

Closing remarks

Christos GIAKOUMOPOULOS,
Director General – DG Human Rights and
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Strasbourg, 5 July 2024

Closing session: Past 20, next 20 – Reflections on lessons learnt and steps to take

Chair: Frédéric DOLT

12.15–12.30

HELP in the Council of Europe landscape – (recorded) words from former HELP managers

Tatiana TERMACIC, Head of the Secretariat of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Parliamentary Assembly

Eva PASTRANA, Head of the Criminal Law Division, Council of Europe

12.30-12.45

Closing remarks

Christos GIAKOUMOPOULOS, Director General – DG Human Rights and Rule of Law

Dear Members and Partners of the HELP Network,

As we conclude this year's Conference, I want to thank you - not only for being here, but more generally for your energy and involvement.

This event marks HELP's 20th anniversary, which is a perfect occasion to celebrate our achievements and aspire to further enhance human rights training.

For the European Convention on Human Rights, and other related human rights instruments to be effective at home, they need to be well known, understood and integrated not only in laws, but also in national jurisprudence, in professional practice and decision-making.

And for this, we always need more and better human rights training. For legal professionals, for law students – and many others!

The Committee of Ministers has repeated this time and again in the course of the last two decades, including in its 2019 Recommendation on the system of the ECHR in university education and professional training, or in its 2023 guidelines on preventing and remedying ECHR violations.

And the significance of human rights education was also underlined in the "Reykjavik principles", adopted by the Heads of states and governments at the Fourth Summit.

HELP's anniversary allows us to look back at two decades of change, major crises like pandemics and wars, but also significant milestones in advancing rights and reforms.

These changes impacted our training topics and formats, always striving to meet the needs of legal professionals.

Two courses presented yesterday, on International Humanitarian

Law and Artificial Intelligence, reflect Europe's current state and the CoE's dual role in advancing innovative standards while securing basic human rights. This underscores that democracy, rule of law, and human rights are ongoing pursuits, evolving with society and legal professions.

I believe that over the years, HELP has proven its relevance as a high-quality, cost-effective training solution.

With over 50 courses available in more than 600 language versions and hundreds of national adaptations, it has established itself as an efficient human rights training method.

It ensures that legal professionals across member States are trained on priority human rights topics.

Many of your institutions have successfully implemented HELP courses, demonstrating willingness, creativity, and innovation –

And I would like to thank you very much for that; for your contribution to HELP's work; for using the courses, promoting them, adapting them.

Your Network is the HELP programme's backbone and HELP's success is your success.

We also have representatives of our member states participating in this meeting, and of our partners, including the Council of Europe's main strategic partner, the European Union, as well.

So I would also like to thank them for their confidence and support for HELP, which has never wavered – including in terms of a financial support which we continue to need.

And finally if you allow me, I would like to thank all our staff members who have served the HELP programme over the years, you know many of them very well, in particular the most recent ones –

and you have seen some of them in video messages just now.

This is my last intervention before you in my capacity as a DG, since I am going to retire in a couple of days.

Despite all the challenges Europe and the world is going through, there is one thing I am very confident about: it is that with such a fine group of Ambassadors of our shared European values - all of you, Network members, member states, international partners, Secretariat - HELP will continue to make a very real and concrete difference in terms of national capacity to give effect to human rights.

Thank you again for this, and also for your attention - and I wish you a good and safe return home!