

# The **Faro** Convention: the **way forward** with heritage





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## FOREWORD

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Over the last fifty years, the Council of Europe has developed a range of instruments designed to protect and promote Europe's cultural heritage. Among these, the Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society is of great and ongoing importance.

The Faro Convention supplements and consolidates the Council of Europe's previous instruments for the protection of member states' architectural and archaeological achievements. It emphasises the important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy and it promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society.

It does this by encouraging us to recognise that objects and places are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural heritage. Instead, they are important because of what people attach to them, the values they represent, and the way in which these can be understood and transmitted to other people.

In turn, this enhanced definition of heritage has created new ways to ensure its resilience and sustainability, recognising that this is not simply a matter for top-down, state-led action, but that what is required is a bottom-up, people-driven approach, where heritage communities can emerge to take up the shared challenge of managing common cultural assets.

This involves empowered citizens and civil society sharing the lead with governments and local authorities in the protection and transmission of cultural heritage, sometimes across borders, and always to the benefit of future generations. The platforms that they establish and the initiatives that they take are a natural means by which to promote shared heritage. This is sustainable in the sense that it is action driven by the passion and conviction of motivated citizens, but it creates economic sustainability too.



Increasingly, heritage communities are playing a pivotal role in cultural life. If the state is important for setting frameworks and policies, when it comes to managing cultural heritage sites, it is not only the national, regional and local authorities that should be involved. The entrepreneurial spirit of local people, organisations and small to medium-sized enterprises is also key to keeping communities afloat in many parts of Europe, through the adequate conservation and wise use of their cultural heritage. Heritage is not just about our past, but about our present and our future too.

The Faro Convention reflects an evolution in our thinking about the role of cultural heritage in Europe. This evolution continues and the Council of Europe is proud to play its part.

**Marija Pejčinović Burić**  
*Secretary General of the Council of Europe*

# THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON THE VALUE OF CULTURAL HERITAGE FOR SOCIETY (FARO CONVENTION)

**THE FARO CONVENTION** is a unique convention about cultural heritage that emphasises the value and potential of heritage as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a constantly evolving society.

It is one of the ways in which the Council of Europe helps its member states to address societal challenges, individually or collectively.

- ▶ As of early 2020, **19 member states** have ratified the Convention: *Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Finland, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Luxembourg, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, Norway, Portugal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Switzerland and Ukraine.*
- ▶ In addition, **6 member states** have signed the Convention: *Albania, Belgium, Bulgaria, Italy, San Marino and Spain.*

The Faro Convention emphasises important aspects of heritage as they relate to human rights and democracy. It promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society and encourages citizens to recognise the importance of cultural heritage objects and sites through the meanings and values that these elements represent to them.

## In brief

The Faro Convention offers a framework to engage civil society in decision-making and management processes related to the cultural heritage environment in which different stakeholders operate and evolve.

## Date and place

The Faro Convention was adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 13 October 2005 and opened for signature to member States in Faro (Portugal) on 27 October of the same year. It entered into force on 1 June 2011.

## Raison d'être

Citizen participation has become an ethical obligation and a political necessity. It revitalises society, strengthens democracy and fosters co-existence for a better quality of life.

“ I think it is essential that states sign the Faro Convention, because, by doing so, they recognise the importance of citizens' involvement in public policies.”

*Prosper Wannier,  
Faro Community, Venice, Italy*

“ It is important for governments to sign the Faro Convention in order to keep track with the way society is moving.”

*Ana Schoebel,  
Cultural Heritage Institute, Madrid, Spain*

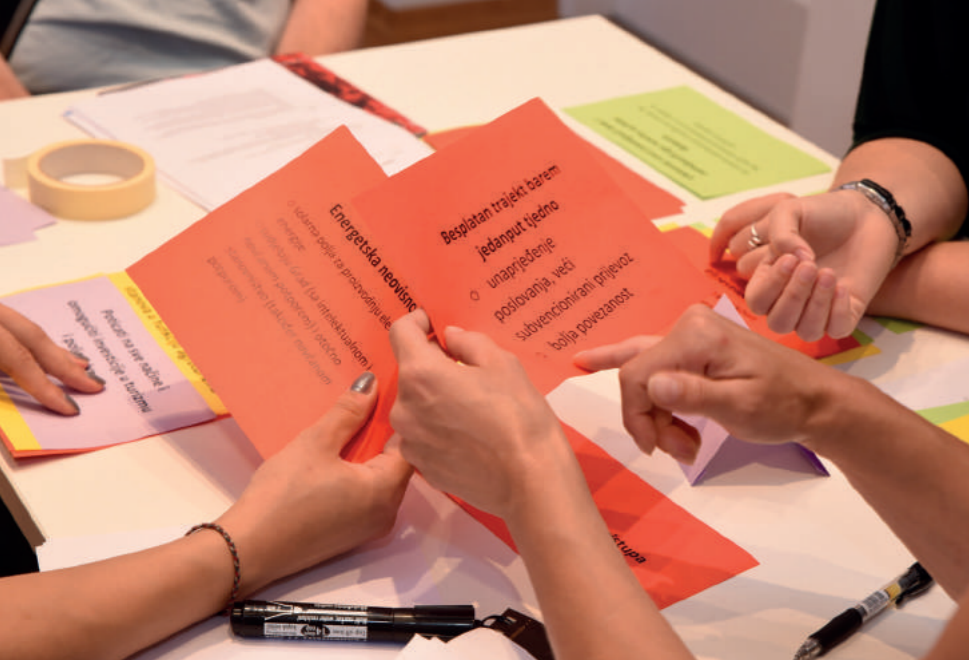
“ The signature of the Convention makes it better known and increases the impact it has on society.”

*Caroline Fernolend,  
Faro Community, Viscri, Romania*

## THREE MAIN STEPS FOR NATIONAL AUTHORITIES

- ▶ **Signature:** formal support to the Convention and its principles;
- ▶ **Ratification:** legal commitment to the Convention principles and potential adjustments of the existing legislation;
- ▶ **Implementation:** developing concrete actions in line with the Convention principles and choosing the actual implementation methods.





## THE FARO CONVENTION PRINCIPLES

### Developing democratic participation and social responsibility

The Faro Convention creates space for discussion and debate, with the aim of identifying shared values and priorities around heritage and promoting cultural heritage initiatives.

For this to happen, it is of crucial importance to involve voluntary organisations or non-governmental bodies and provide opportunities for the participation of young people, by means of education and research (articles 11,12,13 of the Convention).

### Improving the living environment and quality of life

The Convention promotes an integrated approach, combining initiatives related to cultural identity, natural landscape and biological ecosystems.

Parties to the Convention should aim at reinforcing people's sense of belonging, by fostering shared responsibility for the common environment in which they live (article 8).

“Through the Faro Convention, we use the existing heritage to improve the quality of life of the people in our community.”

*Caroline Fernolend,  
Faro Community, Viscri, Romania*

“The Faro Convention is very useful to re-launch life and repopulation of our area. It is about how to use the huge heritage we have as an attraction to new settlers and tourism. We are starting a new life in this traditional place.”

*Alessio di Giulio,  
Fontecchio, Italy*

“The Faro Convention creates a framework for cooperation. Today, civil society and institutions have no choice – we need to work together and get going.”

*Julie de Muer,  
Faro Community, Marseilles, France*

“The Faro Convention has restored confidence and enabled a new cooperation framework to be set up between public institutions, elected representatives and citizens.”

*Prosper Wanner,  
Faro Community, Venice, Italy*



## Managing cultural diversity and mutual understanding

Public authorities and civil society organisations are encouraged to pursue cultural heritage policies that facilitate co-existence among different communities.

Heritage stands as a resource for the conciliation of different perspectives, by promoting trust, mutual understanding and cooperation, with a view to contributing to local development and preventing possible conflicts (article 7).



“ The Faro Convention has been a discovery of a new dynamic and gave me the feedback of the people. It showed me how creative and dynamic they can be, how they feel about their heritage and I was convinced, when I saw people working in the spirit of Faro, that it is the best way forward.”

*Ana Schoebel,  
Spanish Cultural Heritage Institute,  
Madrid, Spain*

“ I live in the northern district of Marseilles, which is a neighbourhood with a great cultural diversity ... From the beginning, the Faro Convention was about walking with my neighbours and creating a collective story through a great conversation.”

*Julie de Muer,  
Faro Community, Marseilles, France*



## Enhancing more cohesive societies

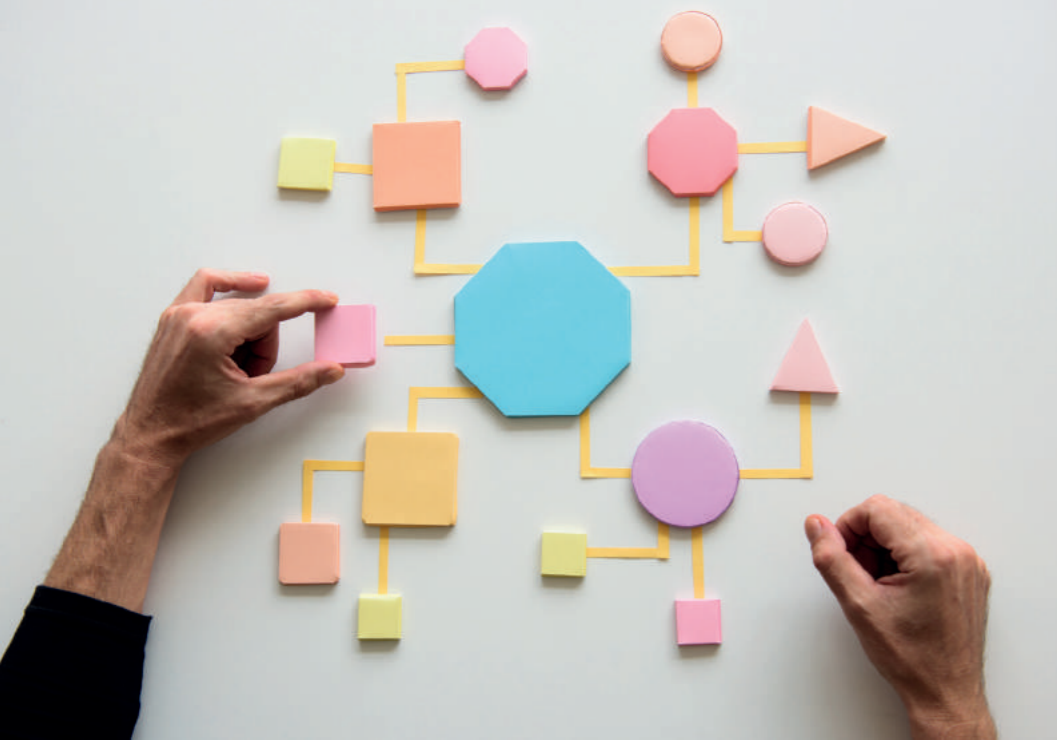
Public and private actors should engage, in order to raise awareness of the economic potential of cultural heritage, carrying out practices aimed at its protection and responsible management, considering the principles of sustainability, efficiency and social cohesion (articles 8, 9,10).

“ The Faro Convention opened my eyes and made me recognise heritage in things that I have never considered before. Heritage can be a real resource for development in rural areas. In this sense, the Faro Convention brought more cohesion with other stakeholders that we were not collaborating before with.”

*Ugo Toić, Cres Island, Croatia*

“ Culture and cultural diversity can be and must be used in our everyday lives as viable instruments for resolving post-conflict situations, multicultural and social problems.”

*Nicos Nicolaidis,  
ex-Chair of the Sub Committee on Culture,  
Diversity and Heritage, Parliamentary  
Assembly of the Council of Europe*



## THE FARO CONVENTION ACTION PLAN

**THE FARO CONVENTION ACTION PLAN** is intended to translate the Faro Convention principles into practice. It aims to illustrate the richness and novelty of the Faro Convention, as well as provide possibilities for its interpretation in relation to current societal challenges.

### The Faro Action Plan has the following goals:

- ▶ to provide field-based knowledge and expertise for member states to better understand the potential of the Convention and fully apply it;
- ▶ to help the Council of Europe to highlight and study specific cases in line with the political priorities of the Organisation;
- ▶ to offer a platform for analysis and recommendations for further action in line with the Convention's principles;
- ▶ to encourage member states to sign and ratify the Convention.

### To achieve these goals, the Faro Action Plan develops the following action lines:



#### Promotion

Various "Faro Convention events" are taking place at community, national and international levels:

- ▶ presentations of good practices and inspirational talks at high political and local levels to introduce the spirit of the Faro Convention;
- ▶ meetings organised at the invitation of a member state to present the Convention and explore possible actions for its implementation by diverse stakeholders;
- ▶ workshops in the form of labs, organised in relation to specific aspects of the Convention in order to exhibit, analyse and reflect on the Faro Convention principles and criteria.



#### Networking

Under the impulse of the Action Plan, the Faro Convention has inspired several initiatives that, through active citizen engagement, explore solutions to the challenges related to preserving the common cultural heritage.

The Faro Convention Network allows for an evolutive interpretation of the Convention's provisions, and constitutes a platform for the exchange of experiences on the different implementation methods.



#### Tools

The Faro Convention Network builds on its good practices to identify useful tools and generates dynamic dialogue among facilitators and heritage actors.

Through the ongoing action-process-reflection, the Convention remains dynamic, redefining suggested actions and resulting in a better understanding of its implementation at local, national and international levels.



#### Research

The Faro Convention is open to interpretation, as its principles and criteria call for periodic review. Consequently, its implementation should be flexible and creative, inspiring new initiatives to demonstrate the role of heritage in addressing societal challenges.



#### Spotlights

Specific heritage-led actions, in line with the political priorities of the Organisation, are identified and investigated, with special emphasis on the role of heritage in addressing societal issues. The aim of this process is to make recommendations to promote targeted heritage action in the member states.

# TOPICAL ISSUES AND FARO PRINCIPLES AT WORK

## Integration

With the help of the **MIHAI EMINESCU TRUST**, the Whole Village Project was born as an initiative aimed at preserving the Saxon heritage in the intercultural village of Viscri (Romania).

The initiative focuses on turning the local heritage into a resource for all community members (Roma, Romanians, Hungarians and Saxons), enabling them to make the best use of it through tourism, agriculture and craftsmanship, with the objective of overcoming any potential challenges of integration.



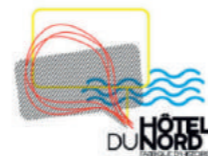
Village of Viscri, ©The Whole Village Project



Heritage walk in Marseilles, ©Filip Vlatkovic

**HÔTEL DU NORD** is a project made up of a group of small-scale initiatives that create opportunities for local actors to work together to improve the poor living conditions, discrimination and poverty that affect certain neighbourhoods of Marseilles (France).

This is being done through the restoration and enhancement of heritage in different neighbourhoods of Marseilles, helping to improve the population's living environment. With a view to promoting the hospitality offer of the city, heritage walks are organised by local inhabitants, who also welcome the guests into their own homes to share their daily lives and the very specific heritage of their neighbourhood.



## Urban social changes

**THE FARO VENEZIA ASSOCIATION** seeks to make Venice (Italy) more attractive to its own residents and overcome the monoculture of tourism that has progressively depopulated the city.

This is done through a network of local associations (combining research, culture and art), implementing different forms of participative democracy to overcome the apparent gap between decision-makers and citizens.

To reinforce the attractiveness of the city beyond mass tourism, the initiative aims to promote traditional local craftsmanship and the transformation of heritage sites (such as the Arsenale, the ancient navel production centre of the Serenissima) into useful places for all citizens.



Patios of Córdoba, ©PAX Patios de la Axerquía

**PAX PATIOS DE LA AXERQUÍA** is addressing the issue of over-tourism affecting the city of Córdoba (Spain) and resulting in decay and reconversion of its traditional housing communities (patios) into touristic objects.

The initiative aims at tackling the gentrification of the rich heritage of patios, which goes far beyond its architectural and material importance.

This is being done through the rehabilitation of the abandoned patio-houses and restoring the environmental value of the city, by using the multilevel co-management method between public administration and civil society, as well as favouring collective use of the patios.



City of Venice, ©Shutterstock



## Participation and social responsibility

The **ALMAŠKI KRAJ PROJECT** in the city of Novi Sad (Serbia) uses heritage as an instrument of civic cooperation, with the aim of addressing diverse societal challenges.

Its objective is to draw attention to the rich cultural heritage of Almaški Kraj neighbourhood and actively engage citizens in its preservation, using this great potential to develop the city.

Moreover, as the 2021 European Capital of Culture, Novi Sad is seeking to actively contribute, through the sustainable use of heritage, to tackling the issues related to migration, conflict and reconciliation, youth unemployment, Roma discrimination and gender inequality.



Painting of old chairs, Novi Sad, ©Almašani



Parco Centocelle Heritage co-district, ©Comunità Parco Pubblico Centocelle

The archaeological park of Centocelle in Rome (Italy) was opened to the public in 2006, following archaeological excavations. Although it faces illicit occupations that still partly exist, the park has started to attract the interest of the general public, as a result of the local community's intense work, based on the enhancement of its social capital.

**THE CENTOCELLE FARO COMMUNITY** is constituted by the Co-Rome social partnership, that has been promoting activities (i.e. heritage walks, civic collaboration days, collaborative services, digital campaigns, heritage bike tours) since 2015 in order to encourage the appreciation and reuse of cultural and archaeological heritage, that is perceived as a tool for stimulating a heritage-based inclusive sustainable development at the neighbourhood and district level.

The main methodology used in this project is co-governance, allowing the citizens of the Centocelle district to actively participate in the collective use and enhancement of the park.



## Sustainable Tourism

**LES OISEAUX DE PASSAGE** (France) is a platform that suggests another way of travelling, offering a common toolkit for promoting and commercialising hospitality offers to facilitate connecting, passing on knowledge, discovering new territories and heritage artifacts.

Moreover, Les Oiseaux de Passage reaffirms the importance of getting to know a destination as presented by those who live on the spot, through the values of hospitality, cooperation and humanity.

The platform favours meetings and exchanges between the local population and travellers, all without intrusive advertising or profiling.



©Shutterstock



At Ecomuseo del Sale e del Mare, ©Ecomuseo del Sale e del Mare

The **ECOMUSEO DEL SALE E DEL MARE**, Cervia (Italy) is an initiative aimed at preserving and enhancing the natural and urban landscape of this site, the local culture and memory. It is an opportunity for visitors and local people to get to know an ever-changing territory, a city-wide museum, as well as a way of contributing to the preservation of the site and further development of the community.

This project consists of heritage walks, aimed at raising the awareness as to what living in the place really means, as well as showcasing how people in the community relate to their own cultural heritage.



## Learning about heritage

The cultural programme **EMILIANENSIS** gives people the chance to discover the monasteries of La Rioja (Spain) and is designed particularly for families, groups and schools. It is organised around educational and recreational activities that revolve around the history, art and way of life in these monasteries.

The focus of the programme is on the transmission of the cultural and natural heritage in a creative and dynamic way, in order to encourage people (especially the youngest), to appreciate and enjoy their local heritage, as well as to involve them in its conservation.



At La Rioja Monasteries, ©Emilianensis



BrotZeit initiative, ©Brotzeit

**BROTZEIT** (“Breadtime”) focuses on the cultural sustainability and the manifold agricultural and manual practices of cultivation, the processing of grain and production of traditional bread in the Lesach Valley (Austria).

This is being done through the transfer of knowledge and living traditions, intergenerational encounters and the interaction with local culture and heritage, resulting in individual and collective learning experiences.

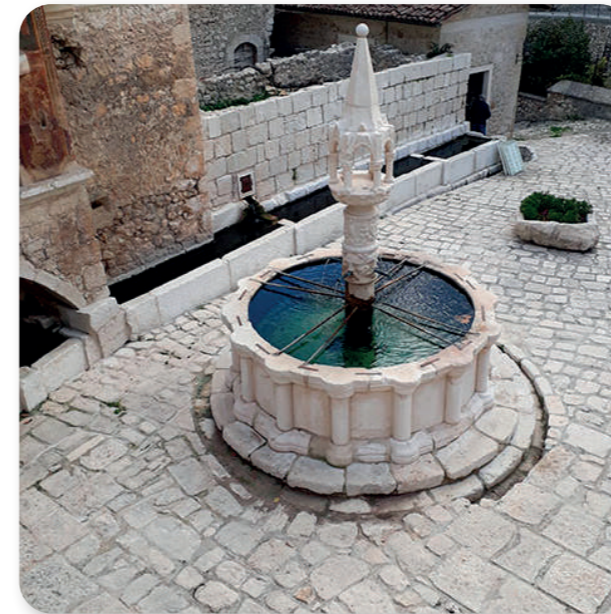


## Restoration and revitalisation

**CASA & BOTTEGA**: As a consequence of the 2009 earthquake that damaged the village of Fontecchio (Italy) and its small community, the local authorities, together with civil society associations and facilitators, adopted a plan focusing on civic education and citizen participation to restore the village.

The aim of the initiative is to spread the knowledge about the use of cultural heritage and landscape for economic development, resettlement and social cohesion.

The project is being implemented through the conversion of damaged buildings into areas of social experiences, such as craftsmanship and local agriculture workshops.



Village of Fontecchio, ©Casa & Bottega



Šančiai Community Opera 2019, © ŽŠb

Citizen participation in cultural heritage governs the activities of Šančiai Community Association in Kaunas (Lithuania). Its **CABBAGE FIELD** initiative is a contribution to local participation in governance and revitalisation of an abandoned historical site (a plot of public land that is home to three 19th century vaulted brick structures located on the former military barracks), with the aim of re-appropriating its cultural identity.

To do this, community art activities are organised on the site, to raise the awareness and creative power of people and to counter an excessive urbanisation of the area triggered by a new road project, which threatens the work being done by the community, that was awarded in 2019 the Genius Loci Award from the Lithuanian Ministry of the Environment for “best urban design work”.





Vilanova d'Alcolea Arts Festival, ©Patrimoni project

## THE FARO CONVENTION: A WIDE-SPREADING APPROACH ...

In order to create synergies that favour the protection, enhancement and the broader participation of national authorities and civil society in cultural heritage, the Council of Europe is implementing a wide range of projects and actively engaging different stakeholders.

In this framework, the Council of Europe and the **European Commission** have agreed to promote the Faro Convention principles, through a **Joint Project: *The Faro Way: enhanced participation in cultural heritage***, encouraging the increased role of civil society in heritage governance.

### THE JOINT PROJECT IS STRUCTURED AROUND THREE MAJOR GOALS

- ▶ **A** to ensure the commitment of all stakeholders and, in particular, national authorities, to the Faro Convention principles;
- ▶ **B** to showcase concrete examples of implementing the principles at national, regional and local levels;
- ▶ **C** to build long-term stakeholder cooperation to translate the Faro principles into action.

### THE ABOVE OBJECTIVES CAN BE ACHIEVED THROUGH THREE MAIN LINES OF ACTION


- ▶ **1.** Increasing the number of signatures and ratifications of the Faro Convention through seminars, workshops and conferences, that disseminate knowledge about the Convention principles, their implications and their added value in managing cultural heritage for the member states.
- ▶ **2.** Promoting the implementation of the Faro Convention principles by encouraging concrete actions by stakeholders, inspired by existing good practices and their achievements.
- ▶ **3.** Creating a dynamic pan-European network of cultural heritage stakeholders that will build on the existing Faro Convention Network and continue fostering Faro-related actions through the exchange of knowledge and experiences.

“What we manage to do through this Convention is show that heritage is everywhere around us and not just limited to an elite. I think this Convention is going to change the general approach about heritage... but the most important issue is the society!”

*Alfредas Jomantas,  
Department of cultural heritage,  
Ministry of Culture, Lithuania*

“Faro Convention empowers local communities... It provides means and a platform for groups of our society, that have so far been without a voice, to be seen, by giving them that place that we all need and deserve.”

*Amund Sinding-Larsen,  
ICOMOS, Cultural Heritage and  
Human Rights, Norway*



# The Faro Convention: cultural heritage – a way into the future

<https://www.coe.int/faro-action-plan>  
[faro.convention@coe.int](mailto:faro.convention@coe.int)

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

The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 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.

