



# THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

GUARDIAN  
OF HUMAN RIGHTS

A SUMMARY

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



\*All references to Kosovo, whether to its territory, institutions or population, in this text shall be understood to mean Kosovo with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

### MEMBER STATES

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Republic of Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, North Macedonia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Türkiye, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

### OBSERVER COUNTRIES

Canada, the Holy See, Japan, Mexico, the United States of America.

### HEADQUARTERS AND OFFICES

The Council of Europe has its headquarters in Strasbourg, France. It employs 2 300 people, and maintains external and liaison offices in other international organisations. The European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest offer training for young people in democracy and human rights issues.

### BUDGET

The Council of Europe's total budget for 2025 is € 655,70 million, and is financed mainly by the member states.



## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE



Alain Berset  
Secretary General

**T**he Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation.

It has 46 member states, including all members of the European Union.

All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

■ The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states. 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.

■ The European Union is preparing to sign the European Convention on Human Rights, creating a common European legal space for over 700 million citizens. ■ ■ ■



## SAFEGUARDING HUMAN RIGHTS

■ The Council of Europe advocates freedom of expression and of the media, freedom of assembly, equality, and the protection of minorities. It has launched campaigns on issues such as child protection, online hate speech, and the rights of the Roma, Europe's largest minority.

■ The Council of Europe helps member states fight corruption and terrorism and undertake necessary judicial reforms. Its group of constitutional experts, known as the Venice Commission, offers legal advice to countries throughout the world.

■ The Council of Europe promotes human rights through international conventions, such as the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Convention on Cybercrime. It monitors member states' progress in these areas and makes recommendations through independent expert monitoring bodies.

■ Today not a single Council of Europe member state applies the death penalty. ■ ■ ■



## GLOBAL CO-OPERATION

### Monitoring bodies

- ▶ Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)
- ▶ European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT)
- ▶ Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA)
- ▶ European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ)
- ▶ Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL)
- ▶ European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)
- ▶ European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR)
- ▶ Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- ▶ Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages

■ The Council of Europe works in close partnership with the European Union, and co-operates with the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and with partner countries in its neighbourhood and worldwide.

■ For example, the Council's European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and Healthcare, which plays a key role in combating counterfeit medicines, has agreements with Brazil, China, South Africa and the United States. ■ ■ ■



## STRUCTURE

■ In addition to the **European Court of Human Rights**, the Council of Europe consists of several working institutions.

- ▶ The **Secretary General** leads and represents the Council of Europe.
- ▶ The **Committee of Ministers**, made up of member states' foreign ministers and their representatives, acts as the main decision-making body.
- ▶ The **Parliamentary Assembly** consists of 612 members of parliament from the 46 member states; the Assembly elects the Secretary General, the Human Rights Commissioner and the judges to the European Court of Human Rights; it provides a democratic forum for debate and monitors elections; its committees play an important role in examining current issues.
- ▶ The **Human Rights Commissioner** independently addresses and brings attention to human rights violations.
- ▶ The **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** is responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy. It comprises 612 elected representatives representing more than 130 000 local and regional authorities.
- ▶ The **Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations** represents civil society and promotes participatory democracy.



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