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## **Council of Europe contribution to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**

### **Introduction**

With its global and overarching political approach, UN Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development has been highly relevant for the Council of Europe, which has, from the outset, been contributing to the process which led to the adoption of Agenda 2030.

As Council of Europe Secretary General Thorbjorn Jagland pointed out in his letter to then-Secretary-General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon in May 2015, "*The Council of Europe is an organisation founded on the universal values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Our contribution must therefore focus on these values. They are not only values in their own right, but important factors of sustainability for any societal model*".

By definition, our philosophy is that most, if not all, of the Council of Europe's activities are relevant and contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030. In this context, as of the next biennium (2018-2019), the Council of Europe's programme of activities and budget will indicate links, where relevant, to specific Sustainable Development Goals.

The unique added-value of the Council of Europe is a combination of:

- its pan-European membership: 47 member States;
- its standards: a comprehensive measurable normative framework which can be used as indicators/benchmarks;
- its multi-stakeholder dimension: in addition to its intergovernmental bodies, the Council of Europe's unique structure includes the Parliamentary Assembly<sup>1</sup>, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Conference of International NGOs, as well as the European Court of Human Rights, the case law of which covers almost all SDGs. The annual World Forum for Democracy is also an important platform reaching out to civil society to consolidate democratic institutions. These various bodies and instruments are precious to support States in their efforts to translate the global agenda into action at both national and local levels;

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<sup>1</sup> In 2014 and 2016, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted two resolutions to express political support for the SDGs.

- its monitoring/follow-up bodies and processes: essential to gather data, assess progress and provide further guidance;
- its technical support provided to individual countries for capacity-building and removing obstacles to implementation; and
- its global outreach: most of the organisation's legally-binding conventions and activities are open to participation by non-member States, in particular, those benefitting from observer status and from the neighbouring regions

Below is a compilation of Council of Europe's instruments and activities which contribute to the implementation of Agenda 2030, structured by the relevant goals.

Further information on specific Council of Europe instruments and activities can be requested from the Secretariat.

List of Council of Europe-relevant goals referred to in this document

Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all

Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls

Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all

Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation

Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries

Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable

Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns

Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss

Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels

### **Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere**

The European Social Charter, a human rights protection instrument, guarantees the right to be protected against poverty and social exclusion through its Article 30, as it is considered that living in a situation of poverty and social exclusion violates the dignity of human beings. Article 30 of the Charter is the first binding human rights provision in Europe for the protection against poverty and social exclusion. The primary obligation for States Parties under Article 30 is the adoption of a comprehensive and co-ordinated approach which explicitly aims at combating poverty and social exclusion by adopting measures aimed at preventing and removing obstacles to access to fundamental social

rights, in particular employment, housing, training, education, culture and social and medical assistance.

The European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) monitors the implementation of the Charter, not only in law, but also in practice.

In light of this approach, assessments of situations under Article 30, as for other substantial provisions of the Charter, are based on this human rights approach, which has been reaffirmed by the Guiding Principles on extreme poverty and human rights (submitted by the Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights, Magdalena Sepúlveda Carmona, and adopted by the United Nations Human Rights Council on 27 September 2012) and which has consistently been applied by the ECSR. In particular, the ECSR has interpreted the scope of Article 30 as relating both to protection against poverty (understood as involving situations of social precarity) and protection against social exclusion (understood as involving obstacles to inclusion and citizen participation) in an autonomous manner or in combination with other connecting provisions of the Charter.

Furthermore, the ECSR emphasises the very close link between the effectiveness of the right recognised by Article 30 of the Charter and the enjoyment of the rights recognised by other provisions, such as the right to work (Article 1), access to health care (Article 11), social security allowances (Article 12), social and medical assistance (Article 13), the benefit from social welfare services (Article 14), the rights of persons with disabilities (Article 15), the social, legal and economic protection of the family (Article 16) as well as of children and young persons (Article 17), the right to equal opportunities and equal treatment in employment and occupation without sex discrimination (Article 20), the rights of the elderly (Article 23) or the right to housing (Article 31), without forgetting the important impact of the non-discrimination clause (Article E) which obviously includes non-discrimination on grounds of poverty.

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2015\)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the access of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods to social rights](#) recommends measures to member States to prevent and eradicate the poverty, discrimination, violence and exclusion faced by young people. A human-rights based approach is the basis for the social and youth work interventions being implemented in co-operation with local authorities and youth organisations.

With regard to ending poverty, the Parliamentary Assembly most recently adopted [Resolution 2197 \(2018\) on The case for a basic citizenship income](#). The Assembly promoted further ratifications and effective implementation of the European Social Charter through [Resolution 2180 \(2017\)](#) and [Recommendation 2112 \(2017\)](#) on The "Turin process": reinforcing social rights in Europe. It also referred to this most comprehensive social rights standard in a recent text relating to poverty explicitly, namely [Resolution 1995 \(2014\) on Ending child poverty in Europe](#).

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted the following texts of relevance:

[Resolution 391 \(2015\)](#) on ‘Fighting the increasing poverty of women: the responsibility of local and regional authorities’;

[REC381\(2015\)](#): Fighting the increasing poverty of women: the responsibility of local and regional authorities;

[Resolution 229 \(2007\)](#) on *“The evolution of extreme poverty in European towns”*;

[REC\(2007\)210](#): The evolution of extreme poverty in European towns.

### **Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

The European Social Charter, a human rights protection instrument, guarantees the right to protection of health in Article 11 which complements Articles 2 and 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights - as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights - by imposing a range of positive obligations designed to secure its effective exercise. The rights relating to health embodied in the two treaties are inextricably linked, since “human dignity is the fundamental value and indeed the core of positive European human rights law – whether under the European Social Charter or under the European Convention of Human Rights - and health care is a prerequisite for the preservation of human dignity”.

States Parties to the Charter must ensure the best possible state of health for the population according to existing knowledge. Health systems must respond appropriately to avoidable health risks, i.e. ones that can be controlled by human action. The main indicators are life expectancy and the principal causes of death. These indicators must show an improvement and not be too far behind the European average.

In addition, the right of every worker to a safe and healthy working environment is a widely recognised principle, stemming directly from the right to personal integrity, one of the fundamental principles of human rights. Article 3 applies to the whole economy, covering both the public and private sectors.

The European Committee of Social Rights (ESCR) monitors the implementation of the Charter, not only in law, but also in practice.

Article 3 of the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention), which aims at ensuring equitable access to healthcare, is particularly relevant in a context of economic crisis, socioeconomic gaps in society and scarce resources. Appropriate measures implemented pursuant to this provision will contribute to the goal of providing equitable access to quality health care.

The special vulnerability of children and the elderly in the biomedical field will require attention in the future, in the light of developing practices taking place, and were addressed at a conference on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Oviedo Convention, which took place on 24-25 October 2017. A Strategic Action Plan will be developed on the basis of the outcome of the conference, to ensure that human rights of particularly vulnerable groups are better protected. Two studies on the challenges posed to the rights of the child by scientific and technological developments in biomedicine have been commissioned in preparation to the conference, and are also part of the activities carried out under the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2016-2021).

The [European Landscape Convention \(ETS No. 176\)](#) is the first international treaty to be exclusively concerned with all aspects of landscape. Its Parties declare themselves "concerned to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment". They acknowledge that "the landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and that it is a basic component of the natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being" and that "the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas". The Work Programme of the Convention implements the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)7](#) the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the contribution of the European Landscape Convention to the exercise of human rights and democracy with a view to sustainable development. The entrance into force of the [Protocol amending the European Landscape Convention](#) in August 2018 will allow non-European States to become Parties to the Council of Europe Landscape Convention.

[Recommendation CM//Rec\(2016\)7 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people's access to rights](#) recommends that youth policies facilitate young people's access to rights with a special emphasis on, inter alia, social and health-care services that cater for the specific needs of young people. Even though health is not primarily a youth policy issue, advice on youth policy development and other support measures will be given to member States.

The [Parliamentary Assembly](#) addresses questions of public health as a human rights issue, in particular through its [Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development](#). In this context, the latest texts adopted were [Resolution 2168 \(2017\)](#) and [Recommendation 2104 \(2017\) on Human rights of older persons and their comprehensive care](#) and [Recommendation 2115 \(2017\) on The use of new genetic technologies in human beings](#). Further reports are currently (Jan. 2018) being prepared on "Universal access to maternal healthcare", "The provision of palliative care in Europe", "Inquiry into growing antimicrobial resistance in Europe", "Addressing the health need of adolescents in Europe", "Organ transplant tourism", "Protecting the rights of people with psychosocial disabilities with regard to involuntary measures in psychiatry" and "Combating trafficking in human tissues and cells".

In 2017, as well as publishing a guide to visiting places where children are detained for migration purposes, its [Committee on Migration, Refugees and Stateless Persons](#) elected a General Rapporteur on Conditions of Reception of Migrants and Refugees, responsible for examining and denouncing degrading conditions and promoting the humanitarian reception and well-being of migrants in Europe. The Committee's action aims to encourage member states to recognise the value of migration and to ensure their equal treatment in all areas.

The [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) adopted the following texts of relevance:

[RES\(2007\)242](#): Balanced distribution of healthcare in rural regions;

[REC\(2007\)223](#): Balanced distribution of healthcare in rural regions;  
[REC\(2007\)212](#): E-health and democracy in the regions.

#### **Goal 4: Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

The Council of Europe's work in this area contributes to the implementation of the World Programme for Human Rights Education, the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights Education and Training and the UN Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative (GEFI). The Council of Europe provides the secretariat for the International Contact Group on citizenship and human rights education, which brings together regional and international institutions active in this field, including UNESCO and the UN OHCHR.

The quality of education systems cannot be assessed without reference to social inclusion: no education system can be of high quality unless it offers adequate opportunities for all learners to develop their abilities and aspirations. Education is essential to provide its students and graduates with the competences that help them ensure sustainable societies. However, it can only fulfil this role if public authorities, schools and universities take a holistic view of education, such as the one outlined in [Recommendation CM\(2007\)6 on the public responsibility for higher education and research](#), which outlines four major purposes of education:

- preparation for sustainable employment;
- preparation for life as active citizens in democratic societies;
- personal development;
- the development and maintenance, through teaching, learning and research, of a broad, advanced knowledge base.

All 47 member States of the Council of Europe have adopted the [Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#) (Recommendation CM (2010)7) which requires them: "to combat all forms of discrimination and violence, especially bullying and harassment" and promotes the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law through education. This is essential for building peaceful and inclusive societies (thereby also contributing to the implementation of Goal 16). Projects designed to enhance digital literacy, combat bullying and hate speech contribute to create the necessary safe and inclusive learning environment. The Council of Europe is currently engaged in a project to develop competences for democracy and intercultural dialogue, which will be key to ensure sustainable societies. The implementation of the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education will be pursued with member States and in cooperation with NGOs, notably youth organisations, human rights education being a priority and regular feature of the Council of Europe's youth policy.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See Resolution [CM/Res\(2008\)23 on the youth policy of the Council of Europe](#).

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2017\)4 on youth work](#) encourages member States to develop their youth work policy and practice. It underlines that youth work makes an important contribution to active citizenship by providing opportunities to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values for civic engagement and social action. Youth work is delivered by paid and volunteer youth workers, is based on non-formal and informal learning processes and focuses on young people and voluntary participation; it encourages life-long learning, social engagement and provides non-violent, inclusive and effective learning environments for young people.

The situation of the Roma minority in education is tackled through a multi-layer project on inclusive education that aims at transforming schools into engines for social inclusion. Information about the SDGs is being included in educational resources made available for non-formal education practitioners.

The work of the [North-South Centre \(NSC\)](#) of the Council of Europe particularly contributes to Target 4.7. as outlined in [CM/Rec\(2011\)4 on education for global interdependence and solidarity](#). The activities of the NSC ensure that educators and learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. The joint Council of Europe/EU iLEGEND project (Intercultural Learning Exchange through Global Education, Networking and Dialogue) seeks to strengthen global development education in new EU member States and accession countries to foster inclusive and equitable quality education to promote peaceful and inclusive societies.

The [European Social Charter](#), a human rights protection instrument, guarantees the right of children and young persons to social, legal and economic protection in Article 27. This entails the right of children and young persons to a free primary and secondary education as well as to encourage regular attendance at schools.

In addition, under Article 7§3 of the Charter, the Parties undertake to provide that persons who are still subject to compulsory education shall not be employed in such work as would deprive them of the full benefit of their education.

Moreover, the Charter guarantees the right to vocational training in Article 10 according to which States Parties must:

- ensure general and vocational secondary education, university and non-university higher education; and other forms of vocational training;
- build bridges between secondary vocational education and university and non-university higher education;
- introduce mechanisms for the recognition/validation of knowledge and experience acquired in the context of training/working activity in order to achieve a qualification or to gain access to general, technical and university higher education;

- take measures to make general secondary education and general higher education qualifications relevant from the perspective of professional integration in the job market;
- introduce mechanisms for the recognition of qualifications awarded by continuing vocational education and training.

The main indicators of compliance include the existence of the education and training system, its total capacity (in particular, the ratio between training places and candidates), the total spending on education and training as a percentage of the GDP; the completion rate of young people enrolled in vocational training courses and of students enrolled in higher education; the employment rate of people who hold a higher-education qualification and the waiting-time for these people to get a first qualified job.

The European Committee of Social Rights (ESCR) monitors the implementation of the Charter, not only in law, but also in practice.

The Council of Europe's Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP) supports its member States in implementing the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and other European standards at the national level. It consists of three key elements:

- The HELP Network of Judiciary Schools and Bar associations of the 47 countries of the Council of Europe (in addition to partners like the European Judicial Training Network and the Council of Bar Associations and Law Societies of Europe).
- Human Rights courses for legal professionals (hosted on the HELP online platform). They cover a range of topical issues such as asylum, anti-discrimination, data protection, labour rights, ill-treatment, human trafficking, bioethics, counterfeiting of medical products or international cooperation in criminal matters. In 2018, the platform reached more than 20.000 users.
- Methodology to develop courses and support the Judiciary Schools and Bar associations.

In line with Recommendation (2004)4 of the CoE Committee of Ministers on the ECHR in university education and professional training, the HELP Programme has the potential of reaching out Universities, particularly law faculties) aiming at integrating human rights courses in their curricula.

The Parliamentary Assembly has regularly stressed the importance of providing young people with all tools and skills required for building a pluralistic society based on solidarity, democratic values and human rights, and for living together as active and responsible citizens. In this respect, it welcomes the Council of Europe's initiative to draw up a framework of competences for a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue. In particular, [\*\*Resolution 2104 \(2016\) - Towards a framework of competences for democratic citizenship\*\*](#) calls on member States to take account of the new Council of Europe framework and, on this basis, to review education policies and reformulate the objectives of these policies, to adapt school curricula as well as the



initial and in-service training of school leaders, teachers and educators and to ensure recognition of the outcomes of learning for democratic citizenship, respect for human rights and intercultural dialogue.

The Assembly also welcomed the efforts to co-ordinate the Council of Europe's action with those of other international organisations – including the EU, the UNESCO and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – and called on these organisations to strengthen their co-operation in all areas with an impact on the implementation of the framework of competences.

Within the Assembly and its [Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media](#), reports are currently being prepared on "Education and culture: new partnerships to support personal development and cohesion", "Reshaping the role of education for digital citizens" and "Education geared towards pupils' need".

The Assembly's [Committee on Migration, Refugees and Stateless Persons](#) is preparing reports on student mobility and on "Integration, empowerment and protection of migrant children through compulsory education" which will examine the gap between international undertakings and migrant children's access to education.

The [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) adopted the following texts of relevance:

[Resolution 414 \(2017\)](#) - Forever young? The role of youth policies and youth work at local and regional levels in supporting young people's transition to autonomy and working life;

[Resolution 375 \(2014\)](#) on "*Promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies*";

[REC365\(2014\)](#): Promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies;

[Resolution 332 \(2011\)](#) on "Education for democratic citizenship – tools for cities";

[Resolution 204 \(2005\)](#) on "Youth education for sustainable development: the role of the regions".

### **Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

<https://rm.coe.int/sdgs-achieving-gender-equality-and-empowering-all-women-and-girls/168077cada>

The Council of Europe has three ground-breaking, unique and comprehensive Conventions in the area of human dignity that are all of relevance to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and through them can support and contribute to the implementation, notably of Goal 5 (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and Goal 16 (Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable

development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels):

- The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS 197);
- The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse – “the Lanzarote Convention” (CETS 201);
- The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence – “the Istanbul Convention” (CETS 210).

These conventions have a global outreach. Their provisions can inspire normative and policy changes in all regions of the world and all States can become Party to them. These treaties offer a comprehensive normative framework, a platform for international cooperation and monitoring mechanisms to gather data, assess progress and promote solutions that work. They can thus provide guidance and good practice examples when designing national policies and legislation globally and be used as indicators in the framework of national and international efforts to assess progress in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

The Istanbul Convention frames violence against women as both a cause and a consequence of the inequality between women and men that persists in society. It sets out a comprehensive set of legal obligations to prevent such violence, protect and support women victims and to ensure justice through more effective prosecution. The holistic approach it requires to this end also includes the need to place women victims at the centre of all measures taken and to ensure their empowerment. The reports and recommendations emanating from its monitoring mechanism ([GREVIO – Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence](#) and the [Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention](#)) set out guidance to state parties to the Convention as to how to step up measures to improve the prevention and combating of all forms of violence against women. For non-state parties in Europe and beyond it sets out important benchmarks to better prevent and protect women from such violence. Its purposes perfectly align with targets 2 and 3 of SDG 5: the elimination of all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres and the elimination of all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation.

The Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings is a ground-breaking and comprehensive instrument which is of relevance notably to achieving target 5.2 of Goal 5, target 8.7 of Goal 8 and target 16.2 of Goal 16. While building on existing international instruments, the Convention goes beyond the minimum standards agreed upon in them and strengthens the protection afforded to victims. The Convention has a comprehensive scope of application, encompassing all forms of trafficking and taking in all persons who are victims of trafficking (women, men or children). The Convention makes particular reference to children’s vulnerability in trafficking and requires States to take special account of their need for special protection and assistance. The Convention is not restricted to Council of Europe member States; non-members States and the European Union also have the possibility of becoming Party to the Convention. The implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Convention by the State Parties is monitored by

the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the Committee of the Parties.

The Council of Europe offers member States and other stakeholders guidance and support for achieving targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 to end human trafficking through the provision of recommendations resulting from the monitoring of the Convention by GRETA and expertise on human trafficking issues and activities, such as round-table meetings in the monitored countries. The round-table meetings are a tool for stimulating dialogue between relevant stakeholders in each country, and identifying areas where the Council of Europe can support national anti-trafficking efforts.

The Council of Europe supports the implementation of the SDGs that aim to end human trafficking by organising conferences and other events to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention and GRETA's recommendations. Further, in order to strengthen capacity in preventing and combating human trafficking, workshops and training seminars are organised for different professional groups.

A free online course on human trafficking has been developed by the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals of the Council of Europe. In addition, information and good practice examples are collected for the promotion of the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Convention.

The Council of Europe furthers the achievement of the trafficking-related SDGs through the financing of anti-trafficking projects and activities whose results bring along the necessary outcomes at national or regional level, in line with the SDGs 5, 8 and 16 and its associated targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2.

The Council of Europe is currently implementing the actions "Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" in Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as part of the European Union and Council of Europe programmatic framework "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey". The projects support the national authorities in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, by addressing the legislation, policy and practice in particular fields.

The Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017 directly addresses many of the targets included in Goal 5, including human dignity and the fight against gender inequality; the promotion of the full participation of women in society; the need to guarantee access to fair justice systems for all and to work in partnerships. In particular, the 14 indicators agreed upon at UN level to measure the implementation of the nine targets included in Goal 5 cover priority areas of the Council of Europe work to promote gender equality, such as laws and policies to promote gender equality; legal frameworks to promote and monitor non-discrimination on the basis of sex; women and girls subject to different forms of gender-based violence; and women members of national Parliaments and local government. At the same time, the Council of Europe is effectively mainstreaming gender equality considerations throughout its programmes and working methods. This allows the Council of Europe to promote gender equality when supporting States in their efforts to meet several sustainable development goals (in particular Goals 4, 8 and 16 – notably through specific work on access of women to justice). The new Council of Europe Strategy for Gender Equality is under preparation for the period 2018-2023. It will build on achievements and continue to address challenges regarding priority

areas covered by the current strategy. Promotion and protection of the rights of migrant and refugee women will be a new priority area. Moreover, the empowerment of Roma and Traveller women and girls is one of the priorities of the Council of Europe's Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019).

The Youth Department has adopted specific [Gender Equality Guidelines](#) to pursue gender equality in international youth activities and raise awareness of any form of gender-based discrimination, including gender-based violence. Sexist hate speech on the Internet has been specifically identified as a major issue of concern and addressed, inter alia, through the [No Hate Speech Movement Campaign](#). Gender equality is also promoted and addressed in [Euro-Arab youth co-operation](#) as it remains an issue of common concern and potential intercultural polarisation (see also Goals 10 and 16).

The [North-South Centre](#) of the Council of Europe acts as an interface between the Council of Europe and its neighbouring regions and contributes to promote Council of Europe conventions and standards in the field of gender equality and fighting violence against women in the Southern Mediterranean.

The [European Social Charter](#), a human rights protection instrument, guarantees the right of men and women to equal opportunities and equal treatment in matters of employment and occupation without discrimination (Article 20, Article 162, Article 4§3). This includes, in particular, the right to equal remuneration for work of equal. Employees who try to enforce their right to equality must be legally protected against any form of reprisals from their employers, including not only dismissal, but also downgrading, changes to working conditions.

The [European Committee of Social Rights](#) (ESCR) monitors the implementation of the Charter, not only in law, but also in practice.

The empowerment of Roma and Traveller women and girls is one of the priorities of the Council of Europe's [Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers \(2016-2019\)](#). The reports of the [Ad hoc Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues \(CAHROM\)](#) and [CM/Rec\(2017\)10 on improving access to justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe](#) include gender equality components.

The Parliamentary Assembly regularly adopts texts relating to gender equality, which are then sent to member States' governments, mainly based on reports prepared by the [Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination](#), sometimes also coming from the [Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development](#). Gender equality and women's rights are covered by the Assembly under various angles, including women's political representation, economic empowerment and gender-based violence, as well as trafficking in human beings, a severe violation of human rights that affects women and girls disproportionately.

Recent texts adopted by the Assembly include:

- [Resolution 2111 \(2016\) on Assessing the impact of measures to improve women's political representation](#);

- [Resolution 2120 on Women in the armed forces: promoting equality, putting an end to gender-based violence](#);
- [Resolution 2135 \(2016\) on Female genital mutilation in Europe](#);
- [Resolution 2159 \(2017\) on Protecting refugee women and girls from gender-based violence](#)
- [Resolution 2167 \(2017\) on The employment rights of domestic workers, especially women, in Europe](#); and
- [Resolution 2177 \(2017\) on Putting an end to sexual violence and harassment of women in public space](#).

Reports under preparation will cover child maintenance from a gender equality perspective, women's economic empowerment and the promotion of STEM education and careers. The [Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence](#) has been committed to fighting against violence against women since 2006, contributing to Europe-wide campaigns to stop violence against women and playing an important role in the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention, the implementation of which it continues to follow and promote.

The [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) actively supports efforts to achieve gender equality and empower women and girls at the local and regional level through both the adoption of texts and participation by its members in events/conferences. All activities and political efforts are underlined by the fact that the Congress has the first time in its history a female president, Gudrun Mosler Törnström.

[The President of the Congress participated in the 61st session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.](#)

The [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) adopted the following texts of relevance:

- [Resolution 405 \(2016\)](#) on *"Gender Budgeting"*;
- [Resolution 404 \(2016\)](#) on *"Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels"*;
- [Recommendation 390 \(2016\)](#): Women's political participation and representation at local and regional levels;
- [RES380\(2015\)](#): Guaranteeing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people's rights: a responsibility for Europe's towns and regions;
- [REC370\(2015\)](#): Guaranteeing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people's rights: a responsibility for Europe's towns and regions;
- [Resolution 318 \(2010\)](#) on *"Cultural Integration of Muslim Women in European Cities"*;
- [Resolution 303 \(2010\)](#) on *"Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life"* adopted in 2010 states that *"The Congress considers equality between men and women as an integral part of human rights and as a fundamental criterion for democracy."*;
- [REC\(2010\)288](#): Achieving sustainable gender equality in local and regional political life;
- [Resolution 279 \(2009\)](#) on *"Combating domestic violence against women"*;

- [REC\(2009\)260](#): Combating domestic violence against women;
- [REC\(2007\)211](#): Freedom of assembly and expression for lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgendered persons;
- [Resolution 176 \(2004\)](#) on 'Gender mainstreaming at local and regional level: a strategy to promote equality between women and men in cities and regions.

**Goal 8: Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

The European Social Charter, a human rights protection instrument, guarantees the right to just conditions of work (Article 2) and the right to a fair remuneration sufficient for a decent standard of living (Article 4), as well as the freedom to organize (Article 5) and the right to bargain collectively (Article 6).

The European Committee of Social Rights (ESCR) monitors the implementation of the Charter, not only in law, but also in practice.

The Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) actively promotes and contributes to attain sustainable development goals proposed under the 2030 Agenda through its three lines of action "sustainable and inclusive growth", "integration of refugees, displaced persons and migrants" and "climate action: developing mitigation and adaptation measures". The Bank's contribution consists in partially financing social investment projects, in particular in favour of vulnerable population groups, in the following sectors: aid to refugees, migrants, displaced persons and other vulnerable groups; social housing for low-income persons; improving living conditions in urban and rural areas; natural and ecological disasters; protection of the environment; protection and rehabilitation of historic and cultural heritage; health; education and vocational training; administrative and judicial infrastructures; supporting MSMEs for the creation and preservation of viable jobs.

With a view to increasing the impact of its operations, the CEB has established close working relations with the United Nations family, in particular the UNDP: a Memorandum of Understanding was signed in 2007 and has since been renewed. The CEB and UNDP co-operate closely in the Balkans, Georgia and Turkey. Through UNDP, the CEB finances technical assistance accompanying the implementation and monitoring of projects, thus contributing to promote inclusive social and economic development in the beneficiary countries.

The Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings is a ground-breaking and comprehensive instrument which is of relevance notably to achieving target 5.2 of Goal 5, target 8.7 of Goal 8 and target 16.2 of Goal 16. While building on existing international instruments, the Convention goes beyond the minimum standards agreed upon in them and strengthens the protection afforded to victims. The Convention has a comprehensive scope of application, encompassing all forms of trafficking and taking in all persons who are victims of trafficking (women, men or children). The Convention

makes particular reference to children's vulnerability in trafficking and requires States to take special account of their need for special protection and assistance. The Convention is not restricted to Council of Europe member States; non-members States and the European Union also have the possibility of becoming Party to the Convention. The implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Convention by the State Parties is monitored by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the Committee of the Parties.

The Council of Europe offers member States and other stakeholders guidance and support for achieving targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 to end human trafficking through the provision of recommendations resulting from the monitoring of the Convention by GRETA and expertise on human trafficking issues and activities, such as round-table meetings in the monitored countries. The round-table meetings are a tool for stimulating dialogue between relevant stakeholders in each country, and identifying areas where the Council of Europe can support national anti-trafficking efforts.

The Council of Europe supports the implementation of the SDGs that aim to end human trafficking by organising conferences and other events to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention and GRETA's recommendations. Further, in order to strengthen capacity in preventing and combating human trafficking, workshops and training seminars are organised for different professional groups.

A free online course on human trafficking has been developed by the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals of the Council of Europe. In addition, information and good practice examples are collected for the promotion of the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Convention.

The Council of Europe furthers the achievement of the trafficking-related SDGs through the financing of anti-trafficking projects and activities whose results bring along the necessary outcomes at national or regional level, in line with the SDGs 5, 8 and 16 and its associated targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2.

The Council of Europe is currently implementing the actions "Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" in Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as part of the European Union and Council of Europe programmatic framework "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey". The projects support the national authorities in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, by addressing the legislation, policy and practice in particular fields.

The Youth Department advocates and supports the development of youth policies that take into account the difficulties encountered by many young people to secure meaningful employment opportunities, putting a particular emphasis on young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods – based on [CM Recommendations \(2015\)3](#) and [\(2016\)7](#) (see also Goal 1).

The [Parliamentary Assembly](#), through its [Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development](#), has undertaken a considerable amount of work towards this goal over the past years, including through its activities building up to [Resolution 1993 \(2014\) on Decent work for all](#), [Resolution 2068 \(2015\) Towards a new](#)



[European Social Model, Resolution 2158 \(2017\) on Fighting income inequality as a means of fostering social cohesion and economic development and Resolution 2146 \(2017\) Reinforcing social dialogue as an instrument for stability and decreasing social and economic inequalities.](#)

In 2017, the [Committee on Migration, Refugees and Stateless Persons'](#) work led to the adoption of [Resolution 2175 \(2017\)](#) and [Recommendation 2109 \(2017\) on Migration as an opportunity for European development](#), urging member States to recognise the economic value of migration and migrants' importance for national labour markets. The Committee's work leading to the creation of a Parliamentary Network on Diasporas also takes into account the social and economic importance of diaspora communities in Europe, as well as their cultural value

The [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) adopted the following texts of relevance:

[RES358\(2013\)](#): Integration through self-employment: promoting migrant entrepreneurship in European municipalities;

[REC343\(2013\)](#): Integration through self-employment: promoting migrant entrepreneurship in European municipalities;

[RES362\(2013\)](#): Migrants' access to regional labour markets;

[REC347\(2013\)](#): Migrants' access to regional labour markets;

[REC\(2009\)262](#): Equality and diversity in local authority employment and service provision.

### **Goal 9: Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation**

The [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) adopted the following texts of relevance:

[RES\(2010\)302](#): Intra-regional transport: a challenge for sustainable development and territorial cohesion;

[REC\(2010\)287](#): Intra-regional transport: a challenge for sustainable development and territorial cohesion.

### **Goal 10: Reduce inequality within and among countries**

The promotion of human rights of older persons is ensured through the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2. The implementation of this instrument is ensured by the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) through the compilation of examples of national good practice.

Guidelines of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to member States on the protection and promotion of human rights in culturally diverse societies were adopted on 2 March 2016. A publication gathering the text of the Guidelines, of the compilation of existing standards in the field as well as of the proceedings of the Seminar is available on line.



In the framework of the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children, the Youth Department is furthering the [social inclusion of young refugees in Europe](#) by researching and promoting good youth-work practices in support of young refugees and asylum seekers. The Youth Department is in the process of drafting guidelines for the specific protection of refugees and migrants in transition to adulthood.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has been regularly addressing issues relating to global and European inequalities over the past year. Its latest text in this area, which was elaborated in close collaboration with other international organisation (e.g. the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and NGOs (e.g. Oxfam) was [Resolution 2158 \(2017\) on Fighting income inequality as a means of fostering social cohesion and economic development](#).

Different targets under goal 10 were also addressed through [Resolution 2153 \(2017\) on Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers](#) and [Resolution 2155 \(2017\) on The political rights of persons with disabilities: a democratic issue](#). The activities of the [No Hate Parliamentary Alliance](#), an alliance of parliamentarians who commit to taking open, firm and pro-active stands against racism, hatred and intolerance, established in 2015, also contribute to combating discrimination and promoting political inclusion of all.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted the following texts of relevance:

- [Resolution 403 \(2016\)](#): The situation of Roma and Travellers in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe;
- [Recommendation 388 \(2016\)](#): The situation of Roma and travellers in the context of rising extremism, xenophobia and the refugee crisis in Europe;
- [RES366\(2014\)](#): Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels;
- [REC354\(2014\)](#): Empowering Roma youth through participation: effective policy design at local and regional levels;
- [RES333\(2011\)](#): The situation of Roma in Europe: a challenge for local and regional authorities;
- [REC315\(2011\)](#): The situation of Roma in Europe: a challenge for local and regional authorities;
- [Resolution 319\(2010\)](#): Integration of young people from disadvantaged neighbourhoods;
- [RES\(2008\)264](#) Social approach to the fight against racism at local and regional level;
- [REC\(2008\)246](#): Social approach to the fight against racism at local and regional level.

## **Goal 11: Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable**

Local authorities are key players in achieving this and other goals. However, in order to be efficient in fulfilling their tasks, they need to be empowered – through decentralisation policies, and enabled – through capacity-building tools. The Council of Europe offers assistance to its member States in both areas.

The Council of Europe is the leading international organisation in respect of strengthening local government and “creating sustainable communities, where people like to live and work, now and in the future” (Final Declaration of the Third Council of Europe Summit). It has the only international treaty concerning decentralisation, the European Charter of Local Self-Government (“the Charter”) and a number of recommendations and other standards, a solid knowledge base, specific tools, expertise and experience with supporting reforms both of central and local government. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities monitors the Charter and ensures regular exchanges between local and regional government representatives, while the Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform offers practical support to central governments which want to reform their legislation, institutions or policies, and to local authorities which want to improve the quality of their governance and public services. For example, the 12 Principles of Good Governance, as well as specific capacity-building tools, training materials and benchmarks developed by the Centre of Expertise allow local authorities to improve governance and help achieve SDGs in a very concrete and practical way.

The Council of Europe’s Intercultural cities programme has pioneered a new policy framework for inclusion and sustainable diversity management at the local level, supporting local authorities in the building of cohesive culturally diverse cities which are resilient to conflict. This policy framework has been endorsed by the Committee of Ministers in their Recommendation CM (2015)1 on intercultural integration. Today, over 120 cities in Europe and beyond are applying the intercultural integration approach. They represent a powerful voice for the recognition of diversity as an asset for societies’ development and a rich source of experience and know-how which can help shape policies at other levels of governance. Last year the ICC concept has been reviewed to demonstrate its contribution to human rights, equality, including in relation to gender issues, inter-convictional/faith relations, and refugee reception. Besides, a study published in January 2018 after a two year research, revealed a strong statistical link between local intercultural policies and cities’ social and economic performance, and demonstrated that countries where intercultural policies are co-ordinated between the national and local levels, have better overall integration results.

A series of projects are currently being implemented to support local administrations with presence of Roma communities in improving the quality of their governance, such as the Council of Europe/European Commission joint programmes “ROMACT” and “ROMACTED”, which aims to increase the capacity of local authorities to develop and implement inclusive policies and public services, with particular focus on Roma.

With the adoption of the [European Landscape Convention](#), the member States of the Council of Europe have taken an important step acknowledging that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life, in particular in urban areas. Each Party undertakes to “integrate landscape into its regional and town planning”. Activities carried out on “Landscapes for urban, suburban and peri-urban areas”, on “Landscape, towns and peri-urban and suburban areas” and on “Landscape and public spaces”, as well as achievements presented in the framework of the Landscape Award Alliance of the Council of Europe present concrete experiences of cities and human settlements that are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.

The [Council of Europe Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society](#) (Faro Convention) sets a framework for more democratic heritage governance, focusing on the role of heritage in addressing societal challenges and encouraging increased cooperation and inclusive policies. The biennial [Faro Convention Action Plan](#) is instrumental in translating the principles and criteria of the Convention into practice, providing field based knowledge and expertise, and bridging the gap between declared values and reality on the ground.

The [European Cultural Heritage Strategy for the 21st century](#) is a strategy to meet the challenges facing cultural heritage in terms of citizen participation, and economic, social and environmental conditions. The Strategy’s recommendations seek to reconnect communities to their heritage values, and encourage member states and relevant stakeholders to practise participatory mechanisms based on "[good governance](#)".

The 2017 [Council of Europe Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property](#) is the only international treaty specifically dealing with the criminalisation of the illicit trafficking of cultural property. It is open for signature to any country in the world and aims to foster international co-operation to fight the crimes that are destroying the world’s cultural heritage.

The work on natural and technological risks developed by the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) provides guidance to decision-makers to improve infrastructures and population resilience to disasters, taking into account in particular vulnerable groups (migrants, asylum seekers, refugees, people with disabilities, children, etc.). Member States are provided with common tools for developing disaster risk reduction, promoting the risk culture to increase awareness and resilience of populations, protect cultural heritage and environment, through an inclusive and participatory approach. The EUR-OPA programme of work is being developed and implemented in cooperation with the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction and the European Union.

In 2015, the [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) adopted a [Strategy](#) to fight radicalisation at grassroots level and developed a [Toolkit](#) (for the use by local authorities) to promote intercultural and interreligious dialogue available on its website radicalisation in 36 languages.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities organised the Third Summit of Mayors for the Alliance of European Cities against Violent Extremism, Barcelona, Spain, 15 November 2017 –

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted the following texts of relevance:

[Resolution 407 \(2016\)](#): Good governance in metropolitan areas;

- [Recommendation 392 \(2016\)](#): Good governance in metropolitan areas;
- [Resolution 384 \(2015\) Guidelines for local and regional authorities on preventing radicalisation and manifestations of hate at the grassroots level](#)
- [Resolution 339 \(2012\)](#) on ‘Making cities resilient’;
- [RES269\(2008\)](#) European Urban Charter II - Manifesto for a new urbanity (2008);
- [REC251\(2008\)](#): European Urban Charter II - Manifesto for a new urbanity;
- [RES\(2008\)249](#): Biodiversity policies for urban areas;
- [REC\(2008\)232](#): Biodiversity policies for urban areas;
- [RES\(2007\)245](#): Challenges and opportunities for peripheral and sparsely populated regions;
- [REC\(2007\)225](#): Challenges and opportunities for peripheral and sparsely populated regions;
- [RES\(2007\)240](#): Environmental accounting for responsible local action;
- [REC\(2007\)220](#): Environmental accounting for responsible local action;
- [Resolution 215 \(2006\)](#) on ‘‘Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters’’.

### **Goal 12: Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns**

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted the following texts of relevance:

[RES\(2009\)284](#): The future of cultural tourism – towards a sustainable model;  
[REC\(2009\)266](#): The future of cultural tourism – towards a sustainable model;  
[RES\(2009\)278](#): Public water and sewer services for sustainable development;  
[REC\(2009\)259](#): Public water and sewer services for sustainable development;  
[RES\(2008\)263](#): Responsible consumption and solidarity-based finance;  
[REC\(2008\)244](#): Responsible consumption and solidarity-based finance;  
[RES\(2008\)247](#): Local and regional authorities committed to sustainable consumption;  
[REC\(2008\)230](#): Local and regional authorities committed to sustainable consumption.

### **Goal 13: Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts**

The European Social Charter, a human rights protection instrument, guarantees the right to a healthy environment as part of the right to protection of health (Article 11).

It entails firstly respect of the precautionary principle, i.e. when a preliminary scientific evaluation indicates that there are reasonable grounds for concern regarding potentially dangerous effects on human health, the State must take precautionary measures consistent with the high level of protection provided for in Article 11, to prevent those potentially dangerous effects.

Under the Charter overcoming pollution is an objective that can only be achieved gradually. Nevertheless, States Parties must strive to attain this objective within a reasonable time, by showing measurable progress and making best possible use of the resources at their disposal. The measures taken by States Parties are assessed with reference to their national legislation and regulations and undertakings entered into with regard to the European Union and the United Nations and in terms of how the relevant law is applied in practice.

In this respect, States Parties must:

- develop and regularly update sufficiently comprehensive environmental legislation and regulations;
- take specific steps, such as modifying equipment, introducing threshold values for emissions and measuring air quality, to prevent air pollution at local level and to help to reduce it on a global scale. In the case of global pollution, emission control is assessed with reference to the objectives set for implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) of 9 May 1992, and of the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC of 11 December 1997.

The European Committee of Social Rights (ESCR) monitors the implementation of the Charter, not only in law, but also in practice.

In the period 2009-2017, the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats developed a large set of standards supporting and guiding action by its 51 Contracting Parties in embedding the consideration of biodiversity issues cross-sectorally and in developing a national coherent vision addressing both the limitation of climate change and mitigating its inevitable impacts, including on nature. The Convention is currently working on the implementation of its ambitious Programme of Work on Climate Change and Biodiversity and in particular the development of healthy ecosystems through the establishment of a pan-European network of areas of species conservation interest (Emerald network). It is preparing to launch a new reporting obligation for monitoring progress by Parties in developing climate change adaptation and mitigation solutions.

The Parliamentary Assembly, via its **Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development**, has been a stakeholder in the international process on climate change through the UN Climate Change Conferences. It has promoted action in this area, for example through **Resolution 1976 (2014) on Climate change: a framework for a global agreement in 2015**; and a new report on "Climate change and implementation of the Paris Agreement" is currently under preparation (Jan. 2018).

The Parliamentary Assembly's **Committee on Migration, Refugees and Stateless Persons** regularly examines the effects of climate change on migratory flows, in particular in **Resolution 2115 (2016) on Forced migration: a new challenge**. A report is currently under preparation (Jan. 2018) on "A legal status for 'climate refugees'?", to prepare recommendations on the management of future waves of migration due to environmental degradation.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted the following texts of relevance:

- [RES335\(2011\)](#): Energy supply and energy efficiency at local and regional level: promoting energy transition;
- [Resolution 317\(2010\)](#): Coastal towns and cities tackling threats from the sea;
- [Recommendation 298\(2010\)](#): Coastal towns and cities tackling threats from the sea;
- [RES\(2010\)298](#): After Copenhagen, cities and regions take up the challenge;
- [REC\(2010\)281](#): After Copenhagen, cities and regions take up the challenge;
- [Resolution 288 \(2009\)](#) on "The global challenge of climate change: Local responses";
- [REC\(2009\)271](#): The global challenge of climate change: Local responses;
- [RES\(2008\)262](#): Public local and regional action: for a new energy culture;
- [REC\(2008\)243](#): Public local and regional action: for a new energy culture;
- [RES\(2008\)248](#): Climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities;
- [REC\(2008\)231](#): Climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities;
- [RES\(2007\)236](#): Climate Change: approaches at local and regional level;
- [REC\(2007\)215](#): Climate Change: approaches at local and regional level;

**Goal 15: Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss**

The Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats promotes harmonised national policies and guidance for the conservation and the sustainable management of wild species and their habitats. It facilitates regional cooperation on conservation issues in Europe, through the wide-ranging participation of national, regional and local authorities, stakeholders, NGOs and civil society. The Bern Convention is considered to be a privileged regional platform at European level for supporting the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which is also strongly contributing to the achievement of Goal 15, among many others.

The European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) is supporting scientific and technical research programs on arid regions and on regions threatened by drought, desertification, floods and fires in order to understand human and ecosystems vulnerability, and increase community reliance to environmental changes. The EUR-OPA Agreement is developing synergies with the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats in order to identify nature-based solutions and mitigations measures for disaster risk management.

The European Landscape Convention states that "landscape planning" means strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes. It involves framing

proper planning projects, more particularly in those most affected by change and badly damaged areas (for example suburbs, peri-urban and industrial areas, coastal areas).

**Goal 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels**

Access to justice

Goal 16, as it refers to providing “access to justice for all”, is an important objective and reference for a number of Council of Europe Conventions (for instance, on fighting trafficking in human beings, violence against women and domestic violence, sexual exploitation of children) and transversal Strategies (notably on Gender Equality, Children Rights, Disability), and it is as well addressed through activities and cooperation with the 47 member States and the South-Mediterranean countries (Jordan, Morocco, and Tunisia).

The Council of Europe, through its European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), develops concrete measures and tools aimed at policy-makers and judicial practitioners in order to analyse the functioning of judicial systems. CEPEJ prepares benchmarks, collects and analyses data and defines instruments of measure and means of evaluation. Through the collection of quantitative and qualitative data, this process enables a detailed photograph of the functioning of justice and the measurement of its evolution.

The Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) and the Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCPE) are the first bodies consisting solely of judges and prosecutors ever set up within an international organisation. They support the Committee of Ministers in carrying out the priorities for safeguarding the status of judges/prosecutors and strengthening of their role in Europe. They enrich the corpus of European standards in the judicial field by adopting Opinions on issues of common interest and examine the situation of the judiciary and judges/prosecutors in the member States. They highlight regularly main challenges to judicial independence and impartiality in Europe and contribute to the implementation of the Council of Europe’s Plan of Action on strengthening judicial independence and impartiality.

The Council of Europe has also adopted standards and guidelines enhancing children’s access to the justice systems (see in particular the 2010 Guidelines on child-friendly justice). They aim at adapting the judicial system to the specific rights and needs of children.

It is also currently implementing a joint programme with the European Commission on access to justice for Roma and Traveller women (“JUSTROM”) aimed at providing legal aid and assistance through legal clinics and raising awareness of women and girls about human rights and complaint mechanisms. [CM/Rec\(2017\)10 on improving access to](#)



[justice for Roma and Travellers in Europe](#) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers in October 2017.

The Parliamentary Assembly most recently covered issues related to the effective access to justice in its following texts prepared within the [Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights](#):

- [Resolution 2154 \(2017\) Securing access of detainees to lawyers](#) (aimed at guaranteeing the effective access of suspects, accused and convicted persons (deprived of liberty or not), as well as participants in the criminal proceedings, to a lawyer of their choice)
- [Resolution 2161 \(2017\) on Abusive use of the Interpol system: the need for more stringent legal safeguards](#) (particularly concerned about abuse by certain governments of the 'Red Notice' procedure for locating and arresting suspects and the lack of an effective remedy within Interpol's procedures against such abuse)
- [Resolution 2190 \(2017\) on Prosecuting and punishing the crimes against humanity or even possible genocide committed by Daesh](#) (reaffirms the PACE position that certain of Daesh's crimes constitute genocide under international law)
- [Resolution 2188 \(2017\) on New threats to the rule of law in Council of Europe member States: selected examples](#) (i.e. examples of states where such threats exist)
- [Resolution 2187 \(2017\) on the Venice Commission's Rule of Law Checklist](#) (encourages wider and more systematic use of the VC Checklist to ensure conformity with basic principles of the rule of law; for illustrative purposes, applies the Checklist to the situations in Poland and Turkey)
- [Recommendation 2121 \(2018\) on The case for drafting a European Convention on the profession of lawyer](#) (adoption of a recommendation expected during the January part-session) (includes a review of the difficulties facing lawyers in certain CE member states, as well as the proposal for a new convention)

### Constitutional Justice

Most national constitutions provide for democratic institutions but often these constitutions are not implemented sufficiently in practice in order to make these institutions effective, accountable and inclusive. Constitutional courts and equivalent bodies (constitutional councils and supreme courts exercising such jurisdiction) are pivotal in ensuring that all branches of power respect the constitution. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe tries to strengthen constitutional courts and equivalent bodies by providing various services for the courts and by directly supporting them when they come under undue pressure. This cooperation is steered by the Venice Commission's Joint Council on Constitutional Justice, which shapes the tools provided by the Commission that enable the exchange of information and cross-fertilisation between courts. These tools are the Bulletin on Constitutional Case-Law, the CODICES database (some 9500 cases submitted by the courts) and the Venice Forum. Upon request by the courts, the Venice Commission provides amicus curiae briefs, assisting the Courts. The Venice Commission also acts as the Secretariat for the World Conference on Constitutional Justice which unites 112 Constitutional Courts and Councils and Supreme Courts in Africa, the Americas, Asia, Australia/Oceania and Europe. It promotes



constitutional justice – understood as constitutional review including human rights case law – as a key element for democracy, the protection of human rights and the rule of law.

### Desistence from crime and social reintegration of offenders

The European Committee on Crime Problems (CDPC), the Council for Penological Cooperation (PC-CP) and the Committee of Experts on European Conventions on Cooperation in Criminal Matters (PC-OC) promote best practice, update and develop standards to help legislators, the judiciary, prison and probation services in preventing impunity for crime, ensuring just and proportionate responses to it, stepping up the work towards rehabilitation of offenders and their reintegration into society and facilitating international co-operation to these ends. The priorities in 2017 ranged from combating transnational organised crime and addressing radicalisation in prisons to understanding and taking care of the needs of the children of imprisoned parents. In May 2017, the Nicosia convention on offenses relating to cultural property was opened for signature, the new European Rules on community sanctions and measures were adopted and a Handbook for prison and probation services on radicalisation and violent extremism developed further the Guidelines on the same subject adopted the previous year. In 2017, thirty-six countries benefitted from Council of Europe technical co-operation projects in the areas of prison and law-enforcement.

### Corruption

Democracy will only thrive if political leaders, public and parliamentary institutions adhere to the highest standards of integrity and accountability. Corruption – in all its forms and manifestations of unethical and dishonest behaviour – is an affront to these principles. It gives rise to mistrust in the way public affairs are managed and feeds into populism. The Council of Europe, notably through its anti-corruption monitoring by its [\*\*Group of States against Corruption \(GRECO\)\*\*](#) and a vast programme of targeted technical assistance against economic crime, actively supports the “more vigorous implementation of the United Nations Convention against Corruption” called for in the Synthesis report of the Secretary-General on the post-2015 sustainable development agenda, certainly in the larger European context. GRECO’s findings and recommendations serve as a “yardstick” for its 49 members when implementing the SDGs.

In 2017, The Council of Europe implemented 3 regional programmes against economic crime, covering South-Eastern Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. With three new bilateral projects launched, the number of countries benefitting from CoE technical cooperation reached 20. Amongst the results achieved in different countries during the year were, strengthening of the legislation on the transparency of political party and election financing, improving the asset declaration systems, introducing whistle-blower protection, support of private sector’s anti-corruption compliance..

In addition to addressing economic crime in its various forms, it is essential from the Council of Europe's perspective and from a global standpoint to reinforce integrity in the judiciary, law enforcement and prosecutorial bodies, to further parliamentarians' and governments' commitment to fight and prevent corruption in their own ranks, to properly control money in politics and to protect – and encourage – those who bring corrupt dealings and similar malfeasance to light (whistle-blowers).

In this field, the Parliamentary Assembly notably adopted [Resolution 2060 \(2015\) on Improving the protection of "whistle-blowers"](#) inviting all Council of Europe member States to strengthen accountability and bolster the fight against corruption and mismanagement, both in the public and private sectors, and [Resolution 2098 \(2016\) on Judicial corruption: urgent need to implement the Assembly's proposals](#), calling for better compliance with and implementation of Council of Europe standards by member States.

In June 2017, the Parliamentary Assembly adopted [Resolution 2170 \(2017\)](#) and [Recommendation 2105 \(2017\)](#) on Promoting integrity in governance to tackle political corruption, with a view to stepping up the fight against corruption and restoring trust in the efficiency and effectiveness of democratic institutions, which must be a priority for many European democracies, including European institutions.

Promoting the rule of law (target 16.3), the fight against corruption (target 16.5) and developing effective and accountable institutions (target 16.6) are generally among the priorities in the Assembly's relations with parliaments enjoying partner for democracy status (Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Morocco, and the Palestinian National Council). This status directly contributes to the strengthening of national institutions, including through international cooperation, and to building capacity at all levels, in order to prevent violence and combat terrorism and crime.

Based on reports by its Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media the Assembly also recently adopted [Resolution 2171 \(2017\)](#) and [Recommendation 2106 \(2017\) on Parliamentary scrutiny over corruption: parliamentary co-operation with investigative media](#) and Resolution 2192 (2017) on Youth against corruption.

Trust and confidence in the quality of education are also essential in sustaining a democratic society. In order to raise awareness of the risks involved and the responsibilities of providers and learners alike, a Pan-European Platform on Ethics, Integrity and Transparency in Education has been launched in the autumn of 2015. The initial work of the Platform is to propose ethical principles for all actors in education and discuss such issues as diploma mills and plagiarism.

#### Co-operation against cybercrime

Societies all over the world exploit the opportunities that information technologies bring for sustainable human development and democratic governance. However, reliance on such technologies makes societies vulnerable to risks, including cybercrime. For this reason, many States (including countries in Africa, the Americas and Asia-Pacific) have

decided to join the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime of the Council of Europe and its additional Protocol on Xenophobia and Racism committed via computer systems.

The effective application of the Budapest Convention is supported by the Cybercrime Convention Committee (T-CY), serving as an international forum to reach agreement on how to deal with cybercrime and evidence as a matter of criminal justice. The T-CY is tasked not only to assess the quality of implementation of the Convention, but also to map the challenges to criminal justice in cyberspace and possible solutions to address these challenges. From 2012 to 2014 this was possible through the establishment of a T-CY working group on trans-border access to data and from 2015 to 2017 through the Cloud Evidence Group.

Based on the work and recommendations of these groups, the T-CY initiated development of the 2nd Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention. This new protocol will deal with enhanced international cooperation and cover specific solutions regarding effective mutual legal assistance, direct cooperation with service providers in other jurisdictions, rules for existing practices of trans-border access to data, and safeguards including data protection requirements.

Moreover, recognizing the need to significantly reduce all forms of violence, in particular to combat the drastic effects of cyber violence, the T-CY commenced work on cyber bullying and other forms of online violence aimed at strengthening action against cyber violence, as well as reinforcing synergies between the relevant CoE standards (Budapest, Istanbul and Lanzarote Conventions).

While cybercrime, cyber violence and other offences entailing electronic evidence on computer systems are thriving, capacity building remains the most effective way ahead to help countries on all continents meet this challenge, contributing to the development agenda at the same time. For this reason, the Council of Europe established a dedicated Cybercrime Programme Office (C-PROC) in Romania in 2014, the sole purpose of which is to support capacity-building programmes worldwide.

#### Anti-Money Laundering and Combating the Financing of Terrorism

Celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2017, **MONEYVAL (the Council of Europe Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism)** proceeded with its 5<sup>th</sup> round of mutual evaluations. This round focuses on the practical implementation of the global standard against money laundering and terrorist financing (AML/CFT) in MONEYVAL's 34 members. The Committee completed its *ad hoc*-review of the counter-terrorist financing legislation of its members, in line with UNSCR 2178 and the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) initiative. Those members for which significant gaps were identified were able to remedy these deficiencies within a short period of time.

In 2017, MONEYVAL also looked into recent trends, such as virtual currencies, the laundering of proceeds from human trafficking and the phenomenon of "de-risking" (where global financial institutions terminate business relationships with regional banks),

In its [Resolution 2130 \(2016\) on Lessons from the “Panama Papers” to ensure fiscal and social justice](#), prepared by the [Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development](#), the Parliamentary Assembly addressed the issue of “dirty” money by, inter alia, drawing attention to the importance of ensuring technical compliance with already existing international standards in the field of anti-tax evasion and anti-money laundering policies.

A report on “Fighting organised crime by facilitating the confiscation of illegal assets” is currently under preparation within the [Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights](#) to encourage wider use of reversal of the burden of proof, subject to safeguards, when confiscating assets from organised criminals.

### **Countering Terrorism**

The Riga Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (CETS No. 217), open for signature in 2015 entered into force on 1 July 2017. The Protocol contributes to ensuring consistency of recently adopted legislation relevant to foreign terrorist fighters and thus facilitates international legal co-operation. The relevance of the Protocol has been internationally recognized, notably by the UN Security Council’s Counter Terrorism Committee. The Protocol also provides for a network of national contact points, available on a 24/7 basis, to facilitate first alerts, in real time, about the travel of foreign terrorist fighters.

The Committee of Experts on Terrorism (CODEXTER /CDCT) finalised a Recommendation on “Terrorists Acting Alone”. The aim of the draft Recommendation is to help member States improve their ability to timely detect and intercept terrorists acting alone and prevent radicalisation leading individuals to terrorism. The Recommendation is with the Committee of Ministers for adoption in 2018.

### Freedom of expression

Freedom of expression, media freedom and pluralism, as well as high ethical standards and quality of journalism, are pillars of true democracy and a pre-condition for effective accountability of democratic institutions to their citizens. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, through its Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, is particularly active in this domain and recently adopted Resolution 2143 (2017) on Online media and journalism: challenges and accountability and Resolution 2141 (2017) on Attacks against journalists and media freedom in Europe, Resolution 2171 (2017)1 Parliamentary scrutiny over corruption: parliamentary cooperation with the investigative media, Resolution 2179 (2017) Political influence over independent media and journalists.

Further reports are currently prepared on “The protection of editorial integrity”, “The status of journalists in Europe” and on “Media freedom as a condition for democratic elections”, “Are social media contributing to limiting freedom of expression?”, “The importance of public service broadcasting in the context of fake news, agitation and propaganda”.

The Committee of Ministers Recommendation on protection of journalism and safety of journalists and other media actors (2016)<sup>4</sup> provides specific guidelines to member states to act in the areas of prevention, protection, prosecution, promotion of information, education and awareness rising.

Also, issued in April 2017, the study "Journalists under pressure: unwarranted interference, fear and self-censorship in Europe", conducted among 940 journalists and other news providers in the 47 Council of Europe member states and Belarus, assesses the prevalence and impact of unwarranted interference on journalists.

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### Internet governance

The Council of Europe puts a great deal of emphasis on the development of standards and policies related to the information society and internet governance since human rights apply equally online as well as off-line. The Council of Europe's Internet Governance Strategy 2016-2019 aims at ensuring that public policy relating to the internet is people-centred and contributes to building democracy online, protecting internet users, and ensuring the protection and respect for human rights online.

In its efforts to promote rights and freedoms and maximise the enjoyment of benefits in the information society while minimising restrictions but ensuring an appropriate level of security to users, the Council of Europe has developed a Guide to Human Rights for Internet Users. This is a unique tool for individuals when facing difficulties in exercising their rights, for governments and public institutions to discharge their obligations to protect, respect and remedy human rights as well as an instrument to promote corporate social responsibility by encouraging the private sector to act responsibly and with respect for the human rights of individuals.

A number of other legal instruments developed by the Council of Europe have other socially important targets, relevant for sustainable development and strengthening of the knowledge based society. The recommendation on protecting and promoting the right to freedom of expression and the right to private life with regard to network neutrality deals with the practice of managing internet traffic transiting through the networks that internet access providers operate. Unjustifiable interferences with internet

traffic may affect the quality of the internet service delivered to users and may result in blocking, discrimination or unfounded prioritisation of specific types of content, applications or services. Some of the techniques used in this context permit inspection or monitoring of communications, which can undermine users' trust in the internet.

The recommendation on Internet freedom provides benchmarks and references for national evaluations of internet freedom. It aims at facilitating regular evaluations of the internet freedom environment at the national level, with a view to ensuring that the necessary legal, economic and political conditions are in place. Such evaluations contribute to a better understanding of the application of the European Convention on Human Rights to the internet-related challenges in member States. The indicators serve as an analytical framework for States to implement human rights standards online and as a reference for developing international policy and approaches for internet policy development.

The involvement of young people in internet governance processes is promoted in the follow-up to the No Hate Speech Movement campaign.

With a view to ensuring Internet governance in the most effective manner, the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media is currently preparing a report on "Coordination for efficient internet governance" and a targeted report on "Creation of the position on internet Ombudsman in charge of assessing the legal or illegal nature of internet contents through screening procedures".

#### Supporting states in adhering to human rights standards

Inclusive societies and sustainable development are not possible without the respect for Human Rights of all members of these societies. The European Convention on Human Rights and the entire CoE convention system, as well as the case law of the European Court of Human Rights set the standards for human rights and the way they should be implemented in each country. Council of Europe Member States increasingly rely on support of the CoE to ensure effective and coherent implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at national level.

The CoE supports the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights and other European human rights standards at the national level in all Council of Europe member states through cooperation programmes in line with the 2012 Brighton and 2015 Brussels Declarations. The CoE provides a combination of legislative expertise and capacity building support, paying attention to impact and aiming at sustainability, both essential and complementary elements to ensure a better protection of human rights at the national level. Through the projects, the CoE disseminates good practices and contributes to raising the standards of human rights observance in Europe.

Concrete cooperation projects aimed at improving the national legal frameworks, capacity building of national institutions, and consolidating the skills and knowledge of key justice actors including. This work focuses on implementing the criminal justice reforms and ensuring a harmonised application of European standards in national

jurisdictions as well as facilitating the execution of the European Court's Judgments. Targeted activities are carried out to maintain human rights dialogue and cooperation.

#### Data protection

Relying on a sound protection of personal data is an element of freedom, which can, in turn, better enable endeavours for professional, personal and economic development, both for individuals and groups. In particular, new technologies representing a chance for developing countries, it is equally important that their development goes together with the necessary safeguards.

The Council of Europe Data Protection Convention is a unique instrument due to its international and binding nature; it can provide a worldwide basis for the harmonisation of data protection legislations and enables the participation of developing countries in this work of fundamental importance.

The Convention allows other fundamental rights to be exercised, such as freedom of expression and access to information (as set in goal 16.10 on ensuring "public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms, in accordance with national legislation and international agreements"), freedom of assembly and association.

#### Anti-Discrimination

The multiple European crisis – austerity economic agenda, uncertainty, terrorist attacks, arrival of high number of migrants and refugees – create a climate of anxiety and fear, which is a fertile ground for hate speech and xenophobic populism. The Council of Europe, notably through the [European Commission against Racism and intolerance \(ECRI\)](#), the [Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities \(FCNM\)](#) and the [European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages \(ECRML\)](#), actively supports the UN determination to protect human rights and minority rights and promote equality for all persons. These activities also contribute to the implementation of goals 4, 5 and 11.

**ECRI** is a human rights monitoring body which helps member States to overcome problems of racism, intolerance and discrimination on grounds such as "race", national or ethnic origin, colour, citizenship, religion, language, sexual orientation and gender identity. ECRI prepares [country monitoring reports](#) and issues [General Policy Recommendations](#) (GPRs) to member States. It puts a special focus on the implementation of effective hate crime and anti-discrimination legislation ([GPR No. 7](#)), the establishment and impact of equality bodies ([GPR No. 2](#)), combating hate speech ([GPR No. 15](#)) and hate crime ([GPR No. 11](#)), running effective integration policies ([GPRs No. 10, 13 and 14](#)), implementing policies to combat discrimination vis-à-vis LGBT people and implementing a gender perspective. With its [GPR No. 15 on combating hate speech](#) ECRI has recently designed a tool that enables member States to give an effective response to hate speech and xenophobic populism, while respecting freedom of speech.



The **FCNM** is a comprehensive treaty designed to protect the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. Parties to this Convention undertake to promote the full and effective equality of persons belonging to minorities in all areas of economic, social, political and cultural life together with the conditions that will allow them to express, preserve and develop their culture and identity. An independent and impartial Advisory Committee prepares an opinion on the implementation of the FCNM by the parties, based on which the Committee of Ministers adopts recommendations to the parties.

The **ECRML** aims to protect and promote the use of regional or minority languages in all spheres of public life, notably in the areas of education, administration, public services, the judiciary, media, cultural activities and facilities, economic and social life and trans-frontier exchanges. The Charter contributes to the maintenance and development of Europe's cultural wealth and traditions, and stresses the values of cultural diversity and multilingualism. The languages of indigenous peoples are covered by the Charter. An independent Expert Committee publishes a report on the implementation of the ECRML by the parties, based on which the Committee of Ministers adopts recommendations to the parties.

The Council of Europe **[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2010\)5 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on measures to combat discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation or gender identity](#)** is a unique instrument which identifies very specific measures to ensure full respect for LGBT persons, promote tolerance towards them and ensure that victims have access to legal remedies. Through its cooperation activities, the **[Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit](#)** addresses issues related to hate crime and hate speech against LGBTI persons, homophobic and transphobic violence and bullying, multiple discrimination, legal gender recognition of transgender persons, as well as protection of intersex children, and has helped improving the legal framework, practices and policies of the member States that seek its expertise.

The **[Council of Europe Strategy on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities - Human Rights: A Reality for All \(2017-2023\)](#)** aims to achieve equality, dignity and equal opportunities for persons with disabilities. This requires ensuring independence, freedom of choice, full and active participation in all areas of life and society. The Strategy addresses a number of areas covered by the SDGs, notably equality, inclusion and accessibility, acting as an implementing tool, at regional level, of the **[United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)**.

The No Hate Speech and Cooperation Unit runs cooperation projects with CoE member states in the areas of combating discrimination, racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance, with a particular emphasis on tackling the use of hate speech on line and off line. The unit builds on the legacy of the **[No Hate Speech Movement](#)** campaign that has mobilised national authorities and civil society organisation in 45 countries raising awareness on the risks hate speech poses to human rights and peaceful democratic societies. Guided by the findings and recommendations of **[ECRI](#)**, **[FCNM](#)** and **[ECRML](#)**, the unit supports national authorities to reform the Criminal, Civil and Administrative law, improve data gathering and implement capacity building and awareness raising



measures through a multi-stakeholder approach. In line with UN goal 16, the unit enables vulnerable groups, including persons belonging to national minorities and LGBT, to make full use of their rights and participate in society. The unit's work strives to strengthen gender equality (UN Goal 5), sustainable cities and communities (UN Goal 11) and reduce inequality (UN goal 10).

The involvement of young people in Internet governance processes is promoted by the follow-up to the [No Hate Speech Movement Campaign](#).

Youth participation in decision making at all levels which concern them is promoted through the Youth for Democracy programme and informs capacity-building measures that are organised for member States and youth organisations. These measures adopt participatory approaches to youth policy and youth work, based inter alia on the Council of Europe Congress' [Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life](#) and in the Youth Department's manual "[Have Your Say!](#)". Specific attention is paid to promoting the participation of vulnerable or disadvantaged young people, notably [Roma youth](#). Standards and approaches to meaningful youth participation in decision making also inform [Euro-Arab youth co-operation activities](#).

The Council of Europe also combats inequality and discrimination through raising awareness and training legal professionals in the member states. Several courses of the [European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals \(HELP\)](#) target issues relevant to gender equality. These include courses on Anti-Discrimination, Labour Rights, Violence Against Women and Domestic Violence, Child-friendly Justice, and a course on Combatting Trafficking in Human Beings. The Council of Europe also contributes to the strengthening of the capacities of national human rights institutions, such as Ombudspersons and dedicated equality bodies in addressing issues of discrimination and gender inequality.

The activities of the Council of Europe in the field of promoting gender equality and empowering women in girls, described extensively under [SDG 5](#), are also relevant to the implementation of SDG 16.

### Ending violence against children

The Council of Europe is actively engaged in the eradication of all forms of violence against children at pan European level. "A life free from violence for all children" is one of the five key priority areas of the current [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#). This strategy stipulates its mission clearly as contributing to the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development building on its standards, intergovernmental platforms and monitoring bodies. To this end, the Council of Europe will continue to act as a regional driver of initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against children, including by protecting victims and promoting safe, child friendly and efficient reporting mechanisms. The work programme of the intergovernmental Committee of Experts (CAHENF) entrusted with the implementation of the Strategy includes actions to promote an integrated approach to the protection from violence, to combat sexual exploitation, sexual abuse and trafficking as well as to

eliminate corporal punishment, bullying, cyberbullying and gender-based violence, as well as to protect children from violent extremism. The Council of Europe will furthermore continue to support the mandate of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children as well as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

To date, the Lanzarote Convention is the most ambitious and comprehensive legal instrument on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, covering and criminalising all possible kinds of sexual offences against children, protecting child victims, prosecuting perpetrators and promoting international co-operation. Furthermore, the Council of Europe policy guidelines on integrated national strategies for the protection of children from violence are of particular interest for States committed to promote a child rights based and holistic approach to ending violence. These instruments are extremely relevant to the implementation of Target 16.2.

Both intergovernmental bodies of the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly have been promoting the Lanzarote Convention very pro-actively over the past years, namely through the Council of Europe ONE in FIVE Campaign to stop sexual violence against children (2010-2015). The Parliamentary Assembly pursued collective action to combat sexual violence against children throughout 2016, and keeps matters of child protection and the promotion of children's rights high up on the agenda, by regularly urging member States to take action. The most recent text adopted by the Assembly in this area is [\*\*Resolution 2204 \(2018\) on Protecting children affected by armed conflicts\*\*](#).

The Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings is a ground-breaking and comprehensive Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings which is of relevance notably to achieving target 5.2 of Goal 5, target 8.7 of Goal 8 and target 16.2 of Goal 16. While building on existing international instruments, the Convention goes beyond the minimum standards agreed upon in them and strengthens the protection afforded to victims. The Convention has a comprehensive scope of application, encompassing all forms of trafficking and taking in all persons who are victims of trafficking (women, men or children). The Convention makes particular reference to children's vulnerability in trafficking and requires States to take special account of their need for special protection and assistance. The Convention is not restricted to Council of Europe member States; non-members States and the European Union also have the possibility of becoming Party to the Convention. The implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Convention by the State Parties is monitored by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) and the Committee of the Parties.

The Council of Europe offers member States and other stakeholders guidance and support for achieving targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2 to end human trafficking through the provision of recommendations resulting from the monitoring of the Convention by GRETA and expertise on human trafficking issues and activities, such as round-table meetings in the monitored countries. The round-table meetings are a tool for stimulating dialogue between relevant stakeholders in each country, and identifying areas where the Council of Europe can support national anti-trafficking efforts.

The Council of Europe supports the implementation of the SDGs that aim to end human trafficking by organising conferences and other events to raise awareness of the provisions of the Convention and GRETA's recommendations. Further, in order to strengthen capacity in preventing and combating human trafficking, workshops and training seminars are organised for different professional groups.

A free online course on human trafficking has been developed by the Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals of the Council of Europe. In addition, information and good practice examples are collected for the promotion of the implementation of the Anti-Trafficking Convention.

The Council of Europe furthers the achievement of the trafficking-related SDGs through the financing of anti-trafficking projects and activities whose results bring along the necessary outcomes at national or regional level, in line with the SDGs 5, 8 and 16 and its associated targets 5.2, 8.7 and 16.2.

The Council of Europe is currently implementing the actions "Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Human Beings" in Serbia and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" as part of the European Union and Council of Europe programmatic framework "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey". The projects support the national authorities in preventing and combating trafficking in human beings, by addressing the legislation, policy and practice in particular fields.

### Values in and through sports

Threats to sports integrity (such as doping and match fixing) have an impact on people's trust in sports organisations and institutions. The Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions and the Anti-Doping Convention address those threats by promoting cooperation between States and the sports movement. By promoting human rights values through sports and fostering safety and good governance in sports, the Council of Europe reaches out to millions of people and involves the sports movement and economic sector in the building of sustainable societies.

### Local Government Reform

The Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform offers practical support to central governments which want to reform their legislation, institutions or policies, and to local authorities which want to improve the quality of their governance and public services. For example, the 12 Principles of Good Governance, as well as specific capacity-building tools, training materials and benchmarks developed by the Centre of Expertise allow local authorities to improve governance and help achieve SDGs in a very concrete and practical way.

### Civil Society

Civil society plays a leading role in the promotion of accountable, effective and inclusive institutions in democratic societies. The Council of Europe is working on enhancing the space for effective civil participation in public life and in political decision-making at all levels of government. The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe represents European civil society within the Council of Europe and aims to defend the freedom of association, amplify the independent voices of civil society, and protect the space for civil participation. The Council of Europe North-South Centre carries out activities to empower civil society organisations in Europe and the Southern Mediterranean to strengthen their role in the preparation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of public policies and in governance.

The Parliamentary Assembly's [Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights](#) is currently working towards specific texts on "How can inappropriate restrictions on NGO activities in Europe be prevented?" (plenary debate expected for June 2018).

#### Promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development

The Youth for Democracy programme involves youth organisations in the [promotion of peaceful and inclusive societies](#), notably by supporting them through capacity-building activities and exchanges on peace education and conflict transformation. The "[Youth Peace Camp](#)" brings together young people from conflict-stricken communities and helps them to overcome hatred and prejudice, as well as to develop joint projects and initiatives to promote inter-community dialogue and, when appropriate, reconciliation. Activities promoting intercultural dialogue among young people are organised on a regular basis, notably in the framework of the [Euro-Arab co-operation](#), and based on the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue.

The role and importance of a safe, reliable and human-rights compatible cyberspace for inclusion and peace is the object of the [No Hate Speech Movement Campaign](#) and its follow-up measures. Education for media literacy as well as digital competences are important dimensions to protect societies from abuse and hate speech which fuel social rift and conflict. The use of counter and alternative narratives to hate speech is particularly important, including as a means of combating violent extremism. Educational resources have been developed through the Campaign and are being promoted in national campaigns.

At the level of the Parliamentary Assembly, the [Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development](#) looks into various categories of individual and collective social rights, social inclusion and good governance notably at the local and regional level; this led, for example, to [Resolution 2024 \(2014\) on Social exclusion: a danger for Europe's democracies](#). More recently, it adopted [Resolution 2152 \(2017\) on "New generation" trade agreements and their implications for social rights, public health and sustainable development](#) and [Resolution 2197 \(2018\) on The case for a basic citizenship income](#).

The Committee has generally supported Council of Europe activities in the area of social cohesion over the past years, such as those by the [European Social Cohesion Platform \(PECS\)](#) and previous relevant bodies.

The [Committee on Migration, Refugees and Stateless Persons](#) has worked to promote inclusive societies through the integration of refugees, leading in particular to the adoption of [Resolution 2176 \(2017\) on the Integration of refugees in times of critical pressure: learning from recent experience and examples of best practice](#). The Committee is currently (Jan. 2018) working on a report on "Recently arrived refugees and migrants at risk of radicalisation", in order to prepare recommendations to member States on policies to avoid extremism and violence in society.

Most of the Assembly reports prepared in the field of education, culture, heritage, youth and sport as prepared by the [Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media](#) focus on promoting diversity and dialogue to cultivate a sense of identity, collective memory and mutual understanding and to promote shared values which are the foundation of "living together" in peace and of an active and responsible citizen participation in public life. In 2016, the Assembly adopted the following resolutions in this field:

- Access to school and education for all children
- Sport for all: a bridge to equality, integration and inclusion
- Culture and democracy
- Educational and cultural networks of communities living abroad.

In its [Resolution 2123 \(2016\) on culture and democracy](#), the Parliamentary Assembly recommended, inter alia, that governments support the right of everyone to participate in cultural life as a core human right, seeking to offset barriers which hamper the access to culture of women, youth, minorities, migrants, refugees, asylum seekers and other vulnerable groups, and that they promote the diversity of cultural expressions and cultural pluralism as positive factors for innovation and development.

Further reports are currently prepared on "Education and culture: new partnerships to support personal development and cohesion", "The value of cultural heritage in a democratic society" and "Safeguarding and enhancing Europe's intangible cultural heritage".

The [Congress of Local and Regional Authorities](#) organised the following events:

Seminar on "Engaging citizens in local affairs for greater transparency", Kyiv, Ukraine, 19-20 December 2017.

Van Staa speech at Regional conference on "Corruption-free Cities of the Future", 7 December 2017, Tirana (Albania)

Conference on ethics and transparency at local level: strategies and tools Tbilisi, Georgia, 6-7 December 2017

Van Staa speech at workshop on "Improving governance and preventing corruption in the EU and EaP countries", Brussels, 12 October 2017 -

Van Staa speech to Committee of ethics of the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities (KS), Oslo, Norway, 14 September 2017 -

Joint Congress/CoR conference on 'the role of local and regional authorities in preventing corruption and promoting good governance' , 28 February 2017, Brussels

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted the following texts of relevance:

- [Resolution 421 \(2017\)](#): Making public procurement transparent at local and regional levels;
- [Recommendation 405 \(2017\)](#): Making public procurement transparent at local and regional levels;
- [Resolution 417 \(2017\)](#): Open data for better public services;
- [Recommendation 398 \(2017\)](#) - Open data for better public services;
- [Resolution 411 \(2017\)](#): From reception to integration: the role of local and regional authorities facing migration;
- [Resolution 401 \(2016\)](#): Preventing corruption and promoting public ethics at local and regional levels;
- [Resolution 402 \(2016\)](#): The misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes : the role of local and regional elected representatives and public officials;
- [RES394\(2015\)](#): E-media: game changer for local and regional politicians;
- [RES389\(2015\)](#): New forms of local governance;
- [RES387\(2015\)](#): Voting at 16 – Consequences on youth participation at local and regional level;
- [RES385\(2015\)](#): Fostering active citizenship by building partnerships with civil society;
- [RES386\(2015\)](#): Bringing down barriers to youth participation: adopting a lingua franca for local and regional authorities and young people;
- [RES378\(2015\)](#): Electoral lists and voters residing de facto abroad;
- [RES374\(2014\)](#): The role of regional media as a tool for building participatory democracy;
- [REC364\(2014\)](#): The role of regional media as a tool for building participatory democracy;
- [RES371\(2014\)](#): Promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities and their participation at local and regional levels;
- [REC361\(2014\)](#): Promoting equal opportunities for people with disabilities and their participation at local and regional levels;
- [RES368\(2014\)](#): Strategy on the right of local authorities to be consulted by other levels of government;
- [REC328\(2012\)](#): The right of local authorities to be consulted by other levels of government;
- [RES350\(2012\)](#): Regional legislation and action to combat sexual exploitation and abuse of children;

- [REC332\(2012\)](#): Regional legislation and action to combat sexual exploitation and abuse of children;
- [RES346\(2012\)](#): Youth and democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement;
- [REC327\(2012\)](#): Youth and democracy: the changing face of youth political engagement;
- [RES343\(2012\)](#): Policy of the Council of Europe towards neighbouring regions: the role of the Congress;
- [RES342\(2012\)](#): The changes underway in the Arab countries – opportunities for local and regional democracy;
- [REC325\(2012\)](#): The changes underway in the Arab countries – opportunities for local and regional democracy;
- [RES332\(2011\)](#): Education for democratic citizenship – tools for cities;
- [RES326\(2011\)](#): Citizen participation at local and regional level in Europe;
- [Resolution 316\(2010\)](#): Rights and duties of local and regional elected representatives: the risks of corruption;
- [RES\(2009\)289](#): Preventing violence against children;
- [REC\(2009\)272](#): Preventing violence against children;
- [RES\(2009\)293](#): Regions with legislative powers: towards multi-level governance;
- [REC278\(2009\)](#): Regions with legislative powers: towards multi-level governance;
- [RES\(2009\)290](#): E-democracy: opportunities and risks for local authorities;
- [REC\(2009\)274](#): E-democracy: opportunities and risks for local authorities;
- [RES\(2009\)283](#): Good governance: a key factor for the sustainable economic development of regions;
- [REC\(2009\)265](#): Good governance: a key factor for the sustainable economic development of regions;
- [REC273\(2009\)](#): Equal access to local and regional elections;
- [RES267\(2008\)](#): Electronic democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects;
- [REC\(2008\)249](#): Electronic democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects;
- [RES\(2008\)259](#): Integration and participation of young people at local and regional level;
- [REC\(2008\)242](#): Integration and participation of young people at local and regional level;
- [RES\(2008\)266](#): E-tools: a response to the needs of local authorities;
- [REC\(2008\)248](#): E-tools: a response to the needs of local authorities;
- [RES\(2007\)244](#): The Principles governing Regional Democracy : proposals and strategy;
- [REC\(2007\)209](#): Intergenerational co-operation and participatory democracy.