

Information Guide



Council of Europe

Contents

Overview.....	2
History.....	2
Institutions.....	4
Committee of Ministers.....	5
Parliamentary Assembly.....	5
European Court of Human Rights.....	6
Commissioner for Human Rights.....	9
Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.....	10
Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs).....	11
The Council of Europe and the European Union.....	11
The Council of Europe and other international bodies.....	13
Location and contacts for the Council of Europe.....	14
Useful Council of Europe internet links.....	14
External links.....	14

Overview

The [Council of Europe](#) (CoE) was founded in 1949, and is perhaps Europe's oldest political organisation. It therefore predates the European Communities (now the European Union) for which it could be said to have been an inspiration and precursor.

Based in Strasbourg, France, the CoE has grown from an initial 10 High Contracting Parties (Member States) to currently embrace 800 million citizens throughout 47 countries (the CoE should not be confused with the [European Council](#) or with the [Council of the European Union](#), which are EU institutions).

The aims of the CoE are:

- to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law
- to promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe's cultural identity and diversity
- to find common solutions to the challenges facing European society: such as discrimination against minorities, xenophobia, intolerance, bioethics and cloning, terrorism, trafficking in human beings, organised crime and corruption, cybercrime, violence against children
- to consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform.

Membership is open to any European state committed to the rule of law and of enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms, and which collaborates sincerely and effectively in the realisation of the aims of the Council (Articles 3 & 4 [Statute of the Council of Europe](#))

Meeting in Vienna in October 1993, at the first CoE Summit, the Heads of State or Government set new political aims for the organisation, characterising it as 'the guardian of democratic security - founded on human rights, democracy and the rule of law'. The phrase 'Democratic security is an essential complement to military security, and is a pre-requisite for the continent's stability and peace' is widely used by - and in relation to - the CoE.

History

Although there had always been movements seeking closer European unions and co-operation, the phenomenal human, economic and physical destruction of the Second World War, provided the powerful impetus towards the realisation of those ideals. Whilst the exact form of any such 'union' was debated, at heart was the desire to prevent any such further European war by promoting respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms, coupled with closer political and economic links. Many commentators see [Winston Churchill's 'United States of Europe' speech](#) at Zurich on 19 September 1946 as being a seminal moment on this path. Thereafter, key steps in the creation of the Council and its expansion not only in terms of geographic reach but also its understanding of 'Fundamental Human Rights and Freedoms' can be traced as follows:

17 March 1948 [Treaty of Brussels](#), essentially a defence treaty between Belgium, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. In its wake came a resolution to explore some form of political and economic union, with a consultative assembly elected by national parliaments, and a charter of human rights regulated by a court of justice. At the forefront of this movement one could number not only Churchill, but Robert Schumann, the French Foreign Minister; Konrad Adenauer, the German Federal Chancellor; Paul Henri Spaak, the Belgian Prime Minister; and Alcide de Gasperi, Premier of Italy.

5 May 1949 These proposals realised fruition with the creation of the Council of Europe by the [Treaty of London \(Statute of the Council of Europe\)](#) signed by Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway and Sweden and the United Kingdom, with Article 1 stating its aim as being:

... to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress ...

[P]ursued ... by agreements and common action in economic, social, cultural, scientific, legal and administrative matters and in the maintenance and further realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms ...

8 August 1949 Accession of Turkey and Greece.

4 November 1950 Signature of the [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#).

10 October 1951 Accession of the Federal Republic of Germany.

3 September 1953 Entry into force of the ECHR.

18 May 1954 Creation of the European Commission on Human Rights.

8 December 1955 Adoption of the [European Flag](#) of 12 stars on an azure background (later adopted by the European Union in 1986).

12 January 1957 Creation of the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#), a pan-European assembly to represent and promote local democracy.

21 January 1959 First election of members of the [European Court of Human Rights \(ECtHR\)](#) by the Consultative Assembly of the Council of Europe.

23-28 February 1959 First session of the Court.

14 November 1960 First judgment of the Court in [Lawless v Ireland](#).

18 October 1961 Signature of the [European Social Charter](#).

12 January 1972 Choice and adoption of Beethoven's 'Ode to Joy' as the [European Anthem](#), (adopted by the European Union in 1986, along with the [European Flag](#))

28 January 1977 Inauguration of the Palais de l'Europe at Strasbourg as the headquarters of the Council of Europe (it also served until 1999 as one of the seats of the [European Parliament](#)).

28 April 1983 Signature of the [Protocol to abolish the death penalty](#).

28 November 1987 Signature of the [European Convention for the prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment](#).

8 January 1989 Introduction of special guest status to forge closer links between the [Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe \(PACE\)](#) and the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

10 May 1990 Creation of the [European Commission for Democracy through Law](#) (the Venice Commission) to encourage development and co-operation on common constitutional standards.

6 November 1990 Accession of Hungary, the first former Soviet Bloc country to join the CoE.

8-9 October 1993 First summit of Council of Europe Heads of State and Government which resulted in adoption of the [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities](#), aimed at fighting against racism, exploitation and intolerance.

26 May 1994 Establishment of the [European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines \(EDQM\)](#).

29 February 1996 Accession of Russia.

4 April 1997 Signature of the [European Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine](#).

12 January 1998 Additional [Protocol](#) to the Biomedicine Convention on the prohibition of the cloning of human beings.

7 May 1999 Creation of the [European Commissioner for Human Rights](#).

23 November 2001 [Convention on Cybercrime](#) with a Protocol outlawing racist / xenophobic acts committed via computer, coupled with an invitation to non-European states to sign.

24 April 2002 Accession of Bosnia-Herzegovina.

3 May 2002 [Protocol 13](#) to the ECHR – the abolition of the death penalty in all circumstances, rendering Europe the first death penalty free zone in the world.

11 July 2002 Adoption of [Guidelines on Human Rights and the Fight against Terrorism](#).

3 April 2003 Accession of Serbia-Montenegro.

16 May 2005 Adoption of conventions on [Prevention of Terrorism](#); [Against Trafficking in Human Beings](#); and [Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism](#).

25 November 2007 Signature by 23 of the 47 Member States of the [Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#).

18 September 2008 10,000th judgment of the European Court of Human Rights in [Takhayeva v Russia](#).

Institutions

The main institutions of the Council are:

- Committee of Ministers
- Parliamentary Assembly
- European Court of Human Rights
- Commissioner for Human Rights
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
- Conference of INGOs

Committee of Ministers

Not to be confused with the [Council of the European Union](#) (also known as the Council of Ministers). The [Committee](#), composed of the Foreign Ministers of each Member State is the executive and decision-making organ of the Council of Europe. (Articles 13-14 [Statute](#)). Although it meets on average only once each year, its daily business is conducted by Ministers' Deputies/Permanent Representatives, through a Bureau and a number of [Rapporteur and Working Groups](#) assisted by a Secretariat. These meetings are governed by respective sets of [Ministers'](#) and [Deputies'](#) rules of procedure.

The Committee on its website defines its role as:

- the emanation of the governments which enables them to express on equal terms their national approaches to the problems confronting Europe's societies;
- the collective forum where European responses to these challenges are worked out;
- co-guardian with the [Parliamentary Assembly](#) of the values of the Council of Europe (Articles 10,19 and 22 [Statute](#)).

Its workload includes:

- Admission, suspension and termination of membership (Articles 4-9 of the [Statute](#))
- Monitoring the commitment of Member States to the Council's aims and their obligations. It can make (non-binding) Recommendations to Member States (Article 15 [Statute](#))
- Concluding Conventions and Agreements (Article 15 [Statute](#))
- Supervising the execution of the judgments of the [European Court of Human Rights](#) (Article 46 of the [Convention](#) as amended by [Protocol 11](#))
- Controlling the [Budget](#) of the Council of Europe (Articles 16, 17 and 38 [Statute](#)).

Parliamentary Assembly

Originally called the Consultative Assembly (until 1974), it is also known by the acronym PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) and not to be confused with the [European Parliament](#) which is an EU institution.

The Assembly is described in Article 22 [Statute](#) as the 'deliberative organ' of the Council of Europe. It sees itself as 'Europe's democratic conscience' and 'a melting pot of ideas'. It consists of 318 members (each with a nominated substitute who may, in the absence of the representative, sit, speak and vote in his place) (Article 25c). Unlike the current European Parliament (but similar to its pre-1979 predecessors) the members are not directly elected by universal suffrage but by their respective national parliaments (Article 25 [Statute](#)). Representation is proportionate to member state populations and varies from 2 to 18 per state. Allocation is determined by Article 26 (the up to date version of the [Statute](#) incorporating a helpful table showing distribution). The Assembly's website provides search facilities to locate members by [name](#), [political grouping](#) or [national delegations](#). Delegates can also be traced via their [committee membership](#).

Members are seated alphabetically within the Assembly chamber, and not by national blocks, thus reflecting the intention that they should act in an individual capacity representing European public opinion rather than purely national interests.

The Assembly is required (by Article 32 [Statute](#)) to meet in ordinary session at least annually. In practice it convenes on average four times each year.

Its work, governed by Articles 22-35 [Statute](#) and by its [Rules of Procedure](#), is prepared by eight committees:

- Political Affairs and Democracy: 84 seats
- Legal Affairs and Human Rights: 84 seats
- Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development: 84 seats
- Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons: 84 seats
- Culture, Science, Education and Media: 84 seats
- Equality and Non-Discrimination: 84 seats
- Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee): 84 seats
- Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs: 27 seats

Work is also prepared by a Bureau comprising the President and the 20 Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, the chairpersons of the five political groups and the committee Chairpersons (part III [Rules of Procedure](#)).

A Joint Committee of the Assembly and representatives of the [Committee of Ministers](#) co-ordinates the activities and maintain good relations between them.

The Assembly adopts three types of texts:

Recommendations (which require a two-thirds majority vote) to the [Committee of Ministers](#) (Article 22 [Statute](#));

Resolutions (which express its own viewpoint on a simple majority vote) (Article 29 [Statute](#));

Opinions (again on a simple majority vote, for example on membership applications, draft treaties and other texts submitted by the [Committee of Ministers](#)).

Although ultimately without the legislative input enjoyed by its 'cousin' the [European Parliament](#), the PACE does have power to appoint:

- The judges of the [European Court of Human Rights](#) (Article 22 [ECHR](#))
- The [European Commissioner for Human Rights](#) (Article 9 [CM Resolution \(99\)50](#))
- The [Secretary General](#) and Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Regulation 1 of the [Regulations](#) governing the positions).

European Court of Human Rights

Not to be confused with the [European Court of Justice](#) (which is the Court of Justice of the [European Union](#)), the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) was established in 1959 by Article 19 of [ECHR](#). Since then the Court has delivered more than 15,000 judgments and receives on average some 50,000 applications annually.

In the original scheme, it was one of three bodies within the Council of Europe responsible for monitoring and enforcing the obligations of the Member States under the Convention (the other two were the European Commission of Human Rights and the [Committee of Ministers](#)). Under the initial procedure all applications were assessed by the Commission for admissibility. If declared admissible, efforts were made to achieve a friendly settlement. When this proved impossible a report containing a non-binding opinion on the merits of the application was compiled. Thereafter, the parties or the Commission could refer the case to the Court. Otherwise, it was decided by the [Committee of Ministers](#).

The regime was changed on 1 November 1998 with the entry into force of [Protocol 11](#) abolishing the filtering mechanism of the Commission and allowing individual applications directly to the newly formatted Court.

The Court comprises 47 [Judges](#), one from each signatory Member State (Article 20 [ECHR](#)) chosen from persons of high moral character who must either possess the qualifications required for appointment to high judicial office or be jurists of recognised competence (Article 21). Although so nominated they sit in the Court in an independent and individual capacity (Article 21.2). They are elected by the [Parliamentary Assembly](#) from a list of three proposed by each Member State (Article 22) for a renewable term of six years.

The Court has jurisdiction to:

1. Rule on applications made by either individuals (Article 34) or by Member States (Article 33) alleging violations of the [ECHR](#); and
2. Render advice to the Committee of Ministers on the interpretation and application of the [ECHR](#) and Protocols (Articles 46-47)

Individual applicants must meet the admissibility criteria set out in Article 35 before the merits of their complaint can be addressed:

- All domestic remedies must have been exhausted
- Application to the Court must be made within six months of the final national judicial decision
- Application must concern Convention rights
- Applicant must be, personally and directly, a victim of a violation of the Convention, and must have suffered a significant disadvantage
- Application can be made only against a Member State, not another natural or legal person.

Applications which are anonymous, deemed to be ill-founded, or which deal substantially with matters already decided by the Court are likely to be ruled inadmissible.

All judgments of the Court (the execution of which are supervised by the [Committee of Ministers](#)) are binding on the Member States concerned in the case (Article 46).

The [Judges](#) of the Court are configured in [Sections](#) [scroll down] comprising a President, Vice-President, Members and support staff (which are essentially administrative units) from which the actual judicial formations are created to deal particular cases:

- Single judge (Article 27) to rule on manifestly inadmissible individual applications (a national judge cannot sit in single judge formation on an application concerning his/her own Member State)
- Committees of three judges (Articles 27 and 28) where a single judge refers an individual application
- Chambers of seven judges comprising the President of the Section to which the case has been allocated, the national judge of the Member State against which the application has been filed, and five other judges of the section designated by the President. Judgments are usually final and binding after three months or where no request is made to the Grand Chamber (Article 44)
- The [Grand Chamber](#) made up of 17 judges comprising the President of the Court, Vice-Presidents, Section Presidents, the national judge, together with other judges

selected by drawing of lots (excluding any judges who previously sat in the Chamber which first examined the case). The Grand Chamber has jurisdiction to:

- Determine cases relinquished by a Chamber (Article 31) for example where a case raises a serious question affecting the interpretation of the Convention or if there is a risk of inconsistency with a previous judgment of the Court
- Determine referrals ("appeals") by the parties to an action after judgment by a Chamber (Article 31). Such requests must be made within three months of the Chamber decision. They are initially assessed by a panel of five judges of the Grand Chamber to ascertain that the "case raises a serious question affecting the interpretation or application of the Convention or the protocols thereto, or a serious issue of general importance" (Article 43) before the referral can pass to the full Grand Chamber for judgment.
- Respond to a request from the [Committee of Ministers](#) for legal advice / opinions on the Convention (Article 31)

There is no appeal from a judgment of the Grand Chamber (Article 44).

Once an application has been lodged, Non-Governmental Organisations, the [European Commissioner for Human Rights](#) and other Member States can apply to the President of the Court to intervene as interested parties (Article 36). Proceedings before the Court are largely by written submission (Title II [Rules of Court](#)) but public hearings can be held for oral submissions and of course for the delivery of judgments. All such hearings take place in the Human Rights Building in Strasbourg with full press and public access unless otherwise decided by the President of the Chamber or Grand Chamber (Article 40 [ECHR](#), Rule 63 [Rules of Court](#)) Public hearings are filmed and broadcast on the Court's web site on the day itself, from 2.30 p.m. (local time). The deliberations of the Judges however are not open to the public (Rule 22 [Rules of Court](#)).

In the course of considering the application the Court can (under Rule 39 of its [Rules of Court](#)) grant a series of [interim measures](#) which it considers should be adopted in the interests of the parties or of the proper conduct of the proceedings before it.

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These are usually very urgent issues required to prevent irreparable damage, and the Court's own statistics show that they tend to be confined to deportation and extradition cases.

At all stages of the case the Court encourages the parties to reach a Friendly Settlement of the matter on the basis of respect for human rights as defined in the Convention and the Protocols, which if achieved leads to the application being struck out. The terms of the settlement are then referred, as with judgments, to the [Committee of Ministers](#) to supervise and ensure its execution (Article 39 [ECHR](#)).

If the Court finds that there has been a violation of the Convention or the protocols, and if the internal law of the Member State concerned allows only partial reparation to be made, the Court can order 'just satisfaction' (usually a sum of money by way of compensation) to the applicant (Article 41 [ECHR](#)).

The Court produces [Statistics](#) and [Annual Reports](#) which provide snapshots and analysis of its activities since 1959 under different criteria such as:

- Violation of the Convention by State
- Violation by Article
- Violation by Article and State

According to [Overview 1959-2012](#), of some 16,000 judgments rendered by the Court between 1959 and 2012, almost half concerned five Member States: Turkey (2,870), Italy (2,229), the Russian Federation (1,346), Poland (1,019), and Romania (938).

Historically (1959-2012), violation judgments by Article show that:

- 43.99% concern Article 6 [ECHR](#) (Right to a Fair Trial)
- 12.96% Article 1 [Protocol 1](#) (on the protection of property)
- 11.74% Article 5 [ECHR](#) (Right to Liberty and Security)
- 8.11% Article 13 [ECHR](#) (Right to an Effective Remedy)
- 8.36% Article 3 [ECHR](#) (Prohibition of Torture and Inhuman and Degrading Treatment)
- 4.22% Article 2 [ECHR](#) (Right to Life)
- 10.62% other violations

In 2012 the highest number of judgments concerned Russia (134), Turkey (123), Romania (79), Poland (74), and Ukraine (71) (see [Annual Report 2012](#)).

The [Annual Report 2012](#) also showed that:

The results achieved by the Court in 2012 have been truly exceptional. For the first time since the establishment of the new Court in 1998, the number of cases pending before it at the end of the year is lower than that of the previous year (128,100, a decrease of 16% in comparison with 2011). This is partly due to the levelling-off in the number of new applications, in contrast to previous years. But it is above all due to the remarkable impact of the single-judge procedure, by which the Court decided approximately 81,700 applications in 2012.

Commissioner for Human Rights

This is an independent, impartial, non-judicial institution of the Council of Europe created by [Resolution \(99\) 50](#) of the [Committee of Ministers](#) of 7 May 1999 with a mission (Article 3) to:

- foster the effective observance of human rights, and assist Member States in the implementation of Council of Europe human rights standards;
- promote education in and awareness of human rights in Council of Europe Member States;
- identify possible shortcomings in the law and practice concerning human rights;
- facilitate the activities of national ombudsperson institutions and other human rights structures;
- provide advice and information regarding the protection of human rights across the region.

The Commissioner is elected for a non-renewable term of 6 years by the [Parliamentary Assembly](#) from a list of three candidates submitted by the [Committee of Ministers](#) (Articles 9 and 11 [Resolution \(99\) 50](#)) from 'eminent personalities of a high moral character having recognised expertise in the field of human rights, a public record of

attachment to the values of the Council of Europe and the personal authority necessary to discharge the mission of the Commissioner effectively' (Article 10).

The Commissioner cannot act on individual complaints but issues recommendations, opinions and reports (Article 8) including an annual report to the [Committee of Ministers](#) and the [Parliamentary Assembly](#) (Article 3), conducting country visits and dialogue with national authorities and civil society and undertaking awareness raising activities. The Commissioner has standing to intervene as an interested party in cases before the [European Court of Human Rights](#) (Article 36(3) [ECHR](#)).

He/she cooperates with a wide range of national and international human rights monitoring and promoting bodies including the [United Nations](#), the [European Union](#) and many non-governmental organisations as mandated by Article 3.

Following the [Declaration of February 2008](#) of the [Committee of Ministers](#), the Commissioner has an enhanced role to protect and promote Human Rights Defenders and their work across Europe, i.e. those who 'individually or in association with others, act to promote and strive for the protection and realisation of human rights and fundamental freedoms at the national and international levels'.

Under the terms of Article 6 [Resolution \(99\) 50](#) Member States are obligated to 'facilitate the independent and effective performance by the Commissioner of his or her functions'.

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Created in 1957, the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) is the self-styled 'voice of cities and regions in Europe - the guarantor of local and regional democracy in Europe'. It is a pan-European assembly of 636 representatives from some 20,000 locally elected authorities across the 47 Member States.

The Congress is similar to, but not to be confused with, the EU's [Committee of the Regions](#) (a [co-operation agreement](#) between the two was signed in 2005).

The Congress is composed of two Chambers each comprising 318 members:

[The Chamber of Local Authorities](#) In addition to promoting local democracy, dialogue, diversity, equality and cohesion across the 47 Member States, it also encourages these principles and practices beyond Europe, for example in the Euro-Mediterranean sphere through Euro-Arab dialogue. Current membership of the Chamber can be ascertained from the Congress website by [Name](#) or [National Delegation](#);

[The Chamber of Regions](#) The Chamber explores and promotes models of regional governance and cohesion and encourages exchange and co-operation (economic and otherwise). As with the Chamber of Local Authorities, current membership can be checked by [Name](#) or [National Delegation](#).

The President of the Congress is elected alternatively from each of the Chambers.

Under the overarching principles of the [European Charter of Local Self Government](#) the Congress seeks to:

- promote local and regional democracy
- improve local and regional governance
- encourage devolution and regionalisation
- foster co-operation between cities and regions across the Council of Europe territories.

This may involve [fact-finding](#) and [monitoring](#) visits to Member States and the [observation](#) of local elections, [support programmes](#), the preparation of reports and the making of recommendations.

Each Chamber has a Bureau comprising their President and their seven Vice-Presidents. The Chamber Bureaux along with the President of the Congress constitute the [Congress Bureau](#), responsible for setting the general policy and budget of the Congress and co-ordinating the work of the Chambers and their [Committees](#) and [Working Groups](#).

The Congress meets for two days each year in [Plenary Session](#) and often with a spring and/or autumn mini-session.

Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs)

From the earliest days of the Council of Europe, the importance of independent non-governmental organisations to the vitality to the functioning of democratic society was recognised. As a result, in 1952 the [Committee of Ministers](#), with a view "to intensify the active participation of all citizens in conducting public affairs", formally decided to create a consultative status for INGOs.

Their role was enhanced to 'participatory' status by [Resolution \(2003\) 8](#) of the [Committee of Ministers](#) enabling them to undertake a more active part in the decision making process and implementation of the programmes of the Council of Europe. To obtain such status the INGOs must be particularly representative in their field at European level, supportive of the aims of the Council and capable of actively contributing to its work (Article 2 [Resolution \(2003\) 8](#)). Currently, approximately 400 organisations hold this status. Their participation (Article 8) can take various forms, for example:

- participation in Council of Europe projects
- contributing to the work of [inter-governmental committees](#)
- preparation of memoranda for the [Secretary General](#)
- oral or written statements to the [inter-governmental committees](#), the [Parliamentary Assembly](#) and the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#)
- addressing seminars and other meetings organised by the Council of Europe
- disseminating information about the Council's aims and activities.

The conference meets three or four times a year at Strasbourg, normally during the ordinary sessions of the [Parliamentary Assembly](#).

Its work, co-ordinated by its [Standing Committee](#) and [Bureau](#), is conducted through a number of Committees on:

- [Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges](#)
- [Education and Culture](#)
- [Human Rights](#)

The Council of Europe and the European Union

Both organisations share many of the same core values although they pursue these in different and complementary fashions. As such, the [European Union](#) can and often does draw on the experience and expertise of the larger and older partner.

There have been a series of agreements and texts governing their relationship (see 2001 [compendium of texts](#)) and since 1993 they have undertaken a number of [Joint Programmes](#). In 2007, they concluded a [Memorandum of Understanding](#) to provide a framework for co-operation (see also [CoE and EU](#) page).

The [European Union](#) has signed and/or ratified following Council of Europe treaties:

- [European Agreement on the Exchange of Therapeutic Substances of Human Origin](#)
- [Agreement on the Temporary Importation, free of duty, of Medical, Surgical and Laboratory Equipment for use on free loan in Hospitals and other Medical Institutions for purposes of Diagnosis or Treatment](#)
- [European Agreement on the Exchanges of Blood-Grouping Reagents](#)
- [Convention on the Elaboration of a European Pharmacopoeia](#)
- [European Agreement on the Exchange of Tissue-Typing Reagents](#)
- [European Convention for the Protection of Animals kept for Farming Purposes](#)
- [Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats](#)
- [European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and other Scientific Purposes](#)
- [Protocol to the Convention on the Elaboration of a European Pharmacopoeia](#)
- [European Convention relating to questions on Copyright Law and Neighbouring Rights in the Framework of Transfrontier Broadcasting by Satellite](#)
- [Protocol of Amendment to the European Convention for the Protection of Vertebrate Animals used for Experimental and other Scientific Purposes](#)
- [Convention on Information and Legal Co-operation concerning "Information Society Services"](#)
- [European Convention for the Protection of Animals during International Transport \(Revised\)](#)
- [Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism](#)

The [European Union](#) has its own commitment to [human rights](#). 'The Union is founded on the principles of liberty, democracy, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law, principles which are common to the Member States' (Article 6 Treaty on European Union) and has adopted a [Charter of Fundamental Rights](#). Although all EU Member States are individually signatories of the [ECHR](#), the [Treaty of Lisbon](#) commits the EU as a legal entity to accede to the ECHR (see also CoE [Accession of the European Union](#), European External Action Service [Delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe](#), and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights: [The European Convention on Human Rights celebrates 60 years](#)).

Furthermore, [issues relating to EU law](#) have often been raised in cases before the (former) European Commission of Human Rights and also the European Court of Human Rights. Indeed there are now regular meetings between delegations from the [European Court of Human Rights](#) and [Court of Justice of the European Union](#)).

The [European Union](#) maintains a [Delegation to the Council of Europe](#) and a Council of Europe [Liaison Office](#) in Brussels.

High level meetings between the two Bodies – called [Quadripartite meetings](#) – are held twice a year. There the EU Presidency, the European Commission, the Chairman and Secretary General of the Council of Europe exchange information and views on their programmes and mutual interests.

The EU also sends non-voting representatives to a number of the Council of Europe's [inter-governmental committees](#).

In November 2007 an [agreement](#) was concluded between the [Parliamentary Assembly](#) and the [European Parliament](#) to encourage increased contact, coordination and co-operation, and as previously mentioned there is a [co-operation agreement](#) between the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) and the EU's [Committee of the Regions](#).

The Council of Europe and other international bodies

The Council of Europe maintains [relationships](#) with more than 30 international bodies including:

- Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials ([ACEEEO](#))
- Association des cours constitutionnelles ayant en partage l'usage du français ([ACCPUF](#))
- Anna Lindh Euro-Mediterranean Foundation for the Dialogue between Cultures ([ALF](#))
- Anti-Terrorism Centre of the Commonwealth of Independent States ([ATC CIS](#))
- Arab League for Education, Culture and Science Organisation ([ALESCO](#))
- Association of Southeast Asian Nations ([ASEAN](#))
- Black Sea Economic Co-operation ([BSEC](#))
- Club de Madrid ([CdM](#))
- Commonwealth Parliamentary Association ([CPA](#))
- Conference of European Constitutional Courts ([CECC](#))
- Conference of the Constitutional Control Organs of the Countries on Young Democracy ([CCCOCYD](#))
- Council of Baltic Sea States ([CBSS](#))
- Egmont Group of Financial Intelligence Units ([FIU](#))
- European Bank for Reconstruction and Development ([EBRD](#))
- European Science Foundation ([ESF](#))
- Financial Action Task Force ([FATF](#))
- Hague Conference on Private International Law ([HCCH](#))
- Ibero-American Conference of Constitutional Justice ([CIJC](#))
- International Association of Constitutional Law ([IACL](#))
- International Centre for Migration Policy Development ([ICMPD](#))
- International Commission on Civil Status ([ICCS](#))
- International Committee of the Red Cross ([ICRC](#))
- International Criminal Police Organisation ([INTERPOL](#))
- International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance ([IDEA](#))
- International Organisation of La Francophonie ([OIF](#))
- International Organisation for Migration ([IOM](#))
- Islamic Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization ([ISESCO](#))
- League of Arab States ([LAS](#))
- Nordic Council of Ministers ([NCM](#))
- North Atlantic Treaty Organisation ([NATO](#))
- Organization of American States ([OAS](#))
- Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe ([OSCE](#))
- Organization for Democracy and Economic Development ([GUAM](#))
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development ([OECD](#))
- Organisation of the Islamic Conference ([OIC](#))
- Regional Co-operation Council ([RCC](#))
- Southern African Chief Justices Forum ([SACJF](#))
- Union of the Arab Constitutional Council and Courts ([UACCC](#))
- United Nations ([UN](#))
- World Anti-Doping Agency ([WADA](#))
- World Customs Organization ([WCO](#))

As well as numerous ties to other states, including five countries which enjoy observer status with the Organisation: Canada, the Holy See, Japan, Mexico and the United States of America.

Location and contacts for the Council of Europe

The central postal address, telephone and fax numbers are:

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European Court of Human Rights
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Specific offices both within the Council and around Europe can also be [contacted](#).

Useful Council of Europe internet links

- [Council of Europe Home Page](#)
 - [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#)
 - [Treaties](#)
 - [Secretary General](#)
 - [Committee of Ministers](#)
- [Parliamentary Assembly](#)
- [European Court of Human Rights](#)
- [European Commissioner for Human Rights](#)
- [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#)
 - [The Chamber of Local Authorities](#)
 - [The Chamber of Regions](#)
- [Conference of INGOs](#)
- [Information leaflets](#)

External links

- [Amnesty International and the Council of Europe](#)
- [Human Rights Watch Europe](#)
- [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#)
- [Universal Human Rights Index](#)

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October 2013

Original compilation: 2012 (Kenneth Wilson)