

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Together for
Human Rights,
Democracy and
the Rule of Law



1946

19 SEPTEMBER UNIVERSITY OF ZURICH

"Let Europe arise!" Speech of Winston Churchill

*"We must build a kind of United States of Europe [...]
The first practical step will be to form a Council of Europe. (...)
I say to you: Let Europe arise!"*



Listen to the speech

1949

5 MAY LONDON

Signing of the Statute of the Council of Europe

The Treaty of London is signed by Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, founding members of the Council of Europe.



Read the Statute

Founding members: Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, The Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom



8 AUGUST STRASBOURG

First meeting of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Learn more about the Committee of Ministers

1949

10 AUGUST STRASBOURG

First meeting of the Consultative Assembly (now the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe)



Learn more about the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Accessions: Greece, Türkiye



1950

4 NOVEMBER ROME

Signing of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)



Learn more about the European Convention on Human Rights and its positive impact

Impact of the European Convention on Human Rights

Examples

 RIGHT TO A FAIR TRIAL	 RIGHT TO A LIBERTY AND SECURITY	 FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY AND HUMAN TRAFFICKING	 RIGHT TO EQUALITY AND FREEDOM FROM DISCRIMINATION	 RIGHT TO FAMILY LIFE
 FREEDOM OF SPEECH	 FREEDOM FROM TORTURE AND ILL-TREATMENT	 RIGHT TO PRIVACY	 RIGHT TO PROPERTY	 RIGHT TO LIFE
 FREEDOM OF RELIGION AND BELIEF	 FREEDOM OF ASSEMBLY	 HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT	 FREEDOM FROM VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMAN	 HUMAN RIGHTS AND HEALTH

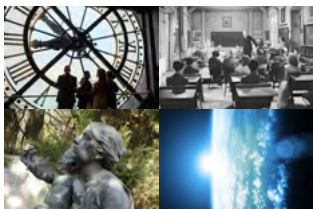
Accessions: Iceland, Germany



1954

Celebrating cultural diversity

The European Cultural Convention is opened for signature, promoting mutual understanding and cultural diversity.



Learn more about the European Cultural Convention

1955

9 DECEMBER STRASBOURG

A flag for Europe — Adoption of the European flag by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

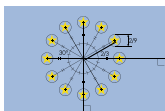
Created by the Council of Europe in 1955 the European flag was also adopted by the European Parliament in 1983 and subsequently by all European Union institutions.

The twelve yellow stars against a blue background have become a common symbol of European co-operation.

Selection of proposed flags that were not chosen



Video – History of the European flag



Learn more about the European flag Exhibition

"I see these twelve stars as a reminder that the world could become a better place if, from time to time, we had the courage to look up at the stars."

Václav Havel, President of Czechoslovakia (later President of the Czech Republic), speech made to the Parliamentary Assembly, 10 May 1990.



1956

The Council of Europe Development Bank begins its work in Paris

The Council of Europe Resettlement Fund (now the Council of Europe Development Bank) is set up to provide support for social projects.

Accession: Austria



Learn more about the Council of Europe Development Bank

1957

Towards local democracy

First session of the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe (now the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities).



Learn more about the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

1959

Establishment of the European Court of Human Rights

First members of the European Court of Human Rights elected by the Council of Europe Consultative Assembly (now the Parliamentary Assembly).



Learn more about the European Court of Human Rights

The Human Rights Building, home of the European Court of Human Rights since 1995.



Virtual visit of the Human Rights Building

1961

18 OCTOBER TURIN

Safeguarding social rights

The European Social Charter is adopted in Turin, Italy, safeguarding citizens' economic and social rights.



Learn more about the European Social Charter and its work today



European Social Charter - YouTube

Accession: Cyprus



1963

Accession: Switzerland



1964

5 MAY

Europe Day

The Committee of Ministers decides that 5 May, the anniversary of the founding of the Council of Europe, should be celebrated as Europe Day.



Creation of the European Pharmacopoeia

The European Pharmacopoeia is the primary source of official quality standards for medicines and their ingredients in Europe. It is published by the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and HealthCare (EDQM).



Learn more about the European Pharmacopoeia

1965

Accession: Malta



1969

12 DECEMBER

Greece withdraws

Following a military coup, Greece withdraws from the Council of Europe. Greece rejoins in 1974.

1972

Un hymne pour l'Europe

The Council of Europe chooses an excerpt from Beethoven's "Ode to Joy", the fourth movement of the composer's ninth symphony, as the European anthem.



Listen to the anthem
(orchestra version)



Learn more about the European
anthem and its adaptations
in various musical styles

1972

The European Youth Centre opens in Strasbourg

A second European Youth Centre opens in Budapest, Hungary in 1995.



Virtual visit of the
European Youth Centre



1976

Accession: Portugal



1977

Opening of the Palais de l'Europe

Inauguration by French President, Giscard d'Estaing of the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, France, the home of the Council of Europe.



Virtual visit of the Palais
de l'Europe



Accession: Spain



1978

Accession: Liechtenstein



1979

A first for nature

Opening of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. It is the first international treaty to protect wildlife and the natural environment.



Learn more about the Bern Convention

1980

The Pompidou Group for drug policies

The Pompidou Group, a European co-operation platform to combat drug abuse and illicit trafficking in drugs, becomes an enlarged partial agreement of the Council of Europe.



Learn more about the Pompidou Group

1981

Protecting privacy

The Council of Europe is a pioneer in data protection with the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to the Processing of Personal Data (Convention 108+).



Learn more about the Convention and data protection

1983

Towards a death-penalty free Europe

Opening of Protocol No.6 to the European Convention on Human Rights abolishing the death penalty and making it a precondition for Council of Europe membership.



Learn more about death penalty in Europe and worldwide

1987

First Council of Europe Cultural Route (the Santiago de Compostela Pilgrim Routes)



Explore 43 cultural routes

A watchdog against torture

Opening of the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, allowing specialised teams to visit places of detention throughout Europe.



The European Convention for the Prevention of Torture

1988

Accession: San Marino



1989

1 JUNE

First woman to take office as Secretary General

Catherine Lalumière becomes the ninth Secretary General and the first woman to hold the post.



9 NOVEMBER

Fall of the Berlin Wall – Germany



Accession: Finland



1989

Making sports safe

Opening of the Anti-Doping Convention, the first of three Council of Europe conventions relating to sport. This was followed, in 2014, by the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions and, in 2016, by the Convention on an Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events.



Learn more about the Council of Europe's work in sport

1990

Constitutional expertise

The Venice Commission, formally known as the European Commission for Democracy through Law, is established as an advisory body of independent constitutional experts. Its opinions help states prepare democratic reforms.



Learn more about the Venice Commission

Accession: Hungary



Making criminals pay

Opening of the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds for crime, boosting international co-operation in the investigation of crime and the recovery of criminal assets.



Learn more about Moneyval

1991

Accession: Poland



1992

Giving a voice to regional and minority languages

Opening of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.



Accession: Bulgaria



Supporting European film production

Opening of the European Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production to promote independent filmmaking, with financial support for feature-length films, animation films and documentaries.

Launch of the European Audiovisual Observatory

The European Audiovisual Observatory is created to collect and distribute information about the various audiovisual markets in Europe and their financing.



Learn more about Eurimages



Virtual visit of the European Audiovisual Observatory – Villa Schutzenberger

1993

8 OCTOBER VIENNA

1st Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe



1st Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe – Final Declaration and Action Plan

Accessions: Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Czechia, Slovak Republic, Romania



1994

Fighting racism and discrimination

The first meeting of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) takes place. The Commission specialises in fighting all forms of racism, discrimination, xenophobia, antisemitism and intolerance.

**all different
all equal**



Learn more about ECRI

Accession: Andorra



1995

Protecting national minorities against discrimination

Opening of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.



Learn more about the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

Accessions: Latvia, Albania, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, North Macedonia



1996

Children's rights in court proceedings

Opening of the European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights, reinforcing children's protection and giving them the right to be heard and to express their views in court proceedings affecting them.



European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights

Accessions: Russian Federation, Croatia



1997

10 OCTOBER STRASBOURG

2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe



2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe – Final Declaration and Action Plan

1999

First Commissioner for Human Rights

Establishment of the Commissioner for Human Rights, an independent and impartial non-judicial institution whose mission is to promote awareness of and respect for human rights in member states.



Learn more about the Commissioner for Human Rights



Álvaro Gil-Robles,
first Human Rights Commissioner

Protection against corruption

Opening of the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption, criminalising corrupt practices and improving international co-operation for the prosecution of the perpetrators.

Opening of the Civil Law Convention on Corruption, bringing in international rules, asking governments to provide remedies in their domestic law for anyone who has suffered damage as a result of corruption.



Accession: Georgia



Learn more about the fight against corruption

2001

Combating cybercrime

Opening of the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, the first and only international legal treaty to tackle cybercrime



Accessions: Armenia, Azerbaijan



Cybercrime Convention explained

2002

Accession:
Bosnia and Herzegovina



2003

Accession:
Serbia



2004

Accession:
Monaco



2005

16 MAY WARSAW

3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe



3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe

Combating human trafficking

Opening of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, pledging assistance for victims, effective investigation and prosecution and stronger international co-operation.



Learn more about human trafficking



Video – Stop Human Trafficking

Countering terrorism

Opening of the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, complemented by the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism.



Learn more about the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism

2007

Protecting children against sex abuse

Opening of the Lanzarote Convention, the first pan-European treaty to make child sex abuse in the home, in the family or abroad a criminal offence.



Learn more about the Lanzarote Convention



Accession: Montenegro



Video – "The Lake" - encouraging young people to break the silence on sexual abuse

2008

Opening of the Agora building

Inauguration of the Agora, the Council of Europe's newest building in Strasbourg, France.



Virtual visit of the
Agora Building

2011

Making drugs safe

Opening of the Medicrime Convention, aimed at stopping the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes that threaten public health.



Learn more about the
Medicrime Convention

Ending violence against women

Opening of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the Istanbul Convention).



The four pillars of the
Istanbul Convention:
prevention, protection,
prosecution and
co-ordinated policies

2017

Protecting heritage

Opening of the Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property, the first international treaty to stop crimes that are destroying the world's cultural heritage such as theft, intentional damage, unlawful excavation and illegal sales.



Learn more about
cultural property

2020

Promoting quality history education

The Observatory on History Teaching in Europe is created to promote quality history education for a better understanding of democracy among young people.



Learn more about the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe

2022

Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

Following the suspension of Russia's right of representation on 25 February, the Russian Federation is excluded from the Council of Europe on 16 March 2022.



2023

16-17 MAY REYKJAVIK

United around our values — 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe

Standing united against Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.



Reykjavik Declaration

Building an international compensation mechanism for Ukraine

The Register of Damage Caused by the Russian Federation's Aggression against Ukraine is created. It is the first step towards the creation of an international compensation mechanism for the victims of Russian aggression.

The second component of the compensation mechanism, the Convention establishing an International Claims Commission for Ukraine, was opened for signature in The Hague in December 2025.



About the Enlarged Partial Agreement on the Register of Damage

2024

Safeguarding Rights and Democracy in the AI Era

Opening of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.



Learn more about the Council of Europe and AI

2025

Protecting Lawyers

Opening of the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer



25 JUNE STRASBOURG

Accountability and justice for Ukraine

Signature of the Agreement between the Council of Europe and Ukraine on the Establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. This tribunal will investigate, prosecute and try individuals who bear the greatest responsibility for the crime of aggression against Ukraine.



Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine

Democracy is our first line of defence

Launch of the New Democratic Pact for Europe, a strategic and innovative initiative, based on broad consultation, aimed at addressing the decline of democracy, restoring trust in institutions, and strengthening democratic resilience in Europe.



Learn more about the New Democratic Pact



**This brochure presents
the work of the Council of
Europe and its essential role
in protecting Human Rights,
Democracy and the Rule
of Law in everyday life.**

It traces the key milestones of its
action and highlights its main
achievements since its creation,
in an informative, illustrated
and concise format.

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.