

COUNCIL OF EUROPE Highlights 2020



Human rights,
democracy and
the rule of law

Activity report

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Igor Dodon, President of the Republic of Moldova (Strasbourg, 29 January 2020)

Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia (Strasbourg, 28 January 2020)

Andrej Plenković, Prime Minister of Croatia (Strasbourg, 13 January 2020)

Amani Ballour, Syrian paediatrician who ran an underground hospital in eastern Ghouta from 2012 to 2018, awarded the Raoul Wallenberg Prize (Strasbourg, 17 January 2020)

2020, year of Covid-19, masks and video teleconferences – Grand Chamber hearing in the case of *M.A. v. Denmark* (Strasbourg, 10 June 2020)

French edition:

Points forts 2020

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Marija Pejčinović Burić,
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Foreword

In 2020, violations of fundamental human rights principles in Europe were more worrying than ever. A clear and worrying degree of democratic backsliding was noted in our continent, across the Council of Europe's various fields of action.

Although the trend often predated the coronavirus pandemic, there is no doubt that individuals' rights and liberty have been curtailed in ways that would be unacceptable in normal times.

However, 2020 was also a year in which the Council of Europe showed its ability to adapt while continuing with its work. Although Covid-19 imposed drastic measures on everybody, with publications, remote meetings and ongoing exchanges between the various leaders and the member states, the Council of Europe was able to continue sounding the alarm about these setbacks to our values, as well as defending freedoms throughout Europe.

This is because our Organisation has strong legal instruments and unique awareness-raising powers. In 2020, for instance, we celebrated the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, which was signed in November 1950. It was an opportunity to reiterate, loudly and clearly, that the values of human rights and the principles of democracy and the rule of law will continue to guide us, including during periods of great turbulence such as we are experiencing at the moment.

Daniel Höltgen
Director of Communications
Spokesperson for the Secretary General



Transfer of chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers from Georgia to Greece – **David Zalkaliani**, Georgian Foreign Minister and **Miltiadis Varvitsiotis**, Greek Minister with responsibility for Foreign/European Affairs (Strasbourg, 15 May 2020)



Transfer of chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers from Greece to Germany – **Rolf Mafael** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Germany and **Panayiotis Beglitis** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Greece (Strasbourg, 18 November 2020)

Committee of Ministers

The texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2020 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 2020, the Committee of Ministers was chaired by Georgia until 15 May, then by Greece until 18 November and thereafter by Germany. The year was marked by the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, commemorated by a special honorary ceremony during the 130th Session of the Committee of Ministers.

The 130th Ministerial Session was held by video-conference from Athens, on 4 November 2020, when the Committee took a series of decisions in particular on securing the long-term effectiveness of the system of the European Convention on Human Rights. The ministers concluded that no comprehensive reform of the Convention machinery was needed, but that further efforts should be pursued by the Council of Europe as a whole to ensure that the Convention system continues to respond effectively to the numerous human rights challenges facing Europe.

During the 130th Session, a **declaration**, also known as the "Athens Declaration", was presented, with the support of 45 member states. It reflected the member states' commitment to observe the principles ensuring the respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in times of a pandemic. It underlined, *inter alia*, that the European Convention on Human Rights clearly establishes red lines that cannot be crossed, even in times of a severe public health crisis. The Athens Declaration also stressed the need to safeguard the right to health for all and other social and economic rights, on the basis of inclusiveness, non-discrimination and gender equality.

The Committee of Ministers welcomed the annual report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, "**Multilateralism 2020**", and reaffirmed its unwavering attachment to the multilateral co-operation framework offered by the Council of Europe with a view to achieving a greater unity and to better protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.

In April 2020, the Committee of Ministers adopted a declaration on the **Covid-19 pandemic**.

A declaration on **human rights and the environment** was adopted by the outgoing Georgian and incoming Greek and German Chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers calling for the preparation of a draft recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on human rights and environment in 2020-2021 to anchor common approaches among member states and to explore viable ways forward for further legal developments at both the national and European levels.

A political declaration on the education response to the Covid-19 pandemic was endorsed. The declaration, accompanied by a Roadmap for Action on the Council of Europe education response to Covid-19, showed how the Organisation would adapt its education programme to assist member states in making the right to education a reality in times of Covid-19. The ministers also considered the role of education in protecting cultural heritage in view of climate change.

The Committee of Ministers held its four annual meetings to supervise **the execution of judgments**. The year again saw a significant number of cases closed, with the number of pending cases remaining stable at the lowest in over 10 years. As of 31 December 2020, 5 233 cases were pending (5 231 in 2019). Some 983 cases were closed, of which 187 were leading cases. In the context of the series of **decisions on securing the long-term effectiveness of the system of the**

Committee of Ministers holding its quarterly meeting to oversee the execution of judgments and decisions from the European Court of Human Rights, under the presidency of Chairman **Panayiotis Beglitis** (foreground) (Strasbourg, 3 March 2020)



European Convention on Human Rights adopted at the 130th Session, the Committee also agreed to continue to enhance the efficiency of the process of supervision of execution of the Court's judgments.

■ During the year, the Committee of Ministers held several **exchanges of views**, including 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.

■ In January, the Deputies welcomed the state of implementation of a series of Council of Europe activities and actions. They examined the implementation of the **Council of Europe Strategy on Internet Governance (2016-2019)** and the state of play of the **Action Plan on Building Inclusive Societies (2016-2019)**. In February, the Deputies welcomed the **Strategic Action Plan on Human Rights and Technologies in Biomedicine (2020-2025)**, which aims to address human rights challenges raised by technological developments. They encouraged the implementation of the Strategic Action Plan, including through co-operation programmes with the member states, and invited the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) to inform them of the progress in the achievement of its objectives.

■ Throughout the year, the Committee of Ministers, through various decisions, reaffirmed its unequivocal opposition to the **death penalty**.

■ In April, in the field of **gender equality and diversity**, the Deputies took note of the annual report 2019 on the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023.

■ In September 2020, the Deputies took note of the abridged report of the 2nd plenary meeting of the **Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI)** and of its progress report. They instructed CAHAI to make progress on the conclusions, having regard to the need to promote synergy and complementarity of its work with that of other international organisations.

■ In the field of **counter-terrorism**, in July 2020, the Deputies adopted a tool for the preliminary evaluation of the risk that a terrorist attack may be carried out by radicalised persons.

■ As regards **the rights of the child**, the Deputies adopted in March the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on strengthening the rights of the child as the key to a "future-proof" Europe.

■ In July 2020, the Deputies took note of the second report on the implementation of the Council of Europe **Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021)**.

■ In November, on the occasion of the sixth edition of the European Day on the **Protection of Children**



Meeting of the Ministers' Delegates – farewell to **Joseph Filletti**, Permanent Representative of Malta – delegates wearing orange masks as part of the Council of Europe's campaign Say no to Violence against Women 2020 (Strasbourg, 8 December 2020)

against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (18 November), a joint declaration was issued by the Secretary General, the incoming and outgoing Presidents of the Committee of Ministers and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

■ In the field of health, in March 2020, the Deputies adopted Resolution CM/Res(2020)3 on the **implementation of pharmaceutical care** for the benefit of patients and health services.

■ With regard to **education**, on 12 November 2020, in the framework of the Greek Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, 17 member states¹ decided to establish an **Observatory on History Teaching in Europe**, as an enlarged partial agreement, and adopted Resolution CM/Res(2020)34 accordingly.

■ The specific situation in a number of member states was regularly discussed in the Committee of Ministers. The Committee of Ministers expressed its unequivocal support of the Council of Europe member states for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. Throughout the year, the Committee of Ministers

took note with satisfaction of the final report on the implementation of the Action Plan for **Georgia** for 2016-2019 and the Secretary General's 21st and 22nd consolidated reports on the conflict in Georgia. The Deputies invited the Secretary General to engage in a dialogue with the Russian Federation and Georgia to this end and called on the Russian Federation to secure immediate and unrestricted access to the territories beyond the control of the Government of Georgia to Council of Europe bodies. In October, the Deputies adopted a full set of decisions on "The Council of Europe and the conflict in Georgia".

■ In February, the Committee took note of the progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan 2017-2020 for the **Republic of Moldova** and welcomed the progress made on its implementation. In November, the Deputies approved a new action plan designed to provide assistance to the Republic of Moldova for the period 2021-2024.

■ In July 2020, the Deputies took note of the progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan 2018-2021 for **Bosnia and Herzegovina**. They welcomed the progress made in implementing the action plan.

■ The Deputies took note of the progress review report on implementation of the Action Plan 2018-2021 for **Ukraine** and agreed to extend the action plan until the end of 2022 to enable all the objectives set therein to be achieved.

1. Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Cyprus, France, Georgia, Greece, Ireland, Luxembourg, Malta, North Macedonia, Portugal, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain and Turkey.



Transfer of chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers from Greece to Germany – inauguration of the German chairmanship tram colors and raising of the German flag, **Panayiotis Beglitis** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Greece, **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, **Jeanne Barseghian**, Mayor of Strasbourg and **Rolf Mafael** Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary Permanent Representative of Germany (Strasbourg, 18 November 2020)



Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe meets **David Zalkaliani**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, President of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 27 January 2020)

■ In October 2020, the Deputies took note of the document “Overview of co-operation between the Council of Europe and observer States”. At the same meeting, the Deputies approved the “Joint Declaration on Council of Europe – **Mexico Strategic Partnership**” and authorised the Secretary General to sign it.

■ In November 2020, the Deputies took note of the report on the Council of Europe’s co-operation activities in **Kosovo**.*

■ In 2020, co-operation with other international bodies remained high on the agenda of the Committee. With regard to the **OSCE**, the Deputies took note of the report of the Chair on the results of the 31st and 32nd meeting of the Co-ordination Group between the Council of Europe and OSCE, held respectively in April and November 2020. At the same time, the Deputies also approved the text of the draft United Nations General Assembly Resolution on co-operation between the **United Nations** and the Council of Europe. In February, the Deputies held an exchange of views on human rights questions with the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council.

* All references to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, in this document shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.



130th Session of the Committee of Ministers by videoconference – **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, with **Miltiadis Varvitsiotis**, Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs of Greece and Chairman of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, **Dunja Mijatović**, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, and **Hendrik Daems**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly (Athens, 4 November 2020)

Furthermore, in November, the Deputies, in the context of the implementation of the Joint Declaration on the reinforcement of co-operation between the Council of Europe and the **International Organisation of La Francophonie**, took note of the 2020-2023 co-operation programme between the two organisations.

In July 2020, the Deputies took note with satisfaction of the interim progress report on implementation of the neighbourhood partnership for 2018-2021 with **Tunisia**, and requested the Secretariat to continue the implementation of the partnership with a view to submitting a final report to them in due course.

In October 2020, the Committee of Ministers adopted the draft adjusted budget for 2021, in the framework of the **biennial Programme and Budget** of the Organisation (2020-2021). At the same meeting, faced with the operational repercussions of the Covid-19 crisis and to ensure the Council of Europe's business continuity, the Deputies welcomed the digital strategy for online meetings and authorised the use of unspent appropriations in the 2020 Ordinary Budget for its implementation. Furthermore, in view of the exceptional circumstances linked to the Covid-19 pandemic, in December 2020 the Deputies authorised exceptional measures for monitoring mechanisms with on-site visits, in order to get back on track and catch up with the monitoring cycles as from 2024.



Conference Environmental Protection and Human Rights, organised under the aegis of the Georgian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – **David R. Boyd**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment (Strasbourg, 27 February 2020)

Hendrik Daems, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 27 January 2020)



Mr Igor Dodon, President of the Republic of Moldova

Salome Zourabichvili, President of Georgia

David Zalkaliani, David Zalkaliani, Georgian Foreign Minister and President of the Committee of Ministers

Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Liliane Maury Pasquier, outgoing President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe



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 2020, can be found on the Assembly website: <http://assembly.coe.int>.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 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 PAN-EUROPEAN FORUM TO DEBATE MAJOR POLITICAL ISSUES

■ During 2020, the Assembly was presided over by Rik Daems, member of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE).

■ In the course of 2020, the Assembly took a series of measures intended to adapt its working procedures in response to the exceptional situation of the Covid-19 pandemic. In full physical format or during enlarged Standing Committee remote meetings, it debated issues of major political relevance in Europe, notably on the consequences and ways to tackle the Covid-19 pandemic and addressing the challenges and taking advantage of opportunities arising from developments in the area of artificial intelligence.

■ The Assembly adopted 41 resolutions and 25 recommendations. It observed parliamentary elections in Georgia, the Presidential election in Poland and the early parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan. Because of the pandemic situation and the travel restrictions caused by it, the Assembly was not in a position to maintain several of its scheduled election observation missions.

■ Among the high-level personalities to address the Assembly in 2020 were the Presidents of Georgia and of the Republic of Moldova, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Georgia, the Alternate Minister for European Affairs of Greece, the Minister of State for Europe at the Federal Foreign Office of Germany, the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the Director General of the World Health Organization and the United Nations Special Representative on Violence against Children.

■ The Assembly awarded the 2020 Council of Europe Museum Prize to the National Museum of Secret Surveillance "House of Leaves" (Tirana, Albania); the 2020 Europe Prize went to the city of Amilly in France. As a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and the related health situation in Europe, the procedure leading to the selection of the laureate of the Václav Havel Human Rights Prize was postponed and should be completed early 2021.



Presentation by Mr **Igor Dodon**, President of the Republic of Moldova, of a gift by the Republic of Moldova to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 29 January 2020)



Visit by **Igor Dodon**, President of the Republic of Moldova, meeting with **Hendrik Daems**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 29 January 2020)

WORK IN COMMITTEES

— The **Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy** dealt with key topics on the European and world political agenda, in particular the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on democracies and the need for democratic governance of artificial intelligence. The committee continued to work on current affairs, including rising tensions in the Eastern Mediterranean, the situation in Belarus, in Nagorno-Karabakh and in the Middle East. Furthermore, the committee focused on the priorities concerning democracy and climate change, reinforced relations with the OECD, and reviewed the functioning of the Partnership for Democracy. Finally, the committee took great interest in the accession of the European Union (EU) to the European Convention on Human Rights and in Council of Europe–EU relations.

— The **Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights** maintained its support for Council of Europe human rights and rule of law standards with proposals to improve implementation of Court judgments and strengthen the independence of the judiciary, in particular in Poland and the Republic of Moldova. It continued opposing the death penalty and impunity for human rights violations, addressing specific issues relating to the fight against corruption and money laundering, and continued supporting the work of NGOs, human rights defenders and whistle-blowers. It further contributed to the Assembly's debates on artificial intelligence and on the Covid-19 crisis. New issues on the committee's agenda included cases of political prisoners in the Russian Federation, the prosecution of politicians in Spain and Turkey, the poisoning of Alexei Navalny, the human rights situation in Belarus and legal and human rights aspects of climate change.



Joint debate – “Organ transplant tourism – Combating trafficking in human tissues and cells” – **Stefan Schennach**, rapporteur (Strasbourg, 31 January 2020)



Session of the Parliamentary Assembly, election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg, 28 January 2020)

■ **The Monitoring Committee** prepared reports on the “functioning of democratic institutions in Poland”, on the basis of which the Assembly opened the monitoring procedure in respect of this country; on the “Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of the Russian Federation”; and on the “New crackdown on political opposition and civil dissent in Turkey: urgent need to safeguard Council of Europe standards”. The committee also initiated a debate on military hostilities in the Nagorno-Karabakh region.

■ **The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons** examined migration and asylum-related problems, working closely with the UNHCR, IOM, ICRC and other international partners. Attention was focused on children, and in particular missing refugee and migrant children and effective guardianship for unaccompanied children. Other issues covered included action against human trafficking and smuggling of migrants, as well as work on the rights and obligations of NGOs assisting refugees and migrants, the issue of investment migration and follow-up to the UN Global Compacts on migration and refugees. The committee also carried out important work on the humanitarian consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ **The Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development** focused on pan-European and global challenges by considering “Lessons for the future from an effective and rights-based response to the Covid-19 pandemic” and by launching work on “Covid-19 vaccines: ethical, legal and practical considerations”. The right to health was also highlighted by debating discrimination against persons with long-term and chronic illnesses, support for people with autism and their families, and artificial intelligence (AI) in healthcare. The committee further promoted children’s rights and addressed the multi-faceted problem of violence against children by making recommendations on the repatriation of children from war zones, on combating sexual violence and on the impact of labour migration on left-behind children, as well starting work on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children. The committee also explored challenges for social rights in the context of AI and labour markets, as well as the Covid-19 pandemic, and discussed means to tackle climate change through child participation, rule of law and anchoring the right to a healthy environment.



Ceremony to mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust – **Salome Zourabichvili**, President of Georgia (Strasbourg, 28 January 2020)

■ The **Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination** focused its work on combating discrimination on any ground, gender-based violence, racism and hate speech, and protecting minority rights. It analysed how inequalities, violence against women and racism were exacerbated in times of crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic. The committee reiterated its strong support for the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, Istanbul Convention), denounced misconceptions and attacks against it and promoted its ratification and implementation. The committee worked to counter lack of progress towards equality and to combat rising hate against LGBTI persons in Europe. It called for the inclusion of a gender dimension in foreign policy and for member states to consider sexual and reproductive health and rights as a crucial factor in women's empowerment. It urged states and other relevant actors to take measures to prevent discrimination caused by the use of artificial intelligence, called for a renewed commitment of member states to the protection and promotion of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, and for an end to the practice of ethnic profiling by the police.

■ The **Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media** kept media and information society high on its agenda. The committee examined new threats to media freedom and safety of journalists resulting from legislation adopted by the European countries in response to the Covid-19 crisis and considered the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on education and culture. The committee adopted reports on issues related to fighting the manipulation of sports competitions, threats to academic freedom in Europe and to ethics in science and technology. The committee also works on football governance; on to the role of young people in the prevention and resolution of conflicts; and on the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe.

Hendrik Daems, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, meets **Tatiana Moskalkova**, High-Commissioner for Human Rights of the Russian Federation (Strasbourg, 30 January 2020)



Hendrik Daems, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe meets **Dmitriy Kobitskiy**, Secretary General of Interparliamentary Assembly of Member Nations of the Commonwealth of Independent States (IPA CIS), with **Wojciech Sawicki**, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly (Strasbourg, 30 January 2020)

■ In the exceptional context created by the Covid-19 pandemic, the **Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs** led the development of new alternative procedures to enable the Assembly to hold its plenary part-sessions, as well as meetings of its committees, in a hybrid or remote manner – in duly defined exceptional circumstances – in order to ensure its continuity of action. This includes a new supplementary electoral procedure for the election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights and the highest officials of the Council of Europe. The committee was also tasked with revising the Rules of Procedure to allow the implementation of a complementary joint procedure between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly in response to a serious violation by a member state of its statutory obligations, as well as clarifying and strengthening the decision-making process of the Assembly committees.

CO-OPERATION PROGRAMMES WITH NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS

■ The Secretariat of the Parliamentary Assembly continued to develop co-operation programmes at the parliamentary level to ensure better implementation by member states of key Assembly resolutions and to reach out to a greater number of members of national parliaments through peer-to-peer parliamentary seminars. In 2020, it continued to contribute to three action plans – the Action Plan for Ukraine (2018-2021), the Action Plan for Georgia (2019-2020) and the Action Plan for Morocco (2019-2020) – and implemented regional activities in the framework of the Horizontal Facility II (2019-2022) with Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia and Serbia.



Anders Knape,
President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
(Strasbourg, 26 February 2020)

Videoconference with **Andreas Kiefer**,
Secretary General of the Congress
of Local and Regional Authorities
and **Anders Knape** President of
the Congress of Local and Regional
Authorities (Strasbourg, 9 June 2020)



Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

The texts adopted by the Congress in 2020 can be found on its website 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: Anders Knappe (Sweden)

The beginning of 2020 was marked for the Congress by the cancellation – due to the Covid-19 pandemic – of its activities and meetings, the first of which was its session, scheduled to take place in March. This was rapidly followed by the Congress President's call for urgent measures and co-ordinated action to be taken by all levels of government – European, national, local and regional – as well as at the level of citizens in their respective communities, in a spirit of solidarity to overcome this crisis.

■ At that stage nobody imagined that the pandemic would take on such dramatic proportions that this cancellation would be followed by the cancellation of the second session of the year due to take place in October 2021, as well as all many other meetings and activities through which the Congress and its partners carry out their work.

■ Very quickly, however, the Congress adapted itself to the situation and developed new working methods relying on digital tools and making use of the provisions of the Congress Charter and the rules and procedures, which had already provided for remote decision making and elections.

■ Above all, the Congress maintained regular contact with its national delegations, local elected representatives and national and European associations and networks and fostered dialogue between them and with the central governments.

■ In May, it launched a web platform showcasing examples of good practice in grass-roots action by municipalities, regions and the Congress's institutional partners who were confronted with the health, social and economic consequences of the pandemic (covid-congress-hub.org).

■ In June, considering the impact of the crisis on local and regional democracy, which led in some cases to what could be described as a “lockdown of local democracy” – the recentralisation of powers, postponement of elections, restrictive measures shrinking the space for public debate and consultations with citizens – the Congress adopted a declaration expressing its concern about the democratic self-governance and financial autonomy of local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member states. It urged national authorities to remove restrictions and restore democratic functioning at the local level, considering that extraordinary measures must always be temporary and under democratic control. Moreover, it called on local and regional authorities to ensure funding for recovery plans and to be involved in setting up emergency procedures.

■ This supported and complemented the statement of April 2020 by the Council of Europe Secretary General and her guidelines for governments on respecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law during the Covid-19 crisis.

■ In September 2020, the Congress held a remote Statutory Forum meeting – acting on behalf of the Congress between sessions and comprising the heads of all national delegations and the members of the Bureau – to adopt the revision of its rules and procedures and several reports on the state of local democracy in Europe and on local and regional elections in major crisis situations.



Jeanne Barseghian, Mayor of Strasbourg and **Andreas Kiefer**, Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Strasbourg, 10 September 2020)



Congress Secretary General **Andreas Kiefer** meets the Public Defender of Georgia **Nino Lomjaria** (Strasbourg, 30 January 2020).

■ This report draws on the different approaches taken by states in Europe and beyond, both recently and in past crises, and provides a comprehensive compilation of guidelines with regard to international electoral standards. It collects best practices on balancing the rights to life, health and security of election participants with protecting the right to political participation and related freedoms, and recommends the core of electoral principles to be upheld at all times for elections.

■ In September the Congress also held remote thematic debates in its committees on questions related to aspects of the functioning of local and regional democracy and multigovernance and co-operation in times of crisis, such as the postponement of local elections, the management of changes of distribution of competences, the transfer of additional responsibilities to the municipalities without the necessary means, the adoption of reforms or measures without the necessary dialogue or consultation processes, and violations of the general application of the principles of local and regional self-government, among others. The Congress members underlined in particular that the pandemic had put at risk not only human lives, but also the functioning of societies, democratic institutions and mechanisms of governance at local and regional level.

■ The Congress's Governance Committee discussed "The Covid-19 pandemic and challenges for multi-level governance", examining how the pandemic has resulted in an urgent "recentralisation" of multilevel governance structures for many European countries, regardless of the fact that regional and local levels have

at times been much more responsive in responding to related challenges. It concluded that limiting decentralisation may endanger the constitutional balance and the pluralism existing within democratic systems.

■ The Current Affairs Committee debated "Protecting minorities in cities and regions in times of fundamental crisis", underlining that the pandemic has had devastating effects especially on the most vulnerable, marginalised or minority groups. Some cities have implemented measures that could serve as examples for other local authorities.

■ The Monitoring Committee debated "Safeguarding the European Charter of Local Self-Government in extreme crisis situations" highlighting that the pandemic has changed the balance between the local, regional and national levels of many countries, and even sometimes put local democracy "on hold". Furthermore, the promulgation of states of emergency and the strengthening of centralisation, but also the increased financial difficulties linked to the cessation of economic activities, have complicated co-operation between the different levels of power.

■ In October, the Congress contributed its findings and recommendations on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic to the European Committee of the Regions of the EU and its debate on the state of cities and regions (Local and Regional Barometer), organised with the participation of, among others, the President of the European Commission.

■ It also decided to pursue its statutory activities remotely as an alternative procedure allowing it to maintain political dialogue with national stakeholders.



Annual co-ordination meeting of the European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) (Strasbourg, 25 February 2020)

This was implemented for the first time for Bulgaria on 14 and 15 December 2020, when remote monitoring meetings took place with national authorities and local interlocutors. The same procedure will be implemented for monitoring local and regional democracy in the Netherlands and in Azerbaijan in early 2021. This provisional procedure will be used until Congress members are able to travel again in safe conditions.

■ A remote election observation procedure was started with the local elections in Ukraine on 25 October 2020. It was preceded by online briefings with electoral stakeholders on 19 and 20 October and concluded with an online debriefing with a local domestic observer who visited polling stations on behalf of the Congress. A similar procedure was adopted for the local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (election day on 15 November with briefings on 29 and 30 October and co-operation with domestic observers to provide first-hand information on election day) and later again for the local elections in Mostar on 20 December with online meetings on 17 December with different interlocutors in Sarajevo and Mostar. The Congress delegation particularly welcomed the fact that for the first time in over a decade, the citizens of Mostar were able to vote at the local level.

■ On 2 and 3 November, a remote fact-finding mission on the situation of LGBTI+ people in Poland took place in reply to a request from two Polish members of the Congress to investigate the situation, noting that sexual orientation had become a polarising issue in Polish society, increasingly reflected at the local and regional level, by the adoption of so-called “anti-LGBT ideology” resolutions and declarations, and family charters. The delegation gathered facts and insight

from various interlocutors. The findings will serve in the preparation of a report on “the role and responsibilities of local authorities in the protection of LGBTI+ people” to be considered by the Congress in one of its sessions in 2021.

■ On 4 November 2020, the Congress participated in the 130th Session of the Committee of Ministers held under the auspices of the Greek Presidency. It provided the Foreign Ministers of the Council of Europe member states with a contribution to their reflection on “effectively responding to a public health crisis in full respect for Democracy, Rule of Law and Human Rights”.

■ In its contribution, the Congress highlighted the essential role played in emergency situations by local and regional authorities, which take up an increasing share of operational and financial responsibilities together with national governments and are on the frontline to deliver basic and emergency services and mitigate the social and health consequences of the crisis for their communities. The Congress stressed that the pandemic had shown a great need for solidarity, especially to safeguard social and economic rights and preserve businesses and jobs. Since the key players in the field of implementing solidarity are the local and regional authorities, the Congress called for their full involvement in the decision-taking process. As recognised also by the Council of Europe Secretary General in her guidelines and by the Foreign Ministers in the Athens Declaration, the Congress shared its conviction that emergency situations require more multilateral co-operation and multilevel governance to enable more flexible responses that are better suited to the specific needs of the communities.



The President of the Congress, **Anders Knape**, paid an official visit to Georgia (Tbilisi, 24 February 2020)

■ In December 2020, the Congress held a second remote Statutory Forum and adopted, among other texts, a contemporary commentary on the explanatory report to the European Charter of Local Self-Government which takes into account the recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly and the opinions of the Venice Commission, reports on developing urban-rural interplay and on fighting sexist violence against women in politics at the local and regional level, and the second volume in the Human Rights Handbook series for local and regional authorities, this time devoted to social rights.

■ The same day, 7 December, it organised an online event, “Covid-19: Local and regional authorities on the front line”, which included two debates. The first debate built on the Athens Declaration that examined how to respond effectively to a public health crisis in full respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and included statements by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and, via video message, by the Minister of State of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany on behalf of the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

■ The second debate was devoted to the specific role of local and regional authorities in responding to the crisis and included statements by the Presidents of the two chambers of the Congress, the Mayor of Athens and a member of the Munich City Council. Participants in this debate highlighted the need to rely on multilevel governance involving cities, regions and national governments to overcome the crisis. They called in particular for active consultation and

better co-ordination between the different levels of government. They noted that local democracy is not a hindrance, but a lever for finding the most suitable answers. They stressed also that the Covid-19 crisis was as much a challenge as it was an opportunity to reinvent the city, both by responding to the highlighted structural inequalities and by introducing new digital tools to provide all the necessary services to citizens. The outcomes of the discussions will contribute to the cross-cutting report “Ensuring the respect of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in major crisis situations”, to be presented at a forthcoming Congress session in 2021.

■ Over the year, the Congress also pursued its co-operation activities in Armenia, Morocco, Tunisia and Ukraine, aimed at strengthening local and regional authorities’ associations and their dialogue with national governments, improving local and regional governance, enhancing citizen participation at local level, fighting corruption and promoting open government, public ethics and gender mainstreaming. New projects were launched in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with a specific focus on the city of Mostar, the Republic of Moldova, Kosovo* and Georgia; furthermore, the Congress made a proposal for a new project in Belarus aimed at reforming local self-government, establishing a national association of local authorities and fostering citizen participation.



Congress high-level visit to Albania, the Congress delegation (**Anders Knape, Gunn Marit Helgesen, Xavier Cadoret and Andreas Kiefer**) with the Mayor of Tirana **Erion Veliaj** (Tirana, 5 February 2020)

■ The major priority for governments in 2020 has been to avoid new escalations of the pandemic, overcome the crisis, help those confronted with health, social and economic issues and prepare for the Covid-19 aftermath, in particular pinning their hopes on the vaccination campaigns launched at the end of 2020, and ensuring the democratic functioning of societies and their economic revival. To that end, all levels of government and all participants in the democratic systems of governance need to join forces.

■ The Congress and the 150 000 local and regional authorities it represents are committed to finding efficient responses to the current crisis and future crises and to preparing the ground for the post-Covid-19 recovery. Based on the lessons learned from this pandemic, the Congress will work on issues that will contribute to building more solid, resilient and fair societies and better prepare for future hygiene or public health crisis. Such issues will include limitations on the timing and proportionality of emergency measures, better division of competences and means within the multilevel governance system, better co-ordination between different levels of governance and an improved system of regular consultations with local and regional authorities, provision of direct funding to local and regional authorities and their access to direct funding, involving all tiers of government in decision making on postponing or holding of elections, maintaining the democratic link between mayors or executives and their local or regional assemblies and the accountability of the executive to their assemblies.

■ These issues will be part of the overall priorities of the Congress for the period 2021-2026 that were prepared in 2020 and that will be adopted in March 2021. This framework of action, which will be implemented by the chambers and committees of the Congress in their working programmes, enshrines the monitoring of local and regional democracy, the observation of local and regional elections and the implementation of co-operation programmes in specific member states as the statutory missions and activities of the Congress, while the thematic work will focus on five priorities in line with the priorities of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the presidencies of its Committee of Ministers: effective local and regional responses to a public health crisis; quality of representative democracy and citizen participation; reducing inequalities in the field; environmental issues and climate action; digitalisation and artificial intelligence in the local context.



Visit by **Salome Zourabichvili**, President of Georgia at the European Court of Human Rights, in the presence of **Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos**, President of the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg, 28 January 2020)

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 avenues of appeal have been exhausted in the member state concerned.

President of the Court: Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos (Greece) until May 2020

Robert Spano (Iceland, since May 2020)

THE COURT CELEBRATES THE 70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

On 31 January 2020, Presidents of the Supreme and Constitutional Courts of the Council of Europe member states and numerous senior judicial figures attended the official opening of the judicial year of the Court, which included a seminar entitled “The European Convention on Human Rights: living instrument at 70”.

Another conference which marked the 70th anniversary was “The European Convention on Human Rights at 70 – Milestones and major achievements”, organised in co-operation with the Greek chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, on 18 September 2020. Leading figures from the judicial world took part in the event in Strasbourg and also by video link. The topics addressed ranged from strengthening the rule of law, access to an independent court and fostering a democratic form of governance, to promoting and ensuring diversity of family life, meeting challenges of scientific and technological development and promoting peace and integration among states.

In October 2020, the Court hosted two noteworthy online conferences focusing on environmental protection (“Human Rights for the Planet”) and the advancement of equality of LGBTI persons (“A ‘Living Instrument’ for Everyone: The Role of the European Convention on Human Rights in Advancing Equality for LGBTI Persons”).

Finally, the President of the Court participated in a special event in Athens commemorating the 70th anniversary of the signing of the European Convention on Human Rights organised under the auspices of the Greek chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

THE COURT’S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Court’s response to the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020 was guided by two primary concerns: to ensure the continuity of the Court’s core daily work and thereby fulfilling its public service mission, while complying strictly with the restrictive measures adopted in its host country, France.

During the first French lockdown (16 March to 19 May 2020), the Court extended the six-month time limit for the lodging of an application under Article 35 of the European Convention on Human Rights for three months until 15 June 2020 inclusive. The time limits which had been allotted in pending proceedings were also extended. Teams were put in place to ensure the continuity of dealing with requests for interim measures under Rule 39 (more than 80% of which concerned issues related to the Covid-19 crisis).

Another significant achievement was the organisation of the Court’s public hearings. The Court held in total nine hearings, six of which were organised after March 2020. Five of these took place with the use of videoconferencing technology and were webcasted for the outside world to watch on the Court’s internet site as usual. This was a major technical challenge for the Court but one which was successfully accomplished.

During this period, new technologies have demonstrated how indispensable they have become to the Court, enabling judges and Registry staff to continue working from a distance when necessary.

The overall number of pending cases before the Court has remained stable in 2020, demonstrating that despite the pandemic the Court’s productivity has been maintained.



Robert Spano, President of the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg, 30 November 2020)



Visit of **Igor Dodon**, President of the Republic of Moldova to the European Court of Human Rights, in the presence of **Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos**, President of the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg, 29 January 2020)

MAINTAINING DIALOGUE WITH NATIONAL COURTS AND REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS COURTS

■ The Superior Courts Network (SCN), set up by the Court in 2015, brings together national judges who have a central role to play in implementing the principles and values of the European Convention of Human Rights. Through this network, the Court has managed to create a dynamic European community of judges. The arrival of the German Federal Constitutional Court to the network in October 2020 brought the membership to 93 courts from 40 states. Given the fact that the SCN Focal Points Forum had to be cancelled in 2020, two webinars were organised in its place: one on 10 July 2020 entitled “Adapting justice systems to the Covid-19 pandemic and the potential impact on the right to a fair trial” and another on 23 October 2020 on the topic of “Detention and health”.

■ 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, an online exchange of views took place on 9 July 2020 on the impact of Covid-19 on human rights. Another important event was the publication in December 2020 of a joint law report of the three regional human rights court, showcasing important case law from 2019.

CASE LAW HIGHLIGHTS IN 2020

■ The Court adopted 12 judgments and decisions in Grand Chamber cases in 2020.

■ In response to the request for an advisory opinion under Protocol No. 16 to the Convention from the Armenian Constitutional Court, the Grand Chamber delivered its opinion on 29 May 2020. The issue under consideration was the use of the “blanket reference” or “legislation by reference” technique in the definition of an offence and the standards of comparison between the criminal law in force at the time of the commission of the offence and the amended criminal law. The Court concluded that in order to establish whether, for the purposes of Article 7, a law passed after an offence had allegedly been committed was more or less favourable to the accused than the law that had been in force at the time of the alleged commission of the offence, regard had to be had to the specific circumstances of the case. If the subsequent law was more severe than the law that had been in force at the time of the alleged commission of the offence, it must not be applied.²

2. Advisory opinion requested by the Armenian Constitutional Court, Request No. P16-2019-001, 29.5.2020 [GC].



Meeting between **Małgorzata Manowska**, First President of Supreme Court of Poland and **Robert Spano**, President of the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg, 9 July 2020)



Meeting between **Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos**, President of the European Court of Human Rights and **Miltiadis Varvitsiotis**, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Greece (Strasbourg, 9 March 2020)

■ The case of *Guðmundur Andri Ástráðsson v. Iceland*³ provided the Court with an opportunity to refine and clarify the meaning to be given to the concept of a “tribunal established by law”, notably by considering how its individual components should be interpreted so as to best reflect its purpose and to ensure that the protection it offers is truly effective. The Grand Chamber also analysed its relationship with the other “institutional requirements” (those of independence and impartiality).

■ In the case of *Selahattin Demirtaş v. Turkey (no. 2)*⁴ concerning the arrest and pre-trial detention of the applicant, who at the time of the events was one of the co-chairs of the Peoples’ Democratic Party (HDP), a left-wing pro-Kurdish political party, the Court found several violations of the Convention, particularly freedom of expression, the right to liberty and security and the right to free elections. The Court also found that the reasons put forward by the authorities for the applicant’s pre-trial detention were merely cover for



European Convention on Human Rights at 70 – Milestones and major achievements – **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and **Robert Spano**, President of the European Court of Human Rights (Strasbourg, 18 September 2020)

an ulterior political purpose: that of stifling pluralism and limiting freedom of political debate, which is at the very core of the concept of a democratic society. Lastly, the Court has held that Turkey was to take all necessary measures to secure the applicant’s immediate release.

■ The Court’s Annual Report 2020 contains a selection by the Jurisconsult of the most important judgments and decisions delivered by the Court in 2020.⁵

3. *Guðmundur Andri Ástráðsson v. Iceland* [GC], Application No. 26374/18, 1 December 2020.

4. *Selahattin Demirtaş v. Turkey (no. 2)* [GC], Application No. 14305/17, 22 December 2020.

5. www.echr.coe.int/Documents/Cases_list_2020_ENG.pdf.



Dunja Mijatović, Council of Europe Commissioner
for Human Rights (Strasbourg, 29 January 2020)

Commissioner for Human Rights

Information on the Commissioner's work in 2020 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.

In addition to her regular country and thematic work, a great deal of the Commissioner's work in 2020 related to the impact of Covid-19 on human rights.

COUNTRY MONITORING

On 13 January the Commissioner published a letter addressed to the Marshal of the Senate of Poland in which she recommended rejecting a bill which would further curtail the independence of judges and prosecutors as well as their freedom of expression.

On 19 February she published the report following her visit to Turkey in which she called on the Turkish authorities to restore judicial independence and stop targeting and silencing human rights defenders.

In a letter addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy, Luigi Di Maio, published on 21 February, the Commissioner urged the Italian government to suspend co-operation activities with the Libyan Coast Guard and introduce human rights safeguards in future migration co-operation.

On 3 March the Commissioner published her letter addressed to the Minister of Internal Affairs of Azerbaijan, Vilayat Eyvazov, in which she raised concerns about the dispersal of demonstrators in Baku and limitations imposed on freedom of assembly in that context.

In the report on her visit to Bulgaria published on 31 March, the Commissioner called for stronger commitment to combating racism, fighting gender stereotypes and increasing media freedom in the country.

On 11 May she published a letter addressed to the Prime Minister of Malta, Robert Abela, urging the government to fully meet its human rights obligations towards migrants, including asylum seekers and refugees, who cross the Mediterranean to reach Europe.

A letter addressed to the Chair and members of the National Council Committee on Security Policy of Switzerland was published on 13 May. In it the Commissioner invited parliamentarians to review the draft federal law on police counter-terrorism measures in order to ensure that all human rights standards are respected.

On 25 June the Commissioner published the report following her visit to the Republic of Moldova. She set out recommendations on violence against women and domestic violence, children's rights, the human rights of persons with disabilities, Roma, hate speech and the rights to housing and health.

On 3 September the Commissioner published a letter addressed to the Minister of Home Affairs, Fernando Grande-Marlaska, and the Minister for Inclusion, Social Security and Migration of Spain, José Luis Escrivá Belmonte, in which she called on Spain's authorities to find alternatives to accommodating migrants, including asylum seekers, in substandard conditions in Melilla.

In a letter addressed to the Speaker of the National Council of the Slovak Republic and to the Chairpersons of the Committees on Constitutional and Legal Affairs, Health Care and Social Affairs published on 10 September, the Commissioner recommended rejecting any proposed measures that would lead to retrogression as regards the access of women to their sexual and reproductive health and rights.

Ceremony to mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust – **Dunja Mijatović**, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe – **Linos-Alexandre Sicilianos**, President of the European Court of Human Rights – **Nawel Raïk-Elmrini**, deputy mayor (Strasbourg, 28 January 2020)



■ In a letter addressed to the Minister for Foreign Affairs of San Marino published on 15 September, the Commissioner called on the authorities to refrain from actions jeopardising the independence of the judiciary.

■ On 29 September she published a letter addressed to the Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies of the Czech Republic, in which she invited parliamentarians to establish a fair and adequate mechanism for compensating the victims of forced and coercive sterilisations.

■ In a letter addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, made public on 22 October, the Commissioner recommended that the authorities ensure the continuity, independence and effectiveness of the Ombudsman institution.

■ On 3 November she published a letter addressed to the members of the House of Commons of the United Kingdom, in which she warned against provisions of the Overseas Operations (Service Personnel and Veterans) Bill and called on members of parliament to reject any measures that would undermine the fight against impunity for serious human rights violations or the right of victims to reparations.

■ On 19 November the Commissioner published a letter in which she called on the Russian investigating authorities to take urgent action in the case of Salman Tepsurkayev, abducted in September and subjected to torture in Chechnya.

■ On 3 December the Commissioner published a memorandum addressed to the Polish authorities. She recommended stopping the stigmatisation of LGBTI people in the country.

■ In a letter published on 11 December the Commissioner called on Slovenia's Prime Minister, Janez Janša, to ensure that the government's decision to suspend public funding for the Slovenian Press Agency be reversed.

■ On the same day the Commissioner published a letter addressed to the Chairman of the Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Zoran Tegeltija, and to the Minister for Security of Bosnia and Herzegovina, Selmo Cikotić, urging measures to improve the country's migrant reception capacities, access to asylum and protection of unaccompanied migrant children.

■ In a letter to the Chair and members of the Law Committee of the French Senate published on 18 December, the Commissioner urged senators to make substantial amendments to the General Security Bill to make it more human rights-compliant.

THEMATIC WORK

■ The main themes of the Commissioner's activities were the impact of Covid-19 on human rights, as well as migration, human rights defenders, press freedom, women's rights, LGBTI people, transitional justice, racism, antisemitism and children's rights.



Meeting between **Filippo Grandi**, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and **Dunja Mijatović**, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (Geneva, 21 February 2020)



Meeting between **Dunja Mijatović**, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe and **David R. Boyd**, United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the Environment (Strasbourg, 27 February 2020)



Meeting between **Michelle Bachelet**, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and **Dunja Mijatović**, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (Geneva, 21 February 2020)

From the beginning of the restrictions imposed to stop the spread of the coronavirus, the Commissioner drew national authorities' attention to the risks that lockdowns could pose to human rights, and especially to those of certain groups of people whose rights were already largely neglected before the pandemic. She published several statements and opinion articles and delivered speeches on the impact of Covid-19 on older persons, persons with disabilities, press freedom, Roma rights, migrants, detainees, surveillance, LGBTI persons and children's rights.

The Commissioner published two sets of written observations submitted to the European Court of Human Rights. On 21 September she published her observations concerning the case of *Florin Buhuceanu and Victor Ciobotaru v. Romania* and 12 other cases, which relate to the absence of a legal framework for the recognition of stable same-sex relationships in Romania.

On 13 November the Commissioner published her observations concerning several cases against Poland on the absence of a legal framework for the recognition of stable same-sex relationships.

The Commissioner also intervened five times in the supervision of the execution of judgments and of the terms of friendly settlements as foreseen by Rule 9 of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The first communication was published on 11 February and concerned judgments related to lawful abortion in Poland.

On 3 July she published a submission in relation to the case of *Kavala v. Turkey* in which she underscored that the Turkish authorities should release Osman Kavala and take far-reaching measures to prevent the misuse of detentions on remand.

In the submission concerning the case of *Bălșan v. Romania* published on 5 August, the Commissioner highlighted the need to strengthen the fight against domestic violence in Romania.

In the submission relating to the case of *Yordanova and Others v. Bulgaria* published on 2 November the Commissioner stressed that the Bulgarian authorities should prevent forced evictions, tackle the stigmatisation and marginalisation of Roma and improve their access to adequate housing, including social housing.

On 9 November the Commissioner published a submission in the case of *D.H. and Others v. the Czech Republic*, underscoring that the Czech authorities should adopt broader measures to end school segregation of Roma children.

Six Human Rights Comments were published in 2020 covering topics such as access to official documents, strategic lawsuits against public participation, comprehensive sexuality education, equality bodies, the right to health and affordable housing. The Commissioner also continued to engage with the press and the public at large with opinion articles, speeches, statements and an intense activity on social media platforms, in particular on Twitter (@CommissionerHR).

Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs (Strasbourg, 16 October 2020)



Ceremony to mark the International Day of Commemoration in Memory of the Victims of the Holocaust – **Anna Rurka**, President of the Conference of INGOs and **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 28 January 2020)



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: Anna Rurka (Poland)

CIVIL SOCIETY'S VOICE IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

■ The Conference of INGOs quickly adapted to the unprecedented situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. Its Strasbourg sessions were replaced by a series of online webinars which focused on the lessons to be learned from the pandemic. It adopted several texts in this respect: www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/texts-adopted.

■ The year ended on a positive note for the Conference of INGOs with the adoption of new Rules of Procedure designed to change its functioning to be more in line with the priorities of the Council of Europe and to anchor its position as the voice of civil society in the Organisation.

VOICE OF SOLIDARITY WITH EUROPEAN CIVIL SOCIETY

■ The Conference of INGOs celebrated World NGO Day with a seminar in Brussels on 28 February entitled "From the Past to the Future: A Living Civic Space for a Living Democracy".

■ Migration continued to be a priority for the Conference of INGOs and the Expert Council on NGO Law adopted a set of guidelines on protecting NGO work in support of refugees and other migrants. The Expert Council also issued opinions on developments in NGO legislation in Turkey and in Greece.



Michael O'Flaherty, Director of European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights and **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 4 March 2020)



Meeting between **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and **David McAllister**, Chairperson of the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the European Parliament (Strasbourg, 15 January 2020)



Darragh Paradiso, Consul General and Deputy Permanent Observer of the United States of America and **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 15 September 2020)

External relations

www.coe.int/DER

POLICY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE TOWARDS NEIGHBOURING REGIONS

On 4 November, the Committee of Ministers welcomed the fact that the implementation of the policy towards neighbouring regions adopted at its 121st Session (Istanbul, 10-11 May 2011) enables the Council of Europe and the beneficiaries in North Africa, the Middle East and Central Asia to move towards the setting up of a shared legal space based on the Organisation's values and instruments. In practice, co-operation continued with Morocco and Tunisia, the Council of Europe's two main partners, through Neighbourhood Partnerships (combining political dialogue and co-operation activities) and with Kazakhstan through Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities. Co-operation also continued through regional frameworks in the Southern Mediterranean region and Central Asia. In addition, a multifaceted co-operation has further developed with Israel. The policy towards neighbouring regions was carried out in close cooperation with the European Union.

RELATIONS WITH THE EUROPEAN UNION, THE UN AND THE OSCE

EU

Close co-operation was ensured in order to better address increasing common challenges, preserve the coherence and efficiency of the European human rights system and to combat the growing threats to democracy and the rule of law. Accordingly, the strategic partnership with the EU continued through its three pillars – political dialogue, legal co-operation and co-operation projects. Co-operation has reached another qualitative level with the strengthening of the benchmarking role of the Council of Europe. This materialised through active EU participation in key Council of Europe standard-setting activities 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. In addition, negotiations on EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights resumed in 2020. As in previous years, a substantial part of the joint activities was carried out through Joint Programmes in Council of Europe member states and in the 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 cooperation described above. The EU and the Council of Europe also increased co-operation on communication, notably launching a series of new

animations illustrating the impact of the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as co-organising visibility events and publishing a number of joint statements.

UN

High-level political dialogue continued in 2020. In Geneva, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe had bilateral meetings with Mr Filippo Grandi, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Ms Tatiana Valovaya, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva. The same day, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe addressed the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

Furthermore, the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe on Migration and Refugees had a series of meetings with Mr António Vitorino, Director General of the International Organization for Migration, with Ms Gillian Triggs, Assistant High Commissioner for Protection at UNHCR and with Ms Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. He addressed the 71st session of the Executive Committee of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees in Geneva and participated virtually in the first Regional Review of the Global Compact for Migration in the UNECE region. Information was exchanged with WHO and OHCHR on the management of the Covid-19 pandemic.

OSCE

Co-operation with the OSCE focused on a broad spectrum of human dimension activities at headquarter level and "in the field". This interaction covered the different Council of Europe and OSCE institutions and bodies. In December, the Secretary General participated in the OSCE Permanent Council, which was held in videoconference format.

RELATIONS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND NON-MEMBER COUNTRIES

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



Tiraspol (Moldova), on the eastern bank of the Dniester river, where the Directorate of Political Affairs implements confidence-building measures (photo: Shutterstock)

Political advice

The regular 21st and 22nd 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 April and November 2020. As on previous occasions, the reports took stock of the situation in Georgia following the August 2008 conflict, provided information on the related activities of the Council of Europe and proposed further action for the Organisation in terms of confidence-building measures.

■ The Directorate of Political Affairs (DPA) continued to implement confidence-building measures (CBMs) in post-conflict, frozen or protracted conflict zones. In 2020, 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, representatives from both banks of the River Nistru/Dniester in the Republic of Moldova and different local officials and population groups from Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 2020, new methods of co-operation were adopted as a result of the Covid-19 epidemic situation.

■ Concerning the Tbilisi-Sukhumi dialogue, the CBM programme in 2020 fostered the co-operation of archiving professionals. Thanks to the common work on archive materials, two publications and two related films were produced, respectively on the criminal cases against monks in Abkhazia during the Soviet period and the phenomenon of “Mukhadjirstvo” from Abkhazia in the 19th century.

■ The CBM programme also contributed to the Youth Peace Week (which replaced the Youth Peace Camp owing to the Covid-19 situation) with online

exchange on engaging young people and youth organisations in dialogue about peace and conflict transformation. Moreover, the first meeting on the preparation of materials on the prevention of drug addictions, especially among young people, took place in 2020 and Georgian and Abkhaz participants took part in the 2020 Pompidou Group Executive training. The co-operation of psychologists and psychiatrists from Sukhumi and Tbilisi working with traumatised children was also maintained in an online format.

■ Concerning CBMs across the river Nistru/Dniester, the DPA continued its dialogue with the authorities in Chisinau and interlocutors in Tiraspol: a fact-finding mission to Chisinau and Tiraspol took place in February 2020. 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 the second phase of projects between divided municipalities in Bosnia and Herzegovina was finalised and preliminary contact initiated for the third phase which would allow the inclusion of all the municipalities divided by the administrative entity boundary line in the project.

■ A number of activities are already planned for 2021, as soon as the pandemic situation allows. Notably, training for teachers and a study visit on the prevention and treatment of drug addictions for doctors from both banks of the river Nistru/Dniester, training for teachers from Tbilisi and the Tskhinvali region, a study visit for prison staff from Tbilisi and Sukhumi on the detention of minors and the presentation of the publications on archives.



Award ceremony of the Raoul Wallenberg Prize to **Amani Ballour**, Syrian pediatrician who ran an underground hospital in eastern Ghouta from 2012 to 2018 – **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 17 January 2020)

6th meeting of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH).
Ad hoc negotiation group (“47+1”) on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights (Strasbourg, 29 September 2020)



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

■ In 2020, the European Court's judgments pending before the Committee of Ministers stood at a record low (5 147)⁶ since 2006 as a result of the closure of 983 cases (including 187 cases revealing structural or systemic problems), following the adoption by respondent states of individual and a wide range of legislative and other general measures to execute the Court's judgments. The Department for the Execution of Judgments assisted the Committee of Ministers in the examination of 896 new judgments delivered by the Court.

■ Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, the Committee of Ministers was able to hold its four annual Human Rights meetings during which a total of 134 cases or groups of cases concerning 27 states were examined.

■ Further to the first initiation by the Committee of Ministers of infringement proceedings and a judgment of the European Court in 2019, the Committee adopted a final resolution closing three cases regarding abusive limitations of the right to liberty and security in Azerbaijan. This happened following the quashing by the Supreme Court of Azerbaijan of the convictions of Mr Ilgar Mammadov and Mr Rasul Jafarov and their compensation for non-pecuniary damage resulting from their unlawful arrest and imprisonment. Another development worth noting is the closure by the Committee of a case concerning voting rights in local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Baralija). In July 2020, the Election Act was amended to enable local elections in Mostar, which finally took place in December 2020, the first since 2008.

■ Other major reforms advancing human rights protection in respondent states in the context of execution

and recorded in the Committee's final resolutions were the following: legislative reforms in Georgia to prevent environmental pollution and to remedy environmental damages; legislative amendments in Latvia aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of investigations into police ill-treatment; major case law change by the Moldovan Constitutional Court aligning domestic law and practice with the Court's case law concerning expulsion of third-country nationals on grounds of national security; amendments of the procedural rules of the Swiss Court of Arbitration for Sport allowing public hearings at the sole request of an athlete if the dispute is of a disciplinary nature; legislative changes in Russia in order to safeguard the human rights of persons with mental disabilities in the context of their legal incapacitation and psychiatric hospitalisation; changes in Ukraine's criminal law aimed at preventing unfair trials and convictions caused by defendants being unable to confront witnesses or question their statements; and statutory changes in the United Kingdom better protecting one's right to private life in the context of counter-terrorism legislation applied by border control officers.

■ Finally, the participatory nature of the execution process was significantly reinforced as a result of the record number of communications received by the Committee from civil society organisations and national human rights institutions (168 concerning 28 states, compared to 133 in 2019 concerning 24 states). The Department for the Execution of Judgments enhanced its interaction with the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI), co-organising a series of four webinars which informed and trained more than 15 European NHRIs about the importance of the implementation of the Court's judgments and the ways to mainstream it across these national institutions.

6. Statistical data available as of 9 December 2020.



Committee for the Prevention of Torture visit to North Macedonia (Skopje, 9 December 2020)

Development and promotion of human rights

■ The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) finalised and transmitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption: a draft recommendation on the development and strengthening of effective, pluralist and independent national human rights institutions and a draft recommendation on measures against the trade of goods used for torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the death penalty. The CDDH pursued its work on the effective processing and resolution of cases relating to inter-state disputes and on human rights and the environment.

Human rights national implementation

■ Noteworthy achievements in terms of the effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at the national level include an increased dialogue among representatives of the Turkish judiciary and other stakeholders on human rights in the field of criminal justice and migration. Access to justice was improved by facilitating the adoption of new Rules of Civil Procedure in Cyprus. In Armenia, the Criminal Code, drafted with the support of the Council of Europe, passed the first reading in the National Assembly. In the Republic of Moldova, new internal rules and procedures helped strengthen the National Preventive Mechanism. In Ukraine, a functional and organisational analysis will help optimise the work of prosecutors' offices at regional and local levels. The number of users of the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals Programme (HELP) doubled to 78 000. Some 80 courses were launched, new courses developed and existing courses updated and adapted to national jurisdictions. Work with law faculties was intensified.

Independent human rights bodies

■ Co-operation activities were enhanced with national mechanisms for the prevention of torture (NPMs), in Europe and beyond, by holding webinars, co-organising an international colloquium, updating a bilingual (French/Arabic) manual on penitentiary law, and issuing quarterly newsletters in the context of the European NPM Forum, including on issues such as carrying out monitoring in times of pandemic, safeguards in police custody and forced return monitoring.

Co-operation with International Bodies Division

■ The negotiations on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights were resumed at the technical level. The Ad Hoc Negotiation Group ("Group 47+1") held one informal meeting and two full negotiation meetings. The Secretary General issued in September – together with the European Commission's Vice-President for Values and Transparency, Ms Věra Jourová – a joint statement, in which they underlined that "the resumption of these crucial negotiations sends a strong signal about the commitment of our two organisations, and our member states, to the fundamental values that we cherish. We very much hope that the negotiations can be brought to a speedy and successful conclusion."

International co-operation

■ The fourth Council of Europe's Raoul Wallenberg Prize was awarded in 2020 to Dr Amani Ballour for her personal bravery, courage and commitment in managing an underground hospital in Eastern Ghouta, Syria, for several years and saving lives at the risk to her own safety.

Conference “Marking 70 years of the ECHR in critical times” – **Christos Giakoumopoulos**, Director General Human Rights and Rule of Law (Strasbourg, 8 July 2020)



■ In addition to demonstrating her courage, Dr Ballour’s story is a wonderful example of female empowerment – she decided to study medicine despite family pressure not to do so – and of leadership, when she took on the running of an underground hospital known as “the Cave” in her hometown, near the Syrian capital Damascus. There, as a young paediatrician, she not only treated wounded children, including those injured by chemical weapons, but also managed a team of some 100 staff members, finding solutions to equipment and medicine shortages, protecting the structure itself and, above all, ensuring the safety of everyone.

■ The prize was created on the initiative of the Swedish Government and the Hungarian Parliament in 2012 in order to keep the memory of Raoul Wallenberg’s achievements alive.

SPECIFIC HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES

Prevention of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment (CPT)

■ Because of the pandemic, the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) had to stop its visits between March and July. It resumed the visits on the basis of new internal guidelines taking into account the situation. In 2020, it carried out six periodic visits (to Azerbaijan, Finland, Germany, Moldova, Monaco and Spain) and eight ad hoc or rapid reaction visits (to Bulgaria, Croatia, France, Greece, Kosovo*, Malta, North Macedonia and Ukraine).

■ The CPT also held high-level talks with the Prime Minister of North Macedonia on the need to improve the treatment of persons held in prisons.

■ At the request of the national authorities concerned, 19 visit reports and 17 government responses were made public.

■ Other publications issued by the CPT include a statement of principles and a follow-up statement relating to the treatment of persons deprived of their liberty in the context of the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic, the 29th Annual General Report, which included a section on the 30th Anniversary of the CPT, celebrated in November 2019, and a factsheet on the CPT’s standards regarding persons deprived of their liberty social care homes.

Social rights

■ Despite the difficulties caused by the Covid-19 crisis, in March the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) made public its 896 conclusions from 2019, including issues such as child labour, protection of children from violence, abuse and exploitation, children neglected because of unresolved migration situations, child poverty and social exclusion, and housing. The ECSR also examined around 400 situations relating to employment and delivery of skills needed in current labour markets as well the situation of workers in the gig economy, conclusions which will be made public in early 2021.

■ Issues addressed in decisions on the merits in collective complaints included the protection of children in juvenile justice procedures, the institutionalisation of children under the age of three and trade unions’ freedom to choose their own representatives. Nine new complaints were registered, some concerning the situation of enhanced vulnerability of Roma or persons with disabilities because of the Covid-19 pandemic. The pandemic was also the subject of an ECSR statement of interpretation on the right to protection of health under the European Social Charter.



2nd meeting of the Drafting Committee on Migrant Women (GEC-MIG) under the direction of **Drahošlav Štefánek**, Special Representative on Migration and Refugees (Strasbourg, 14 December 2020)

Other noteworthy work in the social rights field included outlining criteria for equal pay and equal opportunities for women in employment following the ESCR decisions on the merits in 15 collective complaints lodged by the international NGO University Women of Europe (UWE). The European Social Cohesion Platform (PECS) initiated a reflection on social rights and artificial intelligence. The Department of the European Social Charter stepped up co-operation activities in member states, including a comprehensive needs assessment in the area of social rights in the Republic of Moldova. Considerable work was conducted in the areas of the rights of people with disabilities and of older persons in Ukraine. New co-operation projects were discussed in respect of other countries and a sizeable project was agreed for Georgia.

At the time of writing, Germany and Spain were on the way to ratifying the revised Charter and Spain indicated that it will take steps to quickly accept the collective complaints procedure (ratified in March 2021 for Germany and May 2021 for Spain).

Bioethics

The Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) adopted in April a statement entitled “human rights considerations relevant to the Covid-19 pandemic”, recalling the fundamental principles which must guide medical decisions and practices in the context of

the pandemic. The Strategic Action Plan on Human Rights and Technologies in Biomedicine (2020–2025), launched by the DH-BIO in June, sets actions to address key human rights issues raised by developments in biomedicine. To promote dialogue with the public on such developments, the DH-BIO launched a guide to public debate on human rights and biomedicine in September.

Data protection

The Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (“Convention 108”) confirmed its unique role as a key international instrument by reaching a total of 55 states parties. The updated version, Convention 108+, has attracted a total of 33 signatures and 10 ratifications. The protection of children’s personal data in an education setting is of crucial importance with courses and classes moving online. In this context, the Committee of Convention 108 adopted groundbreaking guidelines on children’s data protection in an education setting.

Two joint statements were issued by the Chair of the Committee of Convention 108 and the Data Protection Commissioner of the Council of Europe, one on the right to data protection in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and one on digital contact tracing.



The USA renews support to the global Octopus Project – Meeting between **Darragh Paradiso**, Consul General and Deputy Permanent Observer of the United States in Strasbourg and **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe (21 September 2020)

■ The report “Digital solutions to fight Covid-19” tackled how personal data are processed in the 55 states parties to Convention 108 in relation to the crisis caused by Covid-19. It showcases commendable practices followed by parties and those that need improvement.

■ An increasing number of countries used Convention 108 as a reference when drawing up their own legislation. In addition, the promotion and implementation of personal data protection measures are also ensured by local capacity-building activities, sectoral awareness raising and technical support as part of bilateral co-operation programmes for European countries, as well as for countries in the Mediterranean neighbourhood (in particular, Tunisia and Morocco). Multilateral support was provided for the African Network of Data Protection Authorities.

European Audiovisual Observatory – partial agreement

■ The Observatory, under the Presidency of Morocco, mobilised its forces in response to the Covid-19 pandemic and set itself the clear goal of providing the audiovisual industries in Europe with valuable, often real-time information on the effects of the pandemic. We tracked support measures for these industries throughout Europe, listing (to date) 1 136 different measures. Our online tracker has become a

reference for the audiovisual industries with almost 8 000 downloads. In addition, we published two Covid reports: one on these support measures and the other on the financial impact of Covid-19 on audiovisual industry revenues. The Observatory’s 2020 Cannes conference went 100% online and dealt with the effects of Covid-19 on the film, TV and VOD (video on demand) industries in Europe. The very first in-house-produced documentary on the effects of the pandemic was produced.

■ All conferences thereafter were held online and included Observatory events on gender equality, regulation and responsibility of video-sharing platforms, and diversity and inclusion in the European audiovisual industries.

■ Apart from its Covid-related work, the Observatory published seven legal reports on relevant topics for European media law, such as the financing of audiovisual production according to territoriality considerations, freedom of expression in the media and journalism, European copyright law and media pluralism, and a major Europe-wide comparative mapping study on defining the nationality of European films and programmes. On the economic front, 12 market reports were published covering themes such as high-end TV series, European films and programmes on VOD, the circulation of European films outside Europe and female directors and screenwriters.



Council of Europe co-operation with the IT sector – **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and new partners from internet and telecommunication companies: Element AI, ICCO, IEEE, Intel and RIPE NCC (Strasbourg, 6 February 2020)

■ The AVMS Database was further developed to host information on the transposition of the revised AVMS Directive into national law. The LUMIERE VOD database now contains information on more than 35 000 European films offered 150 000 times on VOD.

■ The year 2020 also saw a major statutory change for the Observatory with the newly created opportunity for countries to take associate membership. In the long term this should allow major audiovisual territories outside Europe to join.

Protection of freedom of expression and media and internet governance

■ In a context marked by the Covid-19 pandemic, media-related activities have focused on the main challenges related to freedom of expression and media, the importance of quality journalism and the safety of journalists, including in times of crisis. A study on the impact of Covid-19 and related measures on freedom of expression in Council of Europe member states provides a trend analysis of the impact of the measures introduced on freedom of expression, examples of good or worrying practice and draws attention to emerging patterns in the overall response and of member states to crisis situations. A web page dedicated to the challenges to freedom of expression and media freedom in times of crisis has been developed, containing guidance for member states on human rights-compliant responses to the crisis, including a “toolkit” by the Secretary General on the impact of the health crisis on freedom of expression and media freedom (July).

■ An implementation guide was published providing useful practices and specific suggestions for a more effective implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2016)4 on the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists and other media actors. Based on 20 European journalists’ testimonies, the 2020 publication *A mission to inform – Journalists at risk speak out* analyses factors behind the various types of pressure against journalists, their impact and journalists’ resilience, and proposes steps to advance the implementation of the 2016 recommendation.

■ Further studies are devoted to supporting quality journalism through media and information literacy and the prioritisation of public interest content online.

■ The Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)1 on the human rights impacts of algorithmic systems warns of the significant human rights challenges raised by the use of algorithmic systems and, to ensure that human rights are respected in the development, acquisition or use of algorithms, proposes guidelines for states and those in the public and private sectors.

Co-operation on freedom of expression

■ Co-operation on freedom of expression included provision of customised inputs through technical assistance, support and legislative and policy advice to 12 countries, member and non-member states/jurisdictions of the Council of Europe. More specifically, work through country and regional interventions, projects and programmes involved Albania, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Kosovo*, the Republic of Moldova, Morocco, Montenegro, North Macedonia,

25th Conference of Directors of Prison and Probation Services (CDPPS) – Director General **Christos Giakoumopoulos** delivering Norman Bishop's post-mortem Pro Merito Medal to Ambassador Sweden in Council of Europe **Mårten Ehnberg** (Strasbourg, 9 November 2020)



Serbia, Tunisia and Ukraine. During 2020, the co-operation on freedom of expression managed 16 country interventions/projects with a total budgetary envelope of €7 621 and with an annual disbursement of €3 000 during the year.

Some 252 technical co-operation, capacity-building and policy and legislative support activities (inputs) covered areas such as approximation of national legislation to Council of Europe standards, support of public broadcasters, ensuring and promoting safety of journalists and fighting impunity for crimes against them, professional coverage of elections, political advertising, reforms of printed media, countering disinformation, gender equality in media, access to public information, personal data protection, internet governance, technical evaluations, baseline studies on disinformation, legal education on freedom of expression, journalistic ethics, and access of children to public broadcasting radio.

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic situation, various aspects of media operations were introduced as new or adopted interventions through each project area, which also served as safeguarding measures in response to the already built outputs and immediate needs in the new circumstances.

Digital transformations and artificial intelligence

The Council of Europe has played an important role in the analysis of key developments and the effects of the digital transformation on human rights, democracy and the rule of law for many years. In 2020, special focus was placed on increasing the visibility of the Council of Europe's activities through several awareness-raising initiatives – nine webinars on AI and law webinars co-organised with the University of Strasbourg, on subjects such as contact-tracing applications, certification of algorithms, predictive policing and the regular updating of a dedicated website on AI.

The Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI) extensively increased its activities. After the adoption of the CAHAI Progress Report by the Committee of Ministers in September, which includes a road map until the end of 2021, the CAHAI adopted in December a feasibility study on a legal framework for the development, design and application of AI based on Council of Europe standards. The feasibility study comprehensively mapped the impact of AI systems on a wide range of civil, political and social rights and likewise the rule of law and democracy. It also clearly demonstrates that several substantive and procedural gaps in legal protection exist. It therefore concluded that an appropriate legal framework on the design, development and application of AI is likely to consist of a combination of complementary binding and non-binding legal instruments. As for a possible binding legal instrument, it could take the form of a convention or framework convention, of horizontal character, which would consolidate general common principles applied to the AI environment and using a risk-based approach.

Council of Europe Secretary General **Marija Pejčinović Burić** addressing MONEYVAL on the occasion of its 60th plenary meeting. (Strasbourg, 16 December 2020)



Partnership with digital and telecom companies

■ The partnership with digital and telecom companies continued in 2020 with both sector-specific and horizontal activities. The Council of Europe is positioning itself as a global platform that steers a comprehensive multistakeholder debate on the impact of advanced digital technologies and AI on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. This debate involves not only large internet and telecommunication companies but also start-ups, professional associations of engineers and software developers, as well as standard-setting organisations.

■ With a broadened network of 25 partner companies, timely information and joint calendars are becoming more important. A work plan has been prepared and kept updated to facilitate co-operation between partners themselves, as well as with civil society organisations affiliated with the Council of Europe. Activities will be discussed jointly and partners will also be fully involved in the work of the CAHAI, as set out in its Terms of Reference.

ACTION AGAINST CRIME

Counter-terrorism and criminal law

■ The Council of Europe works actively to ensure that victims of terrorism always receive the support they need in the short, medium and long terms. The Council of Europe Network of Contact Points has already produced some concrete results in the exchanges following recent terrorist attacks. Its main

objective is to ensure that victims of terrorism can always get the best information about a state's legal provisions governing victims of terrorism. This includes their right to medical and other relevant assistance, their financial compensation, where and how to file applications for such assistance and compensation, and the possible participation of victims of a terrorist act in legal proceedings against the alleged perpetrators.

■ In July, the Committee of Ministers adopted a guide for member states to establish the "Tool for the preliminary evaluation of the risk that a terrorist attack may be carried out by radicalised persons" and for comparing this risk with that posed by other radicalised persons who are the subject of an assessment, in order to determine the likelihood of these persons becoming "terrorists acting alone".

■ The Council of Europe Committee responsible for questions of criminal law (CDPC) has started its work of negotiating legal instruments on topical issues: environmental crime, artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles, and relations between the European Public Prosecutor's Office and third countries. This work will lead to the development of common standards for all states during the year 2021.

Anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (MONEYVAL)

■ In 2020 MONEYVAL adopted the mutual evaluation reports of Georgia and Slovakia, and five follow-up reports for the Czech Republic, the UK Crown Dependency of the Isle of Man, Lithuania, Montenegro and Ukraine, with a new focus on the



The 2020 HELP Network Conference
 (Strasbourg, 8 July 2020)

sector of virtual currencies. The committee launched a typologies research programme, publishing its first research report “Money laundering and terrorism financing trends in MONEYVAL jurisdictions during the Covid-19 crisis”. MONEYVAL became the first among its anti-money laundering peer organisations to conduct hybrid on-site evaluation visits in the challenging Covid context, which took place to the Holy See/Vatican City State and San Marino in October 2020. The committee made a significant imprint on the global standards of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) under review in 2020 covering weapons of mass destruction proliferation financing risks. In a landmark development the FATF President held the first-ever exchange of views with the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers.

■ The Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Warsaw Convention (CETS 198) adopted a thematic report assessing the way its states parties monitor banking operations to prevent money laundering and the financing of terrorism. The COP adopted three follow-up reports for Bulgaria, Sweden and Croatia and thematic monitoring updates for Monaco and the Russian Federation.

Fight against corruption (GRECO)

■ The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) adopted some 35 evaluation, compliance and ad hoc reports in 2020, a large majority of the reports foreseen for the year, despite considerable restrictions on its work as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. These reports focus on the prevention of corruption of MPs, judges and prosecutors (fourth evaluation round) as well as top executive officials and law-enforcement agencies (fifth evaluation round). The GRECO process,

based on in-depth assessments of country-specific systems, providing recommendations for improvement and following the progress made through a dedicated compliance procedure, resulted in numerous legislative, policy and/or institutional reforms in member states. GRECO also continued to use its means for raising urgent developments as they appear in member states through its specific ad hoc procedure (Rule 34).

■ GRECO further pursued its co-operation and striving for synergies with other international organisations, in particular with its observers such as the UN (UN General Assembly Special Session against Corruption, UNGASS 2021), the OECD (on anti-corruption legislation and reforms) and with the OSCE and the EU in particular on issues relating to the rule of law, judicial independence, etc.

Criminal law co-operation activities

■ In response to the Covid-19 outbreak and the need to provide urgent support to inmates and prison staff, protective materials (93 980 pairs of gloves, 26 610 disposable masks or face shields, 145 thermometers, 1 656 litres of disinfectant or antiseptic solution, 870 disinfectant agents, 3 150 medical clothing sets or uniforms, 6 500 disposable plastic shoe covers, 600 FFP2 respirators and oxygen generators, portable saturimeters, ultrasonic nebulisers, pulse oximeters and bactericide lamps) were donated to Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova, Montenegro and North Macedonia.

■ The Criminal Law Co-operation Unit supported the Western Balkans Beneficiaries by developing tools and guidelines for proper identification of radicalisation



CPT visit to Idrizovo Prison
(Skopje, 8 December 2020)

and assessment of violent extremist prisoners (VEPs), their rehabilitation and reintegration back into society, and strategies for enhancing multidisciplinary work and inter-institutional co-operation. These beneficiaries also benefited from exchanges of experiences, knowledge and practices on VEP management, thus developing recommendations for unifying approaches and strengthening regional co-operation.

Economic crime co-operation activities

■ The Economic Crime and Co-operation Division (ECCD) continued with its efforts to support Council of Europe member states in enhancing their capacities to address economic crimes in line with international standards and good practices. During this year the ECCD produced a comprehensive resource on Liability of Legal Entities for Corruption Offences aimed at supporting regulatory efforts in this area.

■ Following the expansion of the Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Countering of Financing of Terrorism (CFT) obligations to virtual assets (VAs) and virtual service providers (VASPs), it developed a sectoral risk assessment based on its AML/CFT National Risk Assessment Methodology. Furthermore, the ECCD undertook a unique assessment of the regional dimension of financing of terrorism (FT) risks associated with non-profit organisations (NPOs) in the region of the Western Balkans and Turkey, which would contribute to strengthening a proportionate response when addressing FT risks in the NPO sector. In parallel, the ECCD initiated the conceptualisation of the National Corruption Risk Assessment Methodology, Proliferation Financing Risk Assessment Methodology and Introduction to Perception of Corruption e-learning

course. These tools are expected to assist the work of anti-corruption and AML/CFT authorities across Council of Europe member states and beyond.

■ In addition, the ECCD working closely with national beneficiaries and project partners, contributed to significant legislative reforms in member states of the Council of Europe, including new and amended AML/CFT legislation adopted in Moldova, Montenegro and Ukraine, as well as more specific legislative reforms in areas such as asset forfeiture in Armenia and anti-corruption regulations in Moldova.

■ Finally, the ECCD continued its work in supporting EU member states for assessments of national ML and TF risks and their sectoral dimension in line with dedicated Council of Europe methodology, particularly in Romania and the Czech Republic.

Cybercrime

■ The Budapest Convention on Cybercrime remains the most relevant international agreement in this field. By the end of 2020, membership had increased to 65 states parties and the Protocol on Xenophobia and Racism had 32 parties and 13 signatories.

■ The huge increase in cybercrime related to the Covid-19 pandemic and continued ransomware attacks in 2020 stressed the need for additional tools to ensure effective international co-operation. In response, the Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY) made serious progress in the negotiation of a new, second Additional Protocol on enhanced co-operation and disclosure of electronic evidence.



Exchange of views between the CPT and representatives of the European Court of Human Rights – Definition of “deprivation of liberty” - **Mykola Gnatovskyy**, President of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, CPT (Strasbourg, 5 March 2020)

A team of evaluators from the Council of Europe’s Committee of Experts for the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) (San Marino, 12 October 2020)

From March 2020 onwards, most of the activities supported by the Cybercrime Programme Office were carried out online. C-PROC also created an online resource to facilitate the criminal justice response to Covid-19-related cybercrime.

The Cybercrime Programme Office of the Council of Europe supported capacity building through more than 250 activities. Adapting to Covid-19 restrictions, almost all workshops and other events were carried out online from March 2020 onwards. By December 2020, C-PROC managed a portfolio of projects with a budget of over €38 million.

Drug use and illicit trafficking

Two additional Council of Europe member states (Armenia and Georgia) have decided to join the Pompidou Group. The group has now 41 members, including three non-European countries.

Negotiations and consultations continued throughout the year on the statutory revision process launched by the 2018 Stavanger ministerial conference. On 19 November, the Permanent Correspondents approved a draft revised statute which was subsequently transmitted to the Committee of Ministers for adoption in 2021, when the Pompidou Group celebrates its 50th anniversary.

The Pompidou Group set up in April an online platform called “Save lives – Protect people”, which gathers concrete experiences faced and practical solutions found by people who use drugs and their relatives. The platform’s findings are being developed as a tool for policy makers in member states.

JUSTICE AND LEGAL CO-OPERATION

Venice Commission

In light of the Covid-19 crisis, the Venice Commission collected information about legal responses to the pandemic in the member states at the constitutional level. Information received is publicly available at the Venice Commission’s website (section Observatory of the situations of emergency), and was used for the preparation of the interim report on the measures taken in the EU member states as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and their impact on democracy, the rule of law and fundamental rights.

The Venice Commission continued to protect the independence of the Polish judiciary vis-à-vis the executive and the legislature in a critical urgent opinion on the amendments to the laws on the judiciary.

Concerning Turkey, the Venice Commission in one opinion assessed the replacement of elected candidates and mayors and in another evaluated changes to the law on the bar associations, concluding that creation of alternative bars in big cities may lead to the politicisation of the legal profession and recommending giving all lawyers a roughly equal representation in the central lawyers’ self-governance body.

In the framework of urgent opinions for Ukraine, the Venice Commission insisted on quality standards for constitutional court decisions and on disciplinary accountability of the judges. Furthermore, it critically evaluated legal effects of a judgment of the Constitutional Court of Ukraine on the anti-corruption legislation.

Secretary General delivers keynote speech to Athens Democracy Forum (Athens, 29 September 2020)



■ In two opinions on electoral law issues amending the constitutions of Albania and Bulgaria, the commission highlighted the need for constructive dialogue and, in the case of Bulgaria, recommended a thorough assessment of the impact of the reduction of the number of MPs from 240 to 120.

■ The issue of the organisation of elections has been addressed on several occasions, in particular at the 17th European Conference of Election Management Bodies, during several webinars with electoral management bodies and in the Venice Commission's Covid-19 Interim Report, with a final report foreseen for 2021. Furthermore, revised guidelines on political party regulation were adopted, as was a report on the possible criminalisation of calls for independence of a part of a national territory, from the standpoint of the European Court of Human Rights.

■ Following up on its 2019 study, the Venice Commission adopted eight "Principles for a fundamental rights-compliant use of digital technologies in electoral processes", underlining the need to ensure the right balance between different fundamental rights and interests at stake such as freedom of expression, personal data protection and the right to free elections.

■ The commission continued its fruitful co-operation with countries in Latin America and signed a co-operation agreement with the Organization of American States (OAS). Two UniDem Med Campus seminars for public officials on user-oriented administration and on public administration reform were organised online. Furthermore, in the framework of the new Joint Council of Europe–European Union Central Asia Rule of Law Programme 2020-2023, the Venice Commission increased its co-operation with countries

in Central Asia, notably by preparing upon request from the authorities' legal opinions on sanctions for violation of electoral legislation (Kyrgyzstan), freedom of conscience and religious organisations (Uzbekistan) and postponement of elections motivated by constitutional reform (Kyrgyzstan).

Justice and legal co-operation

■ The justice advisory bodies mobilised rapidly in response to the Covid crisis and its significant impact on the functioning of courts. The Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCPE) issued an opinion entitled "The role of prosecutors in emergency situations, in particular when facing a pandemic", while the opinion of the Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) tackled "The role of associations of judges in supporting judicial independence".

■ The European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) adopted the declaration "Lessons learnt and challenges faced by the judiciary during and after the Covid-19 pandemic". The CEPEJ provided extensive input and analysis in its 2020 biennial report, "Evaluation of judicial systems", which for the first time included detailed country dashboards for comparisons and to guide policies. It also developed a detailed and comparative analysis of the functioning of the judicial systems of 26 EU member states, enabling the European Commission to prepare its annual "Justice Scoreboard". A similar analysis, completed with information about integrity of justice, was drawn up concerning the Western Balkans.

■ The Steering Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ) finalised the preparation of new Guidelines

Drahošlav Štefánek,
Special Representative on
Migration and Refugees,
at the second meeting of
the Drafting Committee on
Migrant Women (Strasbourg,
14 December 2020)



on Online Dispute Resolutions mechanisms, as well as Guidelines on Legal Aid Schemes. The CDCJ also approved a study on the feasibility of a new binding or non-binding European legal instrument on the profession of lawyers.

■ Justice reforms were high on the agenda in many countries and the CDCJ provided extensive advice through its capacity-building programmes and in close and constructive dialogues with the national authorities and institutions.

THE SPECIAL REPRESENTATIVE OF THE SECRETARY GENERAL ON MIGRATION AND REFUGEES

■ In January, Ambassador Drahošlav Štefánek took up his duties as the new Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees. His mandate was updated in July.

■ In February, the Special Representative presented the Final Report on the Implementation of the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019), in which he outlined the achievements and set new objectives. Based on these findings, the Special Representative prepared a new draft action plan on protecting vulnerable persons in the context of migration and asylum in Europe (2021-2025), which was introduced by the Secretary General to the Committee of Ministers in December.

■ In March, the Special Representative, together with the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) published a note on the main fundamental rights safeguards applicable at their member states' external borders that aim to support EU and Council of Europe

member states in their duties when taking protective measures and addressing questions related to public order, public health or national security challenges.

■ In June, the Special Representative participated in the launching of a HELP/UNHCR free online course on alternatives to immigration detention, developed under the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children and with the support of his office.

■ In July, the Special Representative organised a webinar to launch a handbook entitled "Family reunification for refugee and migrant children – standards and promising practices", with a particular focus on unaccompanied and separated refugee and migrant children.

■ In September, the Special Representative and the Regional Representative for Europe of the UN Human Rights Office (OHCHR) made a joint statement on the presentation of the new EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. The Special Representative emphasised that the launch offers an opportunity for the EU to find common ground on achieving more effective migration governance in Europe, based on the respect and protection of human rights.

■ Among other activities, the Special Representative organised the second meeting of the Network on Focal Points composed of members from relevant ministries in the member states dealing with migration issues at national level. He introduced the network's working methods at the meeting. He also submitted a written contribution to the Regional Review of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration and addressed the UNHCR Executive Committee on behalf of the Council of Europe.



Informal exchange of views on “strengthening democracy through youth engagement in the Council of Europe and its member States” in presence of **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 23 January 2020)



Snežana Samardžić-Marković,
Director General of Democracy
at the Council of Europe
(Strasbourg, 8 September 2020)

Democracy

www.coe.int/democracy

GOVERNANCE, EQUALITY, HUMAN DIGNITY

World Forum for Democracy

■ The Council of Europe formally launched the ninth edition of the World Forum for Democracy, “Can Democracy Save the Environment?”, on 18 November 2020. Until the forum meets in Strasbourg in November 2021, the “12 Months, 1 Question” campaign will focus on an ongoing global conversation around one environment-related theme each month through a diverse programme of online events and resources.

Democratic governance

■ On the basis of the work of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), the Committee of Ministers adopted the guidelines on public ethics. For the first time, the guidelines cover all categories of public officials and deal with emerging issues such as whistle-blower protection, the prevention of sexism and hate speech and the use of social media. They are complemented by the CDDG guide “Practical Steps to Implementing Public Ethics in Public Organisations” and by a new toolkit of the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance on public ethics benchmarking for central authorities.

■ In 2020, how to continue to ensure democratic governance during the response to the pandemic was a central concern for member states. The CDDG organised a thematic meeting, set up a dedicated web page and published a report called “Democratic governance and the response to Covid-19”. In addition, the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance expanded the offer of its toolkits to areas such as leadership at times of crisis, emergency preparedness and resilience, and teleworking for public administrations.

■ Through its co-operation activities, the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance supported public administration and local government reforms in 21 countries, relying on peers, experts and public authorities from about 30 member states.

Elections and civil society

■ The main activities of electoral co-operation and civil participation were concentrated in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, where the Council of Europe supported numerous actions to promote more integral and transparent decision-making processes, participation of young people and women, and electoral dispute resolution.

Electoral co-operation

■ In 2020, the division expanded the work of the Council of Europe’s Electoral Laboratory (Eleclab), which offers useful and relevant tools in various areas of electoral matters including first-time voters, better representation of women and modern strategic planning.

■ An interactive online educational and awareness-raising platform about elections, “CEC: Prosvita”, was launched as a joint educational project with the Central Election Commission of Ukraine.

■ In Moldova, strategic and electoral advice was provided to the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training and the CEC of the Autonomous Territorial Unit Gagauzia.

■ In Georgia, the e-learning course “Election campaign and administrative resources – preventing and responding to abuse of administrative resources during electoral processes” was developed and implemented in co-operation with the Georgian Central Election Commission, targeting civil servants at all levels of the Georgian executive.

Civil participation

■ In Ukraine, a wide variety of civil participation tools have been effectively introduced to civil servants and citizens of several regions of Ukraine. Despite the Covid-19 restrictions, the e-learning course “Academy of Civil Participation” equipped public servants at local and regional levels with knowledge about the involvement of citizens in the creation of public spaces, participatory budgeting, public consultations and other civil participation tools. The methodology CivicLab, aimed at developing options for decisions and predicting their outcomes, and the UChange interactive

Signature of an agreement between the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) and the Czech Republic – **Rolf Wenzel**, CEB Governor and **Emil Ruffer**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe of the Czech Republic (Strasbourg, 17 December 2020)



practical game, teaching citizens how to interact with authorities, were both introduced. The implementation of school participatory budgeting (School PB) continued in several pilot Ukrainian municipalities, based on Council of Europe standards and best practices. The capacities of several Ukrainian representatives were strengthened through two phases of the online mentoring programme “Mentoring for Change”.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE DEVELOPMENT BANK (CEB) – PARTIAL AGREEMENT

■ In 2020, the CEB approved 56 projects for an overall amount of more than €6 billion, with the majority of projects approved for the benefit of target group countries.

■ In response to the exceptional situation caused by the pandemic, the CEB implemented a fast-track procedure to approve projects in the sectors most affected by the crisis. Twenty-three such emergency projects have been approved in 20 countries for more than €3 billion. They finance the healthcare sector, mainly medical equipment and supplies, and help maintain jobs in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises.

■ In parallel to the increased lending activity, the bank has raised additional funds by issuing two Covid-response social inclusion bonds. The proceeds provide additional financial support for CEB member countries struggling with the crisis.

■ The CEB continued to develop its co-operation with the EU, in particular within the Western Balkans Investment Framework, the Regional Housing Programme and other activities aimed at strengthening social inclusion and the integration of migrants and refugees, including a new project under the Facility for Refugees in Turkey.

■ The Migrant and Refugee Fund was extended until 2025 and a new Green Social Investment Fund was established to strengthen the social impact of CEB investments and reinforce their environmental sustainability.

■ Some 84 eligible applications were received for the first edition of the CEB Award for Social Cohesion. The award was granted to a Croatian project focusing on the employment of persons with disabilities and their inclusion in society.

■ Andorra joined the CEB as its 42nd Member in May 2020 and the country’s first project in the sector of health was approved in September.

■ On 17 December, the CEB signed an additional grant agreement with the Czech Republic for 1.2 million Czech koruna contribution to the Regional Housing Programme.

GENDER EQUALITY AND VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

■ A dedicated web page on women’s rights and the Covid-19 pandemic has been created gathering information on measures taken by member states, international organisations and NGOs to tackle the specific impact of the Covid-19 crisis on women’s rights. Various other events, webinars and initiatives took place, including a high-level webinar held under the aegis of the Greek Presidency on the role and the situation of gender equality mechanisms in the context of Covid-19, opened by the President and the Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic, the President of the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General. The Committee of the Parties of the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (the “Istanbul Convention”) adopted a declaration on the implementation of the convention during the pandemic.

■ The recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on preventing and combating sexism is available in 23 languages, and a new explanatory brochure has been published as part of the campaign “Sexism: See it. Name it. Stop it”. The campaign action page and other online tools are available in 20 languages. Targeted awareness-raising initiatives have been carried out in nine countries, in partnership with

83rd plenary meeting of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), with **Johan Friestedt**, **Mats Lindberg** and **Sophie Kurt** (Directorate of Anti-discrimination) (Strasbourg, 6 October 2020)



the European Women's Lobby. The Gender Equality Commission started the drafting of a new recommendation on the rights of migrant and refugee women, in line with the objectives of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy.

■ The baseline evaluation of the Istanbul Convention continued, with the publication of seven GREVIO reports (on Andorra, Belgium, Italy, Malta, Netherlands, Serbia and Spain) and recommendations of the Committee of the Parties with respect to nine states. Despite the pandemic, GREVIO carried out five evaluation visits. GREVIO also published its first General Activity Report, on its first four years of monitoring work, launched work on a general recommendation on the digital dimension of violence against women, and submitted to the European Court of Human Rights its first third-party intervention.

■ The Kosovo* Assembly decided to amend the constitution in order to give full and direct effect to the Istanbul Convention. Tunisia and Kazakhstan were invited by the Committee of Ministers to adhere to the convention.

■ Various awareness-raising campaigns and communication materials were disseminated and initiatives were undertaken to ensure accurate information about the Istanbul Convention in states discussing its ratification, such as the Republic of Moldova, Armenia and Ukraine. A comprehensive methodology for campaigning on the Istanbul Convention is being developed in co-operation with WAVE Network and UN Women. Co-operation projects were developed with an increased number of beneficiary countries, now covering also Azerbaijan and Latvia, looking at topical issues such as the administration of justice in cases of sexual violence, the role of the media, data collection, risk assessments, police work and perpetrators' programmes. A pioneering mentoring programme for legal professionals has been put in place in the six Eastern Partnership countries to support cross-fertilisation of experiences on women's access to justice. The HELP course on violence against women and domestic violence is now available in 15 languages,

and the HELP course on women's access to justice is now available in four languages (four other language versions are being prepared).

TRAFFICKING IN HUMAN BEINGS

■ Despite the Covid-19 pandemic, in 2020 GRETA (Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings) carried out three on-site country evaluation visits, published eight new reports (Albania, Austria, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, the Republic of Moldova, Monaco and the Slovak Republic) and adopted three more reports as part of the third evaluation round of the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings by the parties (Bulgaria, Denmark and Georgia). The Committee of the Parties elected eight GRETA members and adopted recommendations with respect to eight countries.

■ GRETA also published a general report taking stock of the second evaluation round and adopted a guidance note on the entitlement of victims of trafficking to international protection and a statement on the respect and the protection of victims in time of emergency. As part of the Secretary General's road map on strengthening action against human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation, GRETA adopted a compendium of good practices and a guidance note on trafficking for labour exploitation. A study is in preparation on the impact of the digital dimension on trafficking in human beings.

■ Co-operation projects linked to GRETA's recommendations were implemented in several member states, covering topical issues such as training of labour inspectors, child trafficking, victims' legal representation, protection and rights, with country-specific research, a multidisciplinary approach and solid support from civil society organisations. The HELP course on combating trafficking in human beings is available in 11 languages, and a new module on combating trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation is being prepared.

Work session of the GREVIO, Istanbul Convention action against violence against women and domestic violence (Strasbourg, 5 March 2020)



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 developing a new and comprehensive legal instrument on combating hate speech through the Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS); 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; developing a multi-level policy framework for intercultural integration through the Working Group GT-ADI-INT; preparing a further implementation review of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity; and preparing Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on upholding equality and protecting against discrimination and hate during the Covid-19 and similar crises.

ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)

■ ECRI published seven country reports and nine interim follow-up conclusions. It also prepared a number of country visits, most of which, however, had to be postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ Early in the year, in its annual report, ECRI raised the alarm about ultra-nationalism, antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe. It subsequently issued exceptional statements on European-wide challenges, namely the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and related government responses on groups of concern to ECRI and racist police abuse, including racial profiling, and systemic racism.

■ ECRI also pursued its revision of General Policy Recommendation No. 5 on combating intolerance and discrimination against Muslims and General Policy Recommendation No. 9 on the fight against antisemitism. Following an exchange of views with representatives of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) and of the EU Commission, as well as with a senior scholar from the University of Oxford, ECRI adopted an opinion on the IHRA working definition of antisemitism.

No Hate Speech and co-operation programmes

■ Legislative reviews, capacity-building actions, comparative analyses of national legislative responses to hate speech and a regional campaign No Hate Ambassadors in South-East Europe assisted member states in addressing hate speech. Representatives of equality bodies, government institutions and NGOs acquired better competence and built new tools to tackle racism, xenophobia, homophobia and



Visit to the Council of Europe of the Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova (Strasbourg, 22 January 2020)

transphobia supported by the Council of Europe's co-operation programmes on anti-discrimination and equality. A memorandum of co-operation between a wide range of stakeholders was signed in Georgia, an interagency group was set up in Ukraine, and substantial training was provided in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries. Small grants schemes, adaptation of co-operation initiatives and social media campaigns in response to the Covid pandemic assisted national authorities and NGOs to disseminate information in minority languages, increase access to services for vulnerable communities and counter hate speech and disinformation. A new online course on AI and discrimination for equality bodies and other regulators was developed and piloted in the United Kingdom and will be rolled out to other member states in 2021.

INTERCULTURAL CITIES (ICC)

Seven cities joined the Intercultural Cities programme, bringing the membership to 143, including in the Asia-Pacific region. A new network of intercultural regions is also benefitting from the expertise of the programme. Policy innovation was encouraged through the development of guidance and research on preventing gentrification; identifying and eliminating systemic discrimination; minimising the discriminatory effect of the use of artificial intelligence by public services; building the intercultural competence of public officials; and preventing and combating rumours and stereotypes in the school environment. An intercultural citizenship test has been developed. Knowledge sharing among member cities enabled local authorities to effectively address the health crisis.

MINORITIES AND MINORITY OR REGIONAL LANGUAGES

In 2020, the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities carried out two visits, held two follow-up events and adopted six opinions. The Committee of Ministers adopted eight resolutions on the implementation of the Framework Convention.

The Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages adopted five reports and, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, carried out just one on-the-spot visit. As part of the 2019 reform, the Committee of Experts adopted its first evaluations of the implementation of the recommendations for immediate action contained in the committee's reports. The Committee of Ministers adopted recommendations to seven states parties.

The Advisory Committee published its 12th Activity Report, in which it reflected on the challenges of national minority participation. It noted the continuing rise in xenophobia and racism, and how this infringes on the democratic space of national minorities – excluding them from political discourse and decision-making processes. The Advisory Committee highlighted how the democratic participation of all in society is the foundation of a genuinely democratic society, and how working with the Framework Convention's standards and norms can help to create inclusive societies.

The Committee of Experts, for its part, has underlined the importance of communication in regional or minority languages this year, in which the dissemination of precise, understandable information has been a matter of public health concern. A further key impact of the pandemic has been the increasing use of online education, and the Committee of Experts issued a statement on the importance of maintaining online teaching of and in minority languages, even during the pandemic.



Conference “A Living Instrument for Everyone: The Role of the European Convention on Human Rights in Advancing Equality for LGBTI Persons” – **Eleni Tsetsekou**, Head of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity (SOGI) Unit (Strasbourg, 8 October 2020)

LGBTI EQUALITY

■ The Committee of Ministers took note of the report on the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)5 on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity and encouraged member states to continue their efforts to advance towards the full enjoyment of all human rights by LGBTI persons. The secretariat of the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network (EFPN) was transferred from to the Council of Europe’s SOGI Unit secretariat. Support was given to member states for the execution of European Court of Human Rights judgments (Lithuania, Romania and North Macedonia) and in Poland a stakeholder alliance was initiated to support the advancement of the human rights of LGBTI persons. Intersex and LGBTI refugees gained visibility through peer learning following policy initiatives from two member states (Finland and Serbia).

ROMA AND TRAVELLERS’ ISSUES

■ Based on the completion and assessment of the implementation of the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019), a new Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion (2020-2025) was approved by the Committee of Ministers in January 2020 to address the remaining challenges, 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 (such as INSCHOOL, JUSTROM, ROMACT and ROMACTED) and Roma and Traveller civil society is involved through regular biannual dialogue meetings.

■ Roma history and culture was promoted through the adoption of Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2020)2 on the inclusion of the history of Roma and/or Travellers in school curricula and teaching materials, continuous co-operation with the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERAC) and the publication of books on the Representation of Roma In Major European Museum Collections: The Louvre (Vol. I) and: The Prado (Vol. II), as well as updated and completed fact sheets on Roma history, culture and language.

■ The Roma Political Schools in Greece, Italy, Portugal, Turkey and Ukraine organised training sessions on political participation in both in-person and online formats to over 200 Roma women and men. Ten of 25 Roma alumni of the Ukraine School were elected into political positions in the 2020 local elections.

■ Roma and Traveller women were empowered through capacity-building activities such as a women-only online study session about the Council of Europe and participation in the above-mentioned Roma Political Schools.

■ The first phase of the EU/Council of Europe Joint Programme ROMACTED (2017-2020) was concluded and a new agreement between the EU and the Council of Europe was signed for a second phase (2021-2024) with a significantly increased budget.

■ The conclusions and recommendations of the 10th meeting of the Council of Europe Dialogue with Roma and Traveller civil society (November 2020), particularly devoted to combating hate speech against Roma and Travellers, will feed into the drawing up of the forthcoming Committee of Ministers recommendation on combating hate speech.

7. 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.

■ Roma and Traveller communities and individuals were particularly hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic. In order to alleviate the impact of the crisis, the EC/ Council of Europe Joint Programme ROMACT re-allocated funds for emergency measures in municipalities and Roma communities for food supplies as well as hygiene and health information and measures. ROMACT also supported the implementation of prevention measures for vulnerable pupils and students, in order to limit the risk of dropping out of schooling and education. A total of 85 grants were awarded amounting to €321 568 and for the benefit of more than 60 000 persons. All projects included a financial or in-kind contribution from the beneficiaries.

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

■ Following the ratification by Armenia and Ireland in 2020, the Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse now legally binds all 47 Council of Europe member states and Tunisia. Its monitoring body progressed with the analysis of sexual exploitation and abuse facilitated by information and communications technologies, focusing particularly on the challenges raised by child self-generated sexual images and/or videos, which was also the theme of the 2020 European Day for the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse. At the outbreak of the health crisis, the Lanzarote Committee's Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson issued a statement calling upon parties to step up protection of children during the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ In 2020, a new Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) was set up to strengthen inter-governmental co-operation in this area. Key activities included work on new instruments on the best interest of the child in parental separation and in care proceedings, and on mechanisms for professionals to report violence against children. The CDENF also decided to address the challenges generated by the Covid-19 crisis through exchange of experiences, including on education, violence prevention and mental health. New resources on the rights of the child in the digital environment were published, targeting children, parents and other caregivers and policy makers. An inclusive process for designing a new Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) was also started.

■ In 2020, more than 2 000 key stakeholders were reached in 12 Council of Europe member states through co-operation projects and activities. Tools were developed to address online child sexual exploitation and abuse, such as a new training module, a video and book for four to seven-year-old children to raise awareness and prevent online child sexual exploitation and abuse ("Kiko and the Manymes"), as well as a training for trainers manual for kindergarten

teachers ("Kiko and the Hand") to help detect and report sexual abuse cases. Legal assistance was provided to support the drafting of legal amendments to criminalise possession of child sexual abuse material and grooming in Ukraine and Moldova. The Barnahus project in Slovenia attracted international attention with the results of the study on perceptions of child sexual abuse and the draft law on Barnahus, the first of its kind in Europe. In Andorra, the drafting of the National Action Plan for Children and Adolescents was supported with ambitious consultations of the entire Andorran child population, approximately 11 000 children, to be finalised in January 2021.

ENLARGED PARTIAL AGREEMENT ON SPORT (EPAS)

■ Consultations with governments and sports organisations were carried out by EPAS with a view to revising the European Sports Charter, protecting human rights and fighting corruption in sport. Sport Integrity Guidelines were published by EPAS in the context of the Kazan Action Plan (Action 3) to support sport ministers' interventions in the field of sport integrity, and EPAS continued to play a key role in the International Partnership Against Corruption in Sport (IPACS).

■ The 2020 Conference of Ministers was organised through a series of five short, separate sittings focusing on human rights in sport and on the revision of the European Sports Charter.

■ To identify the obstacles to child safeguarding in sport and propose measures to overcome them, a new joint project with the European Union was launched, including an in-depth analysis of the situation in five partner countries.

SPORT CONVENTIONS

■ Following the entry into force of the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions, its follow-up committee met for the first time on 24 and 25 November 2020. Its seven states parties adopted the committee's rules of procedures and agreed on a range of actions to be taken prior to the next meeting scheduled for May 2021.

■ The monitoring body of the Convention on Safety, Security and Service at Sports Events met for the first time on 1 December 2020 in an informal and remote format. Delegations from the 18 states to have ratified the Saint-Denis Convention had an initial exchange of views on expectations and priorities and agreed on the steps to prepare the first formal meeting of the committee (scheduled for April 2021). Five countries ratified the Saint-Denis Convention in 2020.

Ratification by **Panayiotis Beglitis**, Permanent Representative of Greece, of the Council of Europe Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions, in the presence of **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 16 June 2020)



■ Two new publications were also issued in the context of the work of the Committee of the Spectators Violence Convention: A report entitled “The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on policies and practices on safety, security and service at sports events” and another called “Hate speech, racism and other discriminatory behaviour in sport”.

■ The Monitoring Group to the Council of Europe Anti-Doping Convention (T-DO) continued its standard-setting and monitoring activities and considerably advanced the work on the new general principles of fair procedure applicable to anti-doping proceedings in sport. T-DO also started work on the new recommendation on the protection of whistle-blowers in an anti-doping context.

■ The T-DO also conducted a study and adopted a report, “The Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemics on the Anti-Doping Policy and Practice”, which was used to support states parties in their efforts to adopt the rules and legislation necessary to enact the new 2021 World Anti-Doping Code.

EUROPEAN DIRECTORATE FOR THE QUALITY OF MEDICINES & HEALTHCARE (EDQM)

■ In the unprecedented context related to the Covid-19 pandemic encountered in 2020, availability of and access to quality medicines were more important than ever for patients. This is why the EDQM focused on ensuring the continuous supply of its goods and services and engaged with all stakeholders, including national, European and international authorities, to support public health protection. Procedures and ways of working were immediately adapted to the new situation and constraints. The EDQM’s business continuity plan ensured that reference standards, necessary for the release of medicines onto the market, were available at all times.

■ As efforts to develop Covid-19 vaccines continued and to support developers working on candidate vaccines, the EDQM made available guidance documents and quality standards applicable to vaccines as well as training materials, including a document on the control of viral vectored vaccines. EDQM also facilitated the preparations for the independent batch release of Covid-19 vaccines by Official Medicines Control Laboratories (OMCLs) foreseen in the EU pharmaceutical legislation, resulting in key tools to aid method transfer and the availability of the first three guidelines needed for release of the first batches to the public in the EU/EEA.

■ The European Pharmacopoeia (Ph. Eur.) Commission and its 60 groups of experts and working parties held 166 virtual meetings. Thanks to the commitment and flexibility of all involved, the commission adopted 35 new and 250 revised monographs and general chapters for publication in the Ph. Eur., taking account of the latest scientific and technological developments and ensuring the quality of medicines.

■ The Ph. Eur. Commission’s European Paediatric Formulary Working Party compiled and published existing knowledge on paediatric formulations and marketed products that may be useful in the treatment of Covid-19 in the paediatric population.

■ Regarding the certification of suitability (CEP) procedure, the EDQM established a fast-track procedure to respond to users’ needs as quickly as possible. This procedure has been applied upon request from CEP holders or authorities and on a case-by-case basis for substances of specific interest related to Covid-19. It has made it possible to assess applications and grant CEPs more rapidly and has hence contributed to the availability of medicines.

■ In the field of substances of human origin, 2020 was marked by the publication of the 20th edition of the Guide to the preparation, use and quality assurance of blood components, a compendium of widely



11th international meeting of the world pharmacopoeias – Welcome and Opening by **Snežana Samardžić-Marković**, Director General of Democracy of the Council of Europe, with **Sabine Kopp** Secretary of the WHO Expert Committee on Specifications for Pharmaceutical Preparations, and **Suzanne Keitel**, Director of the EDQM (Strasbourg, 18 February 2020)

North-South Prize 2019 - The winners **Nabila Hamza** and **Leoluca Orlando** (Lisbon, 3 December 2020)

accepted harmonised European standards to ensure the quality and safety of blood in Europe and beyond. In providing health professionals from the blood, organs, tissues and cells sectors with a number of virtual events to minimise the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and ensure the continuity of life-saving treatments relying on these bodily substances, the EDQM also reasserted its mission of providing assistance to its member states and beyond, to protect human health in this field.

Concerning the issue of medicines contaminated by nitrosamines (impurities classified as potentially carcinogenic in humans), identified in 2018, the EDQM continued to actively contribute to the detection and control of these impurities in active pharmaceutical ingredients and medicines, in close collaboration with international partners. This included the revision of five monographs on blood-pressure lowering substances of the sartan-class, in line with the latest European regulatory decisions, as well as the drawing up of a new general chapter “N-nitrosamines in active substances”. The chapter provides an analytical toolbox for the control of nitrosamines and is a great example of co-operation and synergies between different EDQM activities: the chapter devised by experts from the Ph. Eur. is based on procedures initially developed by the OMCL network.

In the area of standard setting for Pharmaceutical and Consumer Care, an important resolution was adopted in March 2020 on pharmaceutical care, aiming at enhancing a rational use of medicines based on services provided in hospital and community pharmacy settings. The resolution has been strongly promoted to member states and partner organisations with the aim of maximising its implementation across the member states.

In 2020, with in-person events and conferences not being possible, EDQM moved to online meetings and webinars, allowing transparent and global communication in real time for the benefit of partners and stakeholders worldwide.

Forty-five online events were held on specific topics, as well as virtual training events and a web conference to mark the 10th anniversary of EDQM and EC co-operation in the field of blood. Together, these events attracted a total of 15 300 participants from 104 countries.

DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION

The Platform for the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists

The second comprehensive annual report of the safety of journalists platform was launched in 2020, highlighting major issues with regard to media freedom in Europe – censorship in the context of “fake news” and counter-terrorism, interferences with the coverage of protests and demonstrations, abusive legal actions designed to intimidate, persistent impunity for the killings of journalists and other serious attacks, growing online harassment, and a tightening political grip over the media sector.

In 2020, the platform received 201 alerts on serious media threats regarding 30 Council of Europe member states. Eighty-eight alerts (43.7%) have been responded to by the member state concerned or resolved by the end of the year.

On 2 November 2020, on the occasion of the International Day to End Impunity for Crimes against Journalists, the dedicated web page, launched in 2018, was updated with the new impunity for murder cases.

Strategy 2030 on “strengthening democracy through youth engagement in the Council of Europe and its member States” in presence of **Marija Pečjnović Burić**, Secretary General of the Council of Europe and **Anja Olin Pape**, Chair of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) and Chair of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) (Strasbourg, 23 January 2020)



EDUCATION

■ A conference of Ministers of Education under the Greek Council of Ministers chairmanship, held online on 29 October, endorsed a political declaration and took note of a Roadmap for Action on the education response to Covid-19, which aims to make the right to education a reality in times of crisis.

■ On 12 November, the Committee of Ministers created an Observatory on History Teaching in Europe as an enlarged partial agreement, initially with 17 member states.

■ In the European Higher Education Area, the Council of Europe helped ensure the inclusion of fundamental values and Council of Europe tools in the communiqué adopted by EHEA Ministers on 19 November.

■ The Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) was furthered through the EPAN Network, new guidance documents and training activities. Some 120 schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia implemented the RFCDC in curricula and extra-curricular activities. Curricula for in-service teacher training fostering a democratic school culture were accredited in Montenegro and in Serbia and materials developed in Turkey.

■ The Companion Volume to the Common European Framework for Languages was published and translated into International Sign Language.

■ On the dedicated web page for the Education Department’s Covid-19 response, 10 digital lesson plans on Digital Citizenship Education aimed at parents were published, with other resources. New publications developed to support teachers during the pandemic included a teachers’ manual, *How to teach Competences for Democratic Culture online*.

■ The European Qualifications Passport for Refugees maintained its assessment cycle. It developed a new

training course for evaluators and a new IT system. Evaluations of qualifications of refugees with health-related backgrounds were accelerated and supported by the Council of Europe’s Secretary General and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

■ In the Republic of Moldova, 1 200 civic education teachers in secondary and 100 in vocational schools were trained in the new competence-based civic education subject.

■ The Council of Ministers of Bosnia and Herzegovina adopted Policy Recommendations with a Roadmap for Inclusive Education.

■ Three international co-operation projects on resilience, integrating the RFCDC into teacher education programmes and human rights education for sports practitioners were implemented.

■ In Kosovo* a training module on assessment of children with special educational needs was developed and approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, leading to 150 officers of municipal assessment teams being trained.

■ The first National Ethical Commission for academic integrity was established in Montenegro and an Ethical Charter developed.

■ LEMON – Learning Modules Online launched new courses on media literacy, competences for democratic culture and recognising cyberbullying and conducted two masterclasses on media and information disorder.

■ The European Centre for Modern Languages moved its new programme “Inspiring innovation in language education: changing contexts, evolving competences” fully online and launched additional activities to support member states during the pandemic, including a treasure chest of resources for learners, parents and teachers and webinars for language teachers, head teachers and policy makers.

First meeting of the Council of Europe Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) (Strasbourg, 8 September 2020)



YOUTH

■ The new youth sector strategy 2030, adopted in January by the Committee of Ministers, will enable young Europeans to actively uphold, defend, promote and benefit from the Council of Europe's core values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

■ Georgia, Germany and Greece featured youth as a priority in their presidencies of the Committee of Ministers, underlining the importance these member states place on supporting young people, youth participation, youth policy and youth work.

■ The German presidency organised the third European Youth Work Convention, which launched the European Youth Work Agenda – a joint initiative of the Council of Europe and the European Union – a major step forward in further developing and strengthening youth work practice and policies in Europe.

■ Artificial intelligence and internet governance were key subjects of discussion, exploring the possible impact on young people as citizens, on their well-being, the possibilities for them to participate and shape society, as well as on their access to rights.

■ With the onset of the global pandemic, the youth sector rapidly launched its response to Covid-19, setting up two databases: one of good practices, the other of useful resources. The European Youth Foundation offered grants to local NGOs to respond to needs arising from the situation.

■ In a Covid-19-hit society, the protection of human rights was at the centre of numerous activities, not only in the national training organised around *Compass*, the human rights education manual, but also a new long-term training programme for staff of the youth centres holding the Council of Europe quality label, and a new edition and website of *Gender Matters*, the manual to address gender-based violence affecting young people.

■ The Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) organised two online debates to show solidarity with youth activists in Belarus and with the Black Lives Matter movement.

■ Fourteen youth centres in member states now hold the Council of Europe quality label and are spreading the values and policies of the youth sector.

■ The first-ever review of the implementation by member states, and also by youth civil society, of a Council of Ministers recommendation, the Enter! recommendation on access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights, was carried out.

CONVENTION ON THE CONSERVATION OF EUROPEAN WILDLIFE AND NATURAL HABITATS (BERN CONVENTION)

■ The Standing Committee to the Bern Convention decided to develop a vision to 2030, to address the challenges and threats biodiversity is facing. A review of the European Plant Conservation Strategy, the results of which will feed into the discussions of the post-2020 global diversity framework, was discussed, and a post-2020 strategic work plan for the Emerald Network was endorsed. A recommendation and an action plan for a species were adopted. Furthermore, the Standing Committee decided to initiate the development of an action plan for the conservation of species in the Mediterranean.

EUR-OPA MAJOR HAZARDS AGREEMENT (NATURAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL DISASTERS)

The agreement included biological hazards in its scope of interest and examined the impact of the current Covid-19 pandemic on vulnerable groups, in particular persons with disabilities and migrants, refugees and asylum seekers. It further supported the organisation of the second BeSafeNet Olympiad for secondary schools pupils and a webinar on earthquakes in the midst of the pandemic. EUR-OPA sustained 18 projects to better prepare populations for major hazards and develop national policies and strategies.

EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

A range of innovative public policies were developed, including the Lausanne Declaration, "Landscape integration in sectoral policies"; International Landscape Observatory (Information System; Glossary; Information Platform); Landscape Award Alliance of the Council of Europe: publication and exhibition; International Landscape Day of the Council of Europe 2020; the proceedings of Landscape and education; Water, landscape and citizenship in the face of global change; and events in Georgia, Croatia and France.

CULTURE AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

Contributing to the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape launched a Manifesto on the Freedom of Expression of Arts and Culture in the Digital Era and the concept for a digital #exhibition "Free to Create, Create to be Free". The manifesto sums up the importance of artistic creation and the cultural industry for our democratic societies, as well as the protection of the freedom of expression, which Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights extends to the freedom of artistic expression.

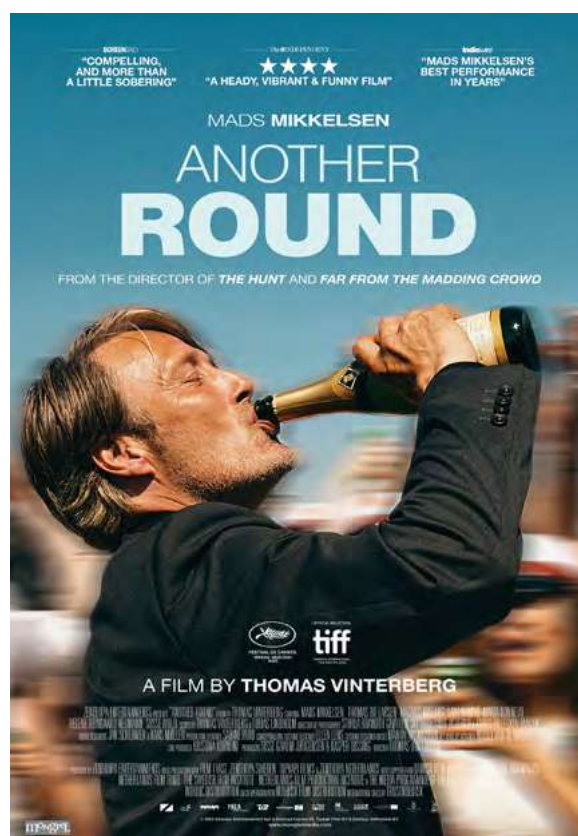
EUROPEAN HERITAGE DAYS (EHD)

The European Heritage Days celebrated a successful 2020 season under the pan-continental theme of "Heritage and Education: Learning for life". Despite the pandemic, tens of thousands of events took place throughout 45 countries, thanks to the efforts of the European EHD network which came together to share creative solutions in the face of the challenge. In addition to traditional events, an impressive digital offering was proposed, providing a long-term legacy for thousands of heritage sites and a unique programme of EHD events, which was both locally led and truly accessible throughout Europe.

CULTURAL ROUTES ENLARGED PARTIAL AGREEMENT

The Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme saw the certification of two new Cultural Routes, bringing the total number of Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe to 40. Furthermore, seven Cultural Routes were recertified. The enlarged partial agreement increased its membership to 34 member states and added one new observer state. In June 2020, the Governing Board of the EPA requested the preparation of a special report, "Major risks and the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe programme: challenges and opportunities", to establish, together with EPA member states and certified routes, coping mechanisms to help stakeholders better face unprecedented situations, such as the Covid-19 pandemic.

EURIMAGES ENLARGED PARTIAL AGREEMENT



The film *Another Round* by Thomas Vinterberg, main winner of the European Film Awards 2020

Cultural activities, and cinema in particular, have been severely impacted by the pandemic. In this context, Eurimages adapted its working methods in order to be able to maintain the four calls for projects already

scheduled: the fund successfully supported 100 international co-productions for a total of €22 million in 2020. This was possible through the introduction of written procedures, online and hybrid meetings and the use of the electronic signature for the execution of contracts and payments.

■ As every year, an important selection of co-productions supported by the fund were honoured at the main international festivals. Among the great successes were Thomas Vinterberg's "Another Round", main winner of the European Film Awards (best film, director, scriptwriter and actor – Mads Mikkelsen), and "Quo vadis, Aida?" by Jasmila Zbanic, nominated and awarded numerous prizes.

■ The reform of the governance of the fund, recommended by an external independent study, was approved by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The board of management of the fund will finalise the details of this reform throughout 2021 for entry into force in January 2022. Eurimages also welcomed the accession of Ukraine, which joined the fund in February.

NORTH-SOUTH CENTRE (EUROPEAN CENTRE FOR GLOBAL INTERDEPENDENCE AND SOLIDARITY)

■ The North-South Centre was prompt to adjust its projects and share resources to address emerging needs, particularly those related to the evolving space of civil society in Europe and beyond (in particular youth and women) at a time when traditional platforms for international and interregional

co-operation are being challenged. In this sense the #SolidAction campaign, initiated at the beginning of the pandemic, aimed to showcase and support the voices and actions of those who see in international solidarity collective answers to the global crises. The #Solidaction campaign reached out 200 000 people through social media.

■ The North-South Centre adapted to new circumstances ensuring the running of activities with innovative online and hybrid formats to connect different organisations at the global level and promote interchanges and allow dialogue, namely the MetaUniversity that gathered many youth-led organisations and 163 participants and the Lisbon Forum with over 1 000 people from all over the world.

■ In line with a new communication strategy, a range of updated material was made available online for the Global Education Week 2020, "It's our world, let's take action together!", namely a new visual identity and a complete toolkit gathering all the necessary resources and information for the implementation of global education activities. In addition, a sub-granting mechanism to support awareness-raising activities about global development education in Europe was attributed to five civil society organisations.

■ A core group was established, constituted by six experts, that will address intersectional discrimination faced by women and girls in Europe, the Middle East and Africa. Through a dynamic of co-operation and exchange of ideas and innovative solutions, they will contribute to developing an awareness-raising strategy and actions targeting attitudes, norms and behaviours that help sustain a stereotyped vision of women.



Deposit by **Paruyr Hovhannisyan**, Permanent Representative of Armenia, of the instrument of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, in the presence of **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Secretary Deputy General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 7 September 2020)

Actions in the field and resource mobilisation

MEMBER STATES

■ In order to address the unprecedented Covid-19 outbreak and to continue implementing co-operation programmes under these circumstances, the Council of Europe has modified its projects' work plans since spring 2020, together with its partners, in line with overall priorities and in compliance with the restrictions in force. This involved applying mitigating measures, where necessary, and focusing on activities in line with the limitations linked to the health situation. The Council of Europe Field Offices have played an important role in this process that allowed for business continuity and facilitated progress towards the achievement of programmes' objectives.

■ In 2020, the co-operation between the Council of Europe and the DG REFORM⁸ of the European Union was enhanced through a new Framework Agreement that includes seven new projects tailored to the needs of **EU member states** in the fields of the rule of law, human rights protection and efficient democratic governance.

■ 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 250 activities in the Eastern Partnership region, South-East Europe and Turkey, and the Southern Neighbourhood Africa, as well as in the Asia-Pacific region and Latin America and the Caribbean. By December 2020, C-PROC managed a portfolio of projects with a budget of over €38 million – co-funded by the European Union and voluntary contributions of other donors.

Eastern Europe

■ In the **Republic of Moldova**, three new projects in the field of anti-corruption, media and local governance were launched. The capacity of the Equality Council and the Ombudsperson respectively to monitor and efficiently handle complaints was strengthened. The quality of healthcare in prisons was improved through training and procurement of medical equipment (including to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic). Electoral bodies were supported in developing innovative IT tools while the Audiovisual Council improved its monitoring capacities during electoral campaigns. Through the Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, all teachers received the handbook on the new civic education subject. A solid dialogue on the co-ordinated implementation of the Lanzarote Convention was established.

■ In the **Russian Federation**, the European Union/Council of Europe Joint Programme "Co-operation on the implementation of the Russian Federation National Action Strategy for Women (2017-2022)" ended in April 2020, and a follow-up project is under discussion. The new project "HELP III in the Russian Federation" was launched in July 2020. On 19 October 2020, the updated HELP course, an Introduction to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights, was launched in the country and was opened in Moscow by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe Marija Pejčinović Burić.

■ In **Ukraine**, two new projects on youth participation and combating violence against children were launched. The Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention) was ratified by Ukraine. The first stage of the decentralisation reform was concluded taking into account Council of Europe recommendations. A national strategy for execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights was adopted by the Ukrainian Government with Council of Europe expert support.

8. Formerly the Structural Reform Support Service (SRSS).



North-South Centre meeting of the executive committee's bureau – **Manuel Montobbio**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Spain (Strasbourg, 28 September 2020)



Signature by **Emil Ruffer**, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic of a voluntary contribution to the Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023, and deposit of the instrument of ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Cinematographic Co-Production, in the presence of **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 11 December 2020)

The Council of Europe also continued to support the parliamentary reform process, electoral institutions, the Ombudsperson Office, the accountability and independence of judiciary, the prosecutorial reform, the penitentiary reform, the fight against corruption and money laundering and against violence against women and domestic violence, ill-treatment prevention, media freedom, the protection of national minorities, including Roma, the protection of social and economic rights, and enhancing policies in key areas for internally displaced persons (IDPs).

South Caucasus

■ In **Armenia**, the project on protection of human rights in biomedicine was launched in June 2020. Armenia completed the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse ("Lanzarote Convention") that will enter into force in Armenia on 1 January 2021. A new Judicial Code based on a joint opinion of the Venice Commission and the Directorate of Human Rights entered into force in May 2020. The work continued on countering cybercrime, protection of human rights in the armed forces, reform of the penitentiary institutions and probation, awareness raising about the Istanbul Convention, capacity building of legal professionals to implement the Convention at the local level, enhancing public integrity and ethics in local governance.

■ In **Azerbaijan**, activities aimed at supporting legal reforms, standard setting and capacity building in the areas of fighting and preventing corruption, strengthening anti-money laundering, improving the penitentiary system, and promoting and enhancing gender equality were adapted to the restrictive conditions and unfolding Covid-19 emergency. The Penitentiary Service and the Main Medical Department of the Ministry of Justice of Azerbaijan were provided with medical items and equipment. In July 2020, a new project on raising awareness about the Istanbul Convention was launched.

■ In **Georgia**, the Council of Europe assisted the implementation of the fourth wave of judicial reforms, including through facilitation of an urgent opinion by the Venice Commission in September 2020 on reforming the system of appointment of Supreme Court judges. An interagency mechanism between law-enforcement bodies and the judiciary for data collection on hate crimes was set up with Council of Europe assistance. Work continued in the field of increasing transparency and integrity in the judiciary, supporting the electoral process in view of parliamentary elections in October and building strong and responsive institutions to protect vulnerable groups.



Signature by **Breifne O'Reilly**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Ireland, of five voluntary contribution contracts, in the presence of **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 2 July 2020)

South-East Europe and Turkey

■ In **Albania** legal expertise was provided to bring important domestic legislation into compliance with Council of Europe standards, notably: on the draft law on finalisation of transitional ownership processes; the penitentiary legal package, enhancing the protection of prisoners' rights; the Electoral Code on Financing of Political Parties and Election Campaigns; and amendments to the Law on Protection from Discrimination. Two Venice Commission opinions on the amendments to the laws "On Audiovisual Media Services" and "On the appointment of judges to the Constitutional Court" helped steer the legislative processes and political dialogue.

■ The Council of Europe continued its support in **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, resulting in the adoption of the National Strategy for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings 2020-2023 and the Roadmap for Improving Inclusive Education. Co-operation also continued in the areas of anti-discrimination, Roma empowerment, combating hate speech, promoting freedom of expression/freedom of the media, improving efficiency of the judiciary and legal certainty, and fostering human rights compliance within the prison system while building the capacity of multiple sectors to rehabilitate violent and extremist prisoners. New projects were launched on media literacy, election reform and building democratic participation in the city of Mostar.

■ In **Montenegro**, amendments to the anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT) law were supported enabling its readmission to the Egmont Group. Support was provided in drafting new deontology codes of notaries and court interpreters, and in reviewing the Code of Professional Conduct of Lawyers and the Code of Ethics for public bailiffs. Special operational procedures for the police enhanced the fight against ill-treatment and a manual for the conduct of investigations in cases of ill-treatment was prepared. Support was provided in the ongoing revision of the criminal legislation, in particular the full alignment of victims', suspects' and accused persons' rights with the EU *acquis* and European standards. The drafting of the Law on Civil Partnership was supported, resulting in its adoption.

■ In **North Macedonia**, the National Co-ordination Body was supported in adopting guidelines on free legal aid and launching an awareness campaign. A draft Suicide Prevention Strategy for prisoners was prepared and Council of Europe recommendations were integrated into two by-laws on disciplinary measures in prisons. Medical supplies were provided for inmates and prison staff in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic. The update of the National Risk Assessment on Money Laundering and Terrorism Financing was supported and subsequently adopted by the government. The first LGBTI Helpline was launched through a grant for the promotion of diversity.



Conference “Pro bono legal services to financially vulnerable single parents”, by the Chairperson of the Georgian Bar Association **Davit Asatiani**, the Head of the Council of Europe Office in Georgia **Natalia Voutova**, the Ambassador of the Kingdom of Norway **Helene Sand Andresen**, within the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2020-2023 (Tbilisi, 8 October 2020)



Hand-over ceremony of medical equipment and devices for prisons with **William Massolin**, Head of the Council of Europe office in Chişinău and **Fadei Nagacevski**, Minister of Justice of Moldova (Chişinău, 29 October 2020)

■ In **Serbia**, the Council of Europe followed closely the execution of the Court judgment *Zorica Jovanovic v. Serbia* by providing a platform for dialogue with the authorities/civil society that resulted in the adoption of the law on missing babies. A comprehensive analysis of the current Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) and European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML) recommendations was provided, including a proposal to establish an institutional mechanism for monitoring the implementation of minority rights. Online courses on freedom of expression and safety/protection of journalists were developed for implementation by the Judicial Academy. Fifty pilot municipalities received hands-on guidance on how to improve their human resources management framework and practice. A project on preventing money laundering and terrorist financing was launched.

■ The Council of Europe supported **Turkey** in developing a “Roadmap for an Improved Administrative Justice” with the aim of improving the administrative justice system. A comprehensive set of recommendations on combating violence against women and domestic violence was submitted to the institutional partners. A “whole-school model” was developed as a tool to help advance the competences for democratic culture in the national education system, based on the Council of Europe Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.

NON-MEMBER STATES

■ As a reaction to the situation in **Belarus** following the outcome of the 9 August presidential elections, a Priority Measures Package for Belarus was developed to be adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe as soon as the circumstances allow.

■ In **Kosovo*** the Istanbul Convention was high on the agenda of co-operation activities, with the decision of the National Assembly to adopt an amendment to the constitution, giving direct effect to the convention. In this regard, the Council of Europe continued raising the awareness of judges, prosecutors, lawyers, police and victims’ advocates involved in combating violence against women and domestic violence in Kosovo* on the standards of the Istanbul Convention. New projects were launched in the fields of inclusive education, the fight against economic crime, prevention of torture and ill-treatment, combating trafficking in human beings and promoting local democracy.



Signature by **Emil Ruffer**, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic, in the presence of **Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, of two voluntary contribution contracts to the Action Plan for Ukraine 2018-2021(2022), and to the Follow-up to the Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (Strasbourg, 28 October 2020)

Speech by the Council of Europe Secretary General **Marija Pejčinović Burić** at the MGIMO European Institute in the framework of her working visit to Moscow (Moscow, 19 October 2020)

Southern Neighbourhood

■ In **Tunisia**, the Council of Europe supported the National Authority for the Prevention of Torture (INPT – Tunisian National Preventive Mechanism). The Guide for Prisoners providing prisoners and prison officers with an understanding of prisoner rights was presented and distributed in Tunisian prisons. A grant was awarded to the INPT to set up disinfection tunnels at the access points of two major Tunisian prisons. The Council of Europe continued to support the justice sector reform. The Ministry of Justice was provided with IT equipment, training was developed and experiences were shared to improve the quality and efficiency of justice in the context of Covid-19 pandemic.

■ In **Morocco**, a benchmark study entitled “European legal mechanisms for the fight against disinformation” was carried out for the Ministry of Communication.

■ Challenges of combating corruption to prevent risks and maintain trust in local and regional authorities in **Tunisia** and **Morocco** were discussed in the framework of two webinars webcasted live on the Council of Europe website.

■ Co-operation at the regional level was pursued notably in the framework of two regional seminars of the UniDem Med Campus allowing for regional peer exchanges to support administrative reforms.



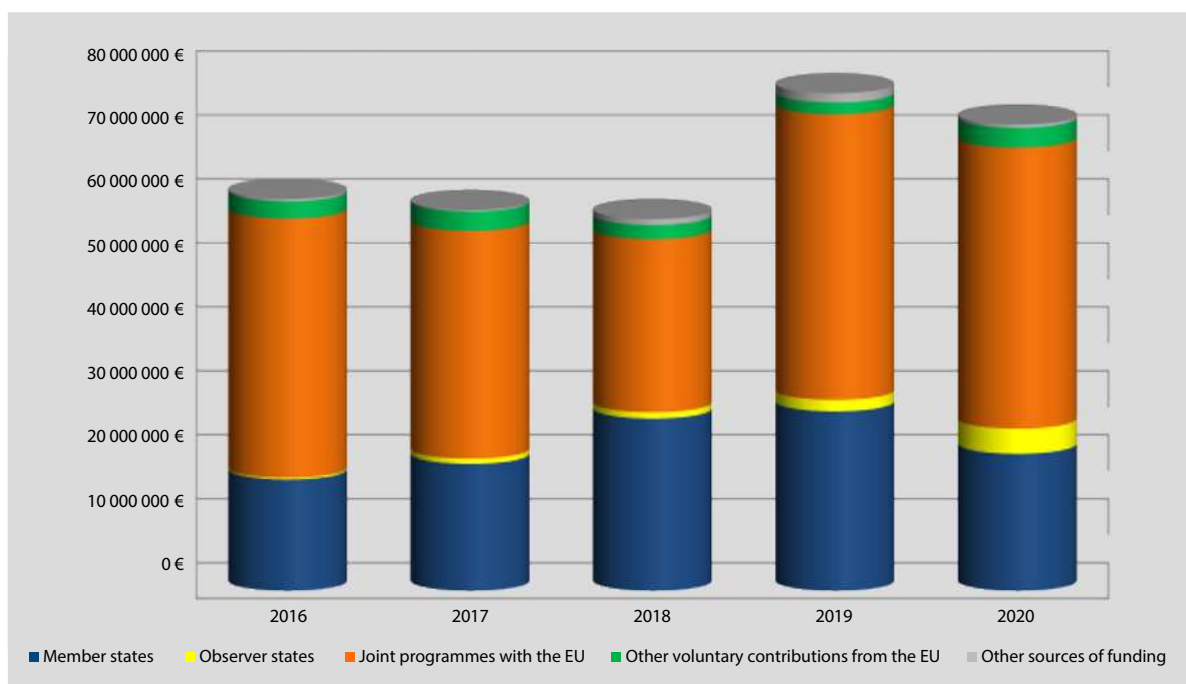
Study visit of the Central Elections Commission, from the Autonomous Territorial Unit of Gagauzia at the Centre for Continuous Electoral Training of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 21 January 2020)

Central Asia

■ In **Uzbekistan**, the Council of Europe assisted in strengthening the institutional capacities of the Office of the Business Ombudsman and contributed to the development of the Business Code for Uzbekistan. As regards **Kyrgyzstan**, the Venice Commission issued an urgent joint amicus curiae brief on the postponement of the parliamentary elections motivated by a constitutional reform.

RESOURCE MOBILISATION AND DONOR RELATIONS

Extra budgetary receipts 2020

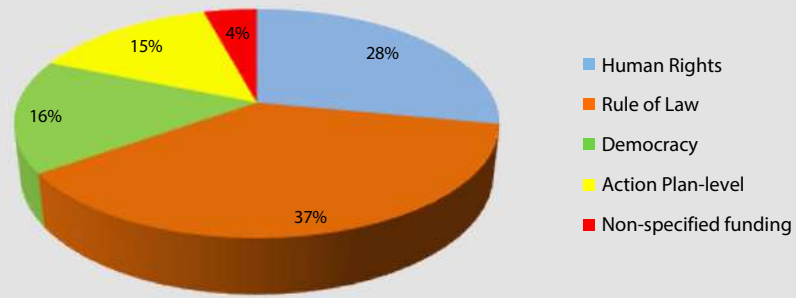


2020 compared to 2019

- ▶ Overall receipts **decreased by 6%** to approximately €72.9 million (€77.8 in 2019, €58.1 in 2018, €59.5 in 2017, €61.2 in 2016, €52.3 in 2015).
- ▶ The top 10 donors **contributed more than €1 million each (the European Union, Norway, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland, France, the United States of America and Canada)**
- ▶ Voluntary contributions from **member states⁹ decreased by 24% to €21.4 million.** (2019 saw an increase of 4%.)
- ▶ **32** of the 47 **member states contributed in 2020** (39 in 2019). The top 10 member states represent 86% of the total receipts from member states (84% in 2019).
- ▶ **Norway, Sweden, Germany, Belgium, Austria, Switzerland and France** rank top among member states with contributions of €6.3 million, €2.9 million, €2.6 million, €2.2 million, €1.2 million, €1 million and €1 million, respectively.
- ▶ Receipts in the framework of **Council of Europe/European Union joint programmes decreased by 2% to €43.9 million** (€44.6 million in 2019) and accounted for 60% of total extra budgetary receipts.
- ▶ The **European Union** also made a number of voluntary contributions outside of joint programmes amounting to €3.1 million (€2.9 million to the EDQM, €200K to CEPEJ, €24 700 to the Bern Convention).
- ▶ Contributions from **non-member states having observer status increased by 120% to €3.9 million, with United States of America and Canada accounting for €1.9 million each.**
- ▶ “Other” sources of funding (i.e. not European Union, member or observer states) contributed €504 844 equivalent to approximately 0.7% of overall extra budgetary receipts.

9. Includes Human Rights Trust Fund and EEA & Norway Grants.

2020 EXTRA BUDGETARY RESOURCES PER PILLAR OF THE PROGRAMME AND BUDGET



EXTRA BUDGETARY RESOURCES PER PILLAR		Euros
HUMAN RIGHTS		20 400 275.39
RULE OF LAW		27 144 072.63
DEMOCRACY		11 651 103.96
ACTION PLAN-LEVEL		10 618 020.20
NON-SPECIFIED FUNDING		3 077 158.00
TOTAL		72 890 630.18



59th meeting of the Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (Prague, 24-25 September 2020)

Statement of **Petr Válek**, Chair of the CAHDI, at the 1391th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (Strasbourg, 8 December 2020)



Public international law

www.coe.int/en/web/cahdi

The Council of Europe facilitates exchanges and co-ordinates the 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 that brings together the Legal Advisers of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the member states of the Council of Europe and a significant number of observer states and international organisations. In 2020, around 100 experts – from 45 member states, seven non-member states and six international intergovernmental organisations – participated in the 59th CAHDI meeting held in Prague (Czech Republic), in hybrid format, on 24-25 September 2020.

■ 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 14 reservations and/or declarations in 2020, contributes to an important dialogue at the international level and has an impact on the subsequent actions of states as regards their respective reservations and/or declarations.

■ The CAHDI members held an exchange of views on derogations under Article 15 of the European Convention on Human Rights in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic.

■ Over the year, the CAHDI continued and strengthened its co-operation and collaboration with the UN and international tribunals. It held exchanges of views with Judge Ekaterina Trendafilova, President of the Kosovo* Specialist Chambers, and Mr Klaus Rackwitz, Director of the International Nuremberg Principles Academy.

■ On 23 September 2020, on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Legal and Consular Section/International Law Department) organised on the margins of the 59th CAHDI meeting in Prague an expert seminar under the title “The Contribution of the European Court of Human Rights to the Development of Public International Law”. The speakers were: Mr Linos-Alexander Sicilianos, Judge and former President of the Court; Professor Pavel Šturma, Chair of the UN International Law Commission (ILC); Professor Georg Nolte, Member of the ILC; Ms Julie Tenenbaum, Regional Legal Adviser, International Committee of the Red Cross; Ms Alina Orosan, Director General for Legal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Romania; Mr Helmut Tichy, Legal Adviser, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Austria; and Ambassador Emil Ruffer, Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic to the Council of Europe. Mr Petr Válek, Chair of the CAHDI at this time, and Mr Jörg Polakiewicz, Director of Legal Advice and Public International Law at the Council of Europe, moderated the seminar.



Press conference with **Salome Zourabichvili**,
President of Georgia and **Hendrik Daems**,
President of the Parliamentary Assembly
of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 28 January 2020)



Visit of a German television crew within the framework of the German
Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 15 September 2020)

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 2020.

ONLINE AND AUDIOVISUAL COMMUNICATIONS

As the Covid-19 coronavirus crisis took hold, the team quickly **adapted its working methods** to working from home, reviewing, replacing and adding certain functions. A daily online co-ordination meeting including all members of the editorial, web and audiovisual teams was established and has continued into 2021.

A dedicated **Covid-19 internet site** was created to highlight the Organisation's response to the pandemic, to showcase the standards and guidelines issued by Council of Europe bodies, and to explain our role in protecting people and democracy across the continent. More than **20 video interviews** with relevant experts were produced and used to put the Organisation's work in a wide range of fields into context.

Social media activities were given a new lease of life as the Organisation acquired its first **social media community manager**. Social media activity increased significantly during lockdowns generally and DC seized the opportunity to actively promote accurate information and facts. This period saw an increase in the number of followers of the main Council of Europe Twitter account to more than 400 000, the Council of Europe Facebook page to almost 240 000 and the Council of Europe Instagram feed to over 17 000.

Shortly before the Covid-19 lockdown, DC organised a screening of the film "L'Homme qui répare les femmes" in partnership with the Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA) to mark International Women's Day. The event put the spotlight on **sexual violence against women** as a weapon of war. It featured the work of Congolese gynaecologist Denis Mukwege and a presentation from eminent criminal and human rights lawyer, Patricia Sellers.

In preparation for the **German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers**, DC subtitled 19 Council of Europe films corresponding to their stated priorities.

DC ran a digital communications campaign to mark the **70th Anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights**. A dedicated web

presence was created in English, French, German, Russian and Italian to highlight the importance of the Convention in "Protecting our Human Rights in Europe for 70 years". DC produced a new series of animated films "**Twelve people – twelve stories**" in English, French and German, and subtitled it in many other languages, with financial support from the European Union's Delegation to the Council of Europe. The animated films cover rights and freedoms contained in the Convention, including the right to life, privacy, the right to a fair trial, freedom of assembly, equality, freedom from slavery and human trafficking, the right to a family life, the right to property, the right to liberty, freedom from torture, freedom of religion and freedom of speech. A square-format version of each film for use on social media was produced in the language of the country of the case featured. The films were released ahead of the 4 November anniversary of the Convention, promoted on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram throughout that period, and released again at hourly intervals on the day.

In June, DC noted a **10% increase in unique visitors** to the Council of Europe home page.

Original content and contributions from around the Organisation, including the European Court of Human Rights, were brought together in a new collection of web pages dedicated to the topic of **protecting the environment using human rights** ahead of a major conference on the subject in October. A special short film was also made for the Athens "Environment and human rights" event.

DC designed and built a new website on the **Holocaust**, in order to highlight the work of the organisation in teaching remembrance. A new website was launched on **antisemitic and anti-Muslim intolerance and hate crimes** to support the new Special Representative of the Secretary General in his work. A major new website for non-governmental partners, the **Civil Society Portal**, was also created in response to a decision of the Committee of Ministers reached in Helsinki.

A **Framework Contract for outsourcing audiovisual productions** was set up, following a call for tender, and systematic use of the Multiservice Assistant (Form 9102) for all audiovisual production requests introduced. Guidelines for the Main Entities were produced and circulated in July.



Open doors for schools of Eurométropole de Strasbourg (Strasbourg, 21 January 2020)

Film production highlights

- ▶ A series of **videos highlighting Convention rights** (12 short animations) were produced with the EU.
- ▶ **Human rights and climate change** – short film for the Athens Conference.
- ▶ **Committee of Ministers Presidency priorities** – 19 films were subtitled in German.
- ▶ **Environment and human rights** – a short film for the Athens conference.
- ▶ **Covid-19** interviews with experts – over 20 videos produced.

- ▶ Thanks to the work of **German, Italian and Russian portals**, a general audience had access to the news and different theme files (published on the main English and French portals) in these three languages.
- ▶ During the year information about major events, co-operation programmes, conventions, declarations, prizes, conferences, reports and publications of the Council of Europe and its bodies was spread in Russian via the **Council of Europe’s Facebook page in Russian**.

■ The **Digital Communications Section** continued to implement the Digital Communications strategy, and to promote the comprehensive Social Media Plan as well as the recommended key performance indicator .

■ The **Editorial Team** continued to provide direct advice and support to MAEs around projects, priority events, campaigns and messages through individual meetings or following MSA requests, as well as through the six training courses on various aspects of digital communications with Human Resources.

- ▶ The main page of the theme file **“Protecting the environment using human rights law”** was translated into German, Italian and Russian, as was the web page “Protecting our Human Rights in Europe for 70 years”.
- ▶ The main page of the theme file **“Covid-19: Human rights are more important than ever in times of crisis. On the front line against human rights violations”** was translated into German, Italian and Russian with all related news also available in these languages.

PUBLIC RELATIONS AND PUBLICATIONS

■ The Organisation’s identity and values were promoted to the respective target audiences through public relations initiatives and events, notably the schools open day in January, involving 1 800 students, with an exhibition of the European Convention on Human Rights at the French National College for the Judiciary in Bordeaux and the “European Union and Council of Europe” exhibition at the European Parliament in Strasbourg. The partnership with the Strasbourg Institute of Political Studies was strengthened with the holding of the European Prize for Eloquence in February, with more than 250 participants, with 12 finalists from 10 countries. Numerous events for the general public and specialists had to be cancelled or postponed in 2020.

■ The health situation also strongly impacted the visit and awareness-raising programmes. Some 5 500 people (154 groups) took part in Council of Europe study tours and guided visits. Close to 60 customised lectures were given during personalised tours. Virtual guided visit videos were prepared in English and French to enable people to explore the Organisation’s architecture, functioning and achievements online.



European Prize for Eloquence, organised by the School for Young Orators of the Strasbourg Institute of Political Studies (Sciences Po) in co-operation with the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 13 February 2020)

■ The partnership with the European Law Students Association (ELSA) network continued with the holding of the eighth Human Rights Moot Court Competition in English on the European Convention on Human Rights: 68 teams from 33 European countries submitted their arguments in a fictitious case on cyberbullying and hate speech. The final took place online in June 2020 and 16 teams took part. ELSA Day focused on human rights and artificial intelligence this year, and the work of the Council of Europe was presented at 40 events in 15 countries. Several webinars were held and customised videos presented with the ELSA network.

■ Commercial publications highlighted the Organisation's priorities, in particular the publications *Freedom of expression and the internet* (second edition in English); a commemorative book about the European Court of Human Rights; *Introduction to the European Convention on Human Rights* (in Spanish, Greek, Hungarian and Polish versions); and *The individual application under the European Convention on Human Rights* (in Russian).

■ The online publications platforms continue to extend their range of digital products, with over 2 250 files available in PDF and e-publishing 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 660 000 visits over the year and there were more than 30 000 subscribers to the publication information. Also, over 4 000 digitised titles are available on Google Play, with 1 500 000 books consulted in 2020.

■ For the events, and in particular in connection with the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights, new information material (leaflets, booklets, posters, exhibition panels, etc.) were designed. They were promoted via the contacts database (featuring nearly 15 000 addresses) and on partner sites. Twenty or so information leaflets were revised or translated. In addition, 106 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 the identity established to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights. A range of new items was developed to give the Organisation a strong visual presence in the field offices and in videoconferences.

2020 contributions of Council of Europe member states (in euros)

MEMBER STATES	
Albania	512 353.00
Andorra	243 196.08
Armenia	516 843.98
Austria	5 831 712.62
Azerbaijan	1 133 087.26
Belgium	8 153 071.77
Bosnia and Herzegovina	602 257.15
Bulgaria	1 266 044.73
Croatia	1 107 980.27
Cyprus	539 715.66
Czech Republic	3 467 623.28
Denmark	4 836 368.18
Estonia	530 072.23
Finland	3 623 666.74
France	39 436 507.63
Georgia	556 178.89
Germany	37 738 988.45
Greece	3 379 978.36
Hungary	2 413 301.83
Iceland	540 251.58
Ireland	4 487 786.06
Italy	36 626 038.03
Latvia	620 522.41
Liechtenstein	392 529.85
Lithuania	862 071.33
Luxembourg	1 206 089.05
Malta	402 264.23
Republic of Moldova	371 143.22
Monaco	372 478.00
Montenegro	535 644.37
Netherlands	11 580 062.00
North Macedonia	521 053.52
Norway	5 681 792.73
Poland	8 884 700.26
Portugal	3 373 489.32
Romania	4 003 206.73
Russian Federation	33 161 216.57
San Marino	148 420.18
Serbia	1 136 894.17
Slovak Republic	1 668 740.19
Slovenia	843 550.79
Spain	19 304 841.89
Sweden	7 626 279.88
Switzerland	9 468 929.24
Turkey	15 230 026.23
Ukraine	3 828 419.16
United Kingdom	34 169 729.95
TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS	322 937 119.05

2020 voluntary contributions to the Council of Europe (in euros)

MEMBER STATES			
Norway	6 339 228.56	Czech Republic	112 293.75
Sweden	2 855 886.75	Liechtenstein	101 829.81
Germany	2 644 411.00	Cyprus	88 000.00
Belgium	2 244 000.00	Andorra	74 646.73
Austria	1 233 500.00	Russian Federation	40 913.92
Switzerland	1 090 112.17	Poland	30 856.15
France	1 066 384.25	Georgia	28 000.00
European Economic Area (EEA) ¹	595 189.58	Estonia	19 000.00
Human Rights Trust Fund ²	548 175.00	Turkey	13 000.00
Netherlands	318 327.51	Iceland	10 000.00
Finland	305 783.48	Slovenia	10 000.00
Luxembourg	292 751.29	Serbia	7 000.00
Spain	292 500.00	Lithuania	5 000.00
Ireland	249 336.21	Slovak Republic	5 000.00
United Kingdom	238 279.81	Bulgaria	4 567.28
Italy	215 722.67	Malta	3 887.06
Portugal	191 739.49	Croatia	1 000.00
Monaco	152 289.36	Armenia	202.65
		TOTAL MEMBER STATES	21 428 814.48

1. Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway.

2. Finland, Germany, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom.

OBSERVERS

United States of America	1 917 132.61
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Canada	1 910 558.38
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Japan	98 442.00
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TOTAL OBSERVERS	3 926 132.99
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EUROPEAN UNION

Joint Programmes	43 932 454.29
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Other Voluntary Contributions	3 098 384.00
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TOTAL EUROPEAN UNION	47 030 838.29
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OTHERS

Fund to End Violence Against Children	294 859.42
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Qatar	120 000.00
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Australia	22 500.00
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Aga Khan Development Network	20 000.00
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French National Gambling Authority (ANJ)	15 000.00
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Faroe Islands	10 000.00
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Israel	9 985.00
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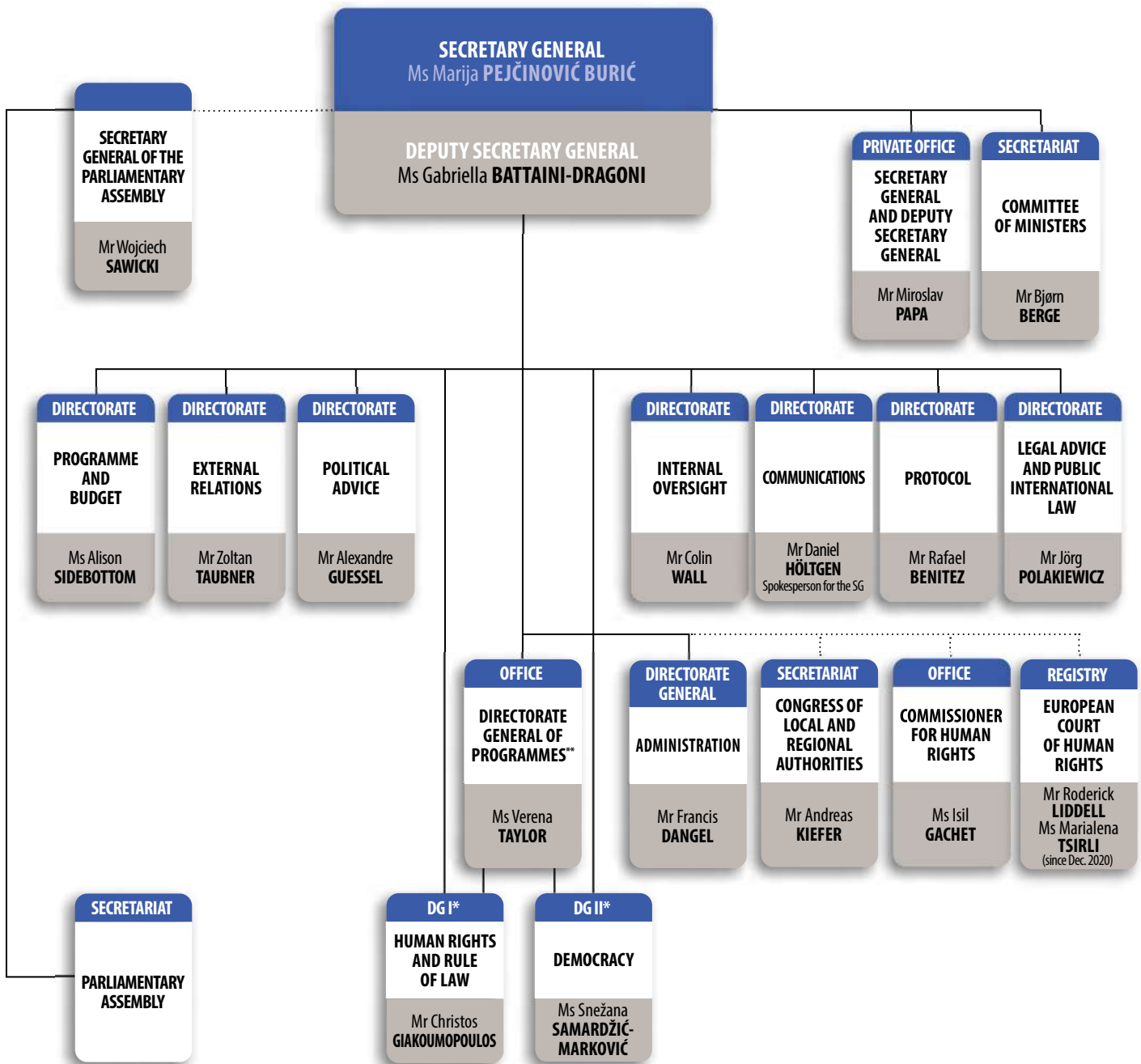
Charta 77 Foundation	7 500.00
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Republic of Korea	5 000.00
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TOTAL OTHERS	504 844.42
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GRAND TOTAL 2020	72 890 630.18
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Organisation chart of the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe in 2020



* DGI DGII report to the Secretary General

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

This publication presents the work carried out in 2020 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 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.