



NEW **DEMOCRATIC PACT**



The New Democratic Pact for Europe – What is it?

The New Democratic Pact – A Commitment for 21st-Century Democratic Security in Europe

The New Democratic Pact is about redefining democracy—making it stronger, more adaptable to old and new challenges, and more inclusive. By leveraging innovation, technology, and collective action, we empower people, reinforce democratic institutions, and drive democratic resilience. The Pact will highlight the importance of democratic security, safeguarding the values that form the foundation of our societies.

The challenges facing democracy today did not arise overnight. Growing disillusionment with the model suggests that, somewhere along the way, expectations were unmet, and promises were unfulfilled. The New Democratic Pact is also about understanding where we have fallen short—what we have done wrong or failed to deliver—and ensuring that democratic institutions truly serve all citizens. This is democracy reimagined and designed for the future, led by the people, and safeguarded by the Council of Europe and its member states.

The Urgency of Democratic Resilience

Democracy is a vital asset. It is imperative to reinvent our responses to old and new threats before it is too late.

For the past 75 years, European countries have built common security, stability, and prosperity through a democratic system based on free and fair elections, fundamental freedoms, and human rights, as protected by the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The Council of Europe (CoE) was established to uphold and safeguard this model.

This collective effort emerged from the devastation of World War II, a conflict rooted in social turmoil, economic hardship, and the systematic erosion of democracy through hate-driven state policies. The lessons of that era led to a commitment to a democratic system that has since underpinned Europe's reunification and progress.

However, today's turbulent times threaten these democratic foundations. The European democratic model, built on shared values, is being weakened by internal and external challenges. A world where power supersedes individual and collective freedoms is taking shape. We must uphold an approach that aligns with the principles of the UN Charter and fosters a true rules-based order. Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine is a stark reminder of what is at stake—supporting Ukraine's resistance is not just about territorial defense but about democratic security itself.

Rebuilding Trust in Democracy

Our greatest challenge is restoring citizens' trust in democracy and its institutions. Just as the CoE played a pivotal role 75 years ago, it must once again lead in fortifying democratic resilience. We must rethink our methods and innovate to defend democracy and the rule of law against both long-standing and emerging threats.

At the 2023 Reykjavík Summit, the CoE Heads of State and Government committed to countering democratic backsliding. They adopted the Reykjavík Principles of Democracy—outlining a shared understanding of democracy and providing a framework for future efforts to protect freedom in Europe.

Pillars of the New Democratic Pact

The CoE's strategy for strengthening democratic resilience in Europe rests on three key pillars:

1. Learning and Practising Democracy by supporting formal and non-formal education initiatives that equip European citizens—especially young people—with the skills, attitudes, and critical thinking necessary for engaged citizenship. It will also be about ensuring equal opportunities for democratic participation and access to rights for all.

2. Protecting Democracy by developing robust responses to internal and external threats, including corruption, electoral interference, and disinformation—particularly the misuse of digital technology and AI. And by safeguarding media freedom as a cornerstone of a healthy democracy. Democratic security is key.

3. Innovating for Democracy by enhancing democratic processes through deliberative and participatory democracy, as well as by harnessing new technologies to improve accessibility, trust, and efficiency in governance. Since Reykjavík, the Council of Europe has launched an ambitious programme addressing key areas such as education, gender equality, youth participation, civil society, media freedom, AI and human rights, culture and heritage, and anti-corruption efforts. A newly established intergovernmental committee on democracy serves as an incubator for innovative policies to strengthen democratic processes and resilience.

The Path Forward: A New Democratic Pact for Europe

Given the critical need for action, we propose the establishment of a New Democratic Pact for Europe, structured around three core objectives:

1. Achieving a Common Goal for Democracy by strengthening commitment among European countries on the future of democracy, grounded in the European Convention on Human Rights and the Reykjavík Principles. And by building political momentum for decisive actions to safeguard and enhance Europe's democratic model.

2. Conducting a Broad Consultation on Democratic Challenges by engaging in an open and critical dialogue on the reasons behind declining public trust in democracy and its institutions. The Council of Europe will be the forum for all views—in the respect of the rights and values protected by the European Convention on Human Rights. This is the only way to revitalise democracy.

3. Translating Consultation Outcomes into Actionable Policies by integrating insights from consultations into intergovernmental processes and implementing new policies at European, national, regional, and local levels.

The Road to 2026

The process leading to the New Democratic Pact will culminate in the 2026 Summit of Heads of State and Government, where crucial political decisions and commitments will be made to reinforce democracy in Europe. The window for action is short—hesitation is not an option. We will work together with other international organisations, civil society and other partners.

The Council of Europe stands ready to fulfill its role in this historic endeavour. The New Democratic Pact for Europe is our path to a future where democracy is unshakable, where every voice matters, institutions inspire trust, and societies thrive on fairness, inclusion, and innovation.