



EDITORIAL

by Matjaž Gruden, Director of Policy Planning



I am delighted to share with you the first Newsletter since my appointment as Director of Policy Planning in January and to inform you about the activities of the Directorate of Policy Planning in the first half of 2015.

Since the beginning of the year, the Directorate of Policy Planning has been assigned two significant

new tasks by the Secretary General, in addition to existing policy planning activities and support to the network of the Schools of Political Studies. We are now also responsible for the preparation of the **Secretary General's 'Annual Report on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe'**; and for the new online **'Platform for the Promotion of the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists'**.

The Secretary General's Report, presented to the Committee of Ministers in May, identifies the biggest challenges to democratic security in Europe. In particular, the Report highlights a lack of judicial independence in many countries and threats to media freedom across the continent. The recommendations made in the Report are followed up by a dialogue between the Secretary General and member states on a bilateral basis.

The new online Platform was recently launched by the Council of Europe, together with the International Federation of Journalists, the European Federation of Journalists, Article 19, the Association of European Journalists and Reporters Without Border. This novel tool is an unprecedented public space where threats to the safety of journalists and freedom of the media can be brought to light.

As to the other well-established activities of our Directorate, a **Policy Planning Seminar** was held in April to discuss the state of play and new challenges regarding democracy and security in Europe. We also launched a new series of **Democratic Security Debates** in Strasbourg to explore from different perspectives the factors other than traditional 'hard security' that favour peace and stability within and between countries.

I hope you will enjoy reading this newsletter and look forward to receiving any reflections and comments you might have.

New Publication

Annual Report on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe



In May, the Secretary General presented the second edition of his Annual Report, entitled 'A shared responsibility for democratic security in Europe'. This edition represents the first consolidated analysis of our member states' capacity to provide security through effective democratic governance, based on the findings of the Council of Europe's monitoring bodies.

The findings of the Report reveal that Europe's democratic shortcomings are greater, deeper and more geographically widespread than previously understood. The Secretary General's overview identifies shortcomings in the conduct of elections, inadequate anti-discrimination laws and pressure on NGOs in many countries as further areas of concern.

The Report includes statistical analysis as well as detailed criteria for assessing different aspects of democratic security and specific plans for follow-up work - including a pan-European action plan for training legal professionals and a new three-year programme on the safety of journalists. The Report makes a series of recommendations on how the Organisation can provide more rapid and effective assistance to its 47 member states.

The Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers discussed the Secretary General's Report at its latest ministerial level session in Brussels in May. The magnitude of the challenges underlined by the Report has prompted a number of proposals that will require concrete follow-up.

This document is available in [PDF format](#).

New Platform to Promote the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists

The newly created Platform is a public space to facilitate the compilation, processing and dissemination of information on serious concerns about media freedom and safety of journalists in Council of Europe member states, as guaranteed under Art. 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights. It aims to improve the protection of journalists, better address threats and violence against media professionals and foster early warning mechanisms and response capacity within the Council of Europe.

The Platform shall enable the Council of Europe bodies and institutions to be alerted on time, in a more systematic way and to take timely and coordinated action when necessary.



PROTECTION OF JOURNALISM SAFETY OF JOURNALISTS

It shall help the Organisation to identify trends and propose adequate policy responses in the field of media freedom.

The Platform was launched on 2 April and by the end of June the five organisations which have partnered with the Council of Europe have reported more than 60 cases of alleged serious media freedom violations in 18 member states.

On the occasion of the World Press Freedom Day on 3 May, the Council of Europe Secretary General stated that “The Platform for the safety of journalists will allow us to be more assertive in defending these rights. Several of these alerts have seen positive developments and I look forward to engaging in dialogue with member states to identify possible remedies to all the other cases of the Platform”.

To read more about the Platform: <http://www.coe.int/fr/web/media-freedom>.

Events

Informal meeting of Policy Planners from Council of Europe member states on ‘Democracy and Security’

On 16 and 17 April, in Strasbourg, an informal meeting brought together policy planning specialists from

Council of Europe member states and representatives of international organisations to exchange on the subject of ‘Democracy and Security’ in Europe. The meeting provided an opportunity for participants to discuss in an informal manner the existing challenges to Europe’s political, social and economic models, and adequate responses by European countries, the Council of Europe and other international bodies.

The Director of Policy Planning of the Council of Europe presented the framework of the **Annual Report on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe** of the Secretary General. The debate was introduced by **Jan-Werner Müller**, Professor of Politics at Princeton University, **Richard Youngs**, Senior Associate at the Democracy and Rule of Law Program at the Carnegie Europe think tank, and **István Gyarmati**, President of the International Centre for Democratic Transition.

New series of Democratic Security Debates



The new series of Democratic Security Debates aims to examine current thinking and dynamics behind the concept of Democratic Security, identify main elements and threats and explore how Democratic Security can strengthen, through different mechanisms related to democracy, human rights and rule of law, the peace and stability in Europe.

Co-organised by the Council of Europe and the Strasbourg-based Ecole Nationale d’Administration (ENA), the debates on Democratic Security feature eminent personalities from the political field, civil society and the academic world. Each time, speakers offer a different perspective on the complex issues related to Democratic Security.

This series was inspired by a call of the Secretary General on Europe’s leaders to show the way by addressing specific challenges while working together to advance democratic security across the continent. In his Annual Report (mentioned above), he concurs that “hard security” remains vital - based on traditional models of deterrence and military capacity. He underlines, however, that alone it can no longer guarantee stability.

Democratic norms and practices are vital foundations for lasting peace. His Report lists the building blocks and parameters for 'democratic security'. While it includes the most important aspects of democratic security, it is nevertheless not exhaustive and the ingredients and conditions for democratic security need to be further studied. The series of debates on Democratic Security aims to support this reflection.

Inaugural debate - Ismail Serageldin on 'Countering Radicalisation and Extremism'



The inaugural debate was introduced by Dr. Ismail Serageldin, Director of Bibliotheca Alexandrina and an important public figure in Egypt, and addressed the rise of extremism and radicalisation and ways we may work together to counter this trend. Dr. Serageldin expounded his vision of democratic security and its components in a presentation on 'Counteracting radicalisation and extremism - promoting mutual knowledge, understanding, tolerance and respect for diversity'. He suggests that religious extremism and terrorism should be defeated through cultural confrontation, i.e. to *'confront ideas with ideas and change the religious discourse, the historical narrative and the public discourse in our societies'*. Maintaining the democratic nature of societies requires pluralism and inclusion built upon *'a coherent historical narrative that gives the ancestors of all the citizens of Europe something to feel proud of, and to recognise themselves in the magnificent enterprise that is the construction of Europe'*. A frank and thought-provoking discussion ensued between Dr. Serageldin and the participants.

The video of the Conference and the text of presentation can be found on the Democracy Debates web site: http://www.coe.int/t/policy-planning/Debates/Democratic_Security_Debates/default_en.asp.

Watch video of Dr Serageldin's interview at the Council of Europe: <http://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/interview-dr-ismail-serageldin-en>.

Council of Europe Schools of Political Studies

Meeting of Directors of Schools of Political Studies



This year's Spring meeting took place in Budva (Montenegro) on 30 - 31 March. The directors exchanged on current challenges and future orientations of the Network of Schools of Political Studies and shared views on past activities and forthcoming ones, including the 4th World Forum for Democracy, to take place in Strasbourg on 18-20 November 2015.

The Directors' meeting also included a workshop on 'Threats to liberal democracy: a challenge to civil society'. Introduced by Hakan Altınay, Director of the European School of Politics in Istanbul, directors explored the merit of claims by some people that the liberal democratic model is not really essential for successful governance. Participants agreed those who work for democratic stability and security need to address such questions very seriously and to continuously work on the quality of democratic governance to convince the sceptical of the superiority of the liberal democratic model.

Second International Meeting of Schools' Alumni



The 2015 Alumni Seminar of the Council of Europe Schools of Political Studies brought together former participants in the Schools - two from each School - on 25 and 26 June in Sarajevo.

The meeting was organised in co-operation with the School of Political Studies of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Participants explored the theme Defending Democracy, Freedom and Human Dignity against Internal and External Threats. The findings of the meeting will provide input to the World Forum for Democracy in November.

Many of the steadily growing number of school alumni attain high-level positions, either in their own countries or internationally, and are in a position to act as multipliers for the values the Schools represent.

Where to find more information

Where to find more information:

- on Policy Planning Activities: www.coe.int/t/policy-planning
- on the Schools of Political Studies: www.coe.int/t/dgap/sps/
- on Council of Europe activities: www.coe.int

For current News & Views, visit the Council of Europe Web TV



Join the Council of Europe on Social Media Networks:

Connect with the Council of Europe on social media and get regular updates on its statements, work and achievements in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe and beyond. Feel free to participate by making comments and sharing the information in your respective networks.

Follow on Twitter:

- . Council of Europe [@coe](https://twitter.com/coe)
- . The Secretary General, Mr Thorbjørn Jagland [@tjagland](https://twitter.com/tjagland)
- . The President of the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), Ms Anne Brasseur [@PACE_President](https://twitter.com/PACE_President)
- . The Human Rights Commissioner, Mr Nils Muznieks [@CommissionerHR](https://twitter.com/CommissionerHR)
- . The European Court of Human Rights [@ECHR_Press](https://twitter.com/ECHR_Press) & [@echrnews](https://twitter.com/echrnews)
- . PACE News [@PACE_News](https://twitter.com/PACE_News)
- . Secretary General Spokesperson [@CoESpokesperson](https://twitter.com/CoESpokesperson)
- . Council of Europe WebTV [@CoEAudioVisual](https://twitter.com/CoEAudioVisual)
- . Platform for the Promotion of the Protection of Journalism and Safety of Journalists [@coeMediaFreedom](https://twitter.com/coeMediaFreedom)
- . Association of Schools of Political Studies [@Networkfordemocracy](https://twitter.com/Networkfordemocracy)
- . No Hate Speech [@nohate_speech](https://twitter.com/nohate_speech)

The Council of Europe is also on Facebook

Share your thoughts with us:

Please send any comment you may have to suzette.saint-marc@coe.int. Please insert 'Newsletter – Sharing thoughts' at the beginning of the "Subject" field - followed by your country / your organisation's name (if relevant) and your profession.