

COUNCIL OF EUROPE Highlights 2021



Human rights,
democracy
and the rule of law



Activity report

The 2021 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize awarded to Belarusian opposition leader and activist **Maria Kalesnikava**, represented by her sister **Tatsiana Khomich** (Strasbourg, 27 September 2021)

Speech by **Angela Merkel**, Federal Chancellor of Germany.

Rolf Mafael, Permanent Representative of Germany to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 20 April 2021)

Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, at the 25th anniversary of the accession of Croatia to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 19 November 2021)

János Áder, President of Hungary (Strasbourg, 29 September 2021)

Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova (Strasbourg, 19 April 2021)

French edition:

Points forts 2021

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Transfer of the presidency of the Committee of Ministers from Germany to Hungary. **Harry Alex Rusz**, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe; **Péter Sztáray**, Minister of State for Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary; **Julia Dumay**, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg; **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and **Rolf Mafael**, Permanent Representative of Germany to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 21 May 2021)

Transfer of the presidency of the Committee of Ministers from Hungary to Italy. Inauguration of the tramway in the colours of Italy. Ambassador **Harry Alex Rusz**, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe; **Julia Dumay**, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg; **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and Ambassador **Michele Giacomelli**, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 17 November 2021)



Committee of Ministers

The texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2021 can be consulted at: www.coe.int/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.

During 2021, the Committee of Ministers was chaired by Germany until 21 May, then by Hungary until 17 November and thereafter by Italy.

■ The 131st Ministerial Session was held by video-conference from Hamburg (Germany) on 21 May 2021, when the Committee took several decisions. During the Session, the Committee of Ministers welcomed the Secretary General's progress report on reform measures and expressed its opinion on the Secretary General's **Strategic framework for the Council of Europe** for the next four years. The Committee agreed to introduce a four-year programming period for the Organisation, while maintaining the existing two-year budgetary cycle. The Ministers underlined the Organisation's role and responsibility for ensuring the implementation of its conventions, developing new legally binding standards in response to new challenges, and providing assistance to member states through its co-operation programmes. They recalled the importance of the Council of Europe co-operating with its main international partners and, when it comes to unresolved conflicts, working together towards political solutions in conformity with the norms and principles of international law.

■ At its 131st Session, and in the context of the 60th anniversary of the 1961 European Social Charter, the Committee of Ministers stressed the importance of the Charter in guaranteeing social rights across the continent and took note of the report of the Secretary General "Improving the implementation of social rights – reinforcing the European Social Charter system" as well as the continuing intergovernmental work on this issue. On 13 October 2021, the Deputies adopted a **Declaration**, reiterating the Committee's resolve to ensure that the Charter system is given the political support, tools and means required to ensure its effectiveness.

■ During the Session in Hamburg, the Committee called upon the states parties to continue strengthening the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention) at the national level and in accordance with previous declarations on securing the long-term effectiveness of the Convention system. The year saw an increase in the number of new judgments delivered by the European Court of Human Rights (the Court) followed by an increase in the number of pending cases before the Committee of Ministers (1 379 new cases in 2021 compared to 983 in 2020). During its four specific human rights meetings devoted to the supervision of **the execution of judgments** and decisions delivered by the Court, 5 533 cases were pending at the end of the year (**5 233** cases at the end of 2020). Some 1 122 cases were closed, of which 170 were leading cases.

■ During the year, the Committee also held **exchanges of views** with the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees.

■ Throughout the year, the Committee of Ministers, through various decisions, reaffirmed its unequivocal opposition to the **death penalty**, including any re-introduction of it, in all places and in all circumstances, and reiterated its aim to create a death penalty-free zone in Europe.

■ In July, in the field of **gender equality and diversity**, the Deputies took note of the 2020 annual report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023.



President of the Supreme Court of Ukraine **Vsevolod Kniaziev** and Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law of the Council of Europe **Christos Giakoumopoulos** during the conference “Developing the case-law of the Ukrainian courts on adequate remedies: case-law of the Strasbourg Court and Committee of Ministers’ practices” (Strasbourg, 17 December 2021)

■ In the field of artificial intelligence, the Deputies took note of the feasibility study of the **Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI)** on a legal framework for the development, design and application of artificial intelligence, based on Council of Europe standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which had been unanimously adopted by **CAHAI**.

■ On 28 April, the Deputies adopted a **Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the need to protect children’s privacy in the digital environment**.

■ In November 2021, and on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the **Convention on the Counterfeiting of Medical Products and Similar Crimes involving Threats to Public Health (the MEDICRIME Convention)**, the Deputies adopted a **Declaration – “Protecting public health through criminal law measures”**, underlining the importance of the convention in guaranteeing and promoting the protection of public health by combating fake medical products and similar crimes.

■ In the field of sports, the Committee of Ministers adopted the **Revised European Sports Charter** which formulates the principle of a “right to sport” that everyone should enjoy.

■ In June, the Deputies adopted **Resolution CM/Res(2021)4 on the Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group) and its revised Statute appended thereto**. In this context, the Committee of Ministers adopted a **Declaration to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Pompidou Group**.

■ On 21 March, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary General joined their voices for a statement concerning **Turkey’s announced withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)**.

■ In May, the Deputies adopted **Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on upholding equality and protecting against discrimination and hate during the Covid-19 pandemic and similar crises in the future**.

■ With regard to migration and asylum, the Deputies adopted the **Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)** and invited the Secretary General to ensure its effective implementation.



Meeting between **Rik Daems**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and **Péter Szijjártó**, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 21 June 2021)

■ As regards **counter-terrorism**, the Deputies adopted the Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the links between terrorism and transnational organised crime, prepared by the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism.

■ On 17 November 2021, the Deputies adopted a **Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime**, on enhanced co-operation and the disclosure of electronic evidence. In this context, they took note of the Assembly's opinion on this important text.

■ The situation in several member states was regularly discussed in the Committee of Ministers, including co-operation activities aimed at accompanying individual countries in their efforts to bring legislation, institutions and practice further into line with European standards in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In this respect, the Deputies took note of the progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan for **Armenia** for 2019-2022 and welcomed the progress made.

■ The Deputies took note, with satisfaction, of the final report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the **Republic of Moldova** for 2017-2020. Bearing in mind the positive results obtained in the implementation of the Action Plan for 2017-2020, the Deputies reiterated their invitation to member and observer states to consider making voluntary contributions to complete the funding available for the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova for 2021-2024.

■ In April, the Deputies took note of a progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan for **Azerbaijan** for 2018-2021 and welcomed the progress made on its implementation. They encouraged the achievement of all the objectives set out in the action plan and instructed the Secretariat to continue implementing it and to present a final report on the results once it had been completed.

■ In December 2021, the Deputies approved an action plan designed to provide assistance to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** for the period 2022-2025 and took note of a report on the Council of Europe's co-operation activities in **Kosovo**.¹

1. 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.



131st Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Robert Spano, President of the European Court of Human Rights;
Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary;
Rik Daems, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
Heiko Maas, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany;
Leendert Verbeek, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities;
Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and
Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (Hamburg, 21 May 2021)

■ In May, the Ministers' Deputies adopted a series of decisions on the **human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)**. In particular, they reiterated their commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and expressed their profound concern that the human rights situation in Crimea had been significantly deteriorating under Russian occupation, with multiple and grave violations of human rights. They urged the Russian Federation to uphold all its obligations under international law and restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and invited the Secretary General to report on a regular basis, at least once per year, on the human rights situation in Crimea.

■ In May, the Committee of Ministers adopted a series of decisions on the **conflict in Georgia**. In particular, it stated that, more than 12 years after the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia, the Russian Federation continues to impede the peaceful conflict resolution process and to undermine the security and stability in the wider region through its continuing military presence in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Tskhinvali region). It also expressed further profound concern that the human rights situation had been further deteriorating and encouraged the Secretary General to continue the submission of her biannual consolidated reports on the conflict in Georgia to the Committee of Ministers. In November 2021, the Secretary General presented the 24th consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia, covering the period from April to September 2021.

■ The Deputies took note of the Secretary General's review of the policy towards neighbouring regions and the Council of Europe's contribution to global governance. They also approved Neighbourhood Partnerships for the period from 2022 to 2025 with **Morocco** and **Tunisia**, while calling on the Tunisian authorities to respect and guarantee democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law in Tunisia. In the same context, the Deputies took note, with satisfaction, of the progress review report on the implementation of the neighbourhood co-operation priorities for 2019-2021 with **Kazakhstan**.



Opening of the “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Italy: a European heritage” exhibition.
Mr Stefano Dominioni, Executive Secretary of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes;
Ambassador **Michele Giacomelli**, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Council of Europe;
Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 24 November 2021)

■ In 2021, co-operation with other international bodies and civil society organisations remained high on the Committee’s agenda. In February, the Deputies held their annual exchange of views (human rights questions) with the **United Nations** and with the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council on the agenda of the next session of the Human Rights Council and on human rights and the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to a thematic discussion on human rights and artificial intelligence.

■ Regarding the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**, the Deputies took note of the report of the Chair on the results of the 33rd and 34th meetings of the Co-ordination Group between the Council of Europe and the OSCE, held respectively in April and November 2021.

■ In 2021, the Committee of Ministers took note of the Progress Review Report for 2020, which highlighted, in particular, the **impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of the Council of Europe’s Programme and Budget**. The Deputies adopted a revised resolution on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods, which entered into force on 1 January 2022. This revision provides a better adapted and more efficient legal framework within which to work during the next quadrennium. In September, the Deputies adopted new Staff Regulations to enter into force on 1 July 2022 which streamline the legal framework governing the management of staff, the reform of which represents the central pillar in the continued enhancement of the Organisation’s efficiency and effectiveness. In November 2021, the Deputies adopted the **Council of Europe’s first four-year Programme for the period 2022 to 2025** and the Budget for 2022, as well as the Budget for 2023 on a provisional basis, based on the decisions adopted by the Ministers in Hamburg in May 2021 and building on the Secretary General’s Key Strategic Priorities.



Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova

Benedetto Della Vedova, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of Italy (Strasbourg, 6 October 2021)

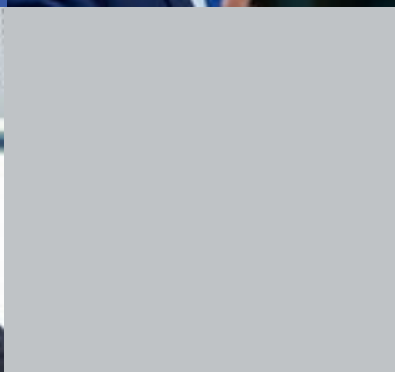
Zdravko Krivokapić, Prime Minister of Montenegro



János Áder, President of Hungary (Strasbourg, 29 September 2021)

Éric Dupond-Moretti, Minister of Justice of France (Strasbourg, 23 April 2021)

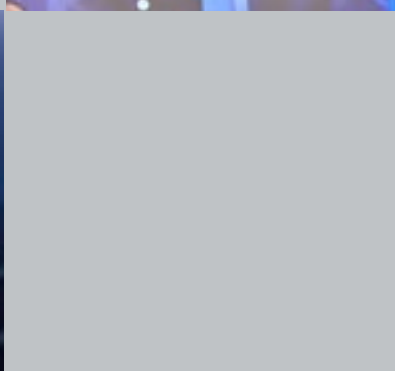
Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium (Strasbourg, 23 June 2021)



Didier Reynders, European Commissioner for Justice

Rik Daems, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary



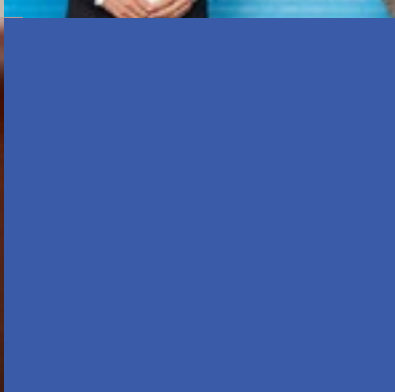
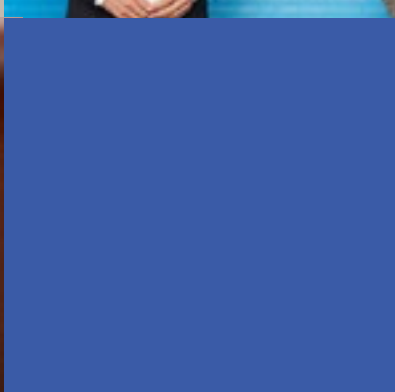
Robert Gelli, Secretary of State for Justice, Director of Judicial Services of Monaco

Judit Varga, Minister of Justice of Hungary

Yanaki Stoilov, Minister of Justice of Bulgaria (Strasbourg, 25 October 2021)



Nikola Dimitrov, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration of North Macedonia (Strasbourg, 30 September 2021)



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 2021, can be found on the Assembly website: <http://assembly.coe.int>

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (the Assembly), consisting of representatives from the national parliaments of member states, 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: Mr Rik Daems (Belgium)

A VOICE FOR THE PEOPLES OF EUROPE

DEALING WITH COVID-19 SAFELY AND FAIRLY

The Covid-19 pandemic again dominated much of the year 2021 – with the Parliamentary Assembly continuing to shape the debate and defend minimum human rights standards amid the ongoing crisis.

■ In January, the Assembly set out a series of ethical, legal and practical recommendations for the safe and fair worldwide deployment of vaccines against Covid-19, while avoiding the twin evils of “vaccine hesitancy” and “vaccine nationalism”. Its recommendation that vaccination should not be mandatory became the Assembly’s most consulted text during 2021.

■ The Assembly set out in detail the principles underlying fair vaccine passes and – in other resolutions – warned of the pandemic’s impact on children, urged support for those affected by “long Covid” and proposed solutions to the socio-economic challenges and inequalities generated by the crisis. It also looked at the impact of Covid-19 in particular areas, such as culture, the media and sport, or on particular groups such as prisoners. Still on the health theme, the Assembly set out steps to avoid discrimination against people with chronic and long-term illness, minimise addiction to prescription medicines and keep medical supply chains safe.

■ Operationally, the Assembly continued to adapt to pandemic restrictions, organising its first-ever hybrid part-sessions to enable all members to speak and vote either in person or virtually, in addition to holding virtual meetings and seminars and ensuring the Assembly’s voice continued to be heard loud and clear at a difficult time.

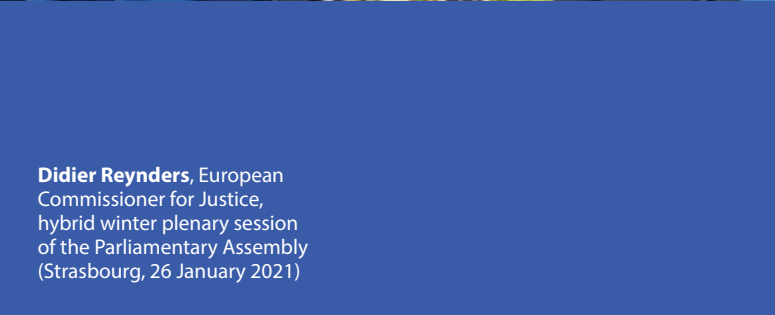
A DEMAND FOR A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

■ Anchoring the right to “a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment” took centre stage for much of the year, a political and personal priority for Assembly President Rik Daems which coincided with an upsurge of public feeling on the question. An unprecedented all-day debate in September led to a series of nine Assembly texts collectively demanding a paradigm shift in law and policy to ensure that a healthy environment is recognised as a basic human right and addressing different aspects of this huge global challenge.



János Áder,
President of Hungary, and
Marija Pejčinović Burić,
Secretary General
of the Council of Europe
(Strasbourg, 29 September 2021)

Meeting between **Marija Pejčinović Burić**,
Secretary General of the Council of Europe,
and **Zdravko Krivokapić**, Prime Minister of
Montenegro (Strasbourg, 18 November 2021)



PRESSING TOWARDS GREATER EQUALITY

■ The Assembly’s unanimous adoption, just before the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) in Glasgow, of a proposal for a draft additional protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights making such a right enforceable in law was a high point of the year, challenging Europe’s governments to take long-overdue action. A high-level event involving, among other guests, then President of Hungary János Áder and a young environmental activist, Anuna De Wever, and featuring a special message from His Holiness Pope Francis, helped to drive home the message, as did the launch of the president’s hashtag initiative #EnvironmentRightNow. The topic also featured on the agenda of the European Conference of Speakers of Parliament in October (more below).

■ On gender equality, the Assembly pressed forward under the leadership of President Rik Daems, for whom this issue continued to be a priority, as well as for its newly elected Secretary General, Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis. Beginning at home, it resolved in September that its national delegations should include women in principle on the basis of “one in three”, and face sanctions if this is not achieved by 2023. This should rise to 40% by 2026, with the clear goal of achieving gender parity.

■ In June, the Assembly set out ways for member states to promote the participation of women from under-represented groups in political decision making and there were resolutions on ending so-called “honour crimes”, the gender mainstreaming of migration policies and boosting equality in the workplace.



High-level panel during the autumn session of the Parliamentary Assembly, in the presence of **Anuna De Wever Van Der Heyden**, climate and human rights activist (Strasbourg, 29 September 2021)



High-level panel and **Rik Daems**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 18 October 2021)



Jeffrey Sachs, Professor, Director of the United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network, autumn session of the Parliamentary Assembly (Strasbourg, 28 September 2021)

■ Meanwhile, all three of the candidates short-listed for the 2020 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, announced in January 2021, were involved in promoting women’s rights or gender equality (see more below), while in its own texts and communications the Assembly began using more gender-neutral writing more systematically.

■ With the Council of Europe’s groundbreaking Istanbul Convention under growing pressure, the Assembly marked the convention’s 10th anniversary with a high-level thematic debate involving Nobel Peace Prize winner Nadia Murad and Belgian Prime Minister Alexander de Croo, among other VIPs, reasserting the Assembly’s determined support for ending violence against women. This was followed up, in December, with an online conference aimed at boosting political support for the convention, one of several events organised by the Assembly’s highly active parliamentary network to combat violence against women. There was an important step internally too: in November, the Assembly introduced into its Code of Conduct an explicit ban on sexism, harassment and sexual violence or misconduct by its members.

■ Still in the domain of equality, June saw a major debate on Afrophobia, or anti-Black racism, coinciding with the Black Lives Matter movement and growing public debate over the negative impact of colonialism and slavery. Other resolutions condemned ethnic profiling and attacks on LGBTI rights, while there were fresh recommendations on preventing and combating



discrimination against minorities such as Roma and Travellers,² antisemitism and Islamophobia.

2. The term “Roma and Travellers” is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term “Gens du voyage”, as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.



Rik Daems, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and **Stella Kyriakides**, European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety (Strasbourg, 28 September 2021)

CRISES AND CONFLICTS – A PRINCIPLED APPROACH, A CALMING INFLUENCE

■ Inevitably, work to resolve difficult political issues or crises in particular member states took up much of the Assembly's time. It also condemned again the gross violations of human rights in Belarus, as well as the "instrumentalisation" of migrants and refugees at its border with Poland, and in September called for measures to ease the humanitarian consequences of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan/Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It twice debated the arrest and detention of Alexei Navalny, calling for his immediate release, sought to reinforce the independence of judges in Poland and the Republic of Moldova, and looked at the Council of Europe's role in the western Balkans.

■ The Assembly maintained its strong stance against the death penalty and tackled the issue of political prisoners in several member states, while continuing to support the work of human rights defenders, whistle-blowers and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) under threat. With an eye on wider global affairs, the Assembly also debated the situation in Afghanistan, rising tensions in the Middle East and unfolding developments in Tunisia.

■ The deeper issues underpinning democracy and society also received their share of attention, with the Assembly pressing for limits on the foreign funding of political parties and campaigns, greater protection for politicians' freedom of speech and the creation of a "right to know" for citizens. There were resolutions demanding greater tax fairness, better regulation of the new digital or "gig" economy and stronger anti-corruption teams in member states. There were also proposals to parliamentarians to look at how to avoid political abuse of the Schengen information system, the influence of "big tech" on free speech online and the regulation of lethal autonomous weapons systems.



Alexander De Croo, Prime Minister of Belgium, session of the Parliamentary Assembly (Strasbourg, 23 June 2021)



Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis, first woman elected Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 26 January 2021)



Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, with **Rik Daems**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 19 April 2021)

Finally, the Assembly kept a close eye on institutional matters, setting out its vision of the Council of Europe's strategic priorities, including deeper relations between the Council of Europe and the EU and doing its best to encourage the process of EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

FAIRNESS FOR CHILDREN, MIGRANTS AND OTHER MINORITIES

Children's rights continued to be a focus of the Assembly's work and 2021 saw it setting out policies to shield children from extreme poverty, protect them against pornography and encourage their participation in political debate and conflict resolution, among others.

The rights of migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other displaced persons were, as in previous years, a priority for the parliamentarians, as the 1951 Refugee Convention marked its 70th anniversary. Working closely with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the EU, the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Committee of the Red Cross and other partners, the Assembly again encouraged states to recognise – among others – the economic and cultural benefits of welcoming refugees and migrants and supporting diasporas and to uphold basic humanitarian principles when dealing with the age-old phenomenon of people on the move, including showing solidarity with those states on the front line.

To underline the point, in September the Assembly organised a warm welcome at the Council of Europe for "Little Amal", a 3.5m-tall puppet of a 9-year-old girl on her way from Turkey to the UK to raise awareness of the situation of child refugees.



Marija Pejčinović Burić,
Secretary General of
the Council of Europe,
and **Yanaki Stoilov**,
Minister of Justice of
Bulgaria (Strasbourg,
25 October 2021)

MONITORING: HOW FAR ARE STATES UPHOLDING COUNCIL OF EUROPE STANDARDS?

■ The Assembly's Monitoring Committee continued to follow all Council of Europe member states regarding their membership obligations and accession promises, with its tried-and-tested formula of dialogue, visits and debates. During the year, 11 countries continued to be subject to a full monitoring procedure (Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine), while three countries engaged in post-monitoring dialogue (Bulgaria, Montenegro and North Macedonia). Six countries (France, Hungary, Malta, the Netherlands, Romania and San Marino) faced periodic review reports.

GUEST SPEAKERS, ELECTION OBSERVATION, ELECTING JUDGES AND MORE

■ Among leading personalities to address the Assembly in 2021 were the Chancellor of Germany, the President of the Republic of Moldova, the President of the European Parliament and the European Justice and Health Commissioners, as well as the top officials from the World Health Organization, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and IOM.

■ Chairing the Committee of Ministers in turn, the Foreign Ministers of Germany and Hungary briefed the Assembly on its work at all four part-sessions, as did Germany's Europe Minister, while regular question-and-answer sessions with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe continued to be a valuable mechanism for intra-institutional dialogue. The Commissioner for Human Rights presented her 2020 annual report in the spring.

■ The Assembly debated its observations of elections in Georgia, Albania, Bulgaria, the Republic of Moldova and Morocco. It also elected judges to the European Court of Human Rights in respect of Greece, Switzerland, Belgium, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Moldova and the Russian Federation, in addition to electing the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the Assembly.

PRIZES

■ A major highlight for the Assembly came in October when it awarded the 2021 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize – which honours outstanding work by human rights defenders worldwide – to Belarusian activist and opposition leader Maria Kalesnikava, one of the three female symbols of the Belarusian opposition. As she was detained at the time of the award (and remains so at the time of writing), the prize was received by her sister, Tatsiana Khomich. News of the award on the Assembly's social media channels quickly went viral. Because of Covid-19-related restrictions, the announcement of the 2020 prize had to be deferred from the previous year, and in April it was awarded to Saudi women's rights activist Loujain al-Hathloul.



Session of the Parliamentary Assembly, Council of Europe Museum Prize Award Ceremony. **Roman Romanov**, Director of the Gulag History Museum (Strasbourg, 22 June 2021)

February saw the award of the 2021 Council of Europe Museum Prize to Moscow's Gulag History Museum, praised for tackling some of the 20th century's most difficult human rights issues "with rare honesty". In December, the 2022 Prize went to Nano Nagle Place in Cork, Ireland.

Meanwhile, the 2021 Europe Prize – awarded since 1955 to the town most active in promoting the European ideal – went to Khmelnytskyi in Ukraine. Five towns in Germany, Turkey and Ukraine received the plaque of honour this year, while four more towns received the flag of honour, and six more the European diploma, all forming part of the Europe Prize system.

WORKING WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

In Athens in October, the Assembly brought together some 60 presidents and vice-presidents of Parliament from the 47 Council of Europe member states, their counterparts from partner and observer countries and other international parliamentary assemblies, for the biennial speakers' conference. Speakers warmly appreciated the opportunity to network, meet bilaterally and share their experiences of the three conference themes: battling Covid-19, working towards a healthy and sustainable environment and shaping the future for all Europeans.

In the meantime, the secretariat continued its work with national parliaments to spread good parliamentary practice and increase knowledge of the Council of Europe's democratic standards – including, thanks to support from the EU, with partner countries such as Morocco. Topics covered in 2021 included promoting gender equality, better data-based policy development and improving parliamentary transparency.

Meeting between **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and **Benedetto Della Vedova**, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of Italy (Strasbourg, 6 October 2021)





Award ceremony for the 7th edition of the Dosta! Congress Prize during the Congress session. **Irena Guidikova**, Head of Inclusion and Anti-Discrimination Programmes, awards the prize to **Anika Chrusciel** (Strasbourg, 27 October 2021)

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

The texts adopted by the Congress in 2021 can be found on its website www.coe.int/Congress

The Congress is the political assembly responsible for assessing the situation of local and regional democracy in the 47 Council of Europe member states and improving its quality. It implements the local and regional dimension of the Council of Europe's action in the field of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The Congress is made up of 648 members holding elective office and represents over 200 000 local and regional authorities in Europe. The statutory activities of the Congress derive from the European Charter of Local Self-Government, a legally binding instrument which affirms the role of cities and regions as the first level at which democratic rights are exercised.

President of the Congress: Leendert Verbeek (Netherlands)

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is, within the Council of Europe, a unique political assembly representing the elected officials from 150 000 communities in the 47 member states. It is responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy and assessing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, an international treaty ratified by all the member states which lays down standards for protecting the rights of local authorities and requires the member states to comply with several principles.

■ In 2021, the Congress continued to adapt and develop its statutory and thematic activities considering the health situation and restrictions caused by the Covid-19 pandemic.

THE CONGRESS SESSIONS

■ The first part of the 40th Session on 23 and 24 March was held online. The Congress renewed its membership for a five-year term and elected as its president the King's Commissioner (Governor) of Flevoland (Netherlands) Leendert Verbeek. The Congress also adopted its priorities for 2021-2026, which focus on promoting resilient, democratic, cohesive, sustainable and digital societies, thereby contributing to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and considering the strategic framework of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the priorities of its member states.

■ The second part of the 40th Session was also held online on 15 to 17 June. Among other topics, the Congress examined the situation of LGBTI people in Europe, asking central governments to develop national action plans reinforcing anti-discriminatory and human rights measures and calling on local and regional authorities to strengthen the social rights and well-being of their LGBTI citizens.

■ This activity came about because of a fact-finding mission carried out in November 2020 in co-ordination with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, during which the Congress specifically assessed the situation of LGBTI people in Poland, where more than 90 towns and regions had passed resolutions declaring themselves free from so-called "LGBT ideology". Following this mission, the Congress adopted a resolution on the role of local authorities with regard to the situation and rights of LGBTI people in Poland and called on Poland to withdraw anti-"LGBT ideology" resolutions and protect the rights of LGBTI people. The Polish ombudsman has since referred to this text in six court cases against so-called "anti-LGBTI ideology" declarations.

■ On this occasion, the Congress expressed its concern more generally about the worrying developments in Europe on the social and political front. The Covid-19 pandemic has exacerbated and made even more virulent the impact of fake news and hate speech, which spread at lightning speed on the internet and social networks. In the face of this challenge, in October the Congress launched a collaborative research project on how to fight fake news and hate speech affecting mayors and councillors in European municipalities and regions. The project will serve as a basis for political discussion and work in the Congress to draw up concrete recommendations.

■ The 41st session of the Congress was held in a hybrid format on 26 to 28 October. It debated, among other topics, the challenges of migration issues for cities and regions and highlighted the need for co-ordination between all levels of government, a clear and coherent legislative framework on a European scale and support from national governments and at European level to enable local and regional authorities to implement policies on receiving and integrating migrants and refugees.



Andreas Kiefer, Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities;
Leendert Verbeek, President of the Congress;
Rik Daems, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly (Strasbourg, 19 April 2021)

COVID-19 AND POST-CRISIS RECOVERY IN CITIES AND REGIONS

Within the context of the health crisis, the Congress held several debates during the year on the various aspects of “post-Covid recovery”, in particular the impact of the crisis on socio-political processes in Europe’s cities and towns and on the role of regions in ensuring a citizen-centred response to Covid-19, especially regarding stalled decentralisation and post-crisis recovery. The debates raised several critical questions, such as the future of democracy, urban-rural interplay, the digital divide, the development of new workspaces, infrastructure and public transport and the impact on city development, spatial planning and the environment. The Congress stressed the need for cities and regions to prepare innovative post-Covid-19 strategies and the need for concrete responses to growing inequalities and the difficulty of investing in times of decreasing responsibilities and budgets. It advocated strongly for establishing more effective multitier governance that would be genuinely capable of upholding the principle of solidarity and compliance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government. In this context also, in March the Congress adopted a report on “Ensuring compliance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government in major crisis situations such as Covid-19”. This report details the “negative consequences” of the pandemic on local self-government in general, such as worsening inequalities between local authorities and increased administrative oversight and restrictions on local resources, which have weakened citizens’ participation and consultation of local and regional authorities on issues affecting them.

MONITORING AND PROMOTING LOCAL AND REGIONAL DEMOCRACY

Through the monitoring of local and regional democracy as its most emblematic activity, the Congress assesses the proper application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government by the 47 member states, observes the organisation and conduct of local and regional elections and builds on the subsequent recommendations to implement co-operation activities.

Because of the inability to carry out monitoring visits to member states in person given the travel restrictions and health protection measures related to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Congress decided at the end of 2020 to introduce a new format of virtual meetings as a temporary procedure. The first monitoring in this remote format was conducted in December 2020 with Bulgaria. In 2021, the Congress conducted online visits to Albania, Azerbaijan, Cyprus, Germany, Luxembourg, North Macedonia, Spain and the United Kingdom. In-person visits were resumed in the autumn of 2021 with field missions in Turkey and Ukraine.

During 2021, the Congress adopted monitoring reports on local and regional democracy in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Hungary, Spain, North Macedonia and the Netherlands.

In the report “Recurring issues based on assessments resulting from Congress monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and election observation missions (reference period 2017-2020)” adopted in June, the Congress underlined that the inadequacy of financial resources, the lack of consultation of local government, and the absence of direct applicability of the charter in domestic legal systems remain the main persistent problems for the application of the charter.



Youth delegates during the 41st session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Strasbourg, 28 October 2021)

■ Several positive developments concerning the implementation of the charter were welcomed by the Congress in 2021: for example, the decision taken by the Scottish Parliament to incorporate the charter into Scottish domestic law. Another example was the signing in April by the Congress and the Government of the Republic of Moldova of a roadmap for the implementation of the Congress recommendations aimed at strengthening local and regional democracy in the country.

■ As to the observation of local and regional elections, a remote procedure was established in September 2020 and, after summer 2021, field missions were resumed with the sending of delegations to observe grassroots elections in Denmark and Georgia. For Morocco, a hybrid format was tested, with online preparatory meetings and a short on-site mission on election day. The local elections in Armenia in December 2021 were observed using the remote procedure, due to the worsening Covid-19-related situation.

■ Over the course of 2021, the Congress also pursued its co-operation activities in member states Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia Ukraine, in addition to Kosovo,* Morocco and Tunisia, and successfully completed a project in the Republic of Moldova in support of the national association of local authorities. These activities were aimed at enhancing dialogue between central and local authorities and strengthening associations of local and regional authorities, improving local and regional governance, enhancing citizen participation at the local level, preventing corruption and promoting open government, public ethics and gender mainstreaming.

■ As part of its project in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Congress developed a tailored methodology for a deliberative process in the city of Mostar and, in July 2021, it organised a citizens' assembly, which provided recommendations for improving the cleanliness of the city and maintenance of public spaces in Mostar, leading to an action plan by city authorities. This was the first deliberative process of its kind in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the South-East Europe region. The Congress also provided expertise in evaluating the conformity of the local self-government in Kosovo* with European standards, in co-operation with the Association of Kosovo* Municipalities, leading to proposed measures for further improvement. In the southern Mediterranean, the Congress set up a platform (a community of practice) for networking and experience sharing on decentralised territorial governance between associations of local and regional authorities and government representatives from Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Palestine, the first of its kind in the region.



Meeting between the President of Moldova, **Maia Sandu**, and the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, **Leendert Verbeek** (Strasbourg, 19 April 2021)

IMPLEMENTING THEMATIC ACTIVITIES

■ Congress action towards achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at local and regional levels included its online contribution to the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Regional Forum on Sustainable Development and to the UN High-Level Political Forum on support to local authorities in SDG implementation, in addition to organisation of a workshop on regional authorities' contributions to national reviews.

■ The Congress also prepared a booklet for children on sustainable development in their cities aimed at raising the awareness of school-age children (aged 6-12) about the UN SDGs and how they can contribute to the process. Aimed at increasing children's participation in sub-national sustainability policies, this publication will be piloted and finalised based on input from the participating local authorities and children.

■ Among other thematic activities, the Congress started drafting the third volume of its "Human rights handbook", which is devoted to environmental and human rights and will explore how to fight climate change at sub-national level while upholding human rights.

■ Moreover, environmental issues are one of the Congress' five thematic priorities for 2021-2026 and will be a central feature of its work in the coming years. In early 2021, the Congress decided that "Protecting the environment: local communities take action" would be the theme of the European Local Democracy Week for 2021-2022. The theme focuses on local action to protect the environment, fight climate change, strengthen resilience and work towards achieving SDGs 11 (building resilient communities) and 13 (climate action) and on ways in which territorial authorities could integrate them into their work plans.

■ In line with its commitment to youth participation, the Congress adopted a report on youth work at local and regional levels and organised a conference on the issue, bringing together Congress members and youth delegates.

■ To further promote civil participation in local and regional decision making, the Congress, in cooperation with the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and the Division of Elections and Participatory Democracy, is developing an online forum to promote and gather good practice examples of civil participation.

ENHANCING POLITICAL AND INSTITUTIONAL DIALOGUE

■ As soon as he was elected in March, the new Congress President held various meetings with members of central governments, ambassadors in the Committee of Ministers, the leadership of the Council of Europe institutions and with partner organisations across Europe, to share concerns and priorities and discuss issues of common interest and synergies to be developed.

■ He held an exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies to present, among other issues, the Congress priorities for the next five years and discuss concerns and challenges regarding the situation of governance, local democracy and human rights during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Sören Schumacher,
Head of the German
delegation to the
Congress of Local and
Regional Authorities;
Almut Möller, Secretary
of State of Germany;
Leendert Verbeek,
President of the Congress;
Andreas Kiefer,
Secretary General of the
Congress (Hamburg,
21 May 2021)



■ He also met with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, the newly elected President of the INGO Conference, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the President of the European Court of Human Rights. The unique role of the Congress in the institutional architecture of the Council of Europe, the paramount importance of local and regional authorities' grassroots contributions to addressing the challenges faced by member states and the need for an acute awareness of local elected representatives and their administrations as actors in a robust democracy were underlined. The leaders of the Council of Europe institutions agreed to enhance co-operation on issues of common interest, including social rights, human rights and the environment, protection of migrants and refugees, the rights of the LGBTI community, governance and the promotion of active citizenship in political decision making.

■ On 21 May, the President of the Congress addressed the Session of the Committee of Ministers in Hamburg, stressing the importance of strengthening grassroots democracy in Europe to restore citizens' confidence in democratic processes, which has been weakened by the Covid-19 crisis. He recalled the pivotal role of local and regional elected representatives, who are the closest to the citizens, in responding effectively to the crisis and underlined the need to place them at the heart of the post-crisis recovery.

■ The Congress President also held meetings with representatives of member state governments, including Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, who highlighted the importance of strengthening co-operation between the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Congress of the Local

Authorities of Moldova (CALM), in addition to building the capacities of Moldovan municipalities.

■ During 2021, the Congress President and his representatives took part in events organised by national associations of local and regional authorities and by the Congress' European institutional partners such as the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe, the Assembly of European Regions, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, the European Association for Local Democracy, the Association of European Border Regions and the Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies.

■ Co-operation was strengthened, in particular, with the European Committee of the Regions of the European Union (CoR) through the Congress-CoR High-Level Group meeting in April, the subsequent Congress contribution to the debate on the future of Europe, its participation in the Adamowicz Award initiative launched by CoR in 2021 and the participation of its president to an exchange on the fight against disinformation to ensure a functioning and resilient democracy at all levels, held during the CoR plenary session in December.



Official visit by **János Áder**, President of Hungary to the European Court of Human Rights. Meeting with **Robert Spano**, President of the European Court (Strasbourg, 30 September 2021)

Meeting between **Robert Spano** and **Benedetto Della Vedova**, Undersecretary of State of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Co-operation of Italy (Strasbourg, 6 October 2021)



European Court of Human Rights

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.
President of the Court: Robert Spano (Iceland), since May 2020

THE COURT LAUNCHES A NEW “IMPACT” CASE-PROCESSING STRATEGY

While the decade-long Interlaken reform of the Convention system drew to a close at the end of 2020, reforming the Court’s working practices continued in 2021. Even though many of the reforms put in place over the last 10 years have successfully managed to reduce the Court’s backlog of clearly inadmissible cases, processing the caseload of meritorious cases remains a challenge for the Court.

Accordingly, from January 2021 the Court has put in place a more targeted approach to processing potentially well-founded “impact” cases, building on and strengthening the priority policy adopted by the Court in 2009 and amended in 2017. Impact cases are those which, while not being the most urgent, still deserve an expeditious response. Impact cases are identified according to flexible guiding criteria and a list of examples. Impact cases could be cases which raise a question of the rule of law or the independence of the judiciary, highlight a new issue related to the Covid-19 pandemic or concern the environment, the rise of hate speech or other principles of democratic governance. To give itself more time to devote to impact cases, the Court must deal as efficiently as possible with non-priority and non-impact cases. Hence the Court’s recourse, as of 1 September, to summary formula judgments and decisions for all non-priority and non-impact cases. Henceforth, cases falling within the competence of the committees of three judges will be drafted in a significantly more concise and focused manner.

The goal of the new strategy is to ensure that the Court’s success will be measured not only in numerical terms, but more importantly by reference to its adjudication of those cases which address core legal issues of relevance for the state in question and for the Convention system in general. In this way, the strategy will contribute in a significant way to ensuring that the Court remains a Court which matters (*une Cour qui compte*).

THE ENTRY INTO FORCE OF PROTOCOL NO. 15

On 1 August 2021, Protocol No. 15 entered into force, amending the Preamble to the Convention, which now includes a reference to the subsidiarity principle and to the margin of appreciation doctrine. The Court ruled on the breadth of the margin of appreciation that should be afforded to States Parties to the Convention in several cases in 2021, for example in the area of health (*Vavříčka and Others v. the Czech Republic*), bulk surveillance of cross-border communications (*Big Brother Watch and Others v. the United Kingdom and Centrum för rättvisa v. Sweden*), access to family reunion for aliens (*M. A. v. Denmark*), protection of pupils from any form of violence at school (*F. O. v. Croatia*), regulation of begging (*Lacatus v. Switzerland*) and the rights of working prisoners (*Yakut Republican Trade-Union Federation v. Russia*).



Visit to the Court of Justice of the European Union (Luxembourg, 29 November 2021)

UPDATED RESOLUTION ON JUDICIAL ETHICS

On 21 June 2021, the Plenary Court adopted an updated Resolution on Judicial Ethics. This new text, which came into force on 1 September and is now published on the Court's website, modernises the previous resolution from 2008 by dealing with more contemporary challenges, such as judicial expression on social media. It sets down a series of principles on integrity, independence, impartiality, diligence, competence, discretion and confidentiality. It deals with specific situations, such as additional activities and the acceptance of decorations and honours. The intention of the Court was to bring more transparency to the obligations inherent in judicial office, thereby enhancing public confidence in the Court. The resolution applies to serving members of the Court and, where relevant, former and ad hoc judges.

DIALOGUE WITH CONVENTION STAKEHOLDERS

Continuous dialogue between the Court and all Convention system participants is indispensable. This includes not just national courts and representatives of member states, but also applicants' representatives, civil society, bar associations and national human rights institutions (NHRIs). Accordingly, several important online and face-to-face meetings were held in 2021.

Two meetings with government agents took place in 2021, one online meeting in February and one hybrid meeting in Strasbourg in November. These meetings allowed for fruitful discussion on the Court's new working practices, including the impact strategy and summary formula judgments and decisions.

The Court also organised two separate online meetings with NGOs/litigators (21 October) and with representatives from national bar associations (22 October). The latter was co-organised with the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe and was the first such exclusive meeting between Court Judges and senior registry staff and representatives from Europe's bar associations and law societies.



Meeting between **Robert Spano**, President of the European Court of Human Rights, and **Robert Gelli**, Secretary of State for Justice, Director of Judicial Services of Monaco (Strasbourg, 14 September)



Meeting between **Judit Varga**, Minister of Justice of Hungary, and **Robert Spano**, President of the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg, 31 March 2021)

■ The Covid-19 pandemic obviously had an impact on the number and frequency of bilateral meetings which the Court could hold with national court delegations. Nevertheless, several did take place. Among others, in June the Court welcomed a delegation of judges from the German Federal Constitutional Court and, in November, the president led a delegation of 15 Court Judges to the Court of Justice of the European Union for a day's programme of discussions on case law convergence.

■ During the year, the President of the Court, accompanied by the Registrar or the Deputy Registrar, undertook official visits to Slovenia, Sweden, North Macedonia and Denmark.

■ Moreover, dialogue with national courts was maintained through the continuing work of the Superior Courts Network (SCN). By the end of 2021, five new superior courts from four member states (Sweden, Slovakia, Ireland and Malta) joined the network, bringing the total to 98 courts from 43 member states. In addition, the Court of Justice of the European Union joined the SCN with observer status and the Strasbourg Court joined the European Union's judicial network, also as an observer.

■ In June 2021, the Court organised its 4th Annual SCN Forum (online), attended by 73 member courts. The forum focused on "Case management and case-law consistency: national and ECHR perspectives". Two webinars were organised, the first on hate speech and vulnerable groups, on 12 February 2021, and the second on mass protests on 15 October.

Robert Spano and **Didier Reynders**, European Commissioner for Justice (Strasbourg, 16 September 2021)





Meeting between Her Excellency **Maia Sandu**, President of the Republic of Moldova, and **Robert Spano** (Strasbourg, 19 April 2021)

As part of the ongoing co-operation between the European Court of Human Rights, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, the Court hosted the second International Human Rights Forum on 25 March 2021, with the support of the German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Judges from the three regional human rights courts exchanged views on case law developments.

GRAND CHAMBER CASE LAW HIGHLIGHTS IN 2021

In 2021, the Grand Chamber delivered 12 judgments.

Under Article 1, the Grand Chamber clarified its case law on extraterritorial jurisdiction, in respect of an attacking state in an international armed conflict, for acts committed in the state that was attacked and then invaded (*Georgia v. Russia (II)*), and also in the context of a state's complaint about the "annexation" of its territory by another member state (*Ukraine v. Russia (re Crimea)*). In connection with a military operation led by the United Nations, in *Hanan v. Germany* the Court examined whether the respondent state had a procedural obligation to carry out an effective investigation after a member of its armed forces had ordered a fatal airstrike on foreign soil (Articles 1 and 2). In *Kurt v. Austria*, the Court consolidated, both generally and in the specific context of domestic violence (Article 2), the positive obligation of states to preventively take operational measures to protect an individual whose life is threatened by the criminal acts of others, in a case concerning a child killed by its father. As to minors taken into public care, in *X and Others v. Bulgaria*, the Court set out the state's positive obligations in response to allegations of sexual assault. In *Savran v. Denmark*, the Court clarified its case law on the expulsion of an alien suffering from a severe mental illness (Article 3).

Under Article 5, in *Denis and Irvine v. Belgium* the Court addressed the confinement of criminals with mental illnesses who have been found to lack criminal responsibility for their acts. In the fields of private life, beliefs and health, the judgment in *Vavříčka and Others v. the Czech Republic* established the case law on the legal obligation to vaccinate school children against common infectious diseases (Articles 8 and 9), emphasising in particular the obligation of states to place the best interests of children, as a group, at the centre of all decisions affecting their health and development. Addressing the present-day means of surveillance of cross-border communications, the Grand Chamber set out fundamental safeguards against abuse in the bulk interception and collection of communications data and in the reception by a member state of data from foreign intelligence services (*Centrum för rättvisa v. Sweden* and *Big Brother Watch and Others v. the United Kingdom*, Articles 8 and 10). In the field of immigration control, the Court ruled on the imposition of a waiting time for the access of aliens to family reunion (*M. A. v. Denmark*), and on the deportation and permanent exclusion of a settled migrant who, suffering from a severe mental illness, had been under a compulsory treatment order instead of a criminal sanction (*Savran v. Denmark*). Under Article 8, read in the light of Article 9, the Court ruled on a child's adoption by a foster

Meeting between **Robert Spano** and **Yanaki Stoilov**, Minister of Justice of Bulgaria (Strasbourg, 25 October 2021)





Visit by **Zdravko Krivokapić**, Prime Minister of Montenegro, to **Robert Spano** (Strasbourg, 18 November 2021)

family practising a different religion from that of the biological mother, who wanted her son to be raised in line with her own religious beliefs (*Abdi Ibrahim v. Norway*; see also Article 2 of Protocol No. 1). In addition, the Grand Chamber examined, for the first time under Article 2 of Protocol No. 4, the issue of persons displaced within their own country as a result of an international armed conflict (*Georgia v. Russia (II)*). It also reiterated the obligation to co-operate with the Court under Article 38 of the Convention (*ibid*).

■ In response to two requests for an advisory opinion, one under Protocol No. 16 to the Convention, the other under the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention), the Court had the occasion to clarify the nature, scope and limits of its advisory jurisdiction. It emphasised that the purpose of the Protocol No. 16 procedure is to reinforce the implementation of the Convention in respect of cases pending before national courts, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity.

■ The Court's Annual Report 2021 contains a selection by the Jurisconsult of the most important judgments and decisions delivered by the Court in 2021.

Éric Dupond-Moretti, Minister of Justice of France, meeting with **Robert Spano**, President of the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg, 23 April 2021)



Arnfinn Bårdsen, Judge, European Court of Human Rights, and **Robert Spano**. Second International Human Rights Forum (Strasbourg, 25 March 2021)





His Eminence Cardinal **Pietro Parolin**, Secretary of State of the Holy See. Meeting with **Dunja Mijatović**, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 5 July 2021)



High-level conference: Council of Europe norms and standards on national minority rights. **Dunja Mijatović**, **Ferenc Kalmár**, **Snežana Marković** and **Ben Freeman** (Strasbourg, 29 June 2021)

Commissioner for Human Rights

Information on the Commissioner's work in 2021 can be found at: www.coe.int/commissioner

The Commissioner's Twitter account is @CommissionerHR

The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent and impartial non-judicial institution established by the Council of Europe to promote awareness of and respect for human rights in the 47 Council of Europe member states.

Commissioner for Human Rights: Dunja Mijatović

COUNTRY MONITORING

In a letter published on 11 February, the Commissioner urged the Russian authorities to halt the practice of arresting peaceful demonstrators and to align policing of demonstrations with human rights standards.

On 10 March, the Commissioner published a letter in which she called on the Turkish authorities to refrain from further restricting NGOs' activities and freedom of association in the name of counter-terrorism.

In a letter published on 16 March, the Commissioner urged the Government of Poland to ensure that draft laws on the media sector respect European human rights standards on freedom of expression, media pluralism and data protection.

On 18 March, the Commissioner published a letter in which she urged the Cypriot authorities to investigate allegations of pushbacks and ill-treatment of migrants, improve reception conditions and ensure an enabling environment for NGOs.

In a letter published on 22 March, the Commissioner called on the Spanish authorities to amend the Criminal Code to strengthen existing safeguards of the right to freedom of expression.

On 24 March, the Commissioner published a memorandum calling on the authorities of Portugal to address racism in the country more resolutely and take additional steps to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence.

A memorandum recommending that Hungary restore journalistic and media freedoms was published on 30 March.

On 14 April, the Commissioner published a letter in which she invited the members of the Senate of Romania to enhance the independence, credibility and effectiveness of the Council for Monitoring the Implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

In a letter published on 27 April, the Commissioner called on the President of Azerbaijan to take a firm stance against any rhetoric or actions which lead to triggering animosity or hatred and, instead, provide his full support and political backing for efforts aimed at promoting peace and reconciliation between the populations affected by the conflict in and around Nagorno-Karabakh.

In a letter published on 12 May, the Commissioner urged the Greek authorities to investigate allegations of pushbacks and ill-treatment of migrants, ensure an enabling environment for NGOs and improve reception conditions.

In a memorandum published on 4 June, the Commissioner called on the Slovenian authorities to put a stop to the marked deterioration of freedom of expression and freedom of the media in the country.

On 24 June, the Commissioner published a letter in which she called on the Turkish authorities to stop the stigmatisation of LGBTI people, and uphold their freedoms of assembly, association and expression.

In a letter published on 5 July, the Commissioner urged the UK House of Commons and House of Lords to reject proposals contained in the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Bill introducing restrictions on peaceful demonstrations and a new criminal offence of trespass in case of unauthorised encampment, specifically affecting Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities.



Meeting between **Dunja Mijatović** and **Zdravko Krivokapić**, Prime Minister of Montenegro (Strasbourg, 19 November 2021)

- On 16 July, the Commissioner published a letter to the Senate of the Czech Republic supporting the adoption of a draft law on compensation for victims of forced sterilisation.
- In a letter published on 19 July, the Commissioner called on the Government of the Slovak Republic to set up a mechanism to ensure reparations for victims of forced or coercive sterilisation.
- In a letter published on 24 August, the Commissioner urged the authorities of Lithuania to ensure a human rights compliant response to migration challenges, including safeguards in asylum procedures and preventing pushbacks.
- In a letter published on 31 August, the Commissioner encouraged the German Government to pursue efforts to fully ensure children's rights.
- In a letter published on 23 September, the Commissioner stressed that the United Kingdom Government's legacy proposals must not undermine human rights and cut off victims' avenues to justice in Northern Ireland.
- At the end of a visit to Malta carried out from 11 to 16 October, the Commissioner recommended introducing reforms to better protect journalists' safety and the rights of migrants and women in the country.
- In a letter published on 19 October, the Commissioner called on the National Council of the Slovak Republic to reject a bill that would restrict access to safe and legal abortion services.
- On 8 November, the Commissioner published a memorandum on humanitarian and human rights protection needs following the 2020 outbreak of hostilities between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh, in which she formulated eight recommendations for urgent human rights protection.
- At the end of a mission to Poland from 15 to 18 November, the Commissioner called for immediate access of international and national human rights figures and media to Poland's border with Belarus to end human suffering and violations of human rights.
- In a letter published on 23 November, the Commissioner requested information to the Prosecutor General of the Republic of Armenia on the ongoing criminal proceedings against human rights defender Sashik Sultanyan, Head of the Yezidi Center for Human Rights, and reiterated the Armenian authorities' obligations to ensure a safe environment conducive to the work of human rights defenders.
- In a letter published on 7 December, the Commissioner urged the General Prosecutor of the Russian Federation to discontinue the liquidation proceedings of the Memorial human rights NGO and encouraged him to take an active role in contributing to bringing the relevant legislation and related practice in line with European human rights standards.
- In letters published on 8 December, the Commissioner called on the authorities of the United Kingdom and of France to ensure that the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants take centre stage in their actions to deal with crossings of the Channel.
- At the end of a visit to Austria from 13 to 17 December, the Commissioner recommended stepping up efforts to protect women's rights and gender equality and improve the reception and integration of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants.



Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, meeting with **Dunja Mijatović** (Strasbourg, 19 April 2021)



Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (Hamburg, 21 May 2021)

THEMATIC WORK

■ An issue paper on the right to health was published on 19 February, calling on member states to ensure the best attainable standard of physical and mental health for all.

■ In a report published on 9 March, the Commissioner called on European countries to urgently change their migration policies which endanger refugees and migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea.

■ The Commissioner also published three reports based on round-table events held with human rights defenders. The first report of 19 March called on countries to address the widespread, yet unacknowledged, problem of racism and racial discrimination against people of African descent. On 31 March, a report stressed that environmental protection is a critical pillar in ensuring that everyone in Europe can fully enjoy human rights. The third report was published on 9 December and called on member states to do more to protect defenders of the LGBTI community in Europe.

■ The Commissioner's annual report was presented on 21 April and called for a renewed impetus to narrow the gap between human rights standards and reality.

■ The Commissioner published five sets of observations submitted to the European Court of Human Rights. On 11 January, she published her observations concerning the cases of three Syrian applicants summarily returned from Croatia to Bosnia and Herzegovina, pointing to widespread ill-treatment of migrants by Croatian law-enforcement officers in the context of collective returns and to the consequences for migrants and asylum seekers.

■ Her observations concerning the case of *Cláudia Duarte Agostinho and Others v. Portugal* and 32 other states relating to the negative impact of climate change on a range of human rights were published on 11 May. The Commissioner argued that international environmental and children's rights law instruments should play a significant role in defining the scope of states' obligation to prevent human rights violations caused by environmental harm.

■ On 28 June, she published observations on the human rights of persons with psychosocial disabilities concerning the case of *Clipea and Iapara v. the Republic of Moldova*.

■ The observations published on 2 July related to the cases of *H. F. and M. F. v. France* and *J. D. and A. D. v. France* and stressed the need to repatriate of European nationals held in camps in north-eastern Syria. For this case, the Commissioner also participated in the hearing of the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights on 30 September.

■ On 10 November, the Commissioner published her observations relating to cases concerning abortion rights in Poland, stressing that the authorities should guarantee to all women and girls full and adequate access to safe and legal abortion care by bringing law and practice into line with international human rights standards.

■ Six Human Rights Comments were published, covering topics such as LGBTI rights, child and youth participation, human rights defenders, the protection of journalists covering public assemblies, the need to reform mental health services and corruption. The Commissioner also continued to engage with the press and the public at large with opinion articles, speeches, statements and intense activity on social media platforms.



Gerhard Ermischer, President of the Conference of INGOs, with **Robert Spano**, President of the European Court of Human Rights; **Leendert Verbeek**, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities; **Harry Alex Rusz**, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe; **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 18 October 2021)

Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs)

More can be found on www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/home

Twitter: @CoE_NGO – Facebook: @CONFINGO

President of the Conference of INGOs: Gerhard Ermischer (Austria)

CIVIL SOCIETY'S VOICE IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

The year 2021 saw new leadership in place for the Conference of INGOs. Gerhard Ermischer was elected President of the Conference of INGOs in April 2021 for a three-year term of office. The new leadership started work immediately on implementing the revised rules of procedure designed to make the Conference's work more streamlined and adopted its three-year strategic plan, outlining its priority fields in line with those of the Council of Europe.

New, smaller, fixed-term committees were established to work on issues relevant to the work of the Council of Europe. The Action for Social Rights Committee adopted a position paper supporting the reform process of the European Social Charter Treaties system, underlining that this reform is crucial for the future of the Charter and of social rights in Europe. The Conference held its annual event with the Secretary General and the presidents of the main bodies of the Council of Europe to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty (17 October) and the European Anti-Trafficking Day (18 October). The Conference also took an active part in the 9th World Forum for Democracy through the participation of its youth delegates, the co-organisation of webinars throughout the year, and sponsoring one lab.

VOICE OF SOLIDARITY WITH EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY

The Covid-19 pandemic prevented the Conference of INGOs from continuing its fact-finding visits to member states, but the Conference continued to follow closely the alarming trend of shrinking civic space in Europe and voiced its concern in this regard to several Council of Europe member states. On World NGO Day, the Conference of INGOs hosted a webinar entitled "Challenges facing NGOs in conflict and post-conflict situations" to pay tribute to the work of civil society focused on human rights, reconciliation and the rule of law in conflict and post-conflict settings.

The Expert Council on NGO Law, an independent advisory board under the Conference, considers the situation of NGOs and applicable laws which affect NGOs in all 47 Council of Europe member states and Belarus. In 2021, the Expert Council prepared opinions on the compatibility of the French bill to ensure respect by all people for the principles of the French Republic and of recent and planned amendments to Russian legislation affecting NGOs with European standards. It also published studies on young environmental defenders, European practices on NGOs in policy development and on the legal status of NGOs. The review of civil society perceptions on the legal status of NGOs indicated that civil society representatives from at least two-fifths of Council of Europe member states, Belarus, and Kosovo* were not aware of Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14, which is a key Council of Europe standard for freedom of association. So, greater efforts should be made to ensure that the recommendation is not only known better by NGOs but also by parliaments and public authorities.



Meeting between **Bjørn Berge**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and **Anuarbek Akhmetov**, the Consul General of Kazakhstan, (Strasbourg, 13 April 2021)

Visit of His Eminence Cardinal **Pietro Parolin**, Secretary of State of the Holy See, meeting with **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 5 July 2021)



Political advice and External relations

www.coe.int/DER

POLITICAL ADVICE

The regular 23rd and 24th consolidated reports of the Secretary General on the conflict in Georgia were presented to, and debated by, the Committee of Ministers on two occasions, in May and November 2021. As on previous occasions, the reports took particular stock of the human rights situation of the conflict-affected populations and provided information on the relevant activities of the Council of Europe, including confidence-building measures.

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING MEASURES

Confidence-building measures (CBMs) in post-conflict, frozen or protracted conflict zones continued to be implemented. In 2021, 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 were representatives from Tbilisi and Sukhumi and various local officials and population groups from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2021, new methods of co-operation were adopted due to the Covid-19 pandemic situation.

Concerning the Tbilisi-Sukhumi dialogue, the CBM programme in 2021 fostered the co-operation among archive professionals. Thanks to common work on archive materials, a second volume of the publication on the phenomenon of “Mukhadjirstvo” from Abkhazia in the 19th century was produced. Moreover, new research was launched into the issue of deportation of princes in 1929.

Concerning CBMs across the river Nistru/Dniester, the interest of the Moldovan authorities in carrying out CBM projects was reconfirmed in the Council of Europe Action Plan 2021-2024, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 25 November 2020.

Finally, following the significant progress achieved in 2019 and 2020, the third phase of projects in Bosnia and Herzegovina allowed all the municipalities divided by the administrative entity boundary line to be included in the project in 2021. The interest of the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina in carrying out CBM projects was reconfirmed in the Action Plan 2022-2025, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in December 2021.

Several activities are planned for 2022, as soon as the pandemic-related situation will allow them. Notably, a training programme for teachers and a study visit for doctors from both banks of the river Nistru/Dniester on the prevention and treatment of drug addiction, training for teachers from Tbilisi and Tskhinvali, a study visit for prison staff from Tbilisi and Sukhumi on the detention of minors, in addition to a presentation of the publications on archives. Discussions are also ongoing concerning the confidence-building dialogue between Armenia and Azerbaijan.



INTERINSTITUTIONAL CO-OPERATION AND EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Policy of the Council of Europe towards neighbouring regions and the Organisation's contribution to global governance

■ The Committee of Ministers reviewed the Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions, in the context of its 10th anniversary, on the basis of proposals submitted by the Secretary General. The review clarified, *inter alia*, its geographical scope and conditionality in the light of the Organisation's strategic priorities and implementation capacities.³ In this framework, the Committee of Ministers renewed its Neighbourhood Partnerships with Morocco and Tunisia for the period 2022-2025, while calling on the Tunisian authorities to respect and guarantee democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law in Tunisia. Co-operation continued with Kazakhstan through neighbourhood co-operation priorities. Co-operation also continued through regional frameworks in the southern Mediterranean region and Central Asia. Furthermore, multifaceted co-operation has further been developed with Israel. The policy towards neighbouring regions was carried out in close co-operation with the European Union.

■ In addition, a reflection process has started on the contribution of the Organisation "to the international order and global governance, as well as to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)".⁴

3 SG/Inf (2021)14 "Review of the policy towards neighbouring regions and the Council of Europe contribution to global governance". Available from: https://search.coe.int/cm/pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=0900001680a2e253 accessed 9 May 2022.

4 *ibid.*

Daniel Höltgen, Director of Communications and Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Antisemitic, Anti-Muslim and other forms of religious intolerance and hate crimes; **Mendel Samama**, Rabbi of Strasbourg; **Alexandre Guessel**, Director of Political Affairs of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 7 July 2021)

Relations with the European Union, the OSCE and the UN

■ On 21 May 2021, the Committee of Ministers decided that practical co-operation between the Council of Europe and, in particular, the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations, as well as other international organisations, needs to be further enhanced and the contribution of the Council of Europe to the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) be emphasised.

European Union

■ On 21 May 2021, the Committee of Ministers welcomed the fact that co-operation with the EU, main institutional partner of the Council of Europe in political, legal and financial terms, continues to be strengthened in order to face the growing challenges in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe, including with regard to the Covid-19 crisis.

■ It also encouraged EU participation in or accession to Council of Europe instruments, as appropriate, as a way of achieving coherence and complementarity and promoting synergies and, in that context, reiterated in particular its commitment to EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

■ Accordingly, the strategic partnership with the EU was further strengthened through its three pillars – political dialogue, legal co-operation and programmatic co-operation. Despite the pandemic, contacts continued to take place, including at high level. Co-operation has consolidated the benchmarking role of the Council of Europe. This materialised through



Meeting between **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and **Věra Jourová**, Vice-President for Values and Transparency of the European Commission (Strasbourg, 19 October 2021)

active EU participation in major Council of Europe standard-setting activities on the one hand, and several contributions by the Organisation to the preparation of new, key EU strategic documents on the rule of law, human rights and democracy in the EU or beyond on the other. In addition, negotiations on EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights continued throughout the year. As in previous years, a substantial part of joint activities was carried out through Joint Programmes in Council of Europe member states and in neighbouring regions. The Council of Europe Liaison Office in Brussels and the Delegation of the EU to the Council of Europe facilitated the reinforcement of the co-operation described above. The EU and the Council of Europe also continued their co-operation on communication and on increasing the visibility of the partnership.

OSCE

Co-operation with the OSCE focused on a broad spectrum of human dimension activities at both headquarters' level and in the field. This interaction covered the various Council of Europe and OSCE institutions and bodies. In June, the Secretary General participated in the OSCE Permanent Council in Vienna. She met her counterpart in April online, the Representative on Freedom of the Media in July online and the Director of ODIHR and the High Commissioner on National Minorities in Strasbourg in September and October respectively. The Swedish Chairperson-in-Office addressed the Committee of Ministers and met the Secretary General in Strasbourg in April.

United Nations

High-level political dialogue continued in 2021. The Secretary General participated in the High-Level Segment of the 76th session of the General Assembly of the United Nations and held bilateral meetings in New York. She also addressed the High-Level Segment of the 46th session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva by video message.

Furthermore, the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees addressed the 72nd session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and had an exchange of views with the UN Committee on Migrant Workers in Geneva. He also participated in the High-Level Officials Meeting of UNHCR by videoconference.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

The Council of Europe maintained regular or ad hoc contacts with other organisations active in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, notably La Francophonie. Active preferential relations with the observer states (the Holy See, Canada, Japan, Mexico and the USA) were complemented by relations with more than 90 non-member states and focused on the fields where the Council of Europe's *acquis* presents a global comparative advantage.



Christos Giakoumopoulos, Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law, Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 17 December 2021)

Maia Sandu, President of the Republic of Moldova, meeting with **Gianni Buquicchio**, President of the Venice Commission (Strasbourg, 19 April 2021)



Human Rights and the Rule of Law

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

HUMAN RIGHTS, DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

Execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights

■ The Committee of Ministers held its four annual Human Rights meetings in a hybrid format and examined a record-high 161 cases or groups of cases concerning 29 states. Despite the increase in new judgments rendered by the Court in 2021, the number of judgments pending before the Committee of Ministers was one of the lowest since 2006 (5 478).⁵ This is the result of the closure of 1 122 cases (including 170 cases featuring structural or systemic problems), following the adoption by respondent states of measures to comply with the Court's judgments.

■ Among these measures, the adoption of legislation to abolish prescription for acts of torture, in line with the European Court's judgment and the Committee of Ministers' decisions should be noted.

■ A record number of communications was received by the Committee of Ministers from civil society and NHRIs (207 concerning 27 states, compared to 176 in 2020 concerning 28 states).

Development and promotion of human rights

■ The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) prepared the Committee of Ministers' recommendation on the publication and dissemination of the European Convention on Human Rights, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and other relevant texts (CM/Rec(2021)4) adopted in September 2021.

■ The CDDH adopted a revised third edition of the "Manual on human rights and the environment" and a "Guide on family-based care for unaccompanied and separated children".

Human rights national implementation

■ With a view to strengthening the Council of Europe co-operation activities in support of national justice reforms, the Division of Co-operation Programmes was established to implement 40 bilateral and regional projects in member and non-member states.

■ The Council of Europe remained the top provider of online judicial training on human rights in Europe thanks to its Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) courses. The number of HELP users topped 90 000 as e-learning spiked during the Covid-19 pandemic (as compared to 40 000 users two years earlier). More than 100 new national courses in different languages were made available on the HELP e-learning platform, including brand new courses.

Independent human rights bodies

Co-operation activities were enhanced with national mechanisms for the prevention of torture (NPMs) by holding, together with the European NPM, a conference in Strasbourg bringing together more than 35 NPMs. The conference focused on the implementation of the European Court's judgments concerning ill-treatment by law-enforcement agents.

Co-operation with international bodies

The negotiations on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights made important progress. The Ad Hoc Negotiation Group (Group 47+1) held five meetings to make this progress possible.

5. Statistical data available as of 5 January 2022.



Ann Linde, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, and **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Ratification of the Convention on Cybercrime (Strasbourg, 28 April 2021)

International co-operation

■ The Council of Europe participated at a high level in the Fundamental Rights Forum organised by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency in both the Vienna and Strasbourg hubs to discuss issues such as social rights, hate speech, the LGBTI community, data protection and artificial intelligence.

■ The visibility of the Council of Europe's role in the abolition of the death penalty increased through the development of a new dedicated website (www.coe.int/abolition). The Organisation also participated in other events to highlight its commitment to universal abolition.

SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment (CPT)

■ The European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) carried out nine periodic and six ad hoc visits. Periodic visits were carried out to Austria, Bulgaria, Lithuania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom. The ad hoc visits were carried out to Albania, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Greece and Romania.

■ The CPT's President held high-level talks with the Croatian authorities to discuss the treatment of migrants in detention. The CPT issued a statement pointing to the lack of progress to address the situation of persons placed in social care institutions and psychiatric hospitals in Bulgaria.

■ The CPT published 12 visit reports and 13 government responses as well as its 30th Annual General Report.

Social rights

■ The European Social Charter celebrated its 60th anniversary with a range of events. [Germany](#) and [Spain](#) ratified its revised version, while Spain accepted the collective complaints procedure.

■ To respond to the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) offered comprehensive guidance to member states on [Covid-19 and social rights](#). The ECSR released its [conclusions 2020](#) on employment, training and equal opportunities.

■ The Committee of Ministers addressed 19 recommendations to individual member states. It adopted declarations on [equal pay and opportunities for women and men in employment](#), and on risks entailed in the process of computer-assisted decision making in social rights.

Bioethics

■ Against the background of the Covid-19 pandemic, the Committee on Bioethics adopted two statements on vaccines ("Covid-19 and vaccines: ensuring equitable access to vaccination during the current and future pandemics" and "Human rights considerations relevant to 'vaccine pass' and similar documents"), recalling the relevant principles laid down in the Oviedo Convention.

■ A compendium of good practices to promote voluntary measures in mental healthcare was published online. Capacity-building assistance in the field was implemented in Armenia.



Alexander Seger, Head of Division, Cybercrime. 20th anniversary of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime (Strasbourg, 18 November 2021)



High-level panel: 60th anniversary of the European Social Charter. **Péter Szijjártó**, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary (Strasbourg, 18 October 2021)

Data protection

■ In the past 40 years, Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108) has remained the key international instrument on the protection of personal data and privacy. Its 55 states parties continue to promote its modernised version, Convention 108+, which now counts 43 signatures and 15 ratifications.

■ The Committee of Ministers adopted a recommendation on the protection of individuals in respect of the processing of personal data for profiling, and a declaration on the right to privacy of children in the digital environment.

■ The Committee of Convention 108 adopted two guidelines on the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data by and for political campaigns, and on facial recognition. It also adopted a statement on Covid-19 vaccination, certificates and data protection, stressing that no unjustified discrimination should occur based a person not being vaccinated.

European Audiovisual Observatory – Partial agreement

■ The observatory continued to provide information on the audiovisual industries in the context of the continuing Covid-19 pandemic and its effects on content consumption, and the application of the EU-UK Trade and Cooperation Agreement, following the UK's withdrawal from the EU in early 2021.

■ All conferences were held online, including the Cannes conference dealing with [the shifting balance in audiovisual production](#) in favour of television and video-on-demand (VOD) content, in addition to an [introductory conference and four subsequent webinars](#) on the Digital Services Act Package aimed at upgrading the current legal framework for digital services in the EU. The UK's Presidency conference focused on [boosting sustainable film through international collaboration](#).

■ The observatory published [six legal reports](#) on topics of the European media law; [two extensive “mapping” reports](#) comparing national legislative strategies to ensure protection from harmful content on video sharing platforms and to fight against the online sports broadcasts being pirated; and [nine market reports](#) on the European VOD markets and film industry.

Protection of freedom of expression and media and internet governance

■ The Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) approved four draft recommendations on principles for media and communication governance, on electoral communication and media coverage of election campaigns, on the impacts of digital technologies on freedom of expression and on combating hate speech. The CDMSI adopted two guidance notes on content moderation and on the prioritisation of public-interest content online. The Committee of Ministers adopted the CDMSI terms of reference to govern its action from 2022 to 2025.

■ On 10 and 11 June 2021, the Ministerial Conference [“Artificial intelligence – intelligent politics: challenges and opportunities for media and democracy”](#) gathered ministers responsible for media and information in society. The ministers adopted the final declaration and four resolutions on freedom of expression and digital technologies; the safety of journalists; the changing media and information environment; and the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on freedom of expression.

■ On 4 February and 22 November, the Secretary General issued two reports respectively on the safety of journalists and on current trends in threats to freedom of expression. The reports focused on interference with the coverage of public events, on broadcasting bans and on “strategic lawsuits” against journalists.



Igor Nebyvaev, Executive Secretary, Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (Moneyval);
Elżbieta Frankow-Jąskiewicz, Chair, Moneyval;
Alexey Petrenko, Vice-Chair, Moneyval. 61st Plenary meeting (hybrid), Moneyval (Strasbourg, 28 April 2021)

Co-operation on freedom of expression

Co-operation on freedom of expression included provision of customised inputs to 15 countries (12 member states) with 283 activities. During 2021, the sector managed 16 country projects with a total budgetary envelope of about €7.7 million.

Some 44 policy and strategy advice papers were prepared for authorities to guide their reforms. Legal advice was provided to assist in eight legislative reforms. Some 180 training events were carried out for more than 30 partner institutions, benefiting over 2 500 participants.

Digital transformations and artificial intelligence

Initiatives taken to raise awareness and facilitate more informed policy making on topics such as human rights-relevant aspects of robotics, artificial intelligence, automated data processing and automated decision making, included participation in key international conferences in this field.

The Council of Europe regularly updates a dedicated [website \(https://www.coe.int/AI\)](https://www.coe.int/AI) on its artificial intelligence policy activities and, jointly with other international organisations, supports the GlobalPolicy.AI.

In December 2021, CAHAI adopted a document containing an outline of the main elements to be included in a possible legal framework on artificial intelligence, based on Council of Europe standards. This document will provide a base for the future work of the Organisation on artificial intelligence in the framework of the new Committee on Artificial Intelligence (the CAI), which replaced CAHAI on 1 January 2022.

Partnership with digital and telecommunications companies

The partnership with digital and telecommunications companies continued in the form of a forum for information exchange and debate on the effects of digital developments in the various areas covered by the mandate of the Council of Europe. The partnership consists of 26 members, including business associations and large companies with significant stakes in software development, internet and telecommunications business, in addition to standard-setting organisations.

ACTION AGAINST CRIME

Counter-terrorism and criminal law

The Committee of Ministers adopted two recommendations prepared by the European Committee on Crime Problems. These recommendations concern the assessment, management and reintegration of persons accused or convicted of a sexual offence, and the protection of witnesses and collaborators of justice.



Alan Mitchell, President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) (Strasbourg, 8 December 2021)



Ambassador **Drahoslav Štefánek**, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (Strasbourg, 26 October 2021)

■ The **26th Council of Europe Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services (CDPPS)** “Gaining an edge over the pandemic” took place in Funchal, Portugal. The **Council of Europe Annual Penal Statistics (SPACE)** on prisons and probation were published. During the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, a **Conference of the Ministers of Justice** “Crime and criminal justice – the role of restorative justice in Europe” was held in Venice, Italy. The Ministers adopted the **final declaration** on the role of restorative justice in criminal matters.

■ The Committee of Ministers adopted a recommendation on measures aimed at protecting children against radicalisation for the purpose of terrorism prepared by the Committee on Counter-Terrorism.

Committee of experts on the evaluation of anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (MONEYVAL)

■ MONEYVAL adopted the mutual evaluation reports of Croatia, Poland, the Holy See (including Vatican City State) and San Marino, and 10 follow-up reports on Albania, Andorra, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Gibraltar, Hungary, Lithuania, Malta, Serbia and Slovenia. It focused on the sector of virtual currencies. In an effort initiated by MONEYVAL, the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) launched a reform of the Global Network of organisations involved in issues related to anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) worldwide.

■ The Conference of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism (Warsaw Convention, CETS No. 198) adopted two thematic reports assessing the powers of its states parties to apply corporate liability and reverse the burden of proof to confiscate proceeds from serious offences.

Fight against corruption (GRECO)

■ The Group of States against Corruption adopted 44 reports focusing on the prevention of corruption of MPs, judges and prosecutors (fourth evaluation round) and top executive officials and law-enforcement agencies (fifth evaluation round). Seven on-site visits were carried out.

■ GRECO pursued its co-operation with other international organisations, including the UN, the OECD, the OSCE and the EU.

Criminal law co-operation activities

■ The Criminal Law Co-operation Unit supported more than 20 member states in their efforts to adhere to the Council of Europe standards on prisons, the police and probation.

■ Radicalisation in prisons remained in the focus in the western Balkans, where important results were achieved, including the establishment of a web-based collaboration platform for prison and probation professionals in the region. A website for the general public has also been set up (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/cooperation-in-police-and-deprivation-of-liberty>).



Christophe Poirel, Director of Human Rights, Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 20 September 2021)



Pompidou Group: opening of the 2nd European symposium on Drug consumption rooms (DCRs). **Mia Nyegaard**, Deputy Mayor in charge of Social Services of the Municipality of Copenhagen (Strasbourg, 1 July 2021)

Economic crime co-operation activities

■ The Economic Crime and Cooperation Division (ECCD) supported the introduction of structural safeguards for the independence and effective functioning of the judicial and prosecutorial councils or anti-corruption agencies in Armenia, Cyprus and the Republic of Moldova. It also offered assistance on e-asset declaration systems, prevention and management of conflict of interest and protection of whistle-blowers. The ECCD assisted in strengthening of AML/CFT legislation in Ukraine and Montenegro in non-financial sectors.

■ The ECCD enhanced its methodology for assessing sectoral risks associated with virtual assets service providers and developed risk assessment procedures for assessing proliferation financing risks and terrorism financing risks related to non-profit organisations. These tools complemented the extensive co-operation on assessing national and sectoral financial crime risks undertaken in Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine.

Cybercrime

■ The Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention) increased its membership to 66 states parties and another 14 states have signed it or been invited to accede. Twice that number of states had used the convention as a guideline for domestic legislation. The Protocol on Xenophobia and Racism had 33 parties and 12 signatories. The Council of Europe prepared the Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime on Enhanced Co-operation and Disclosure of Electronic Evidence. This new agreement will be opened for signature in spring 2022.

■ An Octopus Conference on Cybercrime, organised in co-operation with the Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, was attended online by ministers, senior officials and experts. The Cybercrime Programme Office of the Council of Europe managed a portfolio of projects with a budget of over €38 million and supported 400 activities involving 140 countries.

Drug use and illicit trafficking

■ The Pompidou Group celebrated its 50th anniversary by bringing together 140 participants from 46 countries. Ukraine joined the group, which now has 42 member states, including 3 non-European members.

■ The Committee of Ministers adopted the Pompidou Group's revised statute. Its mandate was extended to deal with all forms of addiction and to have a strong focus on human rights. Its name was therefore changed to the Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addiction.

EFFICIENCY OF JUSTICE AND LEGAL CO-OPERATION

Venice Commission

■ In 2021, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) assisted Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cyprus, Hungary, Kosovo, Kyrgyzstan, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Romania and Ukraine with opinions on reform of their judicial systems, with a focus on judicial independence. It also endorsed a temporary vetting body with international participation in an opinion for Ukraine. An opinion for the Russian Federation focused on the freedoms of association and expression ("foreign agents").



11th Meeting of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) Ad Hoc Negotiation Group (Strasbourg, 7 October 2021)



HELP High level Conference on Countering Cross-Border Crime. **Meglana Kuneva**, Ambassador of the European Union to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 20 October 2021)

■ The Venice Commission provided opinions and *amicus curiae* briefs on electoral legislation for Albania, Armenia, Georgia, Hungary, Serbia and Ukraine.

■ Re-establishment of constitutional courts or the re-definition of their competences was at the heart of opinions for Cyprus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine. Opinions on ombuds institutions were prepared for Armenia, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Moldova and the United Kingdom.

■ The Venice Commission also continued its successful co-operation with non-European partners, including with countries in Latin America and Central Asia.

Justice and legal co-operation

■ The Consultative Council of European Prosecutors issued its [Opinion No. 16 \(2021\)](#) on “implications of decisions of international courts and treaty bodies as regards the practical independence of prosecutors”. The Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) issued its [Opinion No. 24 \(2021\)](#) on the “evolution of the Councils for the Judiciary and their role in independent and impartial judicial systems”.

■ The European Committee on Legal Co-operation published two [guidelines on online dispute resolution mechanisms in civil and administrative court proceedings](#) and [on the efficiency and effectiveness of legal aid schemes in the areas of civil and administrative law](#).

■ The European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) adopted [guidelines on videoconferencing in judicial proceedings; on electronic court filing \(e-filing\) and digitalisation of courts; on the centrality of the user in legal proceedings; and on the simplification and clarification of language with users](#). The CEPEJ created the European Cyberjustice Network, bringing together over a hundred experts in cyberjustice and artificial intelligence. Last but not least, the Crystal Scales of Justice Prize was awarded to the French Ministry of Justice for its project “[Simplified filing of complaints in hospitals for victims of domestic violence](#)”.

The Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees

■ The Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees (SRSG) published two reports following his fact-finding missions to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Turkey.

■ The SRSG issued a joint guidance note, calling for migrants to be included in Covid-19 vaccination programmes. Together with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights, he published a joint note “European standards on legal remedies, complaints mechanisms and effective investigations at borders”.

■ The Committee of Ministers adopted the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025). The SRSG co-ordinates its implementation.

Ceremony for the Democracy Innovation Award.
Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and **Dalit Wolf Golan**, Israeli Deputy Director and Regional Development Director of EcoPeace Middle East (Strasbourg, 10 November 2021)



Opening Session of the World Forum for Democracy, in the presence of the Mayor of Strasbourg **Jeanne Barseghian**. Welcome words, **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 8 November 2021)



Democracy

www.coe.int/democracy

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Democratic governance

In 2021, the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) produced some important European standards, such as the draft recommendation on democratic accountability of elected representatives and elected bodies at local and regional level, and draft guidelines on the use of information and communication technologies in the electoral process. It also released the comprehensive “Study on the impact of digital transformation, including artificial intelligence and automated decision making, on democracy and good governance”.

Exchanges of experience and best practice on administrative and territorial reforms took place, with the participation of members of governments during the CDDG meetings and peer reviews.

Through its co-operation activities, the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance (CEGG) supported public administration and local-government reforms in over 20 countries. The activities resulted in new or improved legislation, better implementation of reforms and strengthened capacities of public authorities at all levels in areas such as human-resource management, the delivery of public services, decentralisation and territorial reforms, resilience and preparedness in times of crisis, teleworking, etc. The CDDG and the CEGG also promoted the [12 Principles of Good Democratic Governance](#) through the implementation of the [European Label of Governance Excellence](#) in the member states.

Elections and participatory democracy

The division provided technical support to national, regional and local authorities to find adequate responses to their needs to improve electoral and participatory democratic processes in line with the recommendations and guidelines from the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the Venice Commission.

In Georgia, the electoral legislation and electoral practice, in particular in the field of electoral dispute resolution (EDR), was improved.

In Ukraine, a review on the national court practice on EDR, following training of 230 judges from 30 administrative courts, showed an increased number of decisions and judgments containing references to the European Court and its case law.

In the Republic of Moldova, jointly with the Venice Commission, an assessment of the electoral processes and the EDR mechanism led to the improvement of the electoral legislation and practice.

In Ukraine, more than 30 municipalities formalised mechanisms of civil participation in their municipal statutes to enable, for example, public-space planning or participatory school budgeting.

Around 200 representatives from public institutions and civil society organisations from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia have increased their awareness and competences to effectively engage citizens in decision-making processes in areas such as urban planning, participatory budgeting or participatory policy development.



Closing Session of the World Forum for Democracy. Performance by **Dubioza Kolektiv** (Strasbourg, 10 November 2021)

Civil society and democratic innovation

■ Civil society and NGOs are key partners of the Council of Europe in fulfilling its mission. This was recognised by the Committee of Ministers in its 2019 Helsinki decisions and by the Secretary General in her 2020 strategic priorities for the Council of Europe and her 2021 report on the implementation of the Helsinki decisions.

■ Following the proposal of the Secretary General, the Committee of Ministers Rapporteur Groups on Democracy (GR-DEM), Human Rights) and Legal Co-operation each devoted one of their meetings to an informal exchange with representatives of the Conference of INGOs and civil society organisations on selected priority issues. The summary conclusions from each of these exchanges recognised the value of such exchanges of views with civil society and proposed to continue them on an annual basis, without prejudice to their regular work.

World Forum for Democracy

■ The 9th edition of the World Forum for Democracy “Can Democracy Save the Environment?” took place from 8 to 11 November 2021 in Strasbourg. Despite the ongoing health crisis, approximately 400 participants were able to attend the event in person over the two and a half days of its duration. The discussions and debates were informed by experts, policy makers and activists of diverse backgrounds and experience and, ultimately, highlighted that democracy is considered by far the best style of governance for facing the environmental challenge. This year, 27 initiatives competed for the Democracy Innovation Award, which was won by “A green blue deal for the Middle East” in recognition of its success in promoting collaboration around shared environmental challenges, especially the need for efficient water management in the Middle East.

The Platform for the protection of journalism and safety of journalists

■ In 2021, the platform posted 234 alerts on serious threats to media freedom in 34 Council of Europe member states, a further increase from 2020. Some 95 alerts (40.5%) were responded to by the member state concerned or resolved by the end of the year.



Carlo Monticelli, Governor of the Council of Europe Development Bank (Strasbourg, 27 October 2021)

■ The 2021 annual report by the platform partners highlighted major media freedom issues – impunity following the killing of journalists, physical attacks, intimidation, online and offline harassment, in particular of women journalists, effects of Covid-19 mitigation measures, abusive lawsuits or prosecution designed to intimidate and a tightening political grip over the media sector. The platform partners addressed a set of recommendations to member states.

Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) – Partial agreement

■ In 2021, the CEB approved 57 projects for an overall amount of roughly €4.2 billion. Some 25 of the projects approved, for a total of €1.6 billion, were for the benefit of Target Group countries.

■ The main sectors of action were (a) improving living conditions, (b) health, (c) protection of the environment, (d) supporting MSMEs (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises) and (e) education and vocational training. Six projects specifically targeted refugees or migrants.

■ Seven projects, amounting to €657 million, were approved in six countries to overcome the persisting impact of the pandemic crisis. They financed the healthcare sector, mainly medical equipment and supplies.

■ The CEB concluded its mid-term review, maintained the main orientations for the remaining period of its current development plan and launched the preparations for its next development plan.

■ Co-operation with the EU was further developed. In the framework of the implementation of the EU facility for refugees in Turkey, the first-ever CEB external office was established in Ankara. The Regional Housing Programme was extended until 30 June 2024 and an additional contribution of €250 000 was received from the European Investment Bank. The CEB's policy on non-compliant/unco-operative jurisdictions was updated as the outcome of the EU Pillar Assessment exercise.

■ The CEB had an active role at the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP26) and has defined a roadmap for alignment to the Paris Agreement Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) framework.

■ Some 114 eligible applications from 27 countries were received for the second edition of the CEB Award for Social Cohesion. The award was granted to a Moldovan project focusing on training and employment for young people with disabilities from rural areas and small towns across the country.



Award Ceremony of the Best Practice Programme in Promoting Academic Integrity. Opening address by **Matjaž Gruden**, Director, Directorate of Democratic Participation (Strasbourg, 7 December 2021)

■ On 16 September, the CEB signed an additional grant agreement with the Czech Republic for a CZK 1.2 million contribution to the Green Social Investment Fund.

■ On 18 December, Mr Carlo Monticelli took office as Governor of the Bank.

HUMAN DIGNITY, EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

Gender equality

■ The Gender Equality Commission (GEC) finished drafting a new recommendation on protecting the rights of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women and girls, a milestone of the Gender Equality Strategy for 2018 to 2023.

■ Under the German Presidency, the GEC conference “Gender equality and the Istanbul Convention: a decade of action” in May (in Berlin and online) focused on the Istanbul Convention’s achievements so far and promoted implementation of the recommendation on preventing and combating sexism.

■ Launching the UN’s 16 days of activism against violence against women, the GEC, in co-operation with the Italian Presidency, hosted a panel discussion on 25 November between the Secretary General, the Italian Minister for Equal Opportunities and Family and the President of GREVIO.

■ Targeted bilateral and regional co-operation projects were pursued with member states (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Latvia, the Republic of Moldova, the Russian Federation, Turkey and Ukraine), as well as in Kosovo* and the southern Mediterranean region.

Istanbul Convention

■ The Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence’s (GREVIO) Mid-term Horizontal Review baseline evaluation reports published on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence has tracked growing levels of support services for victims of violence, an increase in training of professionals, ongoing legislative changes coupled with an increase in budgets allocated and dedicated strategies and policy documents adopted – much of this embedded in wider gender equality policies and programmes.

Johanna Nelles, Executive Secretary of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO) (Strasbourg, 16 February 2021)



■ The first-ever General Recommendation issued by GREVIO was adopted on the digital dimension of violence against women. In addition, GREVIO continued its baseline evaluation, publishing three reports (on Poland, San Marino and Slovenia) and conducting five evaluation visits. Its third-party intervention in the case of *Kurt v. Austria* was widely referred to by the European Court of Human Rights, which integrated GREVIO's arguments and subsequently applied in cases against states which have not signed the Istanbul Convention, such as the pilot judgment of *Tunikova and Others v. Russia* (Application Nos. 55974/16 et al., 14 December 2021), and *Volodina v. Russia (No. 2)* (Application No. 40419/19, 14 September 2021).

Trafficking in human beings

■ The number of States Parties to the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human beings increased to 48, following accession by Israel. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) carried out 10 on-site country evaluation visits, published seven new reports (on Bulgaria, Denmark, Georgia, Malta, Montenegro, Romania and the United Kingdom) and adopted two more final reports as part of the third evaluation round of the Istanbul Convention (concerning Latvia and France).

■ GRETA published a general report including a dedicated section on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on combating human trafficking and a further section on the identification of trafficked persons among asylum seekers and access to international protection by victims of trafficking. The study on online and technology-facilitated trafficking in human beings

was finalised. Work on drafting a new Committee of Ministers recommendation on combating trafficking for labour exploitation started.

■ Co-operation projects linked to GRETA's recommendations were implemented in four member states, as well as in Kosovo,* providing training on detecting and combating trafficking for labour exploitation, awareness raising on child trafficking and training on victims' rights. A regional conference "Acting together in face of crisis: protecting children from trafficking and exploitation in the western Balkans" took place in June 2021.

SOGIESC⁶ equality

■ The European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network carried out a pilot, thematic review of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation to member states on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (CM/Rec (2010)5) in Cyprus, Lithuania, North Macedonia and Spain. This pilot exercise focused on legislation and policies on legal gender recognition (LGR). Despite the constraints imposed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the review was an opportunity for an informed dialogue through multistakeholder national roundtables, which contributed to ongoing national legislative reforms and resulted in a report outlining the state of LGR policies in Europe.

6. Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity or Expression and Sex Characteristics

■ A new project “Co-operating with faith-based institutions to counter hate speech from faith-based representatives” was launched, involving interdisciplinary dialogue among human rights experts and Christian Orthodox theologians and church representatives from 11 countries (Armenia, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Ukraine).

■ Support was given to member states towards the execution of European Court of Human Rights’ judgments (Georgia, Lithuania, North Macedonia and Romania). In Poland, a public event, organised with support from the LGBT+ Parliamentary Group on Equal Opportunities of the Sejm, highlighted positive developments at the national and local policy levels.

CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

■ Having progressed in its analysis of the assessment in States Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (the Lanzarote Convention) of the challenges raised by child self-generated sexual images and/or videos, the Lanzarote Committee plans to adopt its monitoring report in February 2022. Work to assess the extent to which States Parties to the Lanzarote Convention have implemented the recommendations contained in its [special report “Protecting children affected by the refugee crisis from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse”](#) was also continued. The Lanzarote Committee further compiled information received from States Parties to the Lanzarote Convention on the [legal age for sexual activities](#) and the [statute of limitation](#), to serve as a basis for capacity-building activities in 2022. The Lanzarote Committee commissioned the preparation of an independent expert report [“Respecting human rights and the rule of law when using automated technology to detect online child sexual exploitation and abuse”](#) to highlight the relevant Council of Europe standards in this field and recommend how to reconcile the risks and rights at stake. On 4 October, the Lanzarote Committee organised a public awareness-raising event exploring [“The impact of the Lanzarote Convention on case law, decisions and legislation”](#) at the national, European and international levels, which revealed very positive developments. The [2021 edition of the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) (18 November) was dedicated to “Making the circle of trust truly safe for children”.

■ The Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) finalised the implementation of the outgoing [Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#) and elaborated a new draft Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) for adoption by the Committee of Ministers in early 2022. Developed through an inclusive process and in close co-operation with numerous internal and external partners, and with the consultation of 220 children in 10 member states, the new strategy will be launched at a high-level conference to be held in Rome on 7 and 8 April 2022. The CDENF continued intergovernmental standard-setting work on the protection of the best interests of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings, and on reporting systems on violence against children. The CDENF also instigated work on promoting children’s participation in health-related decisions through the drafting of a relevant practical guide for health professionals. The CDENF addressed specific challenges generated by the Covid-19 crisis through a factsheet and summary report on good national practices and through the organisation of [three webinars](#) on the challenges related to education, intrafamily violence prevention and mental health. The CDENF finally contributed to the 2021 United Nations Committee for the Rights of the Child day of general discussion by hosting a [Regional Exchange on “Children’s rights and alternative care”](#) and supported its members in progressing towards the SDGs by holding exchanges of views on progress towards SDG Target 16.2: “End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children”.

■ In 2021, more than 3 500 stakeholders were reached in 16 Council of Europe member states through co-operation projects and activities. Three new projects were launched, strengthening child participation – [CP4Europe](#); implementation of the Barnahus model – [Finland Barnahus](#); and Juvenile Justice – [Reform of the juvenile justice system in Slovenia](#). Several capacity-building and awareness-raising activities were implemented, based on tools developed and adapted to various national contexts and which address online child sexual exploitation and abuse (OCSEA), such as the comprehensive OCSEA training module for law enforcement, judges and prosecutors, a video and book for children aged 4 to 7 to raise awareness and prevent OCSEA (Kiko and the Manymes, translated into 16 languages), as well as a training-for-trainers manual for kindergarten teachers (“Kiko and the hand”) to help detect and report sexual abuse cases. Assistance was provided to support a comprehensive research project on practices in the juvenile justice system and the development of a national forensic interviewing protocol in Ukraine. In the Republic of Moldova,

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), annual seminar with Equality Bodies. **Johan Friestedt**, Executive Secretary; **María Daniella Marouda**, Chair; **Mats Lindberg**, Administrator (Strasbourg, 18 October 2021)



based on the Council of Europe's recommendations and long-term persistence, the Ministry of Internal Affairs led the process of establishing a co-ordination mechanism for the implementation of the Lanzarote Convention at the national level. A comprehensive Barnahus law was adopted unanimously in Slovenia in March 2021, defining the framework for setting up the first Barnahus in the country. Two by-laws on interagency co-operation and on training procedures and modalities for Barnahus actors were also adopted by the Slovenian Government to complement the law. In Andorra, the first draft of the National Action Plan for Children and Adolescents was prepared and is currently being reviewed by Council of Europe and national experts, to be finalised early 2022.

■ Various resources on preventing child sexual exploitation and abuse, encouraging child participation, the rights of the child in the digital environment and age assessment of children in migration have been translated into several languages, including Japanese.

Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI)

■ The CDADI is the new intergovernmental committee in charge of steering the Council of Europe's intergovernmental work to promote equality, build more inclusive societies where diversity is respected and to protect people from discrimination and hate. In September 2020, it started implementing its mandate by: drafting a new, comprehensive legal instrument on combating hate speech through the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech, which was

finished in December 2021; analysing and evaluating specific issues related to Roma and Traveller inclusion through the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM); carrying out a study on the active political participation of national minority youth, which was published in June 2021; drafting a multilevel policy framework for intercultural integration through the GT-ADI-INT working group, which was finished in December 2021; preparing the further implementation review of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity (CM/Rec(2010)5); and preparing "Guidelines on upholding equality and protecting against discrimination and hate during the Covid-19 and similar crises", which were adopted by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers in May 2021. For the years 2022 to 2025, the CDADI was given a challenging [work programme](#) that comprises the preparation of 20 deliverables.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

■ In its [annual report](#), ECRI considered it essential to take more effective action to i. mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on certain groups, including Roma and Travellers, migrants, asylum seekers and LGBTI persons, ii. tackle deep-rooted racism in public life, notably through a series of measures concerning police services, history teaching and the media, iii. combat anti-Muslim racism and antisemitism in the face of terrorism and iv. address the backlash against the protection of LGBTI persons' human rights.

■ ECRI carried out monitoring visits to seven countries (Bulgaria, Denmark, Estonia, France, Greece, Hungary and Monaco) and published a total of 10 country-specific conclusions or reports (Croatia, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta, the Republic of Moldova, Norway, Portugal, the Russian Federation, San Marino and Spain).

■ ECRI completed the revision of its General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination and of its [General Policy Recommendation No. 9](#) on preventing and combating antisemitism. Furthermore, it issued an exceptional [statement](#) on preventing and combating ultra-nationalistic and racist hate speech and violence in relation to confrontations and unresolved conflicts in Europe (commonly referred to as “grey zones”). It also adopted an [opinion](#) on the concept of “racialisation”.

■ Finally, an ECRI [factsheet](#) on key recommendations aimed at addressing intolerance and discrimination against LGBTI persons was issued for the first time.

No hate speech, and co-operation programmes

■ Legislative reviews, capacity-building actions, comparative analyses of responses to hate speech and an awareness-raising campaign “Block the hatred. Share the love” supported member states in South-East Europe in addressing hate speech. Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, new online training tools for equality bodies and the police and small grants schemes for NGOs improved responses to racism, homophobia and transphobia, hate speech and hate crime in the western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. User-friendly tools were also developed to help organisations and young activists fight hate speech through counter-narratives. A novel online course “Artificial intelligence and discrimination” for equality bodies and other regulators, piloted in the United Kingdom, was rolled out in France and is planned for other member states. In Albania, Serbia and Ukraine, legislative expertise and capacity-building activities for national minority organisations and public authorities supported the development of knowledge about relevant Council of Europe standards and monitoring recommendations. In Georgia, a memorandum of co-operation between a wide range of stakeholders facilitated the organisation of “equality weeks” – a wide range of online and offline awareness-raising activities for the general public about the importance of diversity and equality and about redress mechanisms for the victims of discrimination.

Roma and Traveller issues

■ Implementation of the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) continued, particularly in the fields of inclusive education and training, active participation in public and political life, and in the fight against discrimination, hate speech, violence and antigypsyism. Implementation of the plan also includes co-operation and capacity-building activities in the framework of joint programmes with the European Union, (e.g. INSCHOOL, JUSTROM, ROMACT and ROMACTED see below); Roma civil society is involved through biannual dialogue meetings. A first implementation report was completed.

■ Implementation of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curriculums and teaching materials was promoted in co-operation with the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture.

■ A report on the causes, prevalence and consequences of antigypsyism, prepared by the ADI-ROM in consultation with the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society, contains recommendations for possible responses by governments.

■ The agenda on quality, inclusive education for Roma children was advanced through a stocktaking conference on the EU/Council of Europe Joint Project “Inclusive schools – Making a difference for Roma children” (INSCHOOL), held in June in Strasbourg and the conference “From birth to profession – the first decade of social inclusion and Roma integration strategies”, held in September in Budapest under the Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.



International Roma Day. Flower casting ceremony. **Snežana Marković**, Director General of Democracy (Strasbourg, 8 April 2021)

■ The Roma Political Schools in Albania, Greece, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Ukraine – with a pilot project in Kosovo* – organised training sessions on political participation in both in-person and online formats to over 150 Roma women and men.

■ Roma women were empowered through: the 8th International Roma Women’s Conference on the theme “Protecting the human rights and dignity of Roma and Traveller women in times of crises”, held in Strasbourg in November; the publication of the report “Empowerment of Roma and Traveller women: a change under construction. Towards a roadmap for advancing gender equality of Roma and Traveller women in Council of Europe member states”; and through capacity-building activities conducted by the EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme “Roma women’s access to justice” (JUSTROM).

■ Roma youth participation was promoted through the Roma Youth Conference “Together for emancipation and empowerment – the role of history in the participation and inclusion of Roma young people”, held in April in Strasbourg under the German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

■ Roma communities and individuals were hit particularly hard by the Covid-19 pandemic. To alleviate the impact of the crisis, the EC–Council of Europe Joint Programme “Building capacity at local level for the integration of Roma” (ROMACT) re-allocated funds for emergency and priority measures in municipalities and Roma communities. Some 55 grants were awarded for a total of €259 694.

■ The second phase of the EU–Council of Europe Joint Programme “Promoting good governance and Roma empowerment at local level” (ROMACTED) was launched and will be working with 72 local authorities and local Roma communities in the western Balkans and Turkey, with emphasis on the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ The conclusions and recommendations of the 10th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society, particularly devoted to combating hate speech against Roma and Travellers, fed into the drafting of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation on combating hate speech.

■ A new online toolkit for police officers “Council of Europe standards on racially motivated crimes and non-discrimination with focus on Roma and Travellers” was developed and training sessions were initiated.

Minorities and minority or regional languages

■ In 2021, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities carried out 7 visits, held three follow-up events and adopted 4 opinions. The Committee of Ministers adopted 14 resolutions on the implementation of the Framework Convention.

■ The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages adopted 4 evaluation reports and 5 interim reports on the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action contained in the Committee’s reports. It carried out 5 on-the-spot visits.

■ In April 2021, the Secretary General transmitted her report to the Parliamentary Assembly on the application of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in which she provided an overview of the main activities and achievements during the period 2018 to 2020 and highlighted challenges to be addressed by 2024. A new booklet on the “Protection and promotion of regional or minority languages: promising practices across Europe 2015-2020” was published in May 2021.

■ Two conferences were co-organised with the Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers: a high-level conference on “Council of Europe norms and standards on national minority rights: results and challenges” on 29 June 2021 in Strasbourg and a conference on “The role of NGOs and research institutes in promoting Council of Europe norms and standards on national minority rights” on 7 September 2021 in Budapest.

SUSTAINABLE DEMOCRATIC SOCIETIES

Education

■ The Digital Citizenship Education Programme published a set of “Guidelines to support equitable partnerships of education institutions and the private sector” adopted by the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice in October and aiming to foster better understanding of digital citizenship education and the role that partnerships can play in enhancing outcomes for learners.

■ The Learning Modules Online project developed six new innovative interactive courses on topics ranging from intercultural school development to participatory school budgeting and media literacy using the latest e-learning tools and technologies.

■ Translations of the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages: learning, teaching, assessment – Companion volume* (CEFR-CV) into French, Arabic, Italian, Spanish and Turkish were made available on the CEFR website. To familiarise language professionals with the concepts elaborated in the CEFR-CV, eight online webinars were organised. The “Reference guide on literacy and second language learning for the linguistic integration of adult migrants”, based on the CEFR, has also been developed.

■ A new volume in the Council of Europe Higher Education Series, *Higher education's response to the COVID-19 pandemic – Building a more sustainable and democratic future*, was published and presented at a webinar by the International Association of Universities. The volume addresses the various ways in which higher education is facing the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ Within the framework of the ENIC-NARIC network (European Network of Information Centres – National Academic Recognition Information Centres), a series of seven webinars was organised on topical higher education issues. A webinar in September, moderated by the Council of Europe and reaching out to over 70 credential evaluators from ENIC and NARIC centres, addressed the practical implementations of the recommendation on the recognition of qualifications held by refugees, displaced persons and persons in a refugee-like situation.

■ The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees supported Afghan refugees by organising a series of webinars on the recognition of Afghan qualifications for the ENIC-NARIC network and universities. Thanks to its new IT platform, the number of interviews was substantially increased, and Croatia and Serbia joined the initiative, bringing the total number of participating countries to 13.

■ A new Best Practice Programme in Promoting Academic Integrity was launched and the 10 winning practices highlighted at a public event.

■ In co-operation with the Shoah Memorial (Paris), a training course on the theme “Remembrance of the Shoah: national memory, European memory: common challenges” addressed the issue of the use of images in the transmission of the history and memory of the Shoah and the consideration of gender in this context.

■ Co-operation programmes financed through external resources supported education reforms in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Turkey along with several other member states and Kosovo*. Concrete results include new accredited teacher training courses, revised curriculums and democratic digital classrooms, all based on the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) and strengthened academic integrity based on the ETINED (Platform on Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education) values and principles.

■ The [Observatory on History Teaching in Europe](#) (OHTe) Enlarged Partial Agreement, established in November 2020 is fully operational. The initial methodologies for the regular and thematic reports are available. Its first annual conference generated considerable interest: at least 60 persons participated on-site and 360 persons registered to follow online. Various research institutes and professional associations of history educators announced their interest in the OHTe's co-operation platform, while the European Commission Vice-President Margaritis Schinas publicly announced support for the OHTe's work, pledging €1 million for 2022. Hungary publicly announced its interest in becoming an OHTe observer state.

■ Membership of the [ECML](#) Partial Agreement (European Centre for Modern Languages) grew from 33 to 35 countries with the accession of Belgium and the re-accession of Hungary, an indication of the innovation and relevance of its programme of activities, such as [The Future of Language Education in the Light of Covid](#) initiative, launched in partnership with civil society via its [Professional Network Forum](#) and with the European Commission.

Youth

■ The youth sector worked with the ebb and flow of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, engaging young people with the Council of Europe's values through capacity building, standard setting and support for civil society development. The Youth for Democracy programme of education and training reached hundreds of young multipliers through online activities. The European Youth Centres re-opened for physically distanced, multilateral activities, hosting some 180 activities to the appreciation of more than 3 000 participants. The Human Rights Education youth programme continued thanks to national training courses adapted to local situations in over a dozen countries.

■ Youth featured as a priority in the German and Hungarian Presidencies of the Committee of Ministers, the former making a significant contribution to the advancement of youth work in Europe, the latter highlighting the important role of the two European Youth Centres as multilateral conference and training centres and innovative and creative learning spaces for young people. The European Youth Centre in Budapest hosted several high-level and other Committee of Ministers presidency events.

■ In response to the difficulties faced by youth organisations as multilateral activities were stalled and funding opportunities disappeared, the European Youth Foundation put special emphasis on small-scale, local projects which were less likely to be affected by measures taken to counter the pandemic. Some 95 projects were supported, an increase of 40%.

■ Democracy being under threat, the Joint Council on Youth decided on a new youth campaign on revitalising democracy, to be launched in 2022 and marking the 50th anniversary of the youth sector. Youth political participation in Europe was a focus of the European Union–Council of Europe Youth Partnership's work.

■ In light of young people's massive mobilisation, the climate crisis, forms of non-violent civil youth participation and ways to green the youth sector were explored. The Advisory Council on Youth discussed young environmental defenders with the Commissioner for Human Rights and organised a forum talk on youth climate activism during the World Forum for Democracy.

■ The Council of Europe Youth Department received the YMCA 2021 Roots for Peace Award (Young Men's Christian Association) for its outstanding contribution to peace and justice in Europe.

Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS)

Revised European Sports Charter

■ The 16th Conference of Ministers responsible for Sport concluded in February with the adoption of two resolutions, the first on a European approach to sport policies: the revision of the European Sports Charter, and the second on human rights in sport.

■ The Committee of Ministers adopted the Revised European Sports Charter (13 October). The revised text promotes values-based sport, particularly in the areas of integrity, ethics, human rights and sustainability. It also promotes good governance, the right to sport for all, and the social and economic benefits of sport.

Ethical sport

■ EPAS continued to be engaged in the International Partnership against Corruption in Sport. Through Action 3 of the Kazan Action Plan, EPAS prepared detailed guidelines to improve sports integrity, which were promoted during the Integrity Conference jointly held on 6 and 7 December by EPAS and the Italian Department for Sports, in the framework of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

Inclusive sport

■ EPAS hosted a diversity conference to promote the human rights of intersex and transgender athletes in sports competitions (20 September). EPAS pursued its work around gender equality, including the preparation of a training course on awareness of unconscious bias.

Safe sport

■ On 31 March, the Committee of Ministers adopted a recommendation on extreme martial arts and combat activities (CM/Rec(2021)3), opening the way for further study of concussion in sporting activities.

■ EPAS continued its work in the area of child safeguarding in sport through the ongoing Start to Talk project and the joint Council of Europe–European Union Child Safeguarding in Sport project.

Sport conventions

Council of Europe Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (Saint-Denis Convention)

■ The first meeting of the Committee of the Saint-Denis Convention was held online mid-April, enabling the adoption of the Committee's Rules of Procedure and its Policy Strategy 2022–2025, and the establishing of three advisory groups which started their work on standard setting and legal issues; monitoring and international co-operation; and preparation for FIFA World Cup in Qatar in 2022. The Saint-Denis Convention, which calls for an integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other sports events counts 21 states parties.

■ A leadership dialogue on hate speech and racism at sports events was held to mark the launch of the Saint-Denis Committee, to address incidents of racism and hate speech that regularly target participants in sports events. This event inspired future action by the Saint-Denis Committee to tackle this phenomenon, covered by the Saint-Denis Convention.

Anti-doping

■ The Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping Convention (T-DO) resumed its monitoring activities with two evaluation visits, one to the Netherlands (13–15 September) and another to the Russian Federation (21–23 September).

■ The T-DO finalised a draft recommendation on general principles of fair procedure applicable to anti-doping proceedings in sport for adoption by the Committee of Ministers in 2022. The recommendation acknowledges key principles of fair procedure, such as the independence of investigation and of the deciding jurisdictions, the rights to be heard and to an effective defence as well as the principle of public hearing and the necessity to publish decisions. The T-DO also finalised its recommendation on the protection of whistle-blowers in the context of the fight against doping, which aims to reaffirm Council of Europe principles on the protection of whistle-blowers and adapting them to the reality of sport.

■ The T-DO provided technical support to more European countries and their national authorities and national anti-doping organisations, to improve their anti-doping systems and support their efforts to implement the requirements of the 2021 World Anti-Doping Code.

Manipulation of competitions

■ The Follow-up Committee of the Macolin Convention consolidated its setting-up phase with the adoption of its [Action Plan 2022–2025](#). In accordance with Article 31.2 of [the Macolin Convention](#), the Macolin Follow-up Committee adopted the first version of the list of sports organisations. Finally, it jointly adopted with the Committee of Convention 108 (the Data Protection Convention) the Macolin Data Protection Principles.

■ The Macolin Follow-up Committee established its [Advisory Group on the Network of National Platforms \(Group of Copenhagen\)](#). At its meeting (22 November) the Group of Copenhagen adopted its [rules of procedure](#) and elected its bureau, initiating discussions on priority actions for the years to come.

■ The Keep Crime Out Of Sport+ project, which started in 2018, came to an end in December, offering a rich variety of activities to national platform representatives and stakeholders.

Intercultural Cities

■ A total of 11 cities from Belgium, Italy, Poland, Turkey, Australia and Canada joined the Intercultural Cities (ICC) programme, bringing the membership to 153. A new ICC network was set up in the Province of Quebec (Canada) and a joint EU–Council of Europe project is being implemented in Cyprus to build structures for intercultural integration in the country. The programme assessed the intercultural policies of eight member cities in Europe, Canada and South Korea and delivered the relevant ICC Index reports. A new [webpage](http://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/about-the-index) (www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/about-the-index) with interactive ICC Index charts has been launched. Policy innovation was encouraged through thematic events and the development of guidance on the intercultural competence of public officials; on circular and intercultural cities; on assessment of intercultural projects; and on inclusive communication and alternative narratives. Online courses on anti-rumours, on intercultural communication, on intercultural strategy development and on preventing discrimination in decision making through artificial intelligence have been produced and made available for members.

Culture and cultural heritage

■ The culture sector generated innovative activities and products in 2021 for the benefit of member states. These include a massive, open online course on Strategy 21 (a cultural heritage management e-learning platform), a serious online role-playing game about disseminating the principles of the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (the Faro Convention) to a broader public and the launch of the Council of Europe digital exhibition Free to Create – Create to be Free that will grow into a living archive, showcasing the status of artistic freedom in Europe through national artwork contributions. The culture sector also produced a publication *E-relevance – The role of arts and culture in the age of artificial intelligence*, which examines the preferably democratic future of humans living with machines, in addition to the role that the arts and culture play in this complex environment. Cyprus and Poland signed the Faro Convention and Estonia ratified it. Greece, Hungary and Latvia ratified the Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property that will enter into force on 1 April 2022.

European Heritage Days

■ In 2021, the European Heritage Days celebrated “inclusive heritage” as the pan-European theme to create a welcoming, open experience for all and to promote inclusion and diversity. Particular attention was paid to making events more accessible, in terms of both removing physical barriers and offering a platform to different groups, including vulnerable and marginalised people who often have less opportunity to share their stories. The widespread reopening of heritage sites in 2021, combined with multiple continuing digital initiatives, made local stories even more visible and contributed to a rich programme of events across Europe, supported by a dedicated toolkit, [We are Culture](#).

Cultural Routes Enlarged Partial Agreement

■ Ukraine joined the Cultural Routes Enlarged Partial Agreement in March 2021, and five new Cultural Routes were certified in May 2021: the Aeneas Route, the Alvar Aalto Route, the Cyril and Methodius Route, the European Route d’Artagnan and the Iron Age Danube Route.

Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (Bern Convention)

■ The Standing Committee to the Bern Convention adopted a vision for the next decade to address the challenges and threats biodiversity is facing. It also discussed important strategic developments of the Bern Convention to ensure its financial stability. Activities undertaken during the year included progress in the fields of invasive alien species, combating the illegal killing of birds, protection of amphibians and reptiles (including a marine turtle initiative), the eradication of the ruddy duck in Europe and plant conservation. In addition, progress was achieved on case files linked to complaints submitted by citizens and NGOs for alleged breaches of the Bern Convention and on the Emerald Network of Areas of Special Conservation Interest, as along with ongoing business of the European Diploma for Protected Areas. A particular highlight was also the launch of the new [online campaign](#), #VoicesofNature, which showcases how nature conservation benefits from democratic participation and, in turn, fosters human rights protection.



The film *Titane* by **Julia Ducournau**, a co-production supported by Eurimages, received the Palme D'Or at the Cannes Film Festival 2021 (Cannes, 17 July 2021)

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

■ In co-operation with the UNDRR (United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction) and DG ECHO (European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations), the EUR-OPA co-organised and actively participated in the [European Forum for Disaster Risk Reduction](#) (24-26 November 2021 in Matosinhos). At the [14th Ministerial Meeting of the Agreement](#), held back-to-back with the forum, the EUR-OPA Ministers adopted recommendations on [enabling and protecting persons with disabilities before, during and after public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics](#) and on [inclusion of migrants, asylum seekers and refugees in public health emergencies resulting from viral or other pathogenic pandemics](#), the [Medium-Term Plan 2021-2025](#)

and a [Ministerial Declaration](#). EUR-OPA sustained an important number of field projects implemented by its Network of Scientific Centres to better prepare populations for major hazards and develop national policies and strategies. Furthermore, it took part in the World Forum for Democracy by contributing to the [Webinar on Disasters, Displacement and Climate Change](#) (February 2021) and to the forum (November 2021).

Council of Europe Landscape Convention

■ The Committee of Ministers adopted the following recommendations: Landscape and responsibility of stakeholders for sustainable and harmonious development ([CM/Rec\(2021\)9](#)); Town planning and landscape ([CM/Rec\(2021\)10](#); [CM\(2021\)152-add](#)); Landscape and agriculture ([CM/Rec\(2021\)11](#); [CM\(2021\)156-add](#)); Integration of the landscape dimension into sectoral policies ([CM/Rec\(2021\)12](#)). The Protocol amending the Landscape Convention ([CETS No. 219](#)) came into force. National landscape policies were presented in the [information system](#) of the Landscape Convention, the [11th Council of Europe Conference](#) on the European Landscape Convention (26-27 May 2021) held under the auspices of the Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, the Landscape Award of the Council of Europe attributed and the [5th International Landscape Day](#) of the Council of Europe celebrated. The [25th Council of Europe Meeting of the Workshops](#) on the Council of Europe Landscape Convention (Palma de Mallorca) and a [National Symposium](#) (Budapest) were organised and new publications issued.

Eurimages Enlarged Partial Agreement

■ In an industry still affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Eurimages Fund supported 110 film co-productions while actively pursuing a governance reform, which came into force on 1 January 2022.

■ All the Eurimages Co-production Development Awards, the Audentia Award and the Eurimages Co-production Award were presented during ceremonies online or in person. In addition, the Eurimages team participated, in a reduced format, in the Cannes Film Market, which exceptionally was held in July, and the Venice Biennale in September.



Courtesy interview between Ambassador **Afonso Henriques Abreu de Azeredo Malheiro**, Executive Director of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, and **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 18 November 2021)

■ The year 2021 saw Eurimages-supported projects winning both an Oscar for Best Foreign Film and a Palme d'Or. These went respectively to the film *Another Round* by Thomas Vinterberg and to the French-Belgian co-production *Titane*, directed by Julie Ducourneau. The European Film Awards also honoured the exemplary co-production *Quo vadis, Aida?* by Jasmila Žbanić with the awards for Best Film and Best Director, with the award for Best Actress going to Jasna Đuričić for her role in the film.

■ Eurimages organised a high-level conference on drama series in collaboration with the Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Hungarian National Film Institute. In their conclusions, participants confirmed the importance of the Council of Europe's role in preserving cultural diversity and pluralism in a highly competitive market dominated by non-European video-on-demand platforms.

■ During the year, a working group on sustainability was established to explore, as far as possible, ways to improve the ecological footprint of Eurimages and to raise awareness among the fund's beneficiaries about green film production. The Gender Equality Working Group decided to enlarge the scope of their activities to diversity.

North-South Centre (European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity)

■ In 2021, the North-South Centre (NSC) was recognised as an incubator hub that developed innovative online and hybrid solutions to best adapt its activities to the demands that arose from a pandemic context. A good example was the first-ever hybrid Lisbon Forum on the topic: "Intercultural dialogue in the infodemic era". The Lisbon Forum had an unprecedentedly high number of 503 participants from 85 different countries and reached out to 45 000 people on social media. It raised awareness on the importance for states, media, digital technology stakeholders and international organisations to commit to co-ordinated action to ensure that human rights are safeguarded worldwide, both offline and online; it contributed to positioning the Council of Europe as a relevant actor for global "digital" regulation based on human rights; and strengthened the NSC as an important platform to maintain a constructive dialogue with other parts of the world, from a win-win perspective, to mobilise collective action to face problems of global concern.



Portrait of **Sergei Glagolev**, President of the Medicrime Committee and Deputy Minister of Health of Russia, European Directorate for the Quality of Medicine and Healthcare (EDQM) (Strasbourg, 20 October 2021)

■ In recognition of outstanding actions in facing issues of global concern, the 2020 North-South Prize Award Ceremony recognised the efforts of the International Commission against the Death Penalty and the Network of Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change.

■ The NSC also continued to bring the two sides of the democratic paradigm together: the political dialogue within the *quadrilogue*, while contributing to a healthy democratic environment by empowering, opening spaces for and supporting civil society actors, as follows.

- ▶ Eight civil society organisations in the southern Mediterranean received grants to implement projects to protect women and girl victims of gender-based violence, with topics ranging from the protection of single mothers in Tunisia to protection services for vulnerable populations in Morocco, prevention of economic, gender-based violence in Lebanon and the protection of migrant and refugee women in the region.

- ▶ A brand new online training course for facilitators of online policy dialogue in the youth field was developed to support youth workers, trainers and facilitators in reinforcing their competences to provide expertise and support for initiatives where young people and policy makers interact and co-operate at inter-regional level.
- ▶ The North-South Centre organised the first-ever online training course for facilitators of online policy dialogue in the youth field.
- ▶ And in a context where global interdependence is more evident than ever and international solidarity is paramount to leaving no one behind, the Global Education Week reached a peak of 377 000 people (educators, students, members of civil society and government officials) with activities raising awareness of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 25 different countries.

■ The year 2021 also contributed to reinforcing the NSC's expertise by establishing a pool of more than 200 experts, carefully selected from over 1 000 applications, from 52 countries and territories, to support the 2022-2025 programme.

European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare

■ The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare (EDQM) continued to fulfil its mission to protect public health in 2021 in the face of the global Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on the quality of medicines and healthcare. The vast majority of activities continued as planned, with the necessary adaptations to keep the EDQM in "business-as-usual" mode while ensuring it stays ahead of the curve in the post-Covid-19 environment.

■ The European Pharmacopoeia continued to play a key role in setting harmonised quality standards, vital for marketing authorisation, market surveillance and the free movement and trade of medicines in Europe and beyond. All meetings of the Ph. Eur. Commission and its groups of experts and working parties continued online in 2021, ensuring seamless progression of activities.

■ As a result, the Pharmacopoeia continued to grow in 2021, with 226 new and revised quality standards, which will become legally binding in 2022. An important decision was also taken to head down a path that should ultimately lead to the complete replacement of the rabbit pyrogen test by suitable *in vitro* alternatives in 59 Pharmacopoeia texts within approximately five years.

■ The Pharmacopoeia reference standards (RSs) are essential to ensure the quality of medicines and their ingredients – in line with pharmacopoeial requirements. The EDQM portfolio comprises 3 114 RSs and constantly evolves in line with Pharmacopoeia monographs, or to replace existing RSs when corresponding stocks run out. In 2021, the Pharmacopoeia Commission adopted 384 RSs and the EDQM distributed Pharmacopoeia RSs directly to 132 countries.

■ The certification (CEP) programme run by the EDQM attests that the quality of pharmaceutical ingredients used in medicines marketed in Europe can be suitably controlled by the Pharmacopoeia quality standards. In 2021, 269 new certificates and 1 471 revised certificates were issued.

■ On-site audits and inspections of pharmaceutical production facilities (mostly in India and China) continued in remote form due to travel restrictions, which also affected the EDQM's ability to assess CEP applications. The pilot project regarding the conduct of "real-time remote inspections" was also successfully completed and these inspections will now offer a third option (also in the post-Covid-19 era), alongside on-site inspections and desk reviews.

■ The European Network of Official Medicines Control Laboratories, which is in charge of quality-control programmes for medicines circulating in European markets, continued its activities during the pandemic. Work in the area of vaccines increased considerably due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Batches of vaccines are released following carefully co-ordinated quality testing by the OMCLs, under a programme run by the EDQM. Every batch of vaccine is tested by an OMCL before release to the European (EU/EEA) market, underlining the key role the network and the EDQM continue to play during the Covid-19 pandemic. Over 1 300 batches of Covid-19 vaccines (corresponding to roughly 4.5 billion doses) have been released and distributed throughout Europe and beyond since December 2020.

■ Medication is the most frequent intervention in a healthcare system. Activities concerning Resolution CM/Res(2020)3 on the implementation of pharmaceutical care for the benefit of patients and health services, drawn up by the European Committee on Pharmaceuticals and Pharmaceutical Care, took place in 2021, promoting the concept of pharmaceutical care in daily practice at national level.

■ The EDQM continued to run the Blood Proficiency Testing Scheme and the Blood Quality Management programmes to support blood establishments in implementing EU blood legislation, in addition to the standards laid out in the *Guide for the preparation, use and quality assurance of blood components* and Good Practice Guidelines. Both programmes have been co-funded by the European Commission and the EDQM since 2010.

■ In 2021, the EDQM published, in collaboration with the European Society of Human Reproduction and Embryology, the booklet "Fertility preservation: a guide for people facing an illness or life events that may affect their fertility".

■ Work on a new edition of the guide "Safe cosmetics for young children" (2012) continued in 2021, addressing the issue of endocrine disruptors and nanomaterials. The Network of Official Cosmetics Control Laboratories was also active in various areas, from sunscreens to nail varnish, perfume and skin-whitening products.

■ A new technical guide on paper and board and a document on multi-analyte methods for the determination of substances migrating from printing inks were released. They include specific instructions for business operators on how to avoid contaminants migrating from materials intended for food contact. A survey report on enamelware was also published on the EDQM website.

■ And finally, the year 2021 also saw a change in the leadership of the EDQM with the appointment of Dr Petra Doerr as Director, replacing Dr Susanne Keitel who successfully led the EDQM for 14 years.



20 years of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade: promoting equality and diversity in Serbia. **Nadia Cuk**, Deputy Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade; **Tobias Flessenkemper**, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Belgrade; **Ivica Dačić**, Speaker of the National Assembly of Serbia; and **Gordana Čomić**, Minister for Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue of Serbia (Belgrade, 19 May 2021)



Launch of the "Kiko" mural in the Valea Morilor Park, on the occasion of the International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (Chisinau, 4 June 2021)

Actions in the field and resource mobilisation

GLOBAL ACTIONS

■ The Cybercrime Programme Office of the Council of Europe (C-PROC), based in Romania, supported capacity building on cybercrime and electronic evidence through more than 400 activities in the Eastern Partnership region; South-East Europe and Turkey; the Southern Neighbourhood; Africa; the Asia-Pacific region; Latin America; and the Caribbean. In 2021, this resulted, *inter alia*, in increased consistency of legal frameworks of states in all regions of the world with the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime and rule of law, including data protection, requirements. Fiji, Trinidad and Tobago and Vanuatu were invited to accede to the Budapest Convention. Capacities for effective criminal-justice responses to the challenges of cybercrime, electronic evidence and crime proceeds online were considerably enhanced. By December 2021, C-PROC managed a portfolio of projects with a budget of over €38 million – co-funded by the European Union and voluntary contributions from other donors.

MEMBER STATES

■ In 2021, co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union's Directorate-General for Structural Reform Support was enhanced through a new framework agreement that includes eight new projects tailored to the needs of EU member states in the justice sector (projects in Finland, Croatia, Latvia and Slovenia) and in the field of anti-money laundering (projects in Estonia, Croatia, Portugal and Slovakia).

Eastern Europe

■ In the **Republic of Moldova**, four new projects in the field of criminal justice, prison and probation, elections, and equality and diversity were launched. The professional skills of prison staff on provision of healthcare and the capacities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs to deliver training on fundamental safeguards against ill-treatment were enhanced. The "Democratic school governance" methodological guide was piloted

in 50 schools. The Equality Council approved its first monitoring strategy, ensuring a systematic approach. Targeted video spots aiming to increase voters' participation in elections and awareness campaigns on child sexual abuse were disseminated on television and online. The first public digital multimedia platform for children, Zuper.md, and three documentaries on human rights and social issues were launched with Council of Europe support.

■ The year 2021 marked the 25th anniversary of the **Russian Federation** joining the Council of Europe, which was reflected in the exchange of letters between Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Sergey Lavrov. The project "HELP III in the Russian Federation" ended in December 2021.

■ In **Ukraine**, the priority areas in 2021 were the implementation of judicial reforms in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission, the support to internally displaced people and conflict-affected populations and further support to decentralisation reform. Support was also provided: towards ratification of the Istanbul Convention; regarding the effective implementation of European standards in combating ill-treatment; in the area of penitentiary reforms; in fighting money laundering; and in reforming the criminal-justice field by strengthening the key national institutions. The Council of Europe shared its legal and comparative cross-country expertise to further institutionalise the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. With Council of Europe support, the Office of the General Prosecutor signed a memorandum and established a working group with civil society media organisations to improve the protection of journalists. The work on data protection continued, to reform the legal framework in view of Ukraine's accession to Convention 108+ and to strengthen relevant public institutions. The Council of Europe continued its work for the protection of national minorities, inclusion of Roma and Travellers through facilitating their access to IDs, electoral assistance and civil participation.



Annual meeting of the Civil Monitoring Boards. **Victor Zaharia**, member of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of the Council of Europe; **Donche Boshkovski**, Unit for Co-operation in Police and Deprivation of Liberty of the Council of Europe; **George Tugushi**, lawyer and former Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia (Antalya, 21 October 2021)

Workshop on Istanbul Convention standards. **Nita Shala**, National Co-ordinator on Domestic Violence; **Frank Power**, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Pristina; and **Nita Bylykbashi Deliu**, Senior Project Officer, Council of Europe Office in Pristina (Pristina, 10 June 2021)

South Caucasus

■ In **Armenia**, the project “Support for the execution by Armenia of judgments in respect of Article 6 of the ECHR” was launched in January 2021. With the support provided by the Council of Europe, a new Criminal Code and Criminal Procedure Code were adopted and procedures for the evaluation of judges were revised based on CCJE Opinion No. 17 (2014). An extensive analysis on the compliance of the current legislation and policies in the field of biomedicine vis-à-vis the human rights standards enshrined in the Oviedo Convention was completed, preparing the ground for the possible ratification of the Oviedo Convention. Work also continued in the fields of countering cybercrime and corruption, hate speech and discrimination; protection of human rights in the armed forces, healthcare in prisons and local governance. Awareness raising and capacity building continued as regards standards in the field of violence against women. A course on probation for judges, candidate judges and prosecutors was introduced in the curriculums of the Justice Academy.

■ In **Azerbaijan**, country-specific projects, involving capacity- and institution-building activities, were conducted in the areas of AML/CFT, with a focus on asset-recovery systems, awareness raising on the standards in the field of violence against women and other gender equality and media freedom standards, improving court management based on CEPEJ tools and methodology, in addition to providing further support to the penitentiary reform, including supporting the

social reintegration of prisoners. With the involvement of civil society organisations through project grant awards, 16 ex-offenders started their own small family businesses, 122 released persons enhanced their professional skills and, by the end of the project, 11 of them had found jobs.

■ A memorandum of co-operation was signed on 30 November 2021 between the Georgian Internet Governance Forum and the Sector Economy and Economic Policy Committee of the Parliament of Georgia, facilitated by the Council of Europe. The mandate of the committee covers internet-related topics. The memorandum envisages membership of the committee in the Georgian Internet Governance Forum and close co-operation specifically in the field of internet-related legislative process. The memorandum enables all stakeholders to engage in dialogue, co-ordination and co-operation with the parliamentary committee responsible for the legislative process concerning the internet.

South-East Europe and Turkey

■ At the regional level, support for good governance and Roma and Traveller empowerment at a local level were further streamlined through the second phase of the ROMACTED EU–Council of Europe regional joint programme.



Launch of the Tunisian Prison Law Manual. Speech by **Fethi Jarray**, President of the National Authority for the Prevention of Torture (INPT), in the presence of **Hasna Ben Slimane**, Tunisian Minister of Justice. Project co-financed by the joint European Union/Council of Europe programmes “Ensuring sustainable democratic governance and human rights in the Southern Mediterranean” (South III Programme) and the “Support for independent bodies in Tunisia (PAII-T)” project (Tunis, 22 June 2021)

■ In **Albania**, a helpline was established to support the process of land property registration, providing valuable information and guidance to citizens, with a particular focus on women owners. Albanian courts were equipped with knowledge on the implementation of the unified methodology for data collection, prepared with the Council of Europe’s assistance, with the view to strengthen their efficiency and the quality of justice delivered to citizens. The anti-corruption and AML/CFT legislation was further improved with the adoption of the law on foreign jurisdictional relations, the law on notary and the Electoral Code’s by-laws prepared with the Council of Europe’s assistance.

■ In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, the launch of the first-ever citizens’ assembly as a means of building democratic engagement in Mostar was among the most noteworthy achievements. The City Council of Mostar adopted an action plan for the implementation of the recommendations made by the citizens. Tailor-made approaches remained the preferred course of action in various fields, including sentence management of violent and extremist prisoners; partnerships with civil society were a prominent feature of support to efforts against trafficking in human beings and discrimination. The new Action Plan for Bosnia and Herzegovina 2022-2025 was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in December.

■ In **Montenegro**, the new Code of Notary Ethics and the Code of Ethics of Court Interpreters and Translators were adopted with the support of the Council of Europe. Access to free legal aid services for disadvantaged and marginalised groups was also supported through the launch of the legal clinic on human rights. Following the adoption of the law on

civil partnership for same-sex couples, two by-laws supplementing and operationalising the latter were adopted, which resulted in the first LGBTI couples registering their relationships in municipal offices. The Council of Europe contributed to the improvement of the case management system, which resulted in reducing the time needed to collect the data on the investigated person or entity from different databases, thanks to a key feature which enables the quick filtering of financial transactions and facilitates analytical processing.

■ In **North Macedonia**, the harmonisation of 13 laws with the law on prevention and protection from discrimination was supported through relevant recommendations provided by Council of Europe expertise, while the government adopted the amendments to the law on registry concerning legal gender recognition. More than 300 000 people were reached with the awareness-raising campaign for free legal aid, with a special focus on women, children and vulnerable groups. Some 1 984 education officials were trained on identifying and referring potential child trafficking victims.

■ In **Serbia**, with the support of the Council of Europe, the Rules of Procedure of the High Judicial Council and the State Prosecutorial Council were revised, providing judges and prosecutors with the possibility to report undue influence from politicians, the media or business. The recommendations provided within the framework of the legislative expertise delivered by the Council of Europe on the amended anti-discrimination law and on the new law on gender equality were taken into account. In the area of education, the Council of Europe RFCDC was included in the Strategy of Education Development 2030, which seeks a long-term positive impact on the entire education system.



Workshop on the newly adopted criminal legislation of Armenia. **Martina Schmidt**, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Yerevan; **Gayane Hovhannisyan**, Senior Project Officer, project on criminal justice; and trainers of the Academy of Justice of Armenia and School of Advocates of Armenia (Aghveran, 1 October 2021)



Conference “Independent bodies serving citizens: strengthening human rights in Tunisia”, winners of the photo competition “Let your eyes do the talking”, in the presence of **André Parant**, Ambassador of France to Tunisia; **Marcus Cornaro**, Ambassador of the European Union to Tunisia; and **Pilar Morales**, Head of the Council of Europe Office in Tunisia (Tunis, 26 May 2021)

■ In **Turkey**, recommendations on legislation and institutional policies were provided by the Council of Europe with the aim of fostering adequate reasoning of judgments and of developing good practices or introducing structural reforms to better harmonise the application of standards set by the European Court of Human Rights. Legislative changes aimed at strengthening the efficiency of Civil Monitoring Boards were adopted by the Grand National Assembly in June, and the “Road map for a reformed administrative justice system” was finalised in co-operation with institutional stakeholders. The Council of Europe’s areas of intervention were widened, with the launch of new projects on topics such as the effectiveness of family courts, women’s access to justice and supporting the effective implementation of the Constitutional Court’s judgments in the field of fundamental rights.

NON-MEMBER STATES

■ In Kosovo,* thanks to support provided by the Council of Europe, court services are being digitalised. For instance, a new online service to apply for criminal record certificates was developed and is now used by citizens, increasing their access to justice, especially given the Covid-19 pandemic. The second GRETA assessment of the compliance with the standards of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings was conducted, with the aim of providing a baseline for more in-depth interventions by the Council of Europe. It is expected to contribute to improved coherence and synergies with other ongoing and/or planned activities in the field of anti-trafficking. The local No Hate Speech campaign “Block the hatred. Share the love” was launched. The Committee of Ministers took note of the updated overview of co-operation activities in Kosovo* in December.

Southern neighbourhood

■ In the southern Mediterranean, the Council of Europe delivered a baseline study on the media’s treatment of violence against women in **Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia**, which will serve as a basis for discussions between media representatives, institutions in charge of combating violence against women, and civil society organisations on a regional approach to ensure better media coverage of the issue. The privacy impact assessment software developed by the French data protection authority (CNIL) was translated into Arabic and is being uploaded to the CNIL website. This will enable relevant data protection professionals to resort to a recognised tool when carrying out data protection impact assessments.

■ In **Tunisia**, support for independent bodies continued, including in the state of emergency, to promote their efficiency in exercising their constitutional and statutory functions. Support was provided to the Independent High Authority for Elections by the Venice Commission, to the creation of the Online Resource Centre for Regulation of the High Independent Authority for Audiovisual Communication, Self-Regulation and Media Education and to the National Authority for the Protection of Personal Data with a “Data protection awareness toolkit for the health sector” made available. The Council of Europe supported the National Authority for the Prevention of Torture for the creation of the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture. Moreover, a strong emphasis



Workshop organised in the framework of the project “Enhancement of Human Rights and Health-Care Support to the Penitentiary System”, funded by the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia (Tsinandali, 18 November 2021)



Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe **Bjørn Berge** at the launch of the European Union/Council of Europe joint project “Supporting the Effective Implementation of Turkish Constitutional Court Judgments in the Field of Fundamental Rights” (Strasbourg, 23 September 2021)

was put on combating trafficking in human beings, culminating in the launch of the National Referral Mechanism for the victims of trafficking. The Congress’ support resulted in an evaluation by Tunisia’s 350 communities of the decentralisation process launched in 2018, with recommendations on its improvement and expert support to the revision of the local taxation system. Significant support was also provided in the fields of the judiciary, prisons, access to information and fighting gender-based violence.

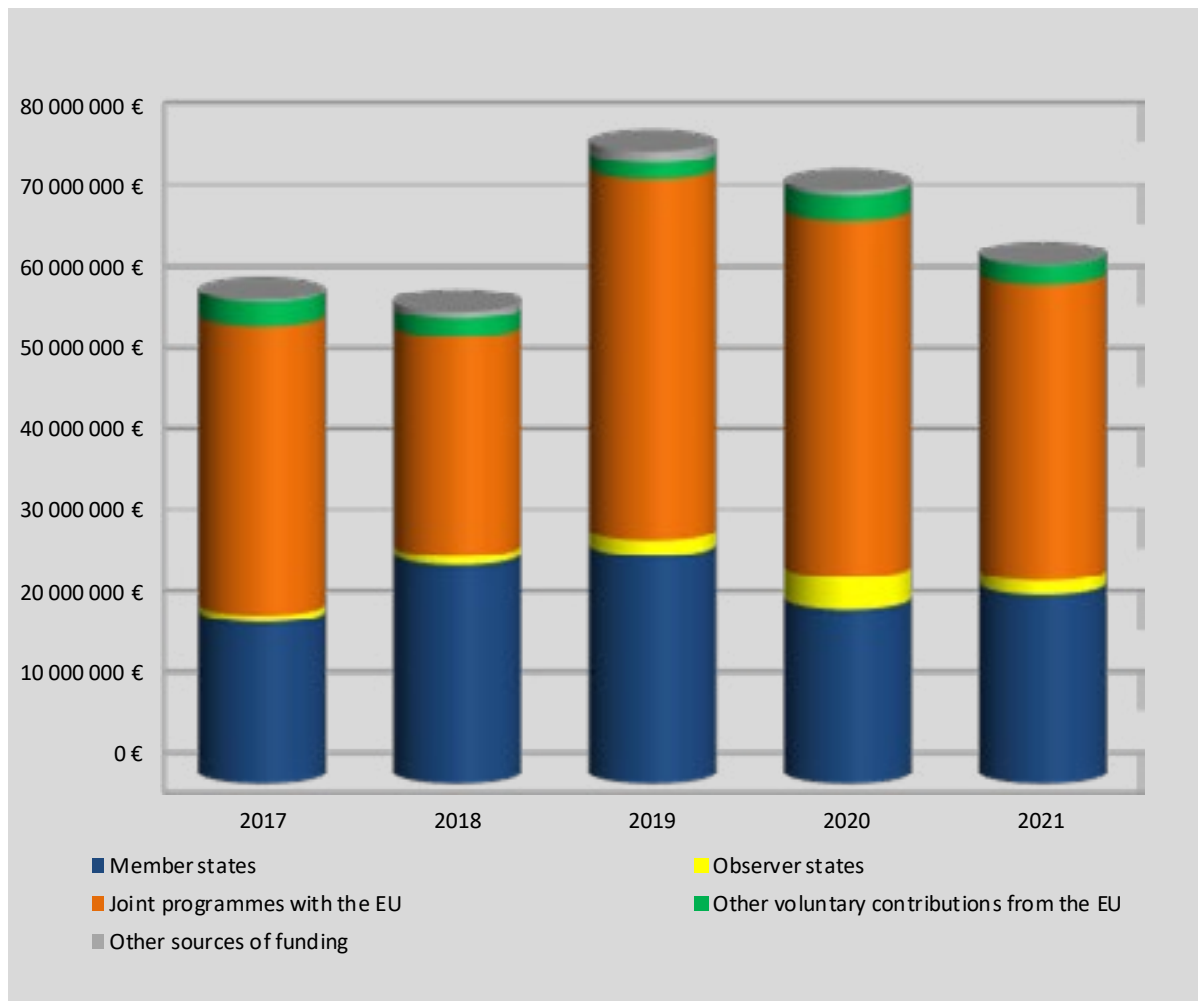
■ In Morocco, support was provided to a large-scale capacity-building programme initiated by the Presidency of the Public Prosecutor’s Office of Morocco to enable judges and prosecutors to get better knowledge of the international and Moroccan human rights protection systems. The Corruption Risk Assessment of the Moroccan banking sector prepared in close cooperation with Moroccan stakeholders was finalised, with the aim of helping relevant institutions to better understand corruption threats and vulnerabilities at the national level. Expert support was provided by the Congress with a view to revising the legislative framework on the three levels of territorial governance. The Council of Europe started the implementation of the EU–Council of Europe Joint Programme aiming at supporting the National Preventive Mechanism against Torture and the development of the key role of parliament in Morocco.

Central Asia

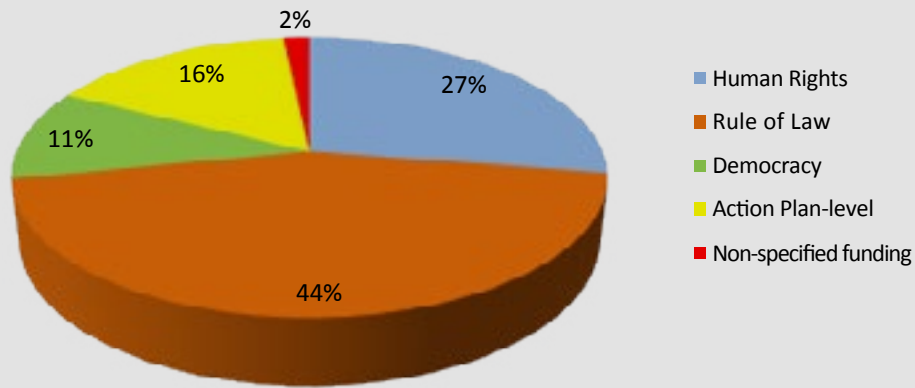
■ In Central Asia, the Council of Europe continued the implementation of the EU–Council of Europe Central Asia Rule of Law Joint Programme. In 2021, the Venice Commission adopted three opinions in respect of Kazakhstan and one in respect of Kyrgyzstan. Some 37 legal professionals from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan were trained to become HELP national tutors and implement HELP courses to other professionals on the ground. Legal expertise was provided to bring the national legislation of Kazakhstan into compliance with Council of Europe standards in the field of whistle-blower protection. Continued support is being provided to Uzbekistan in the establishment of its anti-corruption agency. The Kyrgyz authorities were advised on advantages and potential challenges of Kyrgyz accession to the Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND DONOR RELATIONS

Extra budgetary receipts 2021



2021 EXTRA BUDGETARY RESOURCES PER PILLAR OF THE PROGRAMME AND BUDGET



EXTRA BUDGETARY RESOURCES PER PILLAR	Euros
HUMAN RIGHTS	17 537 925.82
RULE OF LAW	28 423 668.75
DEMOCRACY	6 720 816.14
ACTION PLAN-LEVEL	10 174 005.5
NON-SPECIFIED FUNDING	1 077 158.00
GRAND TOTAL	63 933 574.21



61st meeting of the Committee of Legal Advisers
on Public International Law (Strasbourg, 24 September 2021)

Public international law

www.coe.int/en/web/cahdi

The Council of Europe facilitates exchanges and co-ordinates views of its member states in the field of public international law through the Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI), an intergovernmental committee which brings together the legal advisers of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe, the five observer states to the Council of Europe, five further observer states to the CAHDI and 11 participating international organisations. In 2021, over 100 experts participated in each of the two CAHDI meetings, one held by videoconference and the other in hybrid format.

■ In its flagship function as the European observatory of reservations to international treaties, the CAHDI examines reservations and declarations subject to objection in international treaties prepared within the Council of Europe, but also concerning United Nations conventions. This activity, involving 29 reservations and/or declarations in 2021, contributes to an important dialogue at the international level and has an impact on the subsequent actions of states with regard to their respective reservations and/or declarations.

■ One of the main roles of the CAHDI is to provide legal advice to the Committee of Ministers. In this respect, the CAHDI prepared three legal opinions on the following recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: Recommendation 2191 (2020) "Investment migration"; Recommendation 2197 (2021) "Protection of victims of arbitrary displacement"; Recommendation 2201 (2021) "Human rights violations in Belarus require an international investigation".

■ The CAHDI also exchanged views on the immunities of states and international organisations, and diplomatic and consular immunities, including in Covid-19-related situations.

■ An Expert Workshop "Non-legally binding agreements in international law", organised by the German Federal Foreign Office and the University of Potsdam within the framework of the German Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, was held on 26 March 2021, on the occasion of the 60th CAHDI meeting. In addition, the CAHDI published a compilation of the proceedings of the workshop.

■ Over the year, the CAHDI continued and strengthened its co-operation and collaboration with international organisations and international tribunals. It held exchanges of views with Mr Robert Spano, President of the European Court of Human Rights; Mr Emmanuel Decaux and Mr Erkki Kourula, President and Vice President of the OSCE Court of Conciliation and Arbitration; Mr Peter Lewis, Registrar of the International Criminal Court; Ms Joan E. Donoghue, President of the International Court of Justice disputes and Mr Mahmoud D. Hmoud, Chair of the International Law Commission.

■ Furthermore, the CAHDI participated as an observer in the work of the ad hoc group 47+1 on accession of the EU to the European Convention on Human Rights.



Press briefing with **Daniel Hölzgen**, Director of Communications and Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Antisemitic, Anti-Muslim and other forms of religious intolerance and hate crimes, within the framework of the session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 22 June 2021)



Jeremy Moakes, Head of the Digital Communications and Editorial Division, in the Council of Europe TV studio (Strasbourg, 26 October 2021)

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 2021.

ONLINE AND AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

As part of the ongoing organisational reform and following a feasibility assessment to ensure close collaboration and working methods, at the beginning of September, the Directorate of Communications agreed to transfer responsibility for maintenance of the TV and radio studios and for audiovisual production to Interpreting, Travel, Events and Multimedia. A review of social media accounts throughout the Organisation was also undertaken and recommendations made for changes to be made, which were presented to the Deputy Secretary General.

Three new sections were created on the European Convention on Human Rights Impact [website](#) – Human Rights and Health, Freedom from Violence against Women and Human Rights and the Environment in five languages (English, French, German, Russian and Turkish). Three animation films on these themes were produced, with voiceovers in English and French and subtitles in German, Russian and Turkish. New case histories were also added to the website.

Having created a civil society portal in response to a decision of the Committee of Ministers in consultation with the Private Office and MAEs, DC undertook an extensive re-write of the proposed content. An invitation was issued to the Permanent Representations for feedback at the GR-DEM in September.

Some 170 individual MSA requests for web, social media, audiovisual projects and editorial support were processed and closed during 2021.

DC collaborated closely and intensely with the Directorate for Information Technology to prepare the migration to the new Liferay DXP platform.

DC contributed to the Athens Democracy Forum in September by supplying a promotional film, visuals and social media support, presented the Council of Europe's hub at the Fundamental Rights Forum in October, and in November implemented a comprehensive social media package for the Day to mark Elimination of Violence Against Women, which was developed together with DGII.

DC continued its efforts to professionalise communication practice in the Organisation, helping several teams to construct communication plans. This was especially useful for new teams, such as Elections and Participatory Democracy and the Observatory on History Teaching.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

The Organisation's identity and values were promoted among various target groups through public relations activities and events, in particular on the occasion of the Strasbourg races in August, the European Law Students Association (ELSA) Rule of Law Conference in Vienna in November and the Frankfurt Book Fair in October, which attracted 73 500 people. However, numerous events for the general public and specialists had to be cancelled or postponed again in 2021.



36th René Cassin advocacy competition for law students, organised by the University of Strasbourg Faculty of Law and the René Cassin Foundation with the support of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 30 September 2021)

■ The Covid-19 pandemic situation also strongly impacted visitor and awareness-raising programmes. More than 6 200 people (200 groups) took part in Council of Europe study tours and guided visits in Strasbourg and online. Over 100 customised lectures were given during personalised tours. To enable people to explore the Organisation's architecture, functioning and achievements, virtual guided visit videos of five Council buildings were prepared in German, Italian and Russian, supplemented by a sixth building, the European Audiovisual Observatory, in three languages. In addition, visits to the Palais de l'Europe and the Human Rights Building were prepared in French sign language and international sign language. An educational game on the Organisation's functioning and achievements is also being prepared for those wishing to visit the European district.

■ The partnership with the ELSA network continued, with the holding of the ninth Human Rights Moot Court Competition in English on the European Convention on Human Rights: 66 teams from 24 European countries submitted their arguments in a fictitious case on data protection and the protection of private life in a pandemic. The final took place online in May 2021 and 18 teams took part. ELSA Day focused on the theme of censorship and the internet and the work of the Council of Europe was presented at 40 events in 15 countries. Several webinars were held and customised videos presented within the ELSA network.

■ Commercial publications highlighted the Organisation's priorities, with in particular several educational reference guides and the publication of Italian, Croatian, Ukrainian, Portuguese, Latvian and Irish versions of the "Introduction to the European Convention on Human Rights".

■ The online publications platforms continued to extend their range of digital products, with over 2 400 files available in pdf and epub formats. Material for the general public (leaflets, posters, documents for teachers, etc.) can all be consulted and downloaded free of charge from edoc.coe.int. Other publications can be ordered online at book.coe.int, the online bookshop, where excerpts from books can also be found. The two sites totalled more than 643 000 visits over the year and there were more than 30 000 subscribers to the publication information. Also, over 2 500 digitised titles are available on Google Play, with more than 1 060 000 books consulted in 2021.

■ New information material (leaflets, booklets, posters, exhibition panels, etc.) was designed and promoted through the contacts database (nearly 15 000 addressees) and on partner websites. In particular, a new booklet entitled "The European Convention on Human Rights in practice – Teaching resources" was published and will be translated into other languages. A new tool for presenting the Organisation and its achievements is also being prepared in PowerPoint format. Twenty or so information leaflets were revised or translated. In addition, 135 reproduction or translation agreements were finalised.

■ The visual identity was strengthened in the Organisation, with harmonised templates and the revision of the visual identity manual for general or event-related media and through the use of a revised joint identity with the European Union. A range of new items was developed to give the Organisation a strong visual presence in field offices and videoconferences.



Technicians in the Council of Europe TV studio
(Strasbourg, 11 October 2021)

2021 contributions of Council of Europe member states (in euros)

MEMBER STATES	
Albania	534 839.71
Andorra	262 488.17
Armenia	537 214.84
Austria	6 014 714.06
Azerbaijan	1 108 525.49
Belgium	8 455 280.90
Bosnia and Herzegovina	603 172.48
Croatia	1 157 613.76
Cyprus	556 754.29
Czech Republic	3 681 800.74
Denmark	5 004 627.18
Estonia	552 907.91
France	40 296 966.76
Georgia	582 201.97
Germany	38 254 163.00
Greece	3 440 993.73
Hungary	2 493 884.73
Iceland	557 600.71
Ireland	4 802 464.44
Italy	37 323 106.45
Latvia	638 268.46
Liechtenstein	400 434.26
Lithuania	893 084.93
Luxembourg	1 273 740.12
Malta	422 232.11
Republic of Moldova	378 942.58
Monaco	380 080.67
Montenegro	540 735.05
Netherlands	12 004 393.45
North Macedonia	537 858.88
Norway	5 797 151.30
Poland	9 189 556.66
Portugal	3 513 393.99
Romania	4 225 448.71
Russian Federation	33 949 208.77
San Marino	148 285.69
Serbia	1 207 912.78
Slovak Republic	1 736 952.11
Slovenia	903 709.02
Spain	19 938 979.32
Sweden	7 743 479.58
Switzerland	9 401 536.08
Turkey	15 477 957.61
Ukraine	4 112 713.77
United Kingdom	34 689 796.20
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	330 813 359.80

2021 voluntary contributions to the Council of Europe (in euros)

MEMBER STATES			
Norway	6 963 046.83	Luxembourg	126 870.00
Germany	3 607 465.00	Russian Federation	123 047.18
Sweden	2 264 043.04	Czech Republic	114 862.39
Human Rights Trust Fund ¹	2 200 000.00	Cyprus	92 555.03
Finland	1 286 737.92	Turkey	52 109.71
Switzerland	970 094.03	Romania	50 000.00
Netherlands	719 200.00	Slovenia	36 500.00
United Kingdom	636 682.67	Liechtenstein	33 635.74
Denmark	600 058.17	Andorra	21 300.00
European Economic Area ² (EEA)	595 189.58	Malta	20 000.00
France	560 434.93	Estonia	14 000.00
Hungary	530 000.00	Armenia	12 500.00
Belgium	357 936.00	Azerbaijan	10 270.98
Ireland	275 500.00	Lithuania	7 000.00
Portugal	232 500.00	Serbia	7 000.00
Spain	200 000.00	Iceland	6 219.09
Italy	190 761.45	Slovak Republic	5 000.00
Austria	155 000.00	Greece	4 000.00
Poland	144 106.75	Croatia	2 000.00
Monaco	130 000.00	Republic of Moldova	527.09
		TOTAL MEMBER STATES	23 358 153.58

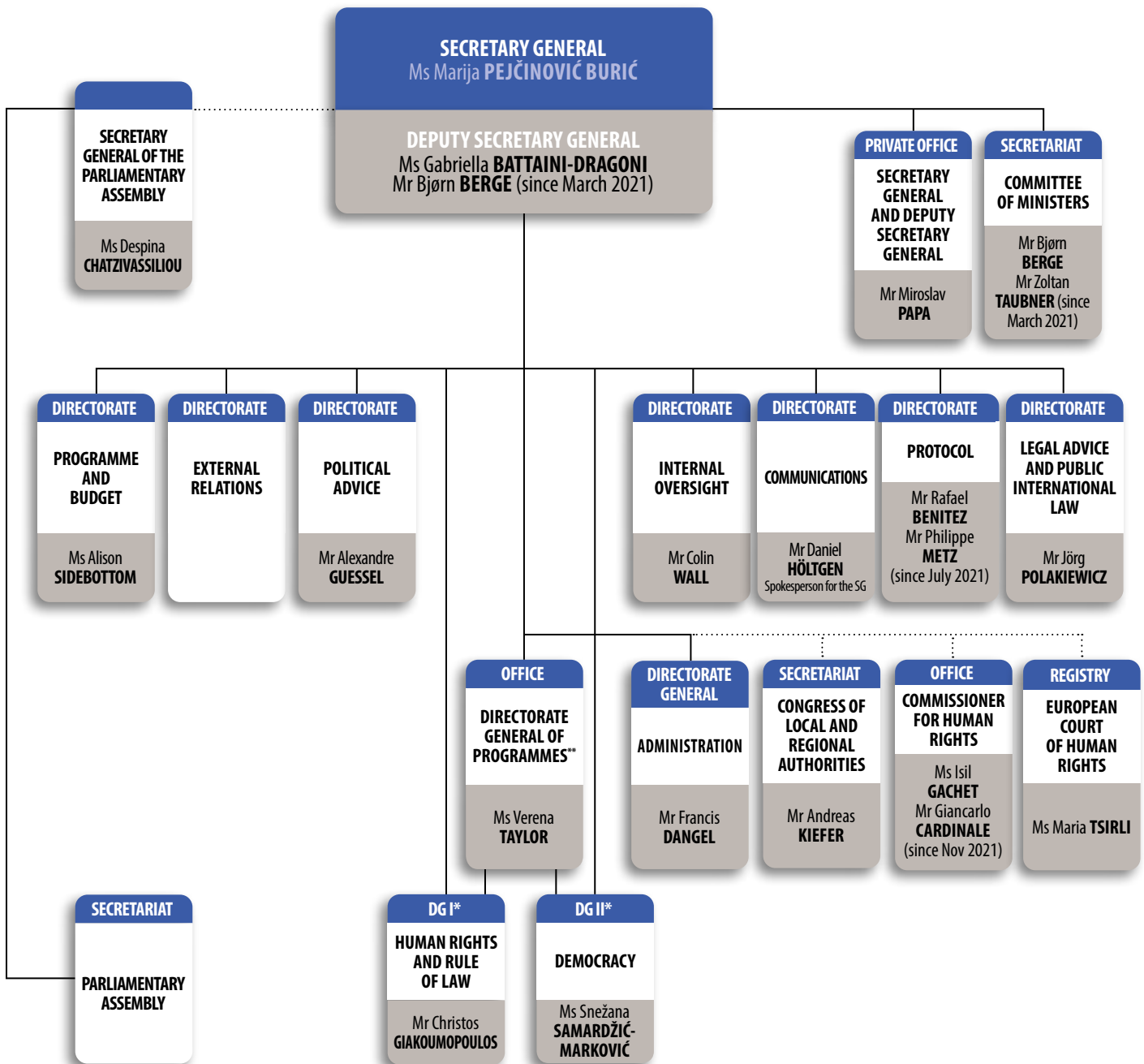
1. Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom
2. Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway

OBSERVER STATES	
United States of America	1 355 273.16
Japon	221 763.01
Canada	5 000.00
TOTAL OBSERVER STATES	1 582 036.17

EUROPEAN UNION	
Joint Programmes	36 506 094.46
Other Voluntary Contributions	2 409 780.00
TOTAL EUROPEAN UNION	38 915 874.46

OTHERS	
Australia	20 010.00
Vaclav Havel Library	15 000.00
Française des jeux	10 000.00
Moscow State Linguistic University	10 000.00
Republic of Korea	10 000.00
Charta 77 Foundation	7 500.00
Faroe Islands	5 000.00
TOTAL AUTRES	77 510.00
GRAND TOTAL 2021	63 933 574.21

Organisation chart of the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe in 2021



* DGI DGII report to the Secretary General

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

This publication presents the work carried out in 2021 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 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.