



## WHAT IS THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE?

Created in 1949, the Council of Europe is a political organisation which aims to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout the whole of Europe. With its headquarters in Strasbourg, France, the Council of Europe's 47 member states stretch across virtually the entire European continent.

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE MEMBER STATES

Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

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The debating chamber, "Palais de l'Europe"



PACE session

## THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

### Guardian of the Council of Europe's Fundamental Values

The Committee of Ministers is the Council of Europe's decision-making body and consists of the 47 member states' foreign ministers, or their permanent diplomatic representatives in Strasbourg. The Committee of Ministers decides Council of Europe policy and approves the Council's programme of activities and budget. It determines what action should be taken on recommendations from the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

## THE PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY

### The Political Driving Force

The Parliamentary Assembly is the political driving force behind the Council of Europe. Its 636 members or substitutes from the national parliaments of the 47 member states debate texts put forward for adoption. These texts or recommendations provide important guidelines for the Committee of Ministers, national governments and parliaments. The Assembly has initiated many international treaties, helping to create a Europe-wide system of legislation.



Congress of local and regional authorities session



The entrance hall, "Palais de l'Europe"

## THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

### The Watchdog of Grassroots Democracy

The Congress is a driving force in hastening the devolution of power to the local and regional tiers of government. It is composed of elected representatives of local and regional authorities of the 47 Council of Europe member states. It monitors the development of local and regional democracy, encourages political dialogue between national governments and territorial entities, and supports regional and local transfrontier cooperation.

## CONFERENCE OF INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (INGOs)

### Providing a Vital Link with Civil Society

The Conference includes some 400 international NGOs. It provides vital links between politicians and the public and brings the voice of civil society to the Council. The Council's work benefits extensively from the INGOs' expertise and their outreach to European citizens.



The Human Rights Building, Strasbourg



The "Palais de l'Europe", with the sculpture "Human Rights" by Mariano González Beltrán

## EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

### Protector of Fundamental Freedoms

The European Court of Human Rights, which sits in Strasbourg, is the permanent judicial body responsible for monitoring compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights. Its role is to ensure respect for the rights safeguarded by the Convention, to which the 47 member states of the Council of Europe are contracted. The Court is composed of a number of judges equal to that of the Contracting States.

## COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

### Advancing the Development of Human Rights-Based Democratic Cultures

The Commissioner is an independent institution and is responsible for promoting education, awareness and respect for human rights in member states and ensuring the full and effective compliance with the Council of Europe's standard-setting instruments. The Commissioner plays an essentially preventive role, performing different functions from those of the European Court of Human Rights and other treaty-based organisations. The Commissioner does not have executive powers.



The "Palais de l'Europe" entrance



The "Agora" Building



## THE SECRETARY GENERAL

### Leadership and Management of the Organisation

Elected by the Parliamentary Assembly for a five-year term, the Secretary General is responsible for the strategic planning and direction of the Council of Europe's work programme and budget and oversees the day-to-day management of the Organisation.

## EUROPEAN SYMBOLS

The European flag – a circle of 12 stars on a blue background - represents the union of the peoples of Europe. The flag was adopted in 1955 by the Committee of Ministers on the suggestion of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Since May 1986 the European flag has also been the official emblem of the European Union.

In 1972 the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted the European Anthem: a musical arrangement by Herbert von Karajan of the prelude to the Ode to Joy from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony. In 1985, it was adopted by EU heads of State and Government as the official anthem of the European Union. It is not intended to replace the national anthems of the member states but rather to celebrate the values they all share and their unity in diversity.

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE 47 MEMBER STATES

### What other international organisations do they belong to?

| COE MEMBER STATES      | EU | OSCE | UN | COE MEMBER STATES                           | EU | OSCE | UN |
|------------------------|----|------|----|---|----|------|----|
| Albania                |    | ★    | ★  | Andorra                                     |    | ★    | ★  |
| Armenia                |    | ★    | ★  | Austria                                     | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Azerbaijan             |    | ★    | ★  | Belgium                                     | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Bosnia and Herzegovina |    | ★    | ★  | Bulgaria                                    | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Croatia                |    | ★    | ★  | Cyprus                                      | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Czech Republic         | ★  | ★    | ★  | Denmark                                     | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Estonia                | ★  | ★    | ★  | Finland                                     | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| France                 | ★  | ★    | ★  | Georgia                                     |    | ★    | ★  |
| Germany                | ★  | ★    | ★  | Greece                                      | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Hungary                | ★  | ★    | ★  | Iceland                                     |    | ★    | ★  |
| Ireland                | ★  | ★    | ★  | Italy                                       | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Latvia                 | ★  | ★    | ★  | Liechtenstein                               |    | ★    | ★  |
| Lithuania              | ★  | ★    | ★  | Luxembourg                                  | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Malta                  | ★  | ★    | ★  | Montenegro                                  |    | ★    | ★  |
| Monaco                 |    | ★    | ★  | Norway                                      |    | ★    | ★  |
| Netherlands            | ★  | ★    | ★  | Portugal                                    | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Poland                 | ★  | ★    | ★  | Republic of Moldova                         |    | ★    | ★  |
| Romania                | ★  | ★    | ★  | Russian Federation                          |    | ★    | ★  |
| San Marino             |    | ★    | ★  | Serbia                                      |    | ★    | ★  |
| Slovakia               | ★  | ★    | ★  | Slovenia                                    | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Spain                  | ★  | ★    | ★  | Sweden                                      | ★  | ★    | ★  |
| Switzerland            |    | ★    | ★  | "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" |    | ★    | ★  |
| Turkey                 |    | ★    | ★  |   |    |      |    |
| United Kingdom         | ★  | ★    | ★  | Ukraine                                     |    | ★    | ★  |



## EXTERNAL RELATIONS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)



### The external relations of the Council of Europe consist of relations with:

- other international organisations and institutions, particularly, the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the United Nations (UN);
- non-member states (states having no possibility of applying for membership of the Council of Europe).



The "Palais de l'Europe", Strasbourg

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION

[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)



The European Parliament building, Strasbourg

*The Council of Europe and the European Union (EU) have a long tradition of co-operation which draws on their shared values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Each benefits from the other's respective strengths and comparative advantages, whilst avoiding unnecessary duplication.*

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In its relations with other international organisations and institutions, notably the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations, the Council of Europe ensures complementarity of its actions with the common aim of building a democratic and secure Europe.

These relations are currently guided by the decisions of the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Warsaw in May 2005. The Warsaw Declaration and the Action Plan confirm the role of the Council of Europe on the European scene by defining its core objectives. The Heads of State and Government declared their determination “to ensure complementarity of the Council of Europe and other organisations involved in building a democratic and secure Europe” with clear focus on relations with the European Union, the OSCE and the United Nations.

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S RELATIONS WITH THE OSCE

[www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org)



The headquarters of the OSCE, Vienna

*The Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) pursue, each in its own way, the promotion of stability and security on the basis of democracy, the rule of law and respect for human rights in Europe.*

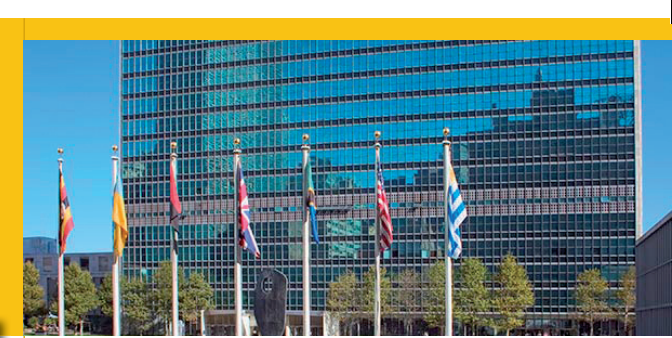
Co-operation between the two Organisations remains results-oriented, with a regular pattern of high-level meetings and consultations at all levels. For example, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) works closely with different parts of the Council of Europe, such as the Parliamentary Assembly and the Venice Commission for Democracy through Law. This co-operation covers areas such as terrorism, non-discrimination and election observation.

Both Organisations promote human rights, democracy and the rule of law because they are the vital ingredients for political stability, good governance, economic development and socially sustainable societies.

Currently, co-operation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE focuses on four priority areas: the fight against terrorism, the protection of national minorities, the fight against trafficking in human beings and the issues of tolerance and non-discrimination.

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)



The United Nations Building, New York

*Formal relations between the Council of Europe and the United Nations date back to 1951. The Council of Europe was granted observer status to the United Nations (UN) General Assembly in October 1989. As a regional partner of the UN, the Council of Europe regularly participates in the work of the principle UN agencies.*

Co-operation is well established in the fields of the protection of human rights, the fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance, the protection of minorities, the prevention of torture, the fight against trafficking in human beings and violence against women, and the protection and promotion of the rights of children and intercultural dialogue.

The Council of Europe continues to work closely with the UN Children's Fund and other UN bodies, including the UN High Commissioners for Refugees and for Human Rights, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN Development Programme, the UN Economic Commission for Europe and the UN Human Rights Council. Joint programmes will be developed with the Alliance of Civilizations (AoC) initiative.

## THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE'S RELATIONS WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL BODIES AND NON-MEMBER STATES

*In addition to special relations with the EU, OSCE and the United Nations, the Council of Europe has regular contacts with more than 30 international organisations world-wide, including almost all major European regional groupings. Contacts with these regional and sub-regional organisations also provide an effective means for reaching non-member countries and promoting the Council of Europe's fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.*



Five countries – Canada, the Holy See, Japan, Mexico and the United States of America enjoy observer status with the Council of Europe. Practical and pragmatic relations with non-member states on all continents allow the Council of Europe to widen its scope for action and global outreach. More than 45 non-member states are Parties to Council of Europe treaties or members, observers or participants in Partial Agreements, such as the Venice Commission, or the North-South Centre, which focuses on the Mediterranean region. Council of Europe legal instruments are increasingly drawn up with the participation of interested non-member states.



The Council of Europe logo

*The Council of Europe in the international arena*

