THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

PARTNERS IN PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS AND DEMOCRACY

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Council of Europe member states

Member states of the Council of Europe and the European Union

The Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) are separate organisations which have different, yet complementary, roles.

The Council of Europe works together with its 46 member states to strengthen human rights and democracy across the continent and beyond.

The EU brings its 27 member states closer together both economically and politically by harmonising legislation and practices in certain policy areas.

All EU member states are also members of the Council of Europe, and the EU shares the fundamental values which underpin all of the Council of Europe's work.

The two organisations work closely together in areas where they have common interests, notably in promoting human rights and democracy across Europe and in neighbouring regions.

Co-operation between the European Union and the Council of Europe allows each organisation to benefit from the other's specific strengths, thereby supporting each other's work.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S 46 MEMBER STATES

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

THE EUROPEAN UNION'S 27 MEMBER STATES

Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden.

CO-OPERATION IN PRACTICE

REGULAR HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL DIALOGUE

In recent years, the regular high-level consultations between the Council of Europe and the EU have covered issues including political developments in Russia, Türkiye and Ukraine, as well as constitutional changes in EU member states and the situation of the Roma people across Europe.

Closer co-operation has also developed between the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, on the one hand, and the EU's European Parliament and Committee of the Regions on the other.

Day-to-day contact between Council of Europe and EU officials has intensified, especially in areas where the EU is becoming more active and Council of Europe standards already exist – including anti-discrimination, trafficking in human beings, children's rights, violence against women, the independence and efficiency of the judiciary, corruption, money laundering, cybercrime and data protection.

The two organisations also regularly liaise on issues where the EU has an interest but a less formal policy role, such as freedom of the media and freedom of expression, including Internet governance.

The European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna often joins forces with the Council of Europe, notably through regular sharing of information and joint publications.

CO-ORDINATION ON THE GROUND

The Council of Europe and the EU both have offices in many European capitals. These offices typically enjoy close political contact and support each other's work in various ways – most notably in countries of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, including Azerbaijan and Türkiye, for example, where many joint Council of Europe/ EU co-operation programmes are under way.

The Council of Europe Liaison Office in Brussels and the EU Delegation to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg also help to strengthen co-operation and partnership between the two organisations.

DIFFERENT FORMS OF CO-OPERATION

PROMOTING EUROPEAN STANDARDS

Alongside its member states, the EU as a whole is legally bound by a number of Council of Europe conventions and takes part in further developing such agreements. The EU encourages its member states – and third countries around the world – to sign up to and implement Council of Europe conventions including those on cybercrime, data protection and violence against women. This helps to develop and spread common European standards around the globe.

Under the EU's Lisbon Treaty, EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights – the Council of Europe's flagship convention – is a major step forward in the protection of human rights across the continent. It will allow citizens to challenge EU decisions at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg.

SHARING EXPERTISE

The Council of Europe's **Venice Commission**, or European Commission for Democracy through Law, advises governments in Europe and beyond on constitutional and legal reforms. The EU participates in the work of the Venice Commission and regularly makes reference to its opinions. Regular high-level and day-to-day contact between the EU and the Venice Commission has intensified in recent years, notably concerning constitutional developments in EU member states, such as Hungary, and non-EU members, including Türkiye and Ukraine.

Discussions are also under way on the EU's future participation in the Council of Europe's anti-corruption body **GRECO** (**Group of States against Corruption**). The United States and Belarus are already members of GRECO, which conducts regular assessments of its members' anti-corruption laws and practices.

Furthermore, data collection and analysis on the effectiveness of European legal systems carried out by the Council of Europe's **European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice** (or **CEPEJ**) is now regularly used by the EU for the purposes of its annual Justice Scoreboard.

The EU also takes part in a number of Council of Europe structures (called Partial Agreements) which allow a limited number of member countries to work together in specific areas. These include the **European Audiovisual Observatory**, the **European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines** and the **Pompidou Group**, which combats drug abuse and drug trafficking.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE

The Council of Europe has a number of different bodies, including the European Committee of Social Rights, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture (CPT) and the European Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), which monitor progress on specific human rights issues in individual countries.

The EU uses information gathered by the Council of Europe to help shape its foreign policy, including decisions on EU enlargement. The Council of Europe's monitoring work also helps to highlight issues which require attention within the EU itself.

JOINT PROGRAMMES

The Council of Europe and the European Commission run a wide range of joint programmes – which can be country-specific, regional or multilateral – to help raise standards of human rights and democracy across Europe and in neighbouring countries. A new agreement was signed in 2014, foreseeing a potential budget of up to €200 million over six years, to put these joint programmes on a more strategic and long-term basis.

Joint programmes support legal and institutional reform through many different activities – typically including training courses, workshops and seminars, expert reports and advice to governments, conferences, and publications – carried out in co-operation with the governments of the countries concerned.

Joint programmes represent the largest source of co-funding for Council of Europe projects to promote democratic stability in Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the South Caucasus and Türkiye, as well as North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia.

JOINT PROGRAMMES: SOME EXAMPLES

Human rights

Human rights and health care in prisons and other closed institutions in Georgia: this two-year €3 million project aims to improve the situation of detainees in Georgia through measures including new action plans on ill-treatment, health-care training sessions and guidelines for relevant staff and the development of a new mechanism for dealing with complaints from detainees with mental disorders.

Democracy

Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education in Türkiye: the programme (€6.1 million) aims to develop a new curriculum for secondary schools, including the publication of four manuals, outlining the main principles of democratic citizenship and human rights education as developed by the Council of Europe.

The rule of law

Strengthening the capacities of law enforcement and judiciary in fighting corruption in Serbia: this €1 million project aims to help prevent and tackle corruption in Serbia, helping to bring the Serbian justice sector in line with European standards. It includes a risk analysis of the possibilities for corruption in the judiciary and law enforcement, as well as a review of existing laws and proposals for improvements.

OTHER INITIATIVES

▬ Other joint Council of Europe/EU initiatives aim to promote and protect Europe's cultural diversity and participation in society.

▬ The two organisations co-operate to improve the situation of Roma people in society through support for European municipalities on Roma inclusion projects and a training programme for Roma mediators.

▬ The Intercultural Cities programme brings together a network of European cities to help manage cultural diversity and promote democratic participation. The Council of Europe-EU Youth Partnership aims to boost participation and social inclusion among young people in Europe, as well as to improve the recognition and quality of youth work.

▬ The European Day against the Death Penalty, the European Day of Languages, the European Day of Civil Justice, the European Heritage Days and the Cultural Routes programme are further examples of initiatives jointly managed by the Council of Europe and the EU.

Initially created by the Council of Europe in 1955, the European flag was later adopted by the European Union in 1985.

GBR

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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.

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