

The Council of Europe

and

**the
protection
of human
rights**



The Council of Europe and the protection of human rights

“Every member of the Council of Europe must accept the principle of the rule of law and of the enjoyment by all persons within its jurisdiction of human rights and fundamental freedoms”

*Article 3
of the Statute
of the Council of Europe*

“Fundamental freedoms, which are the foundation of justice and peace in the world ... are best maintained on the one hand by an effective political democracy and on the other by a common understanding and observance of the human rights upon which they depend”

*Preamble
to the European Convention
on Human Rights,
Rome, 4 November 1950*

Human rights: an essential calling

Protecting and promoting human rights is central to the role of the Council of Europe. Based in Strasbourg, France, the Council works to develop common policies for tackling issues facing society in its member states.

The Council of Europe, the first European political organisation, was born four years after the United Nations in May 1949 in London, from the debris and the barbaric acts of the second world war. The political will of the founding states to achieve unity among its members was to be focused on efforts “to safeguard and promote their common ideals and principles and encourage social and economic progress” (Article 1 of the Statute).

The Statute of the Organisation is explicitly founded upon respect for human rights and the pre-eminence of law. This means protecting and promoting the dignity and freedom of the individual within the rule of law, which must be constantly strengthened. The Statute goes further: it states that any serious violations of human rights by the member states constitute grounds for suspension or exclusion.

An historic step had already been taken in 1948 with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which proclaims the universality and indivisibility of human rights. The Council of Europe, for its part, showed its commitment to human rights by adopting, in 1950, the European Convention on Human Rights. Ratification of the Convention has since become a condition of membership of the Organisation. In 1961 came the counterpart of the Convention in the field of economic and social rights: the European Social Charter.

Fifty years after the creation of the Council of Europe, its mission is as relevant as ever. Indeed, it has even gained in importance with the spectacular changes which have taken place in central and eastern Europe since the end of the 1980s. Giving support during the transitional period, helping the new member states and the applicants for membership to consolidate democracy: this is the challenge which the Council of Europe has redoubled its efforts to meet. A truly pan-European organisation, it has 41 member states in 1999 and remains open to new members, as long as they meet the condition of being democratic states.

In the field of human rights the Council of Europe's work – by means of conventions or otherwise – entails:

- ☆ protecting civil and political rights through the mechanism of an individual complaints procedure, whereby alleged violations can be heard by the European Court of Human Rights
- ☆ protecting social and economic rights through the mechanism of the European Social Charter
- ☆ protecting persons deprived of their liberty through a system of visits by the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
- ☆ protecting the rights of national minorities through the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- ☆ furthering equality between women and men (Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men)
- ☆ combating racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance
- ☆ enhancing freedom of expression and information in the media, and the free movement of ideas and communication across frontiers.

Member states of the Council of Europe at 1 June 1999

Albania	Lithuania
Andorra	Luxembourg
Austria	Malta
Belgium	Moldova
Bulgaria	Netherlands
Croatia	Norway
Cyprus	Poland
Czech Republic	Portugal
Denmark	Romania
Estonia	Russia
Finland	San Marino
France	Slovakia
Georgia	Slovenia
Germany	Spain
Greece	Sweden
Hungary	Switzerland
Iceland	"The former Yugoslav
Ireland	Republic
Italy	of Macedonia"
Latvia	Turkey
Liechtenstein	Ukraine
	United Kingdom

Working through conventions

The conventions concerning human rights constitute an indivisible and interlocking judicial arsenal, based on the principle of protection mechanisms.

The European Convention on Human Rights

The pioneering audacity of the Convention, the jewel in the crown of the Council of Europe, was to establish an international protection system providing, for the first time, for the *effective* implementation of human rights.

Under the Convention, which came into force in 1953, the States Parties guarantee the basic civil and political rights of a state governed by the rule of law, not only to their own citizens but to all persons “within their jurisdiction”. States or individuals can bring a complaint before the Court set up by the Convention. However, the Convention is not necessarily incorporated into each state’s national legal system.

The theory of international law whereby human rights have a fundamental character placing them above the legislation and practices of sovereign states is thus brought into practice.

The rights guaranteed

☆ **The right to life** (Article 2)

Article 2 protects the individual against death inflicted arbitrarily by the State; but it does not exclude the use of the death penalty if carried out in accordance with the law. Protocol No. 6, abolishing the death penalty in time of peace, was adopted in 1985.

- ☆ **The right to liberty and security of person** (Article 5)
Article 5 guarantees people physical liberty by protecting them from arbitrary arrest and detention and according them certain basic procedural rights. Its provisions are extended by Article 1 of Protocol No. 4 which prohibits imprisonment for debt.
- ☆ **The right to a fair trial in civil and criminal matters** (Article 6)
This right is complemented by Article 13, which ensures the right to an effective remedy before a national authority. Article 6 includes the condition that the proceedings must take place within a “reasonable time”. Complaints of violations of this provision are those most frequently brought by applicants. The notion of a fair trial is completed by the principle that criminal law should not be retroactive (Article 7), the right of appeal in criminal cases, the right to compensation for wrongful conviction, and the right not to be tried or punished twice for the same offence (Articles 2, 3 and 4 of Protocol No. 7).
- ☆ **Respect for private and family life, home and correspondence** (Article 8), which may be linked to the right to marry and found a family (Article 12).
- ☆ **The equality of rights and responsibilities of spouses during marriage** (Article 5 of Protocol No. 7).
- ☆ **The right to freedom of expression (including freedom of the press)** (Article 10)
The requirements of this basic right are a logical development of the rights guaranteed by Article 9 (freedom of thought, conscience and religion).
- ☆ **Freedom of peaceful assembly and association** (Article 11).
- ☆ **The right to peaceful enjoyment of possessions** (Article 1 of Protocol No. 1).
- ☆ **The right to education** (Article 2 of Protocol No. 1).
- ☆ **The right to free elections** (Article 3 of Protocol No. 1).

- ☆ **Liberty of movement and freedom to choose where to live** (Article 2 of Protocol No. 4).

What is prohibited

- ☆ **Torture and inhuman or degrading treatment and punishment** (Article 3).
- ☆ **Slavery, servitude and forced labour** (Article 4).
- ☆ **Discrimination in the enjoyment of rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Convention** (Article 14).
- ☆ **Expulsion of a state's own nationals or denying them entry, and the collective expulsion of aliens** (Articles 3 and 4 of Protocol No. 4)
Procedural safeguards also protect foreigners under threat of expulsion from a country (Article 1 of Protocol No. 7).



The protection mechanism

The Convention is a legal instrument provided with a judicial body to oversee its enforcement: the European Court of Human Rights.

The Court may not act on its own initiative, but only at the request of an individual (or group of individuals or NGO) – an individual application – or at the request of a state – an interstate application.

The Court operates quite separately from the judicial systems of the States Parties to the Convention. It is not a final court of appeal, but a tribunal that interprets the contested domestic law or practice exclusively from the point of view of its compatibility with the Convention. It determines whether or not, in the case concerned, there has been a violation of the Convention. States are under an obligation to abide by its judgments. The mechanism is constantly evolving, and the Convention draws a large part of its vitality from its interpretation by the Court.

The reform of the system

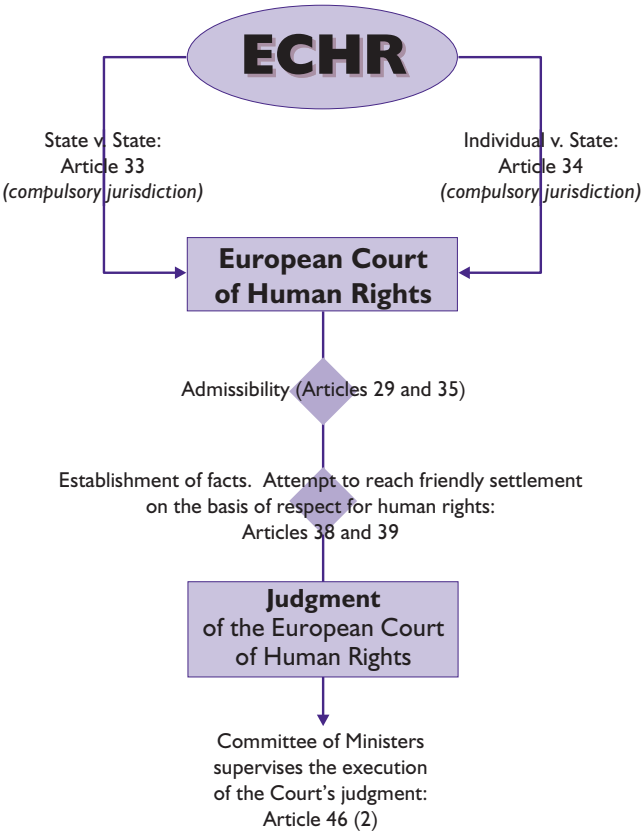
Since the entry into force of the Convention the number of contracting parties has almost tripled. To manage the increasing workload it had become essential to reduce both the number of pending cases and the length of proceedings. The necessary rationalisation was carried out with the objective of maintaining the high level of protection of the individual while at the same time ensuring accessibility. The reforms were introduced by an additional protocol to the Convention, Protocol No. 11, which entered into force on 1 November 1998.

The Convention, as amended by Protocol No. 11, establishes a new permanent Court, created by merging the two original supervisory bodies, the former Commission and Court. The right of individual application has now been made automatic, and all contracting states must accept the jurisdiction of the Court. The Committee of Ministers retains its role of monitoring the execution of the judgments of the Court; but it is no longer responsible, as it was formerly, for deciding in certain cases whether or not there had been a violation. States against which a violation has been found are obliged to take the necessary measures to remedy the violation. If the state's domestic law does not provide a total remedy for the consequences of the violation, the Court may order it to pay financial compensation to the injured party. In addition, to avoid repetition of the violation and its consequences, states may be required to modify their legislation and practices for the future. By such means the judgments have an effect that

extends beyond the actual cases before the Court. The case-law of the Court, through its continuity and consistency, has a preventive effect, dissuading national authorities, faced with possible international sanctions, from acting contrary to the provisions of the Convention.

European Convention on Human Rights

Control mechanism



Concept and design: P. Drzemczewski

Graphic: Publications unit, Directorate General of Human Rights

Examples of states taking action as a result of a judgment under the European Convention on Human Rights

- ☆ *Austria* modified important sections of its code of criminal procedure, and its instructions concerning treatment of prisoners in hospitals, together with the whole system of legal aid fees
- ☆ *Belgium* amended its vagrancy legislation and adopted measures for subsidising French-speaking schools in the Flemish region. Belgium also changed its civil code in order to give equal rights to legitimate and illegitimate children
- ☆ *Denmark* amended the law on custody of illegitimate children
- ☆ *France* passed a law on telephone tapping
- ☆ *Greece* amended the law on pre-trial detention
- ☆ *Italy*, in its code of criminal procedure adopted in 1988, included provisions making the presence of defence lawyers obligatory in judicial proceedings – including appeals in the Court of Cassation
- ☆ *The Netherlands* amended the military criminal code and the law on detention of mental patients
- ☆ *Sweden* amended the law on compulsory religious instruction
- ☆ *Switzerland* completely reviewed its judicial organisation and criminal procedure as applied to the federal army, and amended the civil code regarding deprivation of liberty in reformatory centres
- ☆ *The United Kingdom* outlawed corporal punishment in state schools

Broader protection

The European Social Charter

In accordance with its belief that civil and political rights and economic and social rights are interdependent and form an indivisible set of principles upon which the European democracies must be founded, the Council of Europe adopted the European Social Charter (1961).

The rights guaranteed

The Charter and the additional protocol of 1988 guarantee a series of fundamental rights, a minimum number of which must be accepted by the states:

☆ conditions of employment

- non-discrimination in employment
- prohibition of forced labour
- right to organise, right to bargain collectively
- right to just conditions of employment and to fair remuneration, including the right of women and men to equal pay for work of equal value
- integration of persons with disabilities into the working world
- right to vocational guidance and vocational training
- prohibition on children working before the age of 15, and special protection for young people aged from 15 to 18
- maternity protection
- equal treatment for migrant workers

☆ social cohesion

- right to health, to social security, to medical and social assistance, and the right to benefit from social welfare services
- right of children and young persons to protection against physical and moral dangers

- right of families and of individual members of families to legal, social and economic protection
- right of migrant workers and their families to protection and assistance
- right of elderly persons to protection.

1996 saw the adoption of the Revised European Social Charter, which adapts the content of the original Charter to take account of the fundamental social changes that have taken place since its adoption. The Revised Charter is intended progressively to replace the 1961 Charter, introducing rights in new areas, such as:

- enhancing equality between women and men
- right of persons with disabilities to social integration and personal autonomy
- strengthening the right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection
- right to protection in case of job-loss
- the employee's right to dignity
- right of workers with family responsibilities to equal opportunities and conditions
- right to protection against poverty and social exclusion
- right to decent housing
- extension of the prohibition of discrimination.

Monitoring the implementation of the Charter

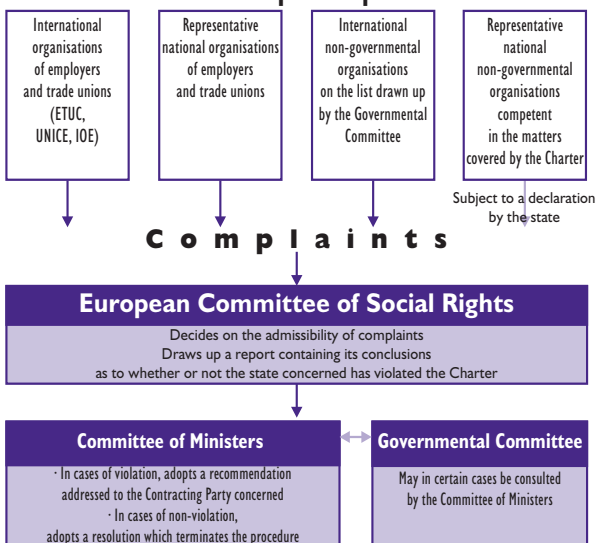
Amended by a protocol in 1991, the monitoring mechanism is based on reports submitted by governments to the European Committee for Social Rights concerning the application of the Charter's provisions.

An additional protocol, which entered into force in July 1998, adds a system of collective complaints to the procedure of national reports on compliance. It allows certain unions, employers' organisations and non-governmental organisations to bring allegations of violations of the Charter before the European Committee for Social Rights.

European Social Charter – Supervisory mechanism



European Social Charter Collective complaints procedure



The European Convention for the Prevention of Torture

The Council of Europe's efforts to secure the implementation of human rights have, in recent years, been increasingly directed towards the prevention of violations.

The European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, drafted in 1987, aimed to put into practice the prohibition of the acts specified in Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

The mechanism set up is based upon a **system of visits** carried out by a committee of independent experts drawn from different sectors – the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT). The CPT visits places where persons are detained by a public authority: prisons, juvenile detention centres, police stations, military barracks, psychiatric hospitals, etc.



The purpose of these visits is to assess the way in which the detainees are treated and, where applicable, to propose improvements. There are two types of visit: periodic, whereby all states are visited in rotation; or *ad hoc*, in cases where the urgency of the situation in a

particular state so requires. At the beginning of 1999 the CPT had carried out 59 periodic visits and 25 *ad hoc* visits, the latter being constantly on the increase.

The Committee must notify the state concerned of its intention to carry out a visit, but is not required to specify exactly when. The government's right to raise objections concerning the time or place of a visit is strictly limited, and such objections must be raised as quickly as possible.

The CPT delegation may go as it pleases to any place of detention and move about freely within it. It may talk to the inmates without witnesses and have free contact with anyone able to provide it with information.

In going about its work, the CPT respects the principles of co-operation and confidentiality. The report which it prepares at the conclusion of each visit constitutes the starting point for a dialogue with the state concerned, with the aim of finding the approach and methods most likely to result in acceptable standards for the treatment of persons deprived of their freedom. The state concerned can ask for the Committee's report to be published, together with its comments. Some 50 reports have been published in this way.

If the state does not collaborate, or refuses to act on the Committee's recommendations, the CPT may exceptionally decide to make a public declaration.

The CPT publishes an annual report of its activities, which may include recommendations intended as guidelines for the member states of the Council of Europe: standards covering involuntary placement in psychiatric establishments, the treatment of foreigners detained under legislation governing the entry and stay of aliens, overcrowding in prisons, prison health services, or detention in police custody.

The European Convention for the Prevention of Torture will soon be open for signature by states which are not members of the Council of Europe. The growing number of states bound by the convention will pose, in the years to come, a significant challenge to the CPT, whose field of activity will then encompass all of central and eastern Europe.

The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

The Framework Convention, which entered into force in 1998, is the first treaty designed to protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities – sadly, a problem of great relevance today. Since the fall of the communist regimes, ethnic tensions have resurfaced within the continent of Europe, often accompanied by violence and sometimes even taking the form of armed conflicts, in particular in the former Yugoslavia.

The protection of national minorities is essential for the stability, democratic security and peace of the continent. Based on this principle, the Framework Convention sets out to guarantee members of minorities full and effective equality – together with the conditions that will allow them to express, preserve and develop their identity in the context of respect for the rule of law, territorial integrity and national sovereignty.

Practical approach

The Framework Convention defines legal standards in the form of principles and provisions constituting a programme to be put into effect. Objectives are defined which the contracting parties agree to pursue through legislation and appropriate government policies. The provisions are not in general directly applicable to all states; and so the states are allowed a degree of discretion enabling them to adapt their legislation to the particular situation of minorities living within their country.

In view of the insurmountable legal and political obstacles in so sensitive an area, the Framework Convention does not attempt a definition of the concept of national minority. It nevertheless suggests criteria, being aimed only at those minorities which can be identified by religion, language, traditions and cultural heritage.

Some of the principles contained in the Framework Convention

- ☆ non-discrimination
- ☆ promotion of effective equality between national minorities and the majority population
- ☆ promotion of conditions favouring the preservation and development of the culture of national minorities, together with their religion, language and traditions
- ☆ freedom of assembly, association, expression, thought, conscience and religion
- ☆ access to the media and the right both to receive and to broadcast programmes
- ☆ freedom in education
- ☆ transfrontier contacts and co-operation
- ☆ participation in economic, cultural and social life

The Framework Convention first deals with equality, and in particular equality before the law. The parties also commit themselves to measures involving positive discrimination where applicable. Additional rights may be recognised in order to achieve actual, effective equality between minorities and majorities. Such rights are formulated in terms of a double obligation, under which the states are responsible both for protecting the existence of minorities, including physically, and for promoting their identity.

But the Framework Convention also imposes obligations on national minorities, with the aim of maintaining social cohesion, such as prohibiting secession without the consent of the state.

The state is also permitted to take measures in favour of a general integration policy.

Monitoring compliance with commitments

The monitoring of states' compliance with their commitments under the Framework Convention is the responsibility of the Committee of Ministers.

The States Parties are required to submit compliance reports on the measures they have adopted to implement their commitments as defined by the Framework Convention. The Committee of Ministers, in consultation with the Advisory Committee of independent experts, evaluates the relevance of measures covered by these reports and adopts its conclusions and any appropriate recommendations.

Human rights activities not governed by conventions

Two complementary principles: non-discrimination and equality

Discriminatory practices establish a climate of intolerance, creating a danger of inequality of treatment and sometimes even to an increase in acts of violence.

This is why the priority given by the Council of Europe to combating discrimination and fostering equality in all its sectors of activity focuses primarily on prevention.

Fighting racism and intolerance

The Council of Europe's strategy for combating racism and intolerance comprises three aspects:

☆ *creating awareness and informing the general public*

The European Youth Campaign against Racism, Xenophobia, Anti-Semitism and Intolerance (1995) asked young people and youth associations to spread a message of tolerance based on the slogan
All different, all equal

☆ *increasing intergovernmental co-operation, especially in the area of the media, the teaching of "history without hatred", and in relation to migrants*

☆ *consolidating legal and political safeguards through the action of the **European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI)**.*

ECRI was set up in 1994. Its members, although appointed by national governments, are independent. Its multidisciplinary composition (legal experts, politicians, academics, researchers, etc.) reflects a desire for a global

approach to problems by applying measures covering all sectors of society.

ECRI works to strengthen legal and political protection against all forms of racism and intolerance. Its work includes assessing the efficiency of existing national and international measures, developing proposals for their reinforcement – in particular the adoption of a draft protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights aiming to abolish discrimination in general – and encouraging the fight against racism and intolerance at local, national and European levels.

ECRI works on the principle that the problem may not be so much a lack of standards as a failure to apply those that exist.

It proposes the implementation, from 1999, of a strengthened programme of activities in three parts:

☆ **“country-by-country” approach**

This approach consists of carrying out an in-depth analysis of the situation in each of the member countries in order to develop specific, concrete proposals, matched by follow-up.

☆ **work on general themes**

- collection and circulation of examples of “good practice” on specific subjects, to illustrate ECRI’s recommendations
- adoption of general policy recommendations

☆ **activities in liaison with the community**

- awareness-raising and information sessions in the member states
- co-ordination with national and local NGOs
- communicating the anti-racist message and producing educational material.

Equality between women and men

The Council of Europe's action in support of equality between women and men is an integral part of its mission to promote pluralist democracy based on the rule of law and human rights.



The **Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men** (CDEG) has the principal responsibility for defining and implementing the Council of Europe's action in this field. It prepares ministerial conferences, organises seminars and publishes studies on questions concerning equality. The CDEG looks for appropriate ways of eliminating current obstacles and draws attention to the challenges involved in bringing about full and effective equality.

As well as its action supporting equal participation of women and men at all levels of life in society, the CDEG is also involved in more specific activities:

- ☆ protecting women and young girls against violence
- ☆ campaigning against the traffic in human beings for purposes of sexual exploitation
- ☆ integrating the question of equality in all policies and programmes
- ☆ positive action in favour of equality.

Media and democracy

A large part of the Council of Europe's work in the media field centres around the twin concepts of "media and democracy". The activities pursued by the **Steering Committee on the Mass Media** (CDMM) are aimed at promoting free, independent and pluralist media which safeguard the proper functioning of a democratic society.

The 1982 **Declaration on Freedom of Expression and Information** sets forth a number of fundamental principles which the member states agree to uphold in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights, establishing freedom of expression. By this is meant the freedom both to receive and to impart information and ideas.

Closely linked to freedom of expression, the **right to privacy**, guaranteed by Article 8 of the Convention, protects the individual against all types of interference, including intrusion by the media.

In concrete terms, national legislation must allow the balanced exercise of these two fundamental rights of equal value.



Since its entry into force in 1993 the **European Convention on Transfrontier Television** has supplied a legal framework intended to ensure the free reception and retransmission of television across national borders, subject to compliance with a set of common principles

covering programming, the right of reply, advertising and sponsorship.

In addition, a series of initiatives in the media field is concerned with finding answers to questions posed by the exercise of the right to freedom of information and expression. Often such work results in recommendations or resolutions to governments of member states suggesting certain particular measures to regulate the media. Other work seeks to make the media aware of their role and influence in society, and to encourage them to accept more responsibility.

European Ministerial Conferences on Mass Media Policy are held at regular intervals. Their purpose is to allow the adoption at a political level of pan-European strategies in media and democracy.

Establishing a media system which satisfies all the requirements of a democratic society – especially in the new member states and in those that are candidates for membership – constitutes a priority among the initiatives undertaken by the Council of Europe to foster democratic security. **Co-operation programmes** allow the Organisation to give support to member countries in the democratic reform of their media structures. Parallel information campaigns aim at creating awareness in such matters as the exercise of journalistic freedom, media action and racism, election coverage, the relationship between the media and the legal authorities, or the treatment of minorities.

Human rights awareness

Legal standards, and the instruments and mechanisms which have been created over the years for the protection of human rights, have little effect if European citizens are informed neither of their existence nor of their significance. Conscious of this, the Council of Europe has made it a priority to direct its efforts towards **information, education and training about human rights.**

Who benefits?

Numerous initiatives exist to promote awareness of human rights throughout Europe. They are directed not only at the general public but also at specialists – lawyers and police authorities, for instance – as well as particularly vulnerable groups such as refugees or Roma/Gypsies.

Content

Awareness-raising activities include producing documentation and information, together with visual material and teaching aids, organising consultations, workshops, training sessions and exchanges of views, and running campaigns and other initiatives to highlight particular aspects of human rights.

How it works

The different programmes are implemented in co-operation with non-governmental organisations and leading professional groups, which are able to respond to concrete requests with the greatest efficiency. The Council of Europe Information and Documentation Centres which have been opened in various central and eastern European countries play a fundamental role.

Police and human rights

Those responsible for maintaining law and order have themselves always constituted an important target group in the eyes of the Council of Europe. A wide-ranging programme entitled “**Police and human rights 1997-2000**” has been set up to ensure that the police are fully able to fulfil their essential role of protecting human rights in a democratic society.

The programme serves as a catalyst, adopting a structured, co-ordinated approach to promoting awareness of human rights within police forces. It provides a framework for the consistent and ordered execution of national, bilateral and multilateral projects.

Among the programme’s activities:

- ☆ creating networks of police officers involved in human rights projects
- ☆ developing human rights education support programmes
- ☆ producing training and awareness-raising materials
- ☆ developing internal quality control instruments.

Developing and consolidating democratic stability

In the field of human rights, the future presents many challenges for the Council of Europe. To enable it to respond it has built up veritable “areas of excellence” during its unique experience of 50 years working for democratic principles and upholding the rule of law.

As we enter the new millennium, the construction of the “common European home” is not finished: both candidates for membership and states that have recently become members will continue to receive assistance in their progress towards democracy. The **Activities for the Development and Consolidation of Democratic Stability (ADACS) programmes** arose from a need to assist and co-operate with emerging democracies in central and eastern Europe. The programmes are pan-European and include western, as well as central and eastern European, countries. In the field of human rights the programmes are aimed at familiarising key groups of officials and professionals with the main human rights instruments of the Council of Europe, and at complementing national efforts towards fulfilling the obligations and commitments entered into by member states upon accession. Co-operation is also pursued with candidate countries. For states planning to ratify the European Convention on Human Rights, as well as those which have recently done so, one of the most important activities is an examination of the compatibility of domestic legislation with the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights, its protocols and case-law. The aim is to prevent a large number of applications being lodged with the European Court of Human Rights as a result of substantial differences between domestic legislation and the European Convention on Human Rights.

BORN FIFTY YEARS AGO, of the will of European states to see an end to the fratricidal wars that had ravaged the continent, the Council of Europe has fulfilled a vital need. But its mission is equally relevant today. In collaboration with both the European Union and the OSCE, it must ensure democratic and economic stability – the basis for the effective protection of human rights – throughout Europe. It must guide the new states on the road to democracy and monitor the observance of the commitments that the member states subscribed to when joining the Organisation.

The Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Strasbourg in 1997 defined priority objectives for 21st century Europe, assigning the Council of Europe the task of

“building a freer, more tolerant and more just European society, founded upon common values such as freedom of expression and information, cultural diversity and the equal dignity of all human beings”.

For further information

Human Rights Information Centre
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 20 24

Fax +33 (0)3 88 41 27 04

e-mail humanrights.info@coe.int
<http://www.humanrights@coe.int>

Directorate General of Human Rights
Council of Europe
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

February 2000

