

# **2021 HELP NETWORK E- CONFERENCE**

## **“HUMAN RIGHTS RESPONSES TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES”**

**STRASBOURG, 1-2 JULY 2021**

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

## BACKGROUND

### I. HELP and the HELP Network

The [European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals \(HELP\)](#) of the Council of Europe (CoE) aims at assisting legal professionals (judges, prosecutors and lawyers) and other professionals to effectively apply the European human rights standards in their daily work.

This is done by **developing** and **implementing** high-quality, tailor made **online courses** on various human rights related topics.

HELP's three pillars are:

- the [HELP Network](#);
- the [HELP online courses](#); and
- the [HELP Training Methodology](#).

**The HELP Network** is the only pan-European peer-to-peer human rights training network. It consists of representatives of national training institutions for legal professionals (judiciary schools and Bar associations) from the CoE member States and beyond. Other international organisations are partners of the HELP Network, including the main international associations of legal professionals (European Judicial Training Network (EJTN), Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), etc.).

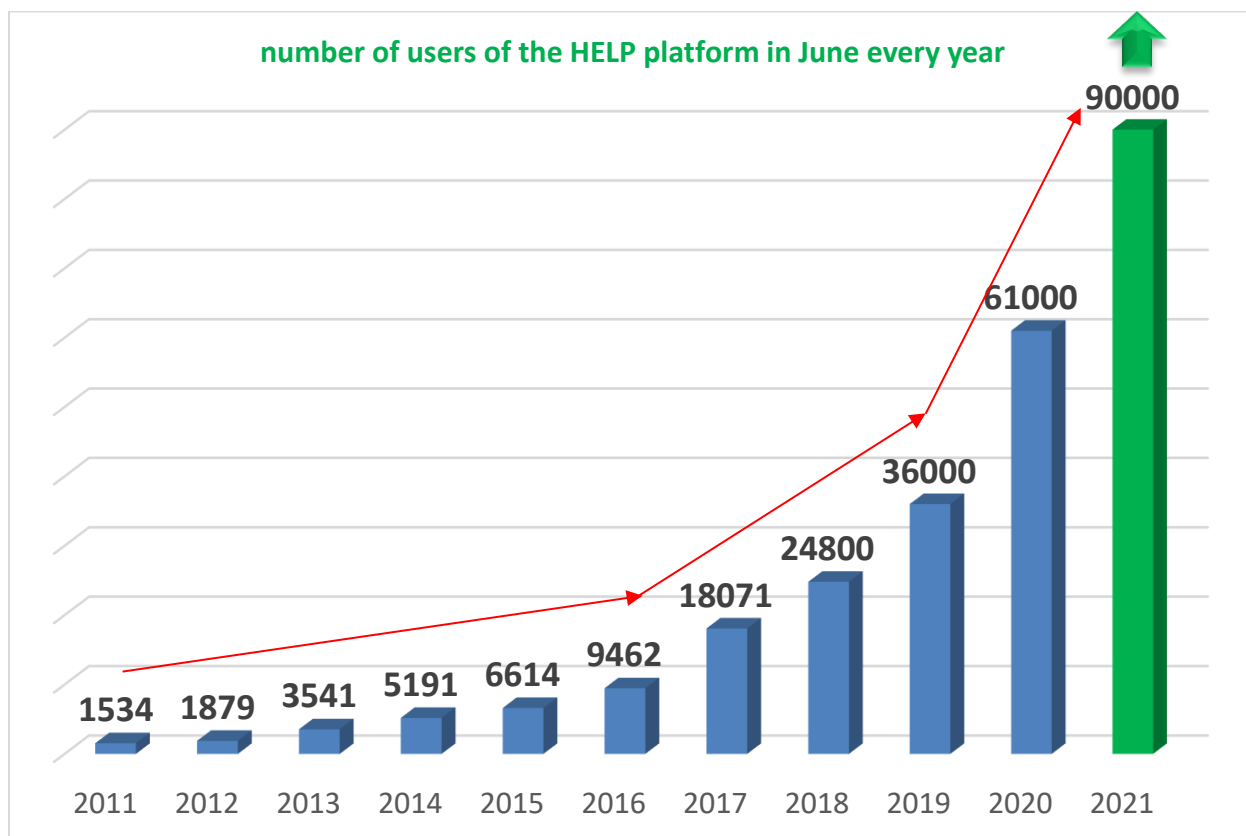
**The HELP Annual Network Conference** is the main gathering of the HELP Network members and partners. It provides a forum for discussion on ways of enhancing human rights training results and on how to improve effective co-operation among all members and partners of the HELP Network. Information on previous HELP Network Conferences is available [here](#).

### II. Current context

2020 and the first half of 2021 was globally marked with **the COVID-19 pandemic**, which gravely affected many aspects of usual life. It also inevitably and seriously influenced human rights and justice training of many national and international providers. Due to the restrictions of movement which have been in place in the Council of Europe member States and beyond, many training activities for justice professionals took place in **online format**.

The COVID-19 pandemic also affected the HELP Programme, in all of its three pillars (the HELP Network, the HELP Platform and courses and the HELP Methodology).

For an illustration, the number of users of the [HELP online platform](#), hosting the [HELP online courses](#), grew from 45.000 in March 2020 to over 90.000 in the beginning of June 2021.



The pandemic did not prevent the functioning of the **HELP Network** – to the contrary, it results with increased contacts with HELP Network members.

In terms of **HELP tutored courses**, an unprecedented number of 130 course editions were launched in 2020, in comparison to approximately 50 in 2019.

The flexible **HELP Methodology** allowed us to adapt quickly to the need to organise the HELP courses fully online, in an efficient and practical way. The HELP Focal and Info Points, as well as the HELP tutors, played a crucial role in ensuring the successful organisation and smooth implementation of the HELP courses for their target groups.

## THE 2021 HELP NETWORK CONFERENCE

### III. Format

Similarly to the [2020 HELP Network e-Conference](#), due to the impossibility to hold it fully presentially, the **2021 HELP Network Conference will be held in a blended format**.

Namely, we are able to host only a very limited number of participants to the 2021 Conference at the Council of Europe premises. HELP Focal and Info Points and longstanding and active HELP Network members and partners have the priority in attending the Conference in person.

The Conference will be **fully streamed online** in three languages: English, French and Russian. The link of the webstream will be published at the dedicated Conference on the [HELP website](#).

#### IV. Thematic focus

The theme of the 2021 HELP Network Conference is **Human rights responses to global challenges**. It will in particular address the topics below:

- ✓ **Key contemporary challenges and HELP's response, focusing on Rule of Law:** rule of law together with democracy and human rights, is one of the key values and cornerstones of our societies. In recent years, it has faced increased threats of different nature and has become a topic of high interest to legal professionals but also other actors and the general public. With a set of HELP courses which will be presented to the Conference participants, including the course on Ethics for judges, prosecutors and lawyers, we join the topical entities of the Council of Europe, as well as the EU and other international actors, in empowering legal professionals in their efforts to preserve the rule of law.
- ✓ **Health and HELP:** the COVID-19 pandemic has posed a global unprecedented challenge. Many people have unfortunately lost their lives and many more were affected in various other serious ways. Health has become the primary topic for us all. The pandemic has had an important impact to the enjoyment of some human rights, and posed serious questions related to management of health systems, equitable access to vaccines, fight against counterfeit medicaments and many others. Some HELP courses, including the course on Bioethics and on Pharmaceutical crime and the MEDICRIME Convention, can provide guidance and support in this respect. We will also look at the impact of the pandemic over social rights.
- ✓ **Environment and human rights:** Another serious threat to the well-being of individuals in Europe and globally, including the effective enjoyments of their human rights, is environmental degradation, requiring a coordinated global response and becoming a topic of top priority for many national and international actors including the Council of Europe. With this in mind, on 2 July the Conference will include a special topical event on Environment and Human Rights and the Council of Europe work in this area.

The Conference will start with a session on **Justice and Human Rights Training** which connects all members of the HELP Network, their primary function being training of justice professionals.

#### V. Objectives

In view of the above mentioned, the **objectives** of the 2021 HELP Annual Network Conference are:

- To discuss with the HELP Network the **current global challenges** for our societies which marked the period preceding the Conference and on the **HELP response to those challenges** through the HELP online courses
- To provide the HELP Network members **a forum for addressing their peers**
- To present **the main developments in the HELP Programme** since the 2020 HELP Network Conference:
  - newly developed or updated HELP courses
  - update on the HELP Projects and initiatives



The following newly developed/updated **HELP courses** will be presented to the participants:

- ✓ [Ethics of Judges, Prosecutors and lawyers](#)
- ✓ [The Environment and Human Rights](#)
- ✓ Business and Human Rights
- ✓ Labour Rights

In addition, the Conference will serve as a forum to announce the upcoming courses, to be published in the following months, on:

- ✓ Anti-corruption
- ✓ Cybercrime

Participants to the Conference will be updated on the **CoE HELP projects and actions** being implemented in the period between the 2020 and 2021 HELP Network Conferences, most of them financially supported by the EU:

Geographical focus
✓ HELP in the EU II Project
✓ HELP in the Western Balkans Project
✓ HELP actions in the Eastern Partnership countries
✓ HELP in the Russian Federation Project
✓ HELP in the South Mediterranean Project
✓ HELP in Central Asia

Thematic focus
✓ Radicalisation Prevention, Judicial Response to Terrorism and International Cooperation in Criminal Matters
✓ HELP in Universities