

Council of Europe and EU discuss cooperation in the Southern Mediterranean

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Senior officials from the 47-nation Council of Europe and the 27-member European Union met in Strasbourg today to discuss current issues of importance to both organisations, including cooperation in the Southern Mediterranean.

Participants stressed that democratic reforms in the Southern Mediterranean are in Europe's interests, as well as those of the region itself. They pledged to continue working together to help support the reform process, notably in the areas of constitutional and judicial reform, as well as holding free and fair elections and promoting human rights.

The high-level representatives also welcomed initiatives which are planned by the Andorran chairmanship of the Council of Europe over the next six months to promote education on human rights, especially among young people, as an important way of supporting democracy and social cohesion.

The Council of Europe was represented at the meeting by Secretary General Jagland and Andorran Foreign Minister Gilbert Saboya, the Chair of the organisation's Committee of Ministers. Cypriot Foreign Minister Marcoullis took part on behalf of the EU's High Representative for Foreign and Security Policy, Catherine Ashton.

Speaking after the meeting Secretary General Jagland, Minister Kozakou-Marcoullis and Minister Saboya concluded: "Cooperation between the EU and the Council of Europe is strong at all levels, including recent developments taking place in neighbouring countries of the South Mediterranean."

The meeting was the latest in the regular series of high-level exchanges between the Council of Europe and the EU on issues of common interest.

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