment. Issues discussed included measures to combat impunity, the provision of health care in prisons, solitary confinement, the treatment of juveniles in detention, and standards on psychiatry.

■ At the request of the national authorities concerned, 18 visit reports and a comparable number of government responses were made public over the year. In addition, the CPT issued a public statement concerning Bulgaria in March 2015.

■ The CPT published a document on its standards concerning the living space per prisoner in prison establishments, as well as a checklist for visits to social care institutions where persons may be deprived of their liberty.

European Social Charter and the European Code of Social Security

■ A major event in 2015 was the organisation of a conference on the future of the protection of social rights in Europe, held on 12 and 13 February under the auspices of the Belgian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe. Building on the “Turin process” launched during the Italian European Union Presidency, it aimed at “renewing the political interest in social rights in Europe within the current context”. Four lines of action aim to guarantee the future of the protection of social rights in Europe: a) the protection of social rights in times of crisis; b) ensuring the consistency of the protection of fundamental social rights; c) enhancing the effectiveness of the European Social Charter; and d) maximising the potential synergies between the Council of Europe and the European Union in the area of social rights. In 2016, the “Turin process” will continue with two events held in Turin on 17 and 18 March 2016. The first is an Interparliamentary Conference on the European Social Charter providing the opportunity for European parliamentarians to discuss the implementation of social rights at national level. The second event is a

forum on social rights in Europe which will take stock of the implementation of social rights in Europe in the “post-crisis” period.

Standards

■ In 2015, the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) adopted its report on the longer-term future of the system of the European Convention on Human Rights covering (i) the national implementation of the Convention; (ii) the authority of the Court (its case-load and the authority of its case law); (iii) the execution of judgments and its supervision; and (iv) the place of the Convention mechanism in the European and international legal order.

■ Alongside this work, the Committee of Experts on the Reform of the Court (DH-GDR) examined in particular the question of re-examination or reopening of cases following judgments of the Court – the good practices and the practical and procedural difficulties encountered (see www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/cddh/reformechr/reopening-EN.asp).

■ Concerning development and promotion of human rights, the CDDH adopted:

- ▶ a Compilation of Council of Europe standards relating to the principles of freedom of thought, conscience and religion and links with other human rights and draft guidelines of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the protection and promotion of human rights in culturally diverse societies, as well as a feasibility study on the impact of the economic crisis and austerity measures on human rights in Europe;
- ▶ a draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member states on human rights and business, built on the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.

Co-operation

■ Better domestic protection of human rights, the Organisation's top priority, was supported through criminal justice reform, measures combating ill-treatment and impunity, strengthening domestic remedies and harmonisation of national case law. In Armenia, an expert unit was established to assist the Court of Cassation for more effective assessment of relevant issues in the light of Strasbourg case law. In Montenegro, the support provided to the Constitutional Court has resulted in it being regarded as an effective remedy by the European Court of Human Rights. In Serbia, a new remedy to combat excessive length of proceedings was put in place; domestic case law gained in coherence through new guidance provided by the Supreme Cassation Court to the lower courts. As a result, applications to Strasbourg radically decreased. In Ukraine, support for the criminal justice reform resulted in a 50% decrease in the number of people in custody. Effective investigations of the Maidan and Odessa events were critically assessed by the International Advisory Panel. HELP (Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals) has become the unique pan-European programme of legal education integrating the Council of Europe instruments and case law into domestic training of legal professionals. New training courses responded to societal challenges faced by Europe, notably the HELP/ UNHCR course on asylum. These results were achieved through member states' active co-operation that went hand in hand with the careful attention the co-operation projects have paid to the national partners' needs in new challenging circumstances.

SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Media

Freedom of expression

■ Over 400 people attended a major Council of Europe conference on 13 and 14 October 2015 in Strasbourg. Entitled "Freedom of expression: still a precondition for democracy?", it examined topical issues and challenges such as the risk of sliding towards criminalising free expression when addressing hate speech, fighting terrorism while respecting free expression online, and the implications of mass surveillance.

Co-operation activities

■ Over 350 co-operation activities were conducted in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Ukraine, Kosovo, Tunisia and Morocco.



"Freedom of Expression: still a precondition for democracy?",
international conference
(Strasbourg, 13-14 October 2015)



Conference **"Establishing an effective mechanism for transparency of media ownership in Ukraine",**
(Kyiv, 16 November 2015)



Seminar gathering Moroccan journalists,
representatives of the National Union of the Moroccan Press and Council of Europe experts
(Rabat, Morocco, 28 September 2015)

■ The work included a very broad range of activities such as legal expertise, training programmes, seminars, conferences and other events on the rights and responsibilities of journalists, public broadcasting services, independence of regulatory authorities, Internet governance, self-regulation and codes of journalistic ethics, with the participation mainly of public officials, media professionals and civil society.

European Audiovisual Observatory, Enlarged Partial Agreement

Under its Montenegrin Presidency in 2015, the Observatory upgraded its *Yearbook – Television, cinema, video and on-demand audiovisual services* to a searchable electronic publication. It developed LUMIERE PRO, a self-financing research tool on admissions to films, and launched its new Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) Database on the transposition of the AVMS Directive into national legislation. The Observatory published *FOCUS 2015 – World film market trends*, and *IRIS*, its monthly legal newsletter. It addressed the broadcast of fiction on European TV channels, and created a special *FOCUS* on the animation industry in Europe for the European Commission. The Observatory produced three *IRIS Plus* issues on the protection of minors in a converged media environment, on territoriality and its impact on financing audiovisual works, and on copyright enforcement online. An *IRIS Special* dealt with the online activities of public service media, remit and financing. An *IRIS Extra* analysed the regulation of online content in the Russian Federation.

In addition, the Observatory conducted substantial research projects concerning on-demand services and issues surrounding the AVMS Directive (REFIT) commissioned by the European Commission.

The Observatory held its annual Cannes Film Market conference in May on the future of film financing in Europe. In June, a workshop organised in Podgorica (Montenegro) together with the Observatory's Montenegrin Presidency explored film funding schemes in order to inform the discussion on a new law on cinematography, adopted afterwards by Montenegro. The Observatory also presented its "FOCUS on Animation" report at the MIFA (International Animation Film Market) Market in Annecy (France) in June. The second Brussels autumn conference examined the remit and financing of public service media online.

Internet governance

In a declaration, the Committee of Ministers recalled that the International Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN), as a private non-profit corporation, should respect international human rights law. It called upon its 47 member states to ensure that ICANN, which manages Internet domain names globally, creates adequate mechanisms to identify, prevent and mitigate possible breaches of human rights in its work.

The Committee of Ministers also reaffirmed its support for the multi-stakeholder governance of the Internet – based on co-operation between governments, business, civil society and the technical community. In particular, it called upon the UN to extend the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum until 2025.

Data protection

Rulings of the European Court of Human Rights and the European Union Court of Justice confirmed the importance of the ongoing modernisation of the Convention for the protection of individuals with regard to automatic processing of personal data ("Convention 108"), as well as the promotion of the Convention on a global level, which remains one of the priorities of the Council of Europe and has led to additional invitations to accede (to Mauritius, Senegal and Tunisia).

Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)5 on the processing of personal data in the context of employment was adopted on 1 April 2015. This revision of a recommendation from 1989 addresses the challenges resulting from the use of new information and communication technologies in the context of employment.

Bioethics

Human Rights challenges raised by emerging technologies were addressed at a conference organised by the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) in May 2015.

The DH-BIO adopted a statement on genome editing technologies, recalling the reference principles laid down in the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention).

The processing of personal health-related data for insurance purposes and research on biological materials were addressed in two draft recommendations finalised in 2015.

Furthermore, a public consultation was organised on a draft additional protocol to the Oviedo Convention, on the protection of the human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorder with regard to involuntary measures.

THE RULE OF LAW

Action against crime

■ Responding to the urgency of the problem of travel by foreign terrorist fighters, the Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER) drafted an additional protocol to the terrorism prevention convention. It requires signatories to criminalise travelling or assisting travel abroad for terrorism purposes and, most importantly, sets up a network of round-the-clock contact points for the exchange of police information. Opened for signature in Riga on 22 November, by the end of 2015 the protocol had 21 signatories.

■ CODEXTER also focused on updating a 2005 Council of Europe recommendation on covert investigation to take into account the latest developments in Internet-related technology, and analysed the links between terrorism and organised crime.

■ The Committee on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) improved its procedures to identify risks of financing of terrorism. MONEYVAL adopted five reports as part of its 4th round of evaluations. It conducted two onsite visits (in Armenia and Serbia) under its new 5th round of evaluations and adopted the first report under the 5th round criteria. Bosnia and Herzegovina addressed its outstanding shortcomings, allowing MONEYVAL to ease the compliance procedure by lifting its public statement. The Committee of Ministers added Gibraltar to the jurisdictions to be evaluated by MONEYVAL.

■ In the area of preventing corruption and money laundering and combating terrorism financing, 20 countries benefited from technical co-operation. Work on criminal assets recovery gained in importance. More than 3 000 individuals – a third of them women – from government and civil society participated in 114 co-operation activities. Major international meetings in Tirana and Prague gave European Economic Area partners the opportunity to discuss new trends in economic crime, and further develop co-operation. Two new programmes started within the Eastern Partnership and the South Neighbourhood frameworks. Five new projects were developed for Bulgaria, Republic of Moldova, Kosovo, Russia and Kyrgyzstan – they will start in 2016.

■ In the criminal law field, the Council of Europe continued to support judges, prosecutors and civil servants in implementing more than 30 conventions. Country information files, model request forms and practical guidelines for practitioners were prepared to facilitate mutual legal assistance in criminal matters (www.coe.int/tcj).

■ A review of the criminal law conventions revealed the need to draft a new Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property – work will start in 2016.

■ Guidelines for prison and probation services facing radicalisation and violent extremism were finalised and will be adopted in 2015. Further prison reform, as well as police work reform was supported by technical co-operation with some 35 member states. The results are better health care and protection of vulnerable detainees in prisons, wider use of probation, less impunity and better overall compliance with human rights.

■ A series of promotional events, notably a conference in Cyprus, helped further the signing and ratification of the MEDICRIME Convention. The convention entered into force on 1 January 2016.

Drug abuse and illicit trafficking

■ On 1 January 2016 Monaco became the 38th member to accede to the Pompidou Group. The group's preparations for the 2016 United Nations General Assembly Special Session (UNGASS) on the world drug problem underline the importance of prevention, harm reduction and treatment, and of a strong objection to the death penalty for drug offences. The group started work on the financial and social cost of drug policies, and the role of civil society in the response to substance abuse, and explored experiences of cannabis regulation. Gender aspects featured in prescription drug abuse and in the connection between drugs, women and violence. New milestones included pilot therapeutic communities in the Republic of Moldova and improved drug treatment for prisoners and for people displaced from conflict zones in Ukraine. Continuous support responded to drug-related problems in the South Mediterranean.

Venice Commission

Corruption (GRECO)

■ In its 4th evaluation round, the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) is seeking more effective corruption prevention within parliaments, the judiciary and prosecution services. Reports setting out action to be taken and reported on after an 18-month implementation phase were addressed to the authorities of Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Greece, Hungary, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Serbia and Turkey, bringing the number of reports drawn up in this round by the end of 2015 to 34. Some 49 European countries and the United States of America participate in GRECO's dynamic process of mutual evaluation and peer pressure.

■ Reviews were also carried out of 29 countries' compliance with recommendations, notably on political finance issued in the 3rd round. In that context, GRECO continues to advocate with determination greater transparency in party and election funding. In addition, co-operation with International IDEA (International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance) is generating a positive mutual reinforcement of the action of both organisations in this field.

■ GRECO has defined the theme for its 5th round (to be launched in 2017) – "Preventing corruption and promoting integrity in central governments and law-enforcement agencies" demonstrating again its resolve, for the sake of democratic security, to address corrupt dealings and misconduct in key institutions.

Cybercrime

■ The Budapest Convention remained the most influential international treaty on cybercrime. Canada, Luxembourg, Poland, Sri Lanka and Turkey became parties to the convention. The Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY) ensured the quality of its implementation through assessments. The T-CY's Cloud Evidence Working Group co-operated with data protection authorities and the private sector on solutions to regulate criminal justice access to electronic evidence on cloud servers. The Cybercrime Programme Office of the Council of Europe in Romania supported capacity building in countries worldwide. In December 2015, new joint projects with the European Union were signed covering public/private co-operation, online crime proceeds and criminal justice capacities in all regions of the world. The Octopus Conference on Cybercrime in June 2015 underlined the risks to the rule of law in cyberspace.

■ The European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) is the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional matters. The commission adopted 45 opinions and reports in 2015.

■ The commission co-operated with Armenia and Ukraine on comprehensive **constitutional reforms** and with Albania, Bulgaria and the Kyrgyz Republic on the constitutional amendments concerning mainly the judiciary.

■ The **functioning of the judiciary**, including conditions for fighting corruption among judges, was a recurrent theme in 2015. The legislation on the disciplining and dismissal of judges in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", on the public prosecution service in Georgia, Montenegro and the Republic of Moldova and constitutional amendments on the judiciary in Albania, Bulgaria and Kyrgyzstan were assessed by the commission. For the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, the commission analysed the existing restrictions on political rights of judges.

■ Focusing on decentralisation and the judiciary, **co-operation with Ukraine** further addressed the lustration of civil servants and judges, the condemnation of totalitarian regimes and the checks on integrity of state or local government officials.

■ The commission also addressed the democratic oversight of signals intelligence agencies.

■ **Media legislation** in Hungary and Montenegro and legislation related to the cultural activities of **national minorities** of Montenegro along with the legal framework for the operation of the **ombudsman institutions** in Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova were assessed by the commission.

A delegation of the Venice Commission participates in the high-level conference on constitutional reform in Ukraine (Kyiv, 3 December 2015).





Gianni Buquicchio, president of the Venice Commission, at the regional seminar for high-level civil servants, "Human rights and public service" (Rabat, Morocco, 14 September 2015).

■ In the field of elections and political parties, the commission reported on international standards and existing practice of the so-called open and closed lists, on the nomination of candidates within political parties, on the exclusion of offenders from parliament and on voters residing *de facto* abroad.

■ The 12th European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) addressed neutrality, impartiality and transparency of elections.

■ Seven Arab countries participated in the first UniDem Campus for high-level civil servants of the Middle East and North Africa region. The commission assisted Tunisia in clarifying the procedures on reconciliation in the economic and financial fields. The commission signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Organisation of Arab EMBs. In its joint opinion with OSCE/ODIHR, the Venice Commission was able to avert the danger of turning the Constitutional Chamber of Kyrgyzstan into a mere advisory body.

■ With the accession of the High Court of Australia, the World Conference on Constitutional Justice was represented on all five continents and numbered 98 members.

Legal co-operation

Child relocation

■ On 11 February 2015, the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)4, prepared by the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), on preventing and resolving disputes on child relocation.

Legal aid

■ The CDCJ held, in October 2015, a debate aimed at reviewing some of the current challenges to (free) legal aid schemes in the member states in view of a comparative study and normative work to be undertaken in 2016-2017.

Digital evidence

■ A comparative study was carried out on the use of electronic evidence in civil and administrative law proceedings and its effect on the rules of evidence and modes of proof.

INDEPENDENCE AND THE EFFECTIVENESS OF JUSTICE

Rule of law – ensuring justice

■ The new CEPEJ Study on the functioning of judicial systems in European Union member states was forwarded to the EC, allowing it to prepare its "European Union Justice Scoreboard".

■ New guidelines to improve the quality of judicial systems were made available to policy makers and judicial practitioners on the enforcement of judicial decisions.

■ Innovative practices to improve the functioning of the court systems were highlighted through the success of the European Prize: "the Crystal Scales of Justice".

■ European standards on the position of the judiciary and its relations with the other powers of state in a modern democracy, as well as the role of prosecutors in criminal investigations, were developed through CCJE Opinion No. 18 (2015) and CCPE Opinion No. 10 (2015). Opinions on specific issues on the status of prosecutors were formulated by the CCPE for Georgia and Turkey. The main challenges to judicial independence and impartiality in the member states were analysed jointly by the CCJE and the CCPE, as part of the follow-up to the Secretary General's 2015 *Report on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe – A shared responsibility for democratic security in Europe*.



Side event during the **World Forum for Democracy "Freedom vs control: For a democratic response"** (Strasbourg, 18-20 November 2015)



Democracy Innovation Award, awarded to "More Than One Story" a card game to promote integration and inclusion; **Snežana Samardžić-Marković**, the Director General of Democracy, **Seth Selleck** and **Thorbjørn Jagland**, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 20 November 2015)

Directorate General Democracy

www.coe.int/democracy

DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

World Forum for Democracy

■ The World Forum for Democracy 2015 “Freedom vs control: For a democratic response” took place in Strasbourg on 18-20 November 2015, five days after the Paris terrorist attacks. It highlighted the need to achieve a better balance between surveillance-based security policies and prevention approaches focusing on building trust within society and addressing the “fear of the other”, in particular through local-level action and the media. New approaches for increasing institutional and citizen oversight over intelligence agencies, for protecting privacy and freedoms, and ensuring media responsibility, were debated by 2 000 participants from 100 countries.

Democracy and governance

■ Substantial thematic exchanges took place at the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) with the participation, *inter alia*, of ministerial representatives. Significant follow-up work was carried out in Armenia, Albania and the Republic of Moldova to assist authorities in leadership, public ethics, local finances and inter-municipal co-operation. The Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine signed a statement of co-operation launching a decentralisation reform programme.

Elections

■ A number of pre-electoral activities took place in 2015 for local elections in Armenia, Albania and Ukraine. Priority was given to upgrading the performance of central and local election commissions. Two manuals for civic observers, one on international and European electoral standards and the other on the drafting of observation reports, were drafted.

Civil society

■ Work focused on improving the conditions for work of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in member states and on promoting civil participation in democratic decision making based on best practice and shared standards.

Intercultural cities (ICC)

■ The ICC network expanded to 72 members. The programme was enlarged with policy briefs and thematic reports on community development, partnership with universities and refugees’ social and economic integration. New methodologies for dispelling rumours related to migrants and diversity and fostering migrant entrepreneurship were piloted and evaluated. Following the refugee crisis, the network supported certain cities in their efforts to cope with the arrival of refugees.

Cultural governance

■ The Namur Conference of Ministers responsible for Cultural Heritage launched work on a European cultural heritage strategy for the 21st century and called on governments to reinforce European co-operation against the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage and the illicit trafficking of cultural property. The second Council of Europe Platform Exchange on the impact of digitisation on culture was held in September in Linz within the Ars Electronica Festival.

Landscape and environment

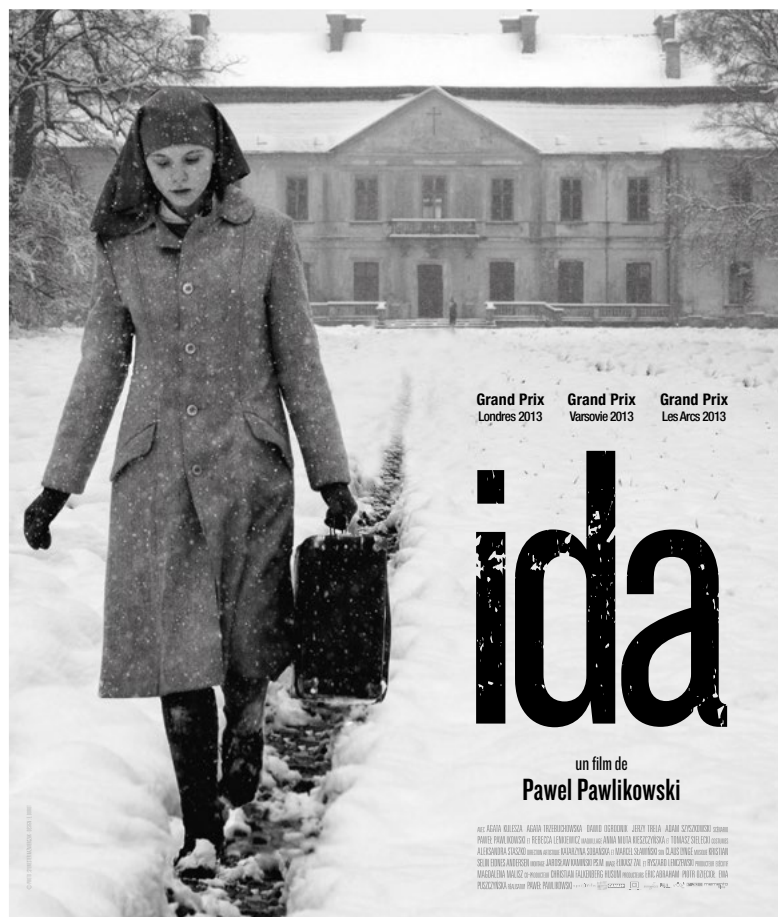
■ The conference on the implementation of the European Landscape Convention examined the landscape policies of the parties to the convention in the context of human rights and democracy. The Bern Convention adopted a new work plan on climate change; it identified additional areas suitable for conservation under the Emerald Network (covering already around 600 000 sq. km), and carried out the first ever mediation procedure between a state and a complainant.

Cultural Routes (Enlarged Partial Agreement)

■ Armenia joined the Enlarged Partial Agreement. With the addition of “the European routes of Emperor Charles V”, “Destination Napoleon”, “The Roman Emperors and wine route along the Danube”, and “In the footsteps of Robert Louis Stevenson”, there are now 33 certified Cultural Routes. The Cultural Routes Summer Seminar in Bad Iburg, Osnabruck (Germany) and the Cultural Routes Annual Advisory Forum in Aranjuez (Spain) were among the highlights.

Eurimages (Partial Agreement)

■ Eurimages supported 92 European co-productions for a total amount of 22.6 million euros. Awards included: the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film for *Ida*; the Silver Bear in Berlin for *Aferim*; at Cannes, the Official Selection Jury Prize for *The Lobster*, the “Un Certain Regard” award for *Zvizdan* (The High Sun), the “Un Certain Talent” award for *Comoara*, the Ecumenical Jury Prize for *Mia Madre* and the Label Europa Cinemas for *Mustang*, a French-Turkish-German co-production selected to represent France at the Oscars, which has won, *inter alia*, the Public Prize at Seville, the European Parliament’s Lux Prize and a nomination at the 2016 Golden Globes.



Poster of *Ida*, directed by Pawel Pawlikowski, a Polish–Danish co-production, supported by **Eurimages** and winner of 65 awards, including the 2015 Academy Award for Best Foreign Language Film.

European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA Partial Agreement)

■ The agreement produced a “Toolkit on Major Hazards and People with Disabilities” which provides guidance and examples of good practice on how to reduce their vulnerability to disasters. EUR-OPA also continued its analysis of the inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in disaster preparedness and response.

North-South Centre (Partial Agreement)

■ The 2015 Lisbon Forum brought together more than 200 high-level participants from Europe, neighbouring regions and other continents on the theme “How to combat radicalisation and terrorism: prevention tools and shared knowledge in the Mediterranean and European space”.

CONFERENCE OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

■ In January, the Conference of INGOs elected its new President, Ms Anna Rurka, for a three-year term of office.

■ The conference intensified its political dialogue with the Committee of Ministers; its President took an active part at the Session of the Committee of Ministers on 19 May. The shrinking space for civil society in several member states was a main preoccupation for the conference in 2015. Its Expert Council intensified its work on NGO legislation in a number of member states and supported human rights defenders in difficult situations across Europe. The conference also contributed to the World Forum for Democracy by looking into concrete ways of supporting and protecting NGOs. Promoting active civil participation has been another priority. Two fact-finding visits were carried out with a view to contributing to, among others, the drafting of new guidelines on civil society's effective and meaningful participation in the political decision-making process.

■ The conference organised in co-operation with LICRA (Ligue Internationale Contre le Racisme et l'Antisémitisme), a symposium on "no hate speech, no hate web". It held a training course on the collective complaints mechanism of the revised European Social Charter in September and convened a seminar on child poverty in October.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Education

■ A reference framework of competences for democratic culture was developed in consultation with international experts and stakeholders. This is one of the priorities set by the Council of Europe Action Plan "The fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism".

■ In the context of the refugee crisis, the European Network of Information Centres (ENIC) on recognition of qualifications, set up by the Lisbon Recognition Convention, took stock of the implementation of the convention regarding the recognition of qualifications held by refugees as a basis for work to facilitate recognition of such qualifications. The new Pan-European Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education (ETINED), launched by 41 member states in Prague, will focus on education fraud in higher education and ethical behaviour of those in education. New resources for teachers and managers working in multilingual schools were launched at an intergovernmental conference, "The language dimension in all school subjects – equity and quality in education".

Youth

■ The Evaluation and Follow-up Conference of the No Hate Speech Movement reviewed the outcomes of the first two years of the campaign and prepared its new phase in the framework of the action plan on the fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism. The work has started with member states and local authorities to implement the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2015)3 on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights (the "Enter!" Recommendation). The Second European Youth Work Convention (Brussels, 27-30 April) agreed on a European agenda for youth work. A joint Council of Europe/European Union Symposium "Youth participation in a digitalised world" was organised in Budapest between 14 and 16 September. The participants of the 5th Euro-Arab Youth Forum (Strasbourg, 2-5 September) expressed concerns about the shrinking space for civil society, poor access to social rights, rampant corruption and lack of accountability of governments to citizens, as well as about refugees' rights. The Second Roma Youth Conference (Budapest, 16-22 October) reviewed the achievements of the Roma Youth Action Plan.

■ Over 2 000 youth leaders were trained in the European Youth Centres Strasbourg and Budapest (which celebrated its 20th anniversary). Some 208 activities responding to the political priorities of the Council of Europe's youth sector benefited from European Youth Foundation support.



HUMAN DIGNITY AND EQUALITY

Violence against women and domestic violence

■ The two-pillar monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) was set up and became fully operational. Four more member states of the Council of Europe ratified the convention, bringing the number of states parties to 19 at the end of December.

Gender equality

■ There was a growing commitment by the member states towards the implementation of the Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017. A thematic conference "Towards guaranteeing equal access of women to justice" was organised on 15 and 16 October in Bern, Switzerland.

Discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI)

■ A number of member states were supported in their efforts to draft and adopt National Action Plans on LGBT human rights and train law-enforcement professionals. A guidebook on legal gender recognition and Case law of the European Court of Human Rights relating to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity were published.

Trafficking in human beings (GRETA)

■ The year 2015 marked the 10th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. The 4th GRETA General Report provided an analysis of trends, gaps and best practices identified during the first evaluation round. GRETA carried out 10 second-round evaluation visits and published eight country reports.

Rights of persons with disabilities

■ An evaluation report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Disability Action Plan was finalised. A conference took place in Dublin, "Promoting Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Ambitions, Impact and Challenges Ahead".

Children's rights

■ The new draft Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child was finalised. The Council of Europe and the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights issued a Handbook on European Law relating to the rights of the child. The Lanzarote Committee adopted its first implementation report. It covers 26 countries assessing the criminal law framework and judicial procedures related to the protection of children against sexual abuse in the circle of trust. The first European Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse was celebrated on 18 November.

European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML)

■ Six Committee of Ministers recommendations and seven Committee of Experts evaluation reports were adopted. An event marking the 50th meeting of the ECRML Committee of Experts was held on 17 March.

Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM)

■ The Advisory Committee adopted eight opinions under the Framework Convention and organised two international conferences: “Minority protection at a crossroads” in March in the Åland Islands and “Minority rights in divided societies” in Sarajevo in October.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

■ ECRI published eight reports and visited 11 countries. It published its conclusions on the implementation of the priority recommendations in respect of 10 countries as well as a study on co-operation for effectiveness between local authorities and national specialised bodies combating racism and intolerance.

Conference of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit (Slovakia, 3 December 2015)



Sport

■ The Council of Europe celebrated 30 years of the European Convention on Spectator Violence and Misbehaviour at Sports Events and in particular Football Matches (ETS No. 120). A visit took place to France in the context of the preparation for Euro 2016. Activities under the Anti-Doping Convention (ETS No. 135) were carried out in four countries.

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)

■ The Secretary General initiated the setting up of a Task Force on good governance issues in sport to EPAS, which will prepare the ministerial meeting in November 2016. EPAS also continued its work promoting the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (CETS No. 215). Awareness-raising and co-operation activities were carried out on the promotion of diversity in and through sport. A European conference “Tolerance and Diversity through Physical Education and Sport” was held in Bled, Slovenia, on 19 and 20 November.

Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) (Partial Agreement)

■ The CEB approved 22 new projects for an overall amount of 2.3 billion euros. Fourteen of those projects (1.5 billion euros) concern Target Group countries in central, South-East and eastern Europe. The projects contribute, *inter alia*, to managing the environment through measures aimed at its protection, at the prevention of natural disasters, at supporting the creation and preservation of viable jobs through investing in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and at supporting the renovation and/or construction of social housing.

■ The CEB established the Migrant and Refugee Fund (MRF) to support its member states in ensuring that migrants and refugees who arrive on their territory enjoy basic human rights, such as shelter, food and medical aid, as well as personal security. The MRF was set up with a 5 million euro contribution from the CEB and the bank has invited donors to contribute funds amounting to 20 to 25 million euros. Up until the end of 2015, donors have pledged 9.37 million euros. The bank approved or identified 10 projects totalling 17.5 million euros. In addition, the CEB also approved a project aimed at reinforcing reception capacities for migratory flows reaching the island of Lesbos.

■ The CEB continued to play an active role in the Regional Housing Programme (RHP), which aims to provide sustainable housing solutions to some 27 000 households in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro and Serbia, with a total estimated cost of 584 million euros over a five-year period. Since the start of the programme, 18 grants for a total amount of 133 million euros have been approved from the RHP Fund. In 2015, the first RHP project was completed in Croatia, providing decent living conditions for 29 families, most of them returnees from Serbia. The promotion of regional reconciliation is one of the cornerstones of the RHP.

EUROPEAN DIRECTORATE FOR THE QUALITY OF MEDICINES AND HEALTHCARE (EDQM)

■ Throughout the year, the EDQM participated in important international events and organised a number of conferences and training sessions to further increase the visibility of EDQM's activities on a global level and to reach out to stakeholders.

■ The Commission of the European Pharmacopoeia (Ph. Eur.) adopted 62 new and 228 revised texts. In addition to 60 new reference standards and 239 replacement batches of existing reference standards necessary to apply the tests described in the monographs, five biological reference standards were established. Alternatives to Ph. Eur. animal tests for biologicals were evaluated in collaboration with the European Partnership for Alternative Approaches to Animal Testing (EPAA), an initiative of the European Union Commission.

■ The number of new applications and requests for revision received for the Certification of Suitability Procedure (CEP) has increased. A total of 38 manufacturing sites were inspected and 42 sites were assessed for compliance through exchange of information. In October 2015, the EDQM hosted the 7th meeting of the PIC/S expert circle on active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), which attracted participants from all over the world and was an opportunity to strengthen international co-operation in the field of API inspections. The Certification Division continues to develop collaboration with authorities in order to increase acceptance of CEPs worldwide. Results of the multinational validation studies of the quality of pharmaceutical care indicators project were presented at an international workshop, organised by the EDQM.

■ The fight against counterfeit/illegal medicines continued: two training courses for Official Medicines Control Laboratories were organised. The MEDICRIME Convention (CETS No. 211) was promoted on a global level, for example through the organisation of four training sessions for Single Points of Contacts in collaboration with international organisations. An agreement with the European Medicines Verification Organisation (EMVO) was signed to initiate activities on the conformity assessment of mass serialisation systems. A market surveillance study on "kids' cosmetics" showed that more than one third of the tested products were non-compliant with the current regulations in Europe.

■ The 18th edition of the *Guide to the Preparation, Use and Quality Assurance of Blood and Blood Components* and the 2nd edition of the *Guide to the Quality and Safety of Tissues and Cells for Human Application* were published. Two resolutions on principles concerning human normal immunoglobulin and haemophilia therapies were adopted by the Committee of Ministers. The *Newsletter Transplant*, compiling annual data from 69 countries, was published. The European Organ Donation Day was celebrated on 10 October in Lisbon.

■ The EDQM was successfully audited by external accreditation bodies and renewed its ISO 9001:2008 certification and maintained its ISO/IEC 17025:2005 accreditation.

ROMA ISSUES

■ The Updated Strategy for Roma Inclusion focused on three strategic orientations: fighting anti-Gypsyism; demonstrating innovative models for inclusive policies for the most vulnerable, including Roma women, youth and children; and promoting innovative models for local-level solutions. The Committee of Ministers prepared the setting up of a European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC), a joint initiative with the Open Society Foundations (OSF). A new dialogue mechanism with Roma and Traveller civil society was launched at the end of 2015.

■ Under the joint Council of Europe/European Union programme ROMED1, over 1 400 mediators (for schools, health institutions and the labour market) have been trained in 25 member states since 2011. Under the joint Council of Europe/European Union programme ROMED2 about 70 Community Action Groups co-operated with 47 municipalities in the programme countries to empower Roma communities to engage actively in local decision-making processes. The ROMACT programme, implemented jointly with the European Commission since 2013, supports local authorities in designing and implementing inclusive



20 - 22
October
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2015

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CONGRESS SESSION
SESSION DU CONGRÈS



The fifth Dosta! – Congress Prize for Municipalities rewards communities for their inclusion of Roma in political and social life (Strasbourg, 21 October 2015).

policies and sustainable plans for development, including better access to European Union funds for Roma inclusion. In 2015, ROMACT was implemented in 61 municipalities in six member states. In co-operation with national authorities and the HELP programme, training activities were carried out in member states for: legal professionals on non-discrimination and the rights of Roma; police officers on the Convention and the European Court of Human Rights case law, on the definition of racist/hate crime under international standards and on effective investigative tools; and for school teachers on inclusive education.

■ The ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma Issues (CAHROM) concentrated on six thematic areas: combating child and forced marriages; human trafficking within Roma communities; empowerment of Roma youth; schooling and pre-schooling of Roma and Traveller children; Roma health mediators; and vocational training and education.

■ A Council of Europe – FRA – Equinet – ENNHRI Operational Platform for Roma Equality (“OPRE”) and an online collaborative platform were launched, addressing housing rights and forced evictions of Roma and Travellers, relations between Roma and the police, as well as the under-reporting of discrimination and hate crime faced by Roma and Travellers in Europe.

■ At the 5th International Roma Women’s Conference held in Skopje in October, Roma women from all over Europe, authorities and international organisations reviewed progress made since 2007 in promoting gender equality within Roma communities and in improving the situation of Roma women in Europe.

■ The online database on Roma-related policies and good practices has reached a total of 135 entries, and 140 cities and regions from 29 member states are now members of the European Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion. The Dosta! awareness-raising campaign was launched in Latvia, and campaign messages were promoted in 17 member states. The municipalities of Ghent (Belgium), Kragujevac (Serbia), Reggio Emilia (Italy) and Madrid (Spain) were awarded the 5th Dosta! Congress Prize.



International Conference
 “Enhancing national mechanisms
 for effective implementation of
 the European Convention on
 Human Rights”
 (St Petersburg, 23 October 2015)

International Conference
 “Bringing human rights
 home: commitments,
 challenges, education
 and co-operation”, on
 the 20th anniversary of the
 accession of the Republic
 of Moldova to the Council
 of Europe (Chişinău,
 4-5 November 2015)



Office of the Directorate General of Programmes

Actions in the field and resource mobilisation

The number of major co-operation projects reached 120 and the extra budgetary receipts reached a record of more than 52 million euros, a renewed sign that donors have confidence in the Organisation and strongly value its technical co-operation expertise.

■ Programmatic frameworks were adopted for Ukraine, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Armenia.

■ The Council of Europe and European Union continued to strengthen their partnership through several major co-operation agreements, notably the Programmatic Cooperation Framework and the South Programme II. (In 2014, the Council of Europe and European Union agreed that targeted co-operation activities with Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus – the European Union's Eastern Partnership countries and, with the exception of Belarus, members of the Council of Europe – would be implemented under a "Programmatic Cooperation Framework" (PCF). This framework includes 48 co-operation projects to strengthen the capacity of Eastern Partnership countries to implement domestic reforms to bring them closer to the standards of the Council of Europe and the European Union.)

■ The co-operation dimension became more important in the Council of Europe Neighbourhood. Neighbourhood Partnerships with Jordan, Morocco and Tunisia were adopted for 2015-17, as well as the first fully fledged co-operation document in Central Asia – Co-operation Priorities for Kyrgyz Republic 2015-17.

MEMBER STATES

Eastern Europe

■ The Council of Europe assisted the **Republic of Moldova**, focusing on elections, the judiciary and the prosecution service, education and reinforcement of people-to-people contact on both banks of the river Nistru/Dniestr.

■ In the **Russian Federation**, activities continued on assistance to vulnerable groups with the launch of a new project, and on anti-corruption projects (Council of Europe/European Union joint project "Protection of the Rights of Entrepreneurs from Corrupt Practices").



Secretary General
Thorbjørn Jagland
met with Ukrainian President
Petro Poroshenko in Kyiv (18 March 2015)

■ The **Ukraine Action Plan 2015-17**, launched in March, provided support for constitutional reform and democratic institutions, the judiciary, democratic governance, economic crime and human rights. The Council of Europe/European Union Programmatic Cooperation Framework (PCF) supported human rights, penitentiary reform, anti-corruption measures and the media, among other things.

■ The **Cybercrime Programme Office in Bucharest** implemented projects such as Cybercrime@EAP I, focusing on judicial and law-enforcement training strategies, GLACY (Global Action on Cybercrime) and Cybercrime@Octopus, focusing on promoting the Budapest Convention.

■ The **Programmatic Cooperation Framework (PCF)** is the main operational Council of Europe/European Union procedure for the countries of Eastern Partnership. It allows for strategic, long-term and cost-effective collaboration. The PCF implementation includes two phases, 2015-17 and 2018-20. In the first phase (budget 33.8 million euros), the Council of Europe provides expert assistance in five thematic areas: human rights; justice; rule of law; information society; and democratic governance.

South Caucasus

■ In **Armenia**, the Council of Europe continued to support constitutional reform, human rights, justice, penitentiary and local government reforms. The Action Plan 2015-2018 was adopted in September 2015. The office implemented eight specific decentralised projects. A programme of pre-electoral assistance was initiated.

■ Support to **Azerbaijan** was ensured via four projects under the Action Plan for Azerbaijan. A Council of Europe/European Union project on civil society dialogue was prepared, as well as a project on penitentiary reform.

■ In **Georgia** 2015 marked a significant enhancement of scope and intensity of Council of Europe support, through new projects supporting the Public Defender's Office and Bar Association, harmonising the national legislation and judicial practice with European standards, countering money laundering, promoting the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, promoting freedom, professionalism and pluralism of the media, and developing urban strategies in historic towns. There were also programmes on justice, penitentiary reform and elections.



Launch of the Council of Europe **Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina** 2015-2017 (Sarajevo, 21 May 2015)

South-East Europe and Turkey

Following the new Co-operation Document **Albania 2015-17**, the Council of Europe continues to support in particular the fields of justice reform, local government, child protection, electoral issues, the Audiovisual Media Authority and LGBTI.

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina** projects continued on justice reform, higher education, prison reform, the School of Political Studies, freedom of the media, inclusive education and minority rights. Priorities for the development of higher education (2016-2026) were adopted in October 2015, one of the outcomes of the Council of Europe/European Union joint project on Strategic Development of Higher Education and Qualification Standards.

Co-operation with **Montenegro** continued through regional projects on human rights education, minority protection, inclusive education, media and cybercrime. In addition, a country-specific project on support for the Ombudsperson's Office and Constitutional Court was successfully concluded.

In **Serbia**, country and regional co-operation focused on the fight against corruption, the judiciary, freedom of expression, human and minority rights and inclusive education. Council of Europe support was of particular relevance for the European Union membership negotiations, for example regarding Chapter 23. Three new projects (on human resource management at local level, the judiciary and implementation of the ECHR, and the media) were launched.

"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" benefited from regional projects on human rights education, minority protection, inclusive education, media and cybercrime. A country-based project focusing on capacity building of law-enforcement agencies for appropriate treatment of detained/sentenced persons has led to a further project on an external oversight mechanism for monitoring police work.

Co-operation with **Turkey** continued through five projects, with the Council of Europe/European Union joint project "Strengthening the Capacity of Turkish Judiciary on Freedom of Expression" and the mainly Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (SIDA)-funded project "Developing Mediation Practices in Civil Disputes in Turkey" being more intensively implemented. The project "Supporting the Individual Application to the Constitutional Court of Turkey" maintained activities with the Constitutional Court. A Council of Europe/European Union project on strengthening judicial ethics was signed.

NON-MEMBER STATES

In **Belarus** the Council of Europe supported priority areas, such as death penalty abolition, independent media, civil society and human rights, education, cultural co-operation and youth, judiciary, local self-government, gender equality, combating drugs and trafficking, anti-corruption and the fight against cybercrime. Co-operation focused on the development of a fully fledged Council of Europe Action Plan.

In **Kosovo**⁴, the Council of Europe continued to co-operate in areas such as anti-corruption, minorities' protection, education, culture, freedom of expression and fighting economic crime, and reinforced activities for the judiciary with training for legal and non-legal professionals and the launch of the HELP e-learning programme. At the request of the Ombudsperson Institution, the Council of Europe engaged resources to assist with the enlargement of its mandate. The Council of Europe provided opinions and comments on a number of draft laws (on higher education, regulated occupations, judicial academies, anti-money laundering/combating the financing of terrorism, and the regulations on subsidising NGOs).

4. All reference to Kosovo, whether the territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

Southern Neighbourhood

■ The Council of Europe further strengthened its support via the regional Council of Europe/European Union joint programme “South Programme II” (2015-2017). A Council of Europe/European Union project was signed in the field of efficiency and independence of justice.

■ In **Tunisia** the co-operation was strengthened in areas critical for democratic transition. The People’s Chamber Assembly requested the Venice Commission’s support on laws on the High Judicial Body and on the Constitutional Court. The Council of Europe also supported legislation on independent institutions in the areas of media and anti-corruption. Judicial reform remained a priority, with CEPEJ expanding its activities (Tunisia was granted CEPEJ observer status). Co-operation also started on setting up the National Prevention Mechanism, on measures aimed at the prevention of terrorism, on legislation on human trafficking and on efforts to combat violence against women and children.

■ In **Morocco** the adoption and enforcement of all the organic and ordinary laws foreseen by the 2011 Constitution continued to remain a priority, notably in the fields of reform of the judiciary, anti-corruption, violence against women and children and prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment, through the establishment of a National Prevention Mechanism. The Council of Europe supported the new constitutional roles of parliament and civil society, and contributed to the data protection legislation; training was organised on the Budapest Convention and on freedom of expression and the media.

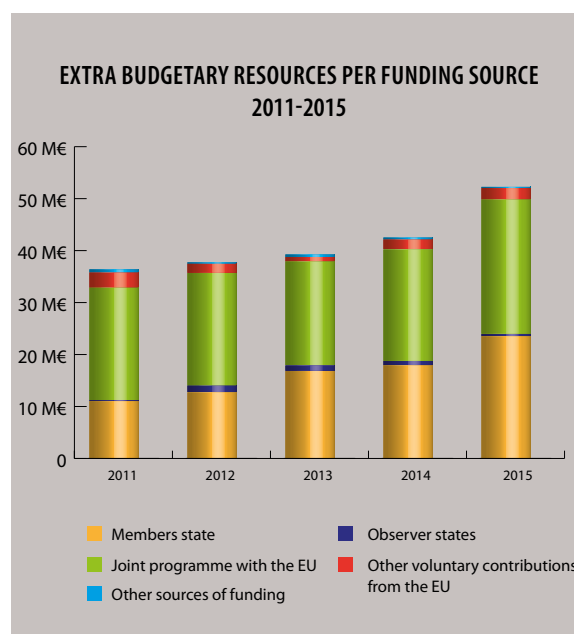
■ The Council of Europe’s co-operation with **Jordan** continued on the efficiency of justice and constitutional justice, and began on anti-corruption and money laundering. Jordan participated in the first module of training in the field of human rights, the rule of law and democracy for the Southern Mediterranean (PATHS) and awareness continued to be raised on Council of Europe conventions (for example, the Cybercrime Convention).

Central Asia

■ Co-operation with the Kazakh authorities has intensified via a European Union/Council of Europe programme within the Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities for **Kazakhstan** 2014-2015. Following the adoption of the Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities for **Kyrgyz Republic** 2015-2017, co-operation continued mainly in the area of constitutional justice, access to justice and electoral reform via two programmes with the European Union. Preparatory work started in the field of anti-corruption and money laundering. The Kyrgyz Republic showed interest in several Council of Europe conventions and GRECO.

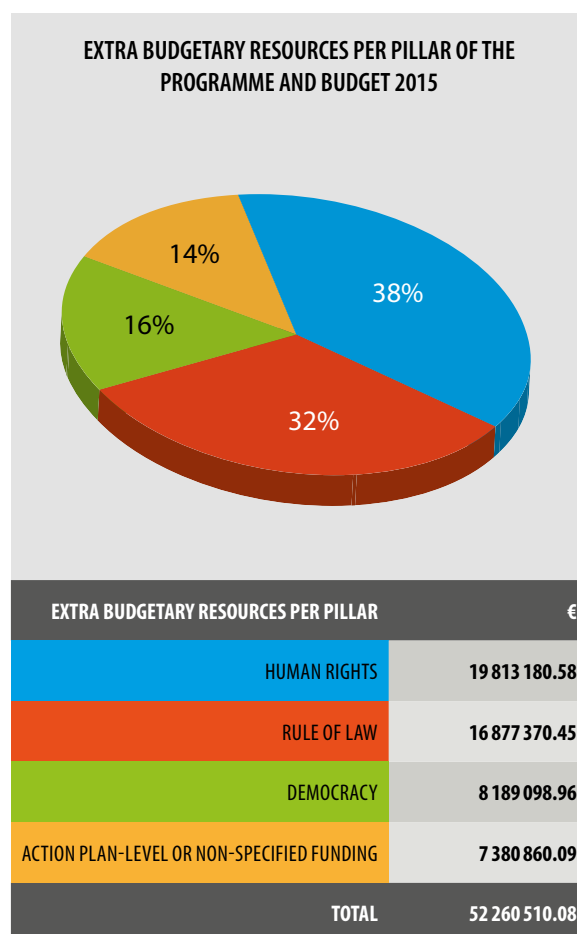
RESOURCE MOBILISATION

Extra-budgetary receipts 2015



2015 compared to 2014:

- ▶ Overall receipts **increased by 23%** to approximately **€52.3 million** (€42.5 million in 2014, €39.3 million in 2013, €37.7 million in 2012, €36.4 million in 2011, €29.6 million in 2010).
- ▶ **Voluntary contributions from member states⁵** increased by 31% to €23.5 million.
- ▶ **36 of the 47 member states contributed in 2015** (34 in 2014). The top 10 member states represent 81% of the total receipts from member states (71% in 2014).
- ▶ **Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and Finland** rank top among member states with contributions of €5 million, €4.7 million, €3 million, €2.4 million, €808 000 and €801 000 respectively. The Human Rights Trust Fund⁶ contributed €1.5 million.
- ▶ Receipts in the framework of **Council of Europe/ European Union Joint Programmes increased by 20% to €25.8 million** (€21.5 million in 2014) and accounted for 49% of total extra-budgetary receipts.
- ▶ The European Union also made a number of voluntary contributions outside the joint programmes amounting to €2.2 million (€2 million to the EDQM, 200 000 to CEPEJ, 19 000 to the Bern Convention).
- ▶ Contributions from non-member states having observer status decreased to €455 000.
- ▶ "Other" sources of funding (i.e. not EU, member or observer states) contributed €225 000.



5. Includes HRTF, EEA and Norway Grants.

6. Germany, Finland, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom.



Current and former Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the **Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHD)**

Public international law

www.coe.int/en/web/cahdi

The Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI) contributes to the development of public international law.

■ In 2015, CAHDI held its 50th meeting and on that occasion organised a conference entitled “The CAHDI contribution to the development of public international law: achievements and future challenges” (Strasbourg, 23 September 2015). The aim of this conference was to highlight the main contributions of this committee to the development of public international law since its establishment in 1991, as well as its possible future contributions in light of the changes and challenges faced by the international community over the past 24 years. The conference brought together the former and present chairs and vice-Chairs of CAHDI who presented the committee’s main achievements during their respective chairmanships and held an exchange of views on the role and the future work of CAHDI. This event provided an opportunity to show that CAHDI often acts as a laboratory and a catalyst for new ideas and that it holds a pioneering role in relation to public international law inside and outside the boundaries of the Council of Europe.

■ Furthermore, CAHDI fulfilled this year its mandate to follow up on the five conventions and one protocol for which it had been given responsibility within the framework of the Ministers’ Deputies’ decision on the Review of Council of Europe Conventions. CAHDI will present to the Committee of Ministers its main findings on these conventions and protocol in 2016.

■ In its role as European Observatory of Reservations to International Treaties, CAHDI gathered the reactions of the delegations on 27 outstanding reservations and/or declarations. This activity contributes to the reservations dialogue at the international level and has an impact on the subsequent actions of states with regard to the reservations and/or declarations mentioned.

■ CAHDI also held exchanges of views on topical issues of international law. It continued its discussions on the issue of immunities of states and international organisations and carried out a follow-up of recent developments regarding international humanitarian law, the International Criminal Court and international criminal tribunals, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights involving issues of public international law, as well as the national implementation measures of UN sanctions and respect for human rights. In this regard, the members of CAHDI held exchanges of views with the Ombudsperson of the UN Security Council’s Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee, Ms Kimberly Prost.

■ Over the year, CAHDI continued and strengthened its co-operation and collaboration with the UN and other international organisations, in particular through the participation in the debates of the Sixth Committee of the UN General Assembly and the annual exchanges of views with the UN International Law Commission (ILC). With regard to the ILC, the members of CAHDI also held an exchange of views with the Chairperson of the ILC, Mr Narinder Singh.



Meeting between Secretary General **Thorbjørn Jagland** and the Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, **Bohuslav Sobotka** (Prague, Czech Republic, June 2015)

Communications

Working closely with media professionals and European influencers and networks, the Directorate of Communications (DC) generated greater visibility for the values and standards of the Council of Europe in 2015.

MEDIA RELATIONS AND ONLINE COMMUNICATION

Political communication about the activities of the Organisation and its events generated a total of 98 interviews and 16 opinion articles in international media outlets. The media monitoring team tracked 14 900 articles and news items in print and online that mentioned the Council of Europe during the year. The reports of monitoring bodies, such as the conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights, the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly sessions (including the visit of the UN Secretary General, Mr Ban Ki-moon) and the launch of the Internet platform for the protection of journalism generated significant coverage, as did the statements of the Secretary General and other dignitaries, in particular in relation to terrorist attacks and migration issues in Council of Europe member states. The adoption of the additional protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism criminalising travelling or assisting travel abroad for terrorism purposes was also covered by numerous outlets.

The Directorate of Communications supplied Europe's largest television news agencies and broadcasters – Eurovision News Networks (EBU), Reuters, Associated Press Television News (APTN) and ENEX (European News Exchange) – with 176 news offers on 47 Council of Europe stories. Offers covered a wide range of subjects, including major ECHR cases, Parliamentary Assembly stories and visits by VIPs. Fifteen video interviews with Council of Europe leaders and experts were supplied to TV stations.

The online news programme *The Journal* continued to develop, with 42 editions produced during the year. Thirty new film productions on specific areas of the Organisation's work were made and 22 individual interviews with experts recorded and distributed online. Council of Europe films housed on the hub (www.coe.int) saw a dramatic increase in views, with almost 350 000 video plays registered by the end of 2015.

Substantial progress was made on all social media channels. Followers of the Council of Europe on Twitter and Facebook combined now number over 347 000. The "humanrightseurope" blog remains an essential anchor of the Organisation's social media activities, providing an easy and highly searchable journal of record, particularly on European court cases and key human rights concerns – gender equality, LGBT and Roma rights, etc. It appeals mostly to the key 25-34 age demographic and marginally more to women than men. There has been important audience growth in the United Kingdom, France, Russia, Turkey, Germany and Italy. Facebook now has a strong emphasis on video and podcasts and exclusive "expert" dialogues. In the autumn, Facebook featured the Secretary General's first "online dialogue".

The Council of Europe hub saw a significant increase of 45% in the number of pages viewed, while the number of visits and unique visitors went down by approximately 15% and 20% – a positive indicator of the impact of search engine optimisation work begun in 2015. The new "Council of Europe in brief" website is now available in more than 30 languages. Some 45 sites were migrated to the new content management system (CMS) Liferay and 47 sites created in co-operation with Information Technology, bringing the cumulative total to 125 sites. The Directorate supported Operational Services in developing and updating the Organisation's overall web presence. Training and knowledge sharing was provided to 334 staff members on CMS, web methodology, search engine optimisation and web resources.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

■ The Organisation's identity and values were promoted among various target groups through public relations activities and events, in particular the celebration of the 60th anniversary of the European flag, in the context of the Brussels book fair (under the Belgian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers) and the Festival of Europe from 8 to 10 May 2015 in Strasbourg and Paris.

■ An exhibition marking the 60th anniversary of the European flag was produced in French, English and German and displayed on the railings around the Lieu d'Europe. In Strasbourg (France), a tram was decorated on the theme of the European flag and European values. A permanent exhibition presenting the 47 Council of Europe member states was also set up in the garden of the Lieu d'Europe.

■ A "Strasbourg Dialogues" session featuring Nils Muižnieks, Commissioner for Human Rights, was held in partnership with the City of Strasbourg on the theme of migration.

■ The Council of Europe was present at the Sarajevo film festival (Bosnia and Herzegovina) and the UN Open Day in Geneva (Switzerland).

■ To mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November, images and slogans were projected on the facade of the Palais de l'Europe.

■ The Organisation's publications were presented at the legal book fair in Paris and the Frankfurt Book Fair.

■ For all these events, graphics or information media (leaflets, brochures, posters, exhibition panels, etc.) were designed and produced. They were promoted via the contact database (nearly 11 000 addressees) and partner sites.

■ The Organisation's priorities were reflected in two commercial publications: the book *Journalism at risk* and a jointly produced handbook on the prevention of violence against women and female genital mutilation.

■ A new game booklet on European values aimed at children aged 8 to 12 was published (in French) and several reference brochures were translated into more than 10 European languages. Under the Bosnian/Herzegovinian and Bulgarian chairmanships, the leaflet "Wear your rights" on the articles of the European Convention on Human Rights and the leaflet on the anniversary of the European flag were translated and disseminated in Bosnian and Bulgarian.

■ The new online publications platform launched in 2013 continues to expand its range of digital products, with over 1 600 files available in PDF, epub and mobi formats. Material for the general public (brochures, posters, documents for teachers, etc.) can be consulted and downloaded free of charge on edoc.coe.int. Other publications can be ordered online on book.coe.int, the online bookshop, where excerpts from books can also be found. Together, the two sites totalled nearly 250 000 visitors. Also, over 4 000 digitised titles are available on Google Play, with 1 115 000 books consulted in 2015.

■ More than 40 000 visitors (1 044 groups) took part in Council of Europe study tours and guided visits, including 2 000 primary school pupils who attended an Open Doors Day at the Palais de l'Europe. Over 450 customised lectures were given during personalised tours.

■ The partnership with the ELSA (European Law Students Association) network continued with the holding of the third Human Rights Moot Court Competition. A total of 106 teams from 30 European countries pleaded in a fictitious case concerning the reproductive and parenting rights of LGBTs. The final, involving 16 teams from 12 countries, took place in February at the European Court of Human Rights. ELSA Day, focusing this year on gender equality, was marked by the holding of 133 events in 30 countries.

■ Deployment of the new visual identity continues, with harmonised templates for printed and event material and training sessions for users.



Students from the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens were declared winners of the **Moot Court Competition** in English (Strasbourg, February 2015)

Secretary General **Thorbjørn Jagland** and Strasbourg Deputy Mayor, **Nawel Rafik-Elmrini** at the illumination of the Council of Europe's Palais de l'Europe building in support of efforts to stop violence against women and girls (Strasbourg, 25 November 2015)



2015 contributions of Council of Europe member states (€)

MEMBER STATES

Albania	476 804.01		
Andorra	256 809.15		
Armenia	359 373.56		
Austria	5 337 501.30		
Azerbaijan	1 223 110.92		
Belgium	7 075 121.50		
Bosnia and Herzegovina	553 754.34		
Bulgaria	1 136 690.39		
Croatia	1 080 929.77		
Cyprus	503 543.86		
Czech Republic	3 162 179.59		
Denmark	4 421 220.20		
Estonia	483 047.79		
Finland	3 437 361.67		
France	37 281 238.34		
Georgia	526 423.93		
Germany	35 415 188.34		
Greece	4 166 897.45		
Hungary	2 259 940.34		
Iceland	485 081.79		
Ireland	3 028 849.69		
Italy	34 900 364.48		
Latvia	563 190.30		
Liechtenstein	365 115.05		
Lithuania	775 679.80		
		Luxembourg	905 024.18
		Malta	379 600.43
		Moldova	343 88.92
		Monaco	339 870.64
		Montenegro	383 346.11
		Netherlands	10 785 559.90
		Norway	6 115 825.38
		Poland	8 325 976.13
		Portugal	3 492 697.52
		Romania	3 540 465.77
		Russian Federation	32 805 837.71
		San Marino	142 603.64
		Serbia	1 045 431.74
		Slovak Republic	1 462 558.98
		Slovenia	788 119.02
		Spain	20 071 620.44
		Sweden	6 877 409.65
		Switzerland	7 877 887.33
		"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"	485 155.79
		Turkey	13 650 942.41
		Ukraine	4 328 287.90
		United Kingdom	31 962 445.06
		TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	305 385 972.21

2015 voluntary contributions to the Council of Europe (€)

MEMBER STATES

Denmark	5 043 819.73
Norway	4 702 797.55
Sweden	3 026 054.15
Switzerland	2 429 251.93
Human Rights Trust Fund ¹	1 491 648.81
Turkey	808 329.90
Finland	801 122.18
France	689 506.75
Germany	685 125.30
Bulgaria	466 411.27
United Kingdom	402 137.03
Luxembourg	366 093.74
Netherlands	354 995.00
European Economic Area (EEA) ²	325 376.00
Romania	276 796.68
Croatia	177 032.83
Czech Republic	175 555.91
Ireland	166 374.77
Poland	147 209.79
Liechtenstein	128 948.07
Portugal	106 500.00
Monaco	97 255.19
Slovak Republic	86 968.76
Belgium	82 500.00
Latvia	67 355.07
Estonia	61 807.89
Iceland	58 603.50
Italy	54 869.50
Russian Federation	49 548.13
Hungary	44 700.97

1. Finland, Germany, Norway, the Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom.
2. Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway.

Austria	39 000.00
Malta	38 716.40
Andorra	35 011.19
Azerbaijan	13 374.71
Serbia	12 000.00
Lithuania	10 000.00
Cyprus	4 220.00
San Marino	1 300.37
TOTAL MEMBER STATES	23 528 319.07

OBSERVERS

United States of America	410 328.28
Japan	45 000.00
TOTAL OBSERVERS	455 328.28

EUROPEAN UNION

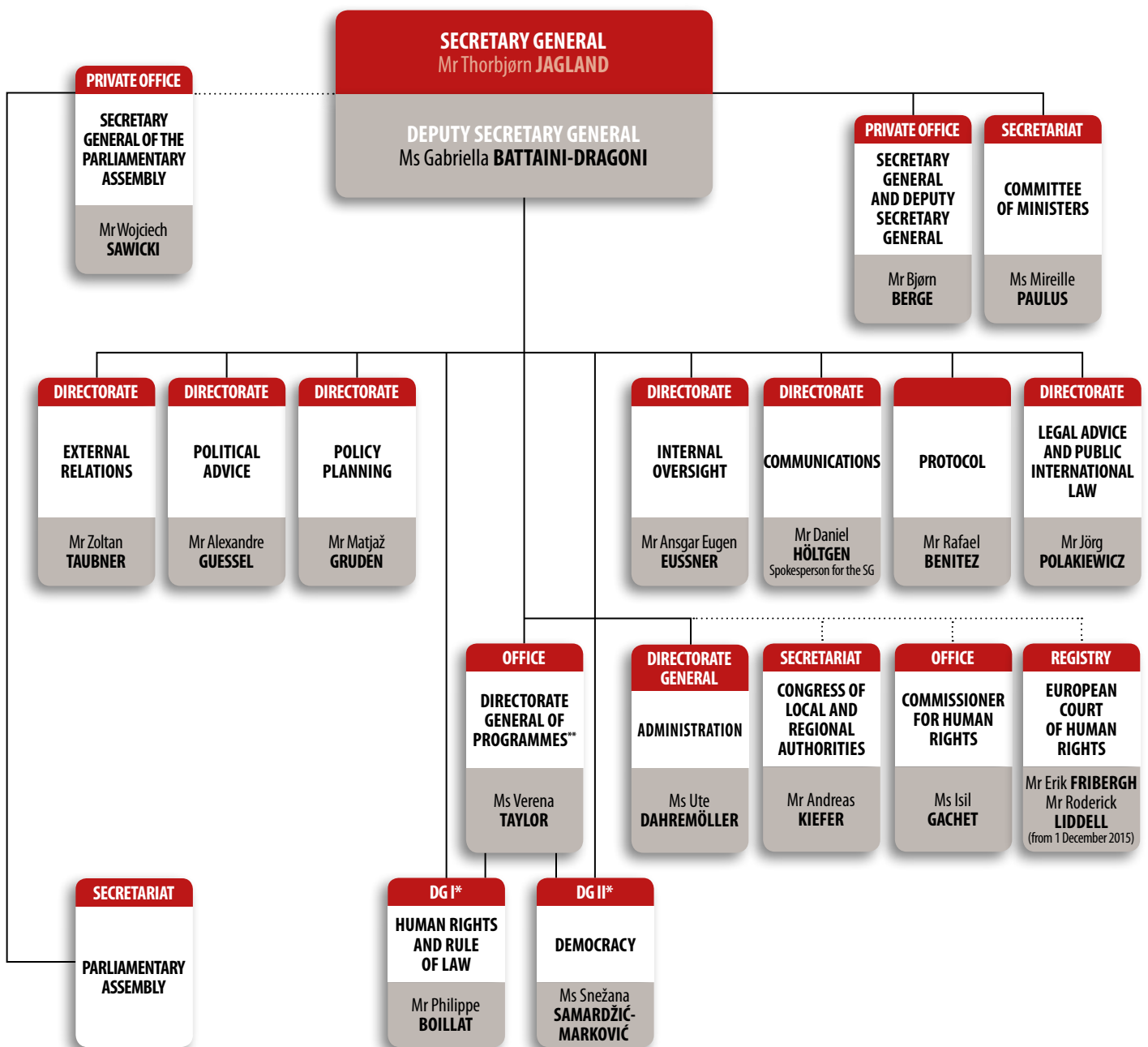
Joint Programmes	25 842 385.72
Voluntary Contributions	2 208 876.01
TOTAL EUROPEAN UNION	28 051 261.73

OTHERS

A.G. Leventis Foundation	104 616.00
Aga Khan Development Network	50 000.00
European Cultural Foundation	36 000.00
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees	12 000.00
Israel	7 985.00
Charta 77 Foundation	7 500.00
Václav Havel Library	7 500.00
TOTAL OTHERS	225 601.00

GRAND TOTAL 2015 **52 260 510.08**

Organisation chart of the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe in 2015



* DGI DGII report to the Secretary General

** Office of the DG PROG co-ordinates intergovernmental activities

This publication
presents the work
carried out in 2015
by the different
bodies and sectors of
the Council of Europe,
highlighting its particular
strengths and achievements.

www.coe.int

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are 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.