



The Council of Europe



HUMAN RIGHTS

DEMOCRACY

RULE OF LAW



SYMBOLS OF UNITY

The European flag is surely one of the best-known in the world. Since it was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1955, it has come to represent the ideal of unity between the peoples of our continent. The European Anthem, a musical arrangement of the prelude to the Ode to Joy from Beethoven's 9th symphony, was adopted by the Council of Europe in 1972. Since 1986, the European Union has also used both symbols.

- 1949 Signature of Treaty of London creating Council of Europe
- 1950 European Convention on Human Rights
- 1954 European Cultural Convention
- 1955 European Flag
- 1956 Council of Europe Development Bank
- 1957 Conference of Local Authorities of Europe, since 1994 "The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities"
- 1959 European Court of Human Rights
- 1961 European Social Charter
- 1964 European Pharmacopoeia
- 1972 European Anthem
European Youth Centre in Strasbourg
- 1980 The "Pompidou Group"
- 1985 European Charter of Local Self-Government
- 1987 European Convention for the Prevention of Torture
- 1988 Eurimages
- 1989 Anti-doping Convention
North-South Centre, Lisbon
- 1990 European Commission for Democracy through Law "Venice Commission"
- 1994 European Centre for Modern Languages, Graz
- 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
2nd European Youth Centre, Budapest
- 1999 Commissioner for Human Rights
- 2005 Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
- 2009 60th Anniversary of the Council of Europe



Cultivating democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law

The Council of Europe occupies a unique place in the international political landscape of Europe – the guardian of human rights, a symbol of hope, with the task of cultivating a Europe where democracy and the rule of law flourish and the mistakes of previous decades cannot easily be repeated. Its work is more important today than ever, covering almost the entire continent, in 47 member states and among 800 million citizens.

Since 1949, politicians, diplomats, lawmakers, judges and experts of many kinds have come to the Council of Europe to share their knowledge, experience and ideas and contribute to a common vision of what Europe could be – an even better place to live for all.

The first tender shoots of the European project were nurtured by the Council of Europe and over sixty years they have grown into a rich arborescence of democratic values, legal standards and protection mechanisms, rooted in vibrant co-operation between nations.

Four main treaties, embracing the protection of human rights, social and economic rights, the rights of national minorities, and protection against torture, form the main trunk of this great organic project. These core texts have fostered growth and inspired the many other Council of Europe agreements, initiatives and campaigns.

Like a gardener, tending the European garden, the Council of Europe offers advice and whatever help is needed to apply properly the standards that it develops with its member states. Seasons change and conditions evolve; governments of member states therefore accept to be bound by law and to be checked on a regular basis for their compliance with it. More effective than any sanction, it is the mutual expectations and the collaborative effort that help the Council of Europe achieve its aims – the vision that makes Europe grow.



Protecting the roots of liberty

Human rights: the lifeblood of a civilised society

At the heart of the Council of Europe is a phenomenon that has improved the lives of millions of people in Europe. It has forever changed the way that Europeans perceive one another and their right to life, liberty, security, a fair trial, to family life and freedom of thought, conscience, religion and expression.

The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, enforced by the European Court of Human Rights, is a unique and powerful propagator of civilised values and democratic growth.

The decisions of the Court have improved the way in which European societies treat their children, homeless people, patients with mental illnesses, their prisoners and foreigners. They have encouraged countries to amend legislation, to review their court systems, or the way in which they deliver justice.

The Court is an institution which allows individuals, groups and governments to contest alleged breaches of the Convention by member states. It places the power to challenge and change a nation's laws and practices in the hands of its citizens, upholding and advancing human rights.

The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent body within the Council of Europe whose mandate is to ensure that human rights are respected in the member states. The Commissioner assists with the application of human rights standards, promotes education in and awareness of human rights, and identifies possible shortcomings in human rights law and practice.

AN END TO THE DEATH PENALTY

The Council of Europe has played a leading role in the battle for abolition of the death penalty in Europe and has succeeded in securing abolition or suspension of capital punishment in all of its member states. A ban on application of the death penalty is now a prerequisite for membership of the Council of Europe.



Standing firm for social justice

Giving value to human dignity

Europe develops and grows stronger through mutual agreement and support in society, and when individuals, regardless of race, sex, age, religion, political opinion, nationality or social origin, pool their interests and assume their responsibilities.

The Council of Europe works hard to protect and strengthen rights that are fundamental to European democracy: equality of treatment, the right to work, to collective bargaining, social security, the social and economic protection of the family, and equal status under civil law for spouses and children.

Social rights and freedoms are delicate leaves on the healthy European tree, and the European Social Charter is the tool used to maintain and advance their growth, to safeguard rights regarding employment, pay, social protection, access to housing and the prohibition of child labour.

Once again, it is the commitment of Council of Europe member states to these goals that allows the Organisation to enforce the principles of its European Social Charter. Every year, each country submits a report on how it meets the Charter's standards, which the Council of Europe considers and acts upon wherever necessary.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) monitors phenomena of racism and racial discrimination, looking closely at the situation in each of the member states of the Council of Europe. It draws up reports containing analyses and recommendations as to how each country might deal with the problems it has found.

EUROPEAN SOCIAL CHARTER

The European Social Charter sets out rights and freedoms and the supervisory procedures guaranteeing their respect by States Parties.

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE DEVELOPMENT BANK (CEB)

The CEB is a tangible example of financial solidarity developed by the Council of Europe. It is the oldest international financial institution in Europe and the only one with an exclusively social vocation.

SPEAK OUT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

In partnership with media professionals, the Council of Europe is promoting good practice and campaigning to get recognition of and action on the problems faced by specific minorities in gaining access to and accurate representation in the media.



Bringing
light to
the darkness

Eradicating torture and ill-treatment

The Council of Europe, a leader on European prison reform since the 1960s, seeks to raise ethical and professional standards in the treatment of those imprisoned or otherwise deprived of their liberty. It establishes key principles, sets standards, co-operates with member states to implement them, monitors their application, draws the relevant conclusions, and where necessary updates the standards.

The prevention of torture and inhuman treatment in places of detention is an issue at the heart of contemporary political and public debate. The Council of Europe tackles this subject head on, working to safeguard the rights of persons deprived of their liberty.

The European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment is the instrument that brings light to the darkness in this sensitive area. The Committee for the Prevention of Torture, a group comprising of independent and impartial experts from a variety of backgrounds, is the Council of Europe's frontline taskforce.

The Committee visits places of detention, on both a prearranged and an ad hoc basis, and assesses the treatment of detainees. The reports of these visits and the member state's response are confidential until the government concerned gives permission for their publication. In a spirit of openness and dialogue, the Council of Europe continues to seek improvement in conditions for detained persons.

SPOTLIGHT ON HUMAN RIGHTS IN FILM

The Council of Europe FACE award is presented to the director of an artistic or documentary film that promotes human rights in accordance with the Council's values, highlighting the principles of individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law. The prize is awarded annually at the Istanbul International Film Festival.

THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

Set up in Strasbourg by the Council of Europe member states in 1959 to deal with alleged violations of the 1950 European Convention on Human Rights.

ENCOURAGING REFORM

The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent body which helps to remedy any problems that may arise in pursuit of the Council's goals and promotes education, awareness and respect for human rights within the member states.



Letting diversity thrive

Equality in variety

THE POWER OF SPEECH

Dialogue between cultures aids understanding and social cohesion and is a priority for the Council of Europe. Open and respectful exchanges of views between people from different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic backgrounds help local and national communities resist intolerance, xenophobia, and discrimination.

EXPRESSING DIVERSITY

The role of the Council of Europe's Charter for Regional or Minority Languages is to preserve and encourage the use of historic regional and minority languages in private and public life in Europe. The charter recognises the importance of such languages in Europe's cultural traditions and heritage, and the right for citizens to use them.

EUROPE ON SCREEN

Eurimages is the Council's fund for co-production, distribution and exhibition of European cinematographic works – the first of its kind in Europe. It supports the growth of European cinema through a wide variety of films, and encourages co-operation among film professionals.

TRACING THE ROUTES OF EUROPE

The European cultural routes are thematic itineraries retracing the history of the influences and exchanges that have shaped European cultures, creating the cultural and spiritual diversity and richness of our continent.

Europe is a complex organism – the sum of its many parts. Its diversity of languages, traditions and cultures is integral to its identity, strength and stability. Migration cross-fertilises European culture. The European Convention on the Legal Status of Migrant Workers, shaping governmental policies, is one way in which the Council of Europe works to protect the human rights of people whose life journeys take them across borders.

The Council of Europe believes that majority and minority communities in every society must enjoy the same rights and be equal before the law, with the right to preserve and develop their cultures, to safeguard their religions, languages and traditions and to voice their opinions.

With events around the world constantly providing a reminder of the importance of this mandate, the Council of Europe works to ensure these freedoms are protected, like delicate flowers, through its Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. The responsibility for implementing the convention rests with the Council's Committee of Ministers and an expert advisory committee, as well as with non-governmental organisations and minority associations – co-operation that nourishes progress.



Co-operation and growth

Tending democracy

Working together is essential if the human rights of Europe's citizens are to be protected, and if the culture, society, economy and communities in which they live are to flourish.

The Council of Europe promotes the use of regional and minority languages in Europe through a specific Charter, and better teaching of modern languages through its European Centre in Graz, Austria. The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and HealthCare (European Pharmacopoeia) pursues better standards of healthcare, and development of the European film and television industries is promoted through Eurimages and the European Audiovisual Observatory.

A wealth of co-operation in the fields of heritage, education, youth and sport is nurtured in order to champion culture and to develop mutual understanding and appreciation of cultural diversity. The European Cultural Convention plays a central role in this process, with initiatives such as the European Heritage Days, the European Day of Languages, the Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights programme and the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS). The European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre) in Lisbon links governments, NGOs, parliamentarians and regional politicians worldwide to promote human rights, democracy and education.

The Council of Europe Development Bank provides loans to member states for social projects, for responsible management of the environment and to develop human capital in the education and health sectors. The Venice Commission advises on the legal framework needed for the development of democracy. Both are partial agreements of the Council of Europe, providing the specialist support and resources needed for growth.

ROOT AND BRANCH DEMOCRACY

The Venice Commission, or European Commission for Democracy through Law, is the Council of Europe's advisory body on constitutional matters. It contributes to the definition and development of common constitutional standards, and provides legal advice to member states on subjects such as democratic institutions, elections and the rights of minorities.

RECOGNISING OUTSTANDING WORK

The Council of Europe North-South Prize is awarded each year to two candidates, in recognition of their work to protect human rights and to strengthen North-South relations.



Nurturing European society

Stimulating change and innovation

The Europe that has blossomed since 1949 is an organic project. The co-operation between member states to protect and defend human rights has nourished that project and is the defining characteristic of the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe has a number of agreements designed to complement the four main conventions on human rights, torture, national minorities and social rights in many specific and crucial areas, such as battling racism and intolerance, corruption, money laundering, human trafficking, illegal trade in drugs, and drug abuse in sport.

The European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA), the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Select Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money-Laundering Measures (MONEYVAL), the Pompidou Group (Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs) and the Anti-doping Convention are just some of these core agreements.

The Council gathers and evaluates information and makes recommendations. The success of its initiatives depends on agreement, on the willingness of member states to submit to mutual evaluation, and on their commitment to applying its recommendations.

SUPPLE SOLUTIONS

Partial agreements allow certain Council of Europe member states to work together in pursuit of goals that might not necessarily be relevant or acceptable to all countries. This flexibility is invaluable and only those involved in the agreements contribute to their financing and development.

INSPIRING GOOD GOVERNANCE

The Council of Europe supports a network of sixteen Schools of Political Studies, across eastern and south-eastern Europe. The Schools aim to train the next generation of political, economic, social and cultural leaders in countries in transition, through seminars and conferences with national and international experts on such themes as European integration, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and globalisation.



Evolving for a new century

Planting new seeds

The Council of Europe fulfils its mandate not only by enforcing and developing its existing conventions and agreements, but also by creating innovative solutions to new problems.

A new generation of Council of Europe standards and treaties are tackling the issues in the spotlight in the 21st century: cybercrime and Internet safety, intercultural dialogue, data protection, international terrorism and human trafficking, discrimination, racism and anti-Semitism, the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, and domestic violence against women are all being addressed.

Campaigning on specific issues to achieve concrete results for Europe's citizens has become an important part of the organisation's work.

Not limited to co-operation between Council of Europe member states, the Organisation works closely with other international bodies, at the regional and global levels, through country-specific projects and multilateral joint programmes in pursuit of common goals.

STANDARDS AND ACTION ON HEALTH

The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and HealthCare promotes and protects human and animal health. It works to guarantee access to good quality medicines for the citizens of all the Council of Europe's member states by setting compulsory standards for the manufacture and quality control of medicines.

EMPOWERING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN

The Council of Europe's programme "Building a Europe for and with children" is designed to advance children's rights and protect them from violence. This initiative helps to form and implement legislation that recognises the rights of children in society, law, education and healthcare.

GETTING YOUNG PEOPLE INVOLVED

The European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest host a wide range of educational activities for young people, including training courses, study sessions, intercultural language courses, seminars, symposiums and expert meetings. Their aim is to encourage intercultural dialogue, awareness of human rights and participation in public life among Europe's young citizens.



Working together to make Europe grow

From the roots to the fruit

The European project has its roots in the sharing of knowledge, experience and ideas – finding the best practices that can help make Europe a better place to live for all. Communication is vital.

The Council of Europe brings together politicians, academics, lawyers, government experts, non-governmental groups and young people within an international institutional structure so that they can together form a common vision of Europe.

Parliamentarians from the 47 member nations sit in the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), often referred to as Europe's democratic conscience, which is the political driving force behind many of the Organisation's major initiatives.

The Committee of Ministers, comprising the foreign minister of each Council of Europe member state or their permanent representatives and ambassadors in Strasbourg, is the body that takes the decisions as to how the vision of Europe should be made a reality.

Elected representatives from local and regional authorities, often the level of government nearest to ordinary citizens, come together within the Congress of the Council of Europe to debate and pool their experience and to effect change and progress at local and regional level.

The Council also benefits extensively from the experience of people working in “grass-roots” organisations at the European level. The work of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) is vital to the Council's success, and the voice of civil society is heard thanks to the Conference of INGOs.

NATIONAL PARLIAMENTS HAVING A SAY

The Parliamentary Assembly plays a major role in supporting democratic development in member states; it monitors their observance of obligations and their commitment to democratic standards.

THE VOICE OF REGIONS AND LOCAL PEOPLE

The Congress monitors the development of local and regional democracy, encouraging political dialogue between national governments and territorial entities, and supporting regional and local transfrontier co-operation.

HARVESTING CO-OPERATION

The Council of Europe is a separate entity, distinct from the EU, the OSCE and the UN; however, it shares many of the same values and co-operates with them to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe and beyond.

Text:
Public Relations Division
Produced by the Directorate
of Communication
of the Council of Europe

For more information:

Public Relations Information
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 20 33
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 27 45

Visits - Public Relations
Tel: +33 (0)3 88 41 20 29
Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 27 54
Email: visites@coe.int

www.coe.int



COUNCIL CONSEIL
OF EUROPE DE L'EUROPE



Harvesting the fruit: 60 years of co-operation

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CELEBRATES ITS 60th ANNIVERSARY IN 2009.

With its roots in the post-war international institutions set up to promote democracy, the rule of law and human rights, modern European society has grown and flourished.

The Council of Europe has pursued its mandate to tend that growth through the decades. 10 countries signed the Treaty of London in 1949. The Organisation now has 47 member states and numerous milestones, like rings in the trunk of a tree, to mark its development.

As it guided Europe into a new era of democracy, liberty and co-operation, the Council of Europe witnessed the fall of the Berlin Wall and other momentous events that have had a dramatic impact on the political and social landscape of the continent. It has responded to the social and political challenges that such change has brought with responsibility, dedication and tenacity.

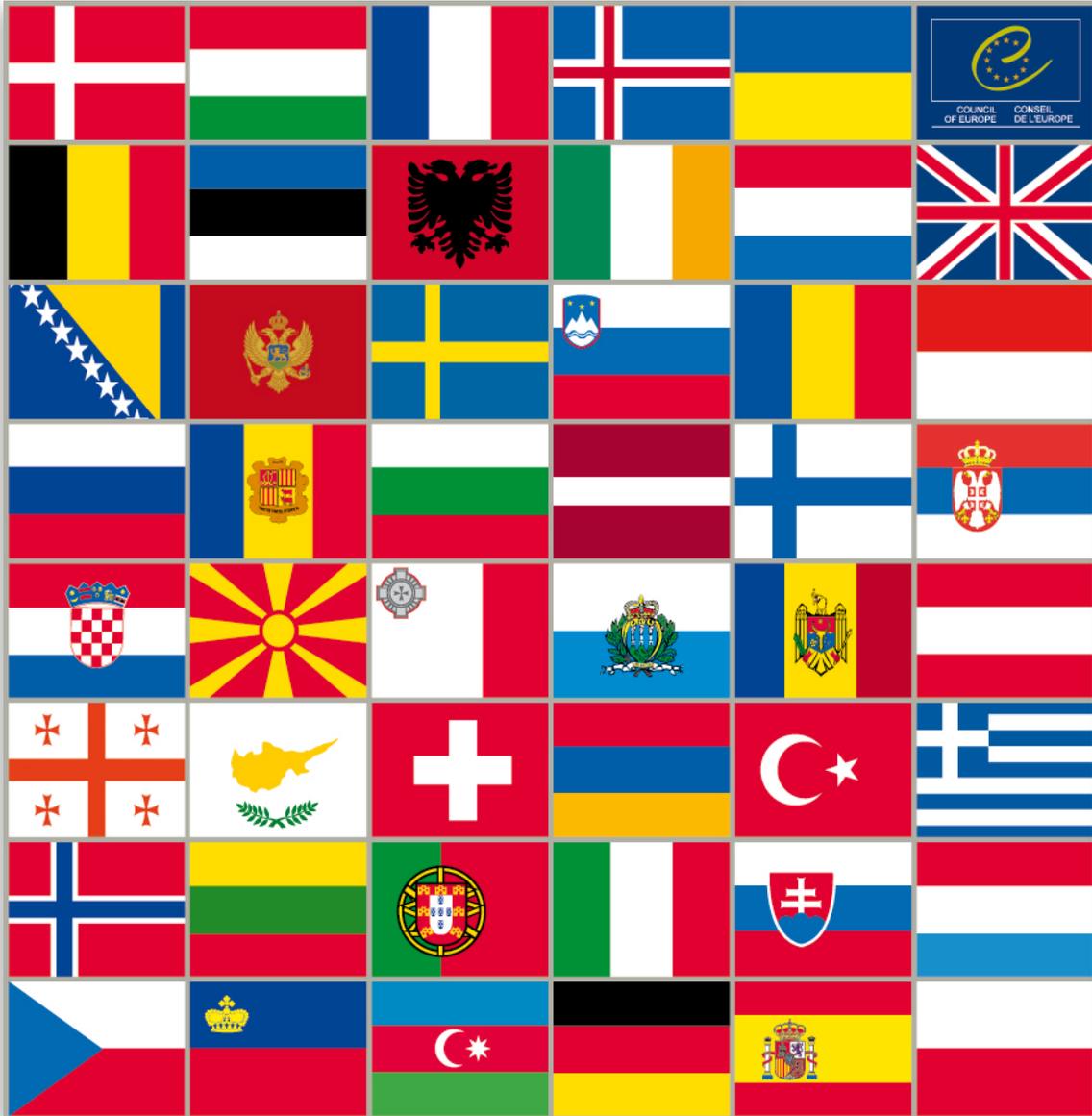
The Council has worked tirelessly to protect the human rights of Europe's citizens, bringing them together to celebrate their many different backgrounds and cultures: 2009 also marks the 50th anniversary of the foundation of the European Court of Human Rights,

the 20th anniversary of the creation of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture, and ten years since the creation of the office of the Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Council of Europe has achieved a great deal, but there is still a lot to be done: prejudice and discrimination remain a daily reality for too many people. Human, political and social rights are delicate, they must be tended and nurtured, and there are new threats appearing all the time. However, the Council of Europe too is evolving to fight these dangers.

The 21st century has brought issues such as cybercrime, international terrorism and people trafficking into the spotlight and the Council of Europe has responded with a new generation of treaties to tackle the challenges. It remains vigilant against traditional threats to human rights, tackling the scourges of domestic violence, discrimination, racism and anti-Semitism.

Democracy, the rule of law and human rights have blossomed in Europe on an unprecedented scale over the last 60 years, and the Council of Europe is dedicated to ensuring that the proliferation of rights and legal standards that it has nurtured continue to bear healthy fruit for Europe's citizens.





FLAGS OF THE **47 MEMBER STATES** AND DATES OF JOINING **THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

1949 Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom, Greece and Turkey **1950** Iceland and Germany **1956** Austria **1961** Cyprus **1963** Switzerland **1965** Malta **1976** Portugal **1977** Spain **1978** Liechtenstein **1988** San Marino **1989** Finland **1990** Hungary **1991** Poland **1992** Bulgaria **1993** Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania **1994** Andorra **1995** Latvia, Albania, Moldova, Ukraine, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" **1996** Russian Federation and Croatia **1999** Georgia **2001** Armenia and Azerbaijan **2002** Bosnia and Herzegovina **2003** Serbia **2004** Monaco **2007** Montenegro