

# COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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## FOREWORD

2022 will be remembered as the year of mass atrocities on European soil. The Russian Federation's military attack on Ukraine has resulted in serious and massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, with disastrous effects on the enjoyment of virtually all human rights by people in Ukraine.

At the outset of Russia's war against Ukraine my Office and I have been engaged in responding to its human rights consequences. In March 2022, we conducted [six emergency missions](#) to countries neighbouring Ukraine hosting people fleeing. I also engaged with human rights defenders and with the Ukrainian authorities.

During the visit to Ukraine in May, together with my team, I witnessed that in only two months, the war had caused widespread human suffering, including the death of thousands of civilians, the displacement of millions, the abduction of children, and numerous cases of torture, extra-judicial executions, arbitrary detention and sexual violence. In Irpin, Bucha, and Borodyanka, I saw evidence of the destruction and heard shocking accounts of the human rights violations that Russian forces caused.

In a [memorandum](#) on the human rights consequences of the war, that I published in July, I warned about the danger of forcible transfer of Ukrainian citizens, including children, to the Russian Federation or Russian-occupied territories. On world children's day, I further noted with concern reports that following a legislative change to facilitate the granting of Russian citizenship to Ukrainian children, some of them had been adopted in Russia in what appears as a deliberate exploitation of these children's vulnerability. In this regard, I emphasised that international humanitarian law prohibits the changing of children's personal status including nationality, by an occupying force.

The appalling crimes committed by Russian forces in Ukraine must not go unpunished. Justice must be done, including through effective cooperation with the International Criminal Court and the provision of long-term support for the Ukrainian justice system.

Justice, remembrance of past human rights violations, and recognition of the suffering of the victims are necessary foundations for a long-term peace based on respect for human rights and the rule of law.

This is urgently needed not only in Ukraine, but also in countries that are still grappling with a violent past. Challenges remain in the fight against impunity for war crimes in some countries of the former Yugoslavia and for crimes committed during the Troubles in Northern Ireland. The lack of truth and justice for thousands of missing persons remains a serious human rights concern in several member states. Facing past human rights violations should be addressed through comprehensive approaches, including legislative measures, prosecutions, reparations, memorialisation and education.

In contrast to the welcoming attitude shown to people fleeing the war in Ukraine, the treatment of asylum seekers, refugees and migrants in Europe in 2022 showed a clear, consistent and deliberate failure by many member states to uphold their international human rights obligations in this area. Pushbacks, refusals to rescue boats in distress, inhumane conditions and treatment are the common features of an approach to migration disproportionately focused on security that endangers human lives. Instead of continuing down this path, member states should focus on providing safe and legal routes, humanitarian assistance along migration routes and search and rescue at sea. It is also crucial to ensure independent monitoring of border control and to put an end to pushbacks, an unlawful and inhumane practice that is widespread at and within Europe's borders.

The space for civil society and the exercise of fundamental freedoms has continued to shrink. Freedom of expression, assembly and association have been seriously affected by increasing repression by state and non-state actors. This has taken the form of restrictive legislation, SLAPPs, arrests and violence against journalists, demonstrators and civil society actors, severely hampering the ability of human rights defenders, journalists and civil society organisations to carry out their legitimate work. Specific groups of human rights defenders have been targeted, in particular those defending the rights of women, of migrants, and of LGBTI people, as well as the environment. States should stop

restricting the work of human rights defenders and start recognising them as key partners in contributing to peace, freedom, justice, and democracy.

Despite some positive developments in women's rights and gender equality, such as the ratification of the Istanbul Convention by the Republic of Moldova, the United Kingdom, and Ukraine, some of the patterns observed in the past have continued or worsened in 2022. One example is digital violence against women and girls, which is another manifestation of gender-based violence that women face in their daily lives, with a negative impact on their safety, physical and mental health, livelihoods, family relationships, dignity, and reputation. Moreover, decisive steps are needed to ensure that women and girls with disabilities can fully enjoy their rights, on an equal basis with others. This includes protection from violence, access to sexual and reproductive health and rights and full participation in decision-making.

Children have been disproportionately affected by the pandemic and the increasing levels of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion in many member states. Anti-rights movements have impacted on the exercise of children's rights. To address this situation, member states should increase the effective participation of children in all aspects of decision-making that affect their lives.

The lack of affordable housing, access to quality health care, the need to reinforce labour rights, and food insecurity are other areas of concern that I have highlighted during the year. In particular, there is a need to address intergenerational poverty and its long-term consequences, including through equitable fiscal policies and sustainable financing of comprehensive and rights-based poverty eradication programmes. Better implementation of the jurisprudence of the European Committee of Social Rights would help to improve the situation.

2022 was also marked by a pervasive climate of intolerance, hostility, and even violence against LGBTI people. The terrorist attack on the eve of Oslo Pride and the murder of two LGBTI people in Bratislava are the tip of an iceberg of scapegoating, disinformation, hate speech or physical attacks against LGBTI people. Online smear campaigns and judicial harassment, as well as violations of the right to freedom of expression and assembly are obstacles that LGBTI people and those who defend their human rights continue to face. The political instrumentalisation of issues related to their human rights, such as the legal recognition of same-sex couples or their right to family life, has only served to increase hostility and disinformation against LGBTI people and to polarise society. Transgender people are particularly targeted in this climate.

I consider this situation as a symptom of a wider problem of regression in the commitment to ensuring equal rights for all. Those who seek to undermine the human rights of LGBTI people often stand against the rights of others, against freedom, democracy, and the rule of law.

Therefore, effectively addressing these concerns requires tackling two structural and interrelated problems common to many member states: the decline of the rule of law and the breakdown of the democratic fabric.

The erosion of the rule of law manifests itself when governments refuse to comply with court rulings, undermine public confidence in the judiciary, violate its independence or weaken its institutions, pressure judges, and reduce parliaments to a rubber-stamp. In such a context, human rights cannot be adequately protected. Unfortunately, some national authorities have enacted legislation that weakens the independence of the judiciary.

In such a situation people have fewer opportunities to have a say in how their society is run, and the gap between them and those in power widens, thus polarising society. This leads to a growing anger towards decision-makers and to dangerous tensions in society. The role of state authorities is to strengthen the range of democratic values, institutions, including national human rights structures, and practices that promote inclusion and participation, and to prevent a reversal of the progress that has been so painstakingly achieved over the decades.

The 2022 events have shown us what can happen when human rights, democracy and the rule of law are flouted, and the common rules established to guarantee international peace are ignored. The Ukrainian people's fight for freedom is a clear message that they reject the rule of violence in favour of the rule of law. The support they have

received from other European countries, including for strengthen the rule of law, the justice system and good governance, is a sign that this is a common aspiration.

This aspiration means that the need for a robust system of human rights protection that guarantees freedoms, justice and human dignity is as pressing as it was when it was established more than 70 years ago.

People in Ukraine and elsewhere in Europe look to us as guarantors of that system. We cannot fail them.

Dunja Mijatović

## 1 COUNTRY WORK

### Introduction

With the easing of restrictions linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, in 2022, Commissioner Mijatović could rely more fully on country visits as an important means of pursuing a continuous, constructive dialogue with member states. During these visits, the Commissioner addressed specific human rights issues that she had identified as requiring particular attention and followed up on the work of her predecessor. While the Commissioner's country work continued to cover all member states of the Council of Europe, the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine had a significant impact on it. Thus, among the issues more prominently covered by the Commissioner's country work in 2022 featured the human rights consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine and the situation of refugees fleeing Ukraine. Other recurrent issues included the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants more generally; transitional justice and social cohesion; freedom of expression and media freedom; freedom of assembly; women's rights and gender equality; children's rights; social rights, including the right to housing and health and labour rights; the human rights of LGBTI people; non-discrimination; and environment and human rights. Reports and other documents published by the Commissioner after these visits contain an analysis of the selected issues and recommendations to member states about possible avenues for improvement. In certain cases, as part of her dialogue with national authorities, the Commissioner addresses letters to them to outline concerns and provide advice on specific issues. All these documents, along with the replies from the authorities, are published on the Commissioner's website and are widely circulated among policymakers, NGOs and the media. The Commissioner also furthers her dialogue on these issues through meetings with the national authorities outside the framework of country visits.

The present chapter contains a brief summary of this work.

### 1.1 Visits, missions and reports

#### ***Report on Malta***

Following a visit to Malta carried out in 2021 (11 to 16 October), on 15 February, the Commissioner published her [report](#) with recommendations on safeguarding media freedom, protecting the life and dignity of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, and strengthening women's rights.

She called on the Maltese authorities to ensure accountability for Daphne Caruana Galizia's murder and prioritise reforms to fully implement the recommendations of the public inquiry report which found the state responsible for her assassination; comply with international standards; involve civil society and ensure accountability and transparency throughout this process; ensure freedom of information; and adopt legislation against SLAPPs (strategic lawsuits against public participation).

Furthermore, the Commissioner urged Malta to increase its capacities and ensure effective co-ordination of search and rescue operations; review its co-operation activities with Libya on migration and suspend any such activities until clear guarantees of their human rights compliance are in place; and ensure accountability for any returns of migrants to Libya resulting from the Maltese authorities' actions. She also urged the authorities to prevent the detention of vulnerable asylum seekers and migrants and arbitrary detention; immediately end the detention of migrant children; protect detained migrants from ill-treatment; allow independent monitoring of the detention places; improve reception conditions; prevent homelessness and destitution among asylum seekers; and ensure the effective protection of unaccompanied minors.

To enhance women's rights and gender equality, the Commissioner called for the adoption of the new draft equality laws, complemented by a comprehensive policy to overcome patriarchal attitudes and stereotypes, increased support for awareness raising, and for measures to improve women's employment situation, reduce the gender pay gap, and advance women's participation in decision making. She urged the authorities to decriminalise abortion, develop comprehensive regulation of women's access to legal and safe abortion, improve the availability of sexual

and reproductive health services, and guarantee equality for all women in the enjoyment of sexual and reproductive health and rights, including by ensuring the availability and affordability of modern contraceptive services and safeguarding access to health care in the light of refusals to provide care on grounds of conscience.

The report is available on the Commissioner's website together with the comments of the Maltese authorities.

### ***Report on Austria***

Following a visit to Austria carried out in 2021 (13 to 17 December), on 12 May, the Commissioner published her [report](#) with recommendations on improving the reception and integration of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and on strengthening women's rights and gender equality.

The Commissioner called on the authorities to address shortcomings in reception conditions of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, through the adoption of harmonised standards regarding reception centres and emphasised the importance of legally strengthening independent and quality legal counselling. The Commissioner further invited the authorities to speed up family reunification procedures, provide beneficiaries of subsidiary protection with the same favourable rules as refugees, and facilitate access to long-term residence and to citizenship. The Commissioner also urged the authorities to ensure that independent and effective investigations are carried out into allegations of pushbacks and to put an end to these practices.

Regarding women's sexual and reproductive health and rights, the Commissioner called on the authorities to complement the sexuality education curricula, to subsidise counselling on contraception and contraceptives and to cover these under public health insurance or reimbursement schemes or provide them free of charge. She also urged the authorities to cover the costs of abortion care under public health insurance and ensure effective access to abortion services throughout the country.

The Commissioner further called for resolute measures to improve the response of the justice system to acts of violence against women. She also stressed the need to raise awareness about the means provided by the legislative package on online hate to victims of digital violence against women, and to safeguard the best interests of the child, including by ensuring that custody rules protect children from any violent parent. The Commissioner underscored that a significant increase in the federal and provincial budgets related to the fight against all forms of violence against women was required to implement all the necessary measures.

As regards gender equality, the Commissioner called on the authorities to address the gender pay gap and gender pension gap as matters of priority and significantly improve the availability of high-quality childcare support to facilitate women's re-entry into the labour market.

The report is available on the Commissioner's website together with the comments of the Austrian authorities.

### ***Visit and report on Georgia***

The Commissioner [visited](#) Georgia from 21 to 24 February. The visit focused on issues pertaining to non-discrimination, labour rights and the environment and human rights. During the visit, the Commissioner met the President of Georgia, Salome Zourabichvili; the Prime Minister, Irakli Garibashvili; the First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, Lasha Darsalia; the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vakhtang Gomelauri; the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civic Equality, Tea Akhvlediani; the Deputy Ministers of Internally Displaced Persons from the Occupied Territories, Labour, Health and Social Affairs, Tamila Barkalaia and Ilia Ghudushauri; and the Minister of Environmental Protection and Agriculture, Otar Shamugia and his Deputy Minister, Nino Tandilashvili. She also met the Vice-Chairman of the Parliament of Georgia, Archil Talakvadze and other members of Parliament. Furthermore, she held meetings with the Public Defender, Nino Lomjaria as well as with representatives of civil society. The Commissioner also travelled to Zugdidi where she met the Chairman of the Government of the Autonomous Republic of Abkhazia, Ruslan Abashidze, and persons living there in protracted displacement, who shared with her accounts of the difficult circumstances of their displacement and their concerns in relation to their integration into Georgian society and access to housing, education and healthcare.

On 15 July, the Commissioner published the [report](#) following her visit to Georgia. In order to ensure that LGBTI people and persons belonging to religious minorities live free from violence and discrimination, the Commissioner called on the authorities to address the inadequate implementation of legal standards and the persistent deficiencies in combating impunity for hate crimes and incitement to violence. Concerning LGBTI people, noting the pervasive discrimination against them in Georgia, she called on the authorities to step up efforts to combat impunity for human rights violations against them, to increase awareness and train relevant categories of professionals on the importance of their role in promoting equality, dignity and non-discrimination. In light of repeated occurrences of LGBTI people having been denied their right to peaceful assembly, the Commissioner called for measures to enable them to freely express their views and assemble. As regards religious minorities, in addition to ensuring the effective investigation and prosecution of hate crimes committed on the grounds of religion, the authorities should remove discriminatory barriers in accessing places of worship and in regulating tax and religious property matters, and foster meaningful partnerships and open dialogue with religious denominations.

The Commissioner welcomed the recently implemented legal and institutional labour reforms and urged the authorities to close the remaining legislative gaps in relation to a minimum wage compliant with international standards, equal access to parental leave, and clear guidelines on the duration and compensation for overtime work. In addition, the authorities should further improve occupational safety at the workplace and promote diversity and equality at work.

As regards human rights and the environment, the authorities should strengthen the implementation of the existing national legal framework; guarantee public access to information and meaningful and transparent public participation in environmental decision-making processes; and improve air quality and the tracking of air pollution and take measures to reduce the risk of environmental disasters.

The report is available on the Commissioner's website, together with the comments of the Georgian authorities.

### ***Emergency missions on the situation of people fleeing Ukraine***

In March, the Commissioner and her Office carried out a series of missions to assess the initial response to the arrival of people fleeing Ukraine.

During a mission to the Republic of Moldova (6 to 8 March), the Commissioner visited a former boarding school in Cărpineni, serving as emergency housing, and a home for mothers and children in Ruseștii Noi. The Commissioner also visited emergency reception centres located at the MoldEXPO international exhibition centre and the Manejul sports hall in Chisinau. Together with a delegation from the OSCE Mission in the Republic of Moldova, the Commissioner travelled to Palanca and visited both sides of the border crossing between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, as well as a temporary reception camp on the Moldovan side. In Chisinau, the Commissioner held meetings with the Minister of Interior, Ana Revenco; State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, Vladimir Cuc; the Ombudsman, Ceslav Panico; and the Children's Rights Ombudsman, Maia Bănărescu.

In her [concluding](#) statement (9 March), the Commissioner called for more support by European states to countries of arrival, in particular the Republic of Moldova. She praised the Moldovan authorities, NGOs and ordinary citizens for coordinating the provision of assistance to meet the basic needs of the people arriving. However, more funding and support, including manpower, skill, and expertise, was urgently needed, as well as longer-term economic, humanitarian and institutional support, in order to help the country urgently scale up its response. The Commissioner also highlighted the importance of providing support for the early identification of vulnerable persons, especially women and children, and for their protection from gender-based violence, human trafficking, and exploitation. The Commissioner also noted that a long-term approach would have to be adopted and integration measures envisaged in good time, including opportunities for child refugees to continue their education and making psychological assistance available to all those who need it.

From 16 to 21 March the Commissioner's office carried out a series of parallel missions to Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic, which were followed by a mission by the Commissioner to the Slovak Republic and the Czech Republic on 21 and 22 March. The missions to Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Slovak Republic comprised



visits to numerous border crossing posts (Beregsurány, Záhony, Tiszabecs and Csengersima – the latter a crossing point with Romania – in Hungary; Hrebenne, Korczowa and Medyka in Poland; Sighetu Marmatiei in Romania; and Vyšné Nemecké, Veľké Slemence and Ubľa in the Slovak Republic); places where people received initial assistance, were registered or were hosted for slightly longer periods; and places for onward transport such as bus and train stations. The Commissioner's staff met with people fleeing Ukraine, volunteers and representatives of non-governmental organisations working in the above-mentioned places, as well as local and regional officials, Ombudsman institutions and national human rights institutions and international organisations. On her visit to Bratislava and Prague, the Commissioner also spoke with many of these groups and interlocutors, and met with the Slovak Minister of Interior, Roman Mikulec and the Slovak State Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs, Ingrid Brocková; as well as the Czech First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior, Vít Rakušan, and the Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs, Jan Lipavský. She also met the Mayor of Bratislava, Matúš Vallo, and the Mayor of Prague, Zdeněk Hřib.

Following these missions, the Commissioner [stressed](#) the need for member states not sharing a border with Ukraine to step up their support for the visited countries. Creating more clarity and predictability on where people moving onward can be appropriately accommodated was crucial not only for the people themselves and the countries now at the forefront of receiving them, but also for reducing the risks of trafficking in human beings and exploitation.

The Commissioner praised the enormous efforts and the extraordinary mobilisation of volunteers, NGOs, religious organisations and charities, as well as local and regional authorities, national human rights structures, border guards, fire and rescue and law enforcement services in the countries visited. However, she noted that relying mainly on such civil society and local efforts was not sustainable and that it was important that state authorities assumed more responsibility, as they were already doing in some of the member states. Preparedness for the arrival of more vulnerable and larger groups of people fleeing the war should be boosted, including access to housing, employment, financial aid and education, and their overall integration.

The Commissioner called for special attention to the protection of specific groups, in particular in view of the high risk of trafficking in human beings, but also in relation to access to sexual and reproductive health services, the situation of unaccompanied and separated children, as well as Roma, LGBTI people, older persons, and persons with disabilities.

### ***Visit and memorandum on Ukraine***

From 2 to 7 May, the Commissioner carried out a [visit](#) to Ukraine's capital Kyiv and its region as an element of her engagement in the response to the human rights consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine. During her visit, the Commissioner met with the First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Emine Dzhaparova; the Minister of Justice, Denys Maliuska; the Deputy Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, Ihor Zhovkva; the then Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Iryna Venediktova; the then Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights, Lyudmyla Denisova; the Government's Commissioner for Gender Equality Policy, Kateryna Levchenko; the mayor of Kyiv, Vitali Klitschko; and mayors and municipal officials from several localities in the Kyiv region. She also met with the Chairman of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Refat Chubarov, many human rights defenders and representatives of civil society, international organisations, non-governmental organisations, and conducted interviews with victims and witnesses of serious human rights violations and their relatives.

On 8 July, the Commissioner published a [memorandum](#) on the human rights consequences of the war in Ukraine. In it, she observed that the Russian Federation's attack against Ukraine had resulted in serious and massive violations of human rights and international humanitarian law, with disastrous effects on the enjoyment of virtually all human rights by people in Ukraine. The Commissioner was confronted with compelling evidence of patterns of violations attributable to Russian and Russian-controlled troops. These included violations of the right to life, including arbitrary killings and enforced disappearances; violations of the right to property, including massive destruction of civilian infrastructure; cases of torture and ill-treatment; gender-based violence and war-related sexual violence; and violations of the right to liberty and security, including abductions and arbitrary or incommunicado detention. Identifiable patterns of certain types of violations, including attacks of a widespread or systematic character, pointed to the possible qualification of many such violations as war crimes or crimes against humanity.

The Commissioner's memorandum called for the prompt investigation of the reported widespread practice of forcible transfer of Ukrainian citizens to non-government-controlled areas of Ukraine or to the territory of the Russian Federation. All humanitarian evacuations should be voluntary, safe, and informed, and the Commissioner called on members of the international community to support any efforts which may facilitate the return of Ukrainian citizens who have been transferred to the Russian Federation against their will.

Noting numerous reports of war-related sexual violence committed by Russian troops, the Commissioner observed that while all such allegations should be duly investigated, priority should be given to the creation of safe conditions for survivors, ensuring their effective access to redress and justice, and the protection of their dignity and well-being.

The memorandum also focused on the situation of several categories of vulnerable persons who in the Commissioner's view required special and urgent attention, including children, older persons, persons with disabilities, persons internally and externally displaced by the war, and journalists and media workers covering the war.

The Commissioner reiterated her call for respect of human rights and international humanitarian law and stressed the obligation to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of gross violations of human rights and grave breaches of international humanitarian law. She welcomed the actions taken by the Ukrainian authorities in advancing accountability and encouraged them to continue to align the country's legal framework with the relevant international standards. Stressing the importance of effective coordination in the field of justice among domestic and international accountability mechanisms and actors and the need to prioritise the interests of victims and their families, she called for cooperation with the International Criminal Court and the continued provision of long-term support to the Ukrainian justice system.

The memorandum is available on the Commissioner's website.

### ***Mission and memorandum on Kosovo\****

The Commissioner carried out a [mission](#) to Kosovo from 30 May to 3 June, focusing on issues relating to transitional justice and social cohesion, freedom of the media, and issues related to women's rights and gender equality.

During the mission, the Commissioner met with the President, Vjosa Osmani-Sadriu; the Prime Minister, Albin Kurti; the First Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration, Development and Dialogue, Besnik Bislimi; the Third Deputy Prime Minister for Minority Issues and Human Rights, Emilija Redžepi; the Minister of Justice, Albulena Haxhiu; the Minister of Internal Affairs, Xhelal Sveçla; and the Minister of Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, Arbërie Nagavci. She also met with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK); the Head of the OSCE Mission; the EU Special Representative; the Head of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX); and the Chief of Mission of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Furthermore, she held a meeting with the Ombudsperson, Naim Qelaj.

Both in Pristina and in North Mitrovica/Mitrovicë the Commissioner met with civil society organisations active in the field of transitional justice and women's rights, as well as representatives of the media sector. In addition, the Commissioner also visited and met with a member of the clergy of the Visoki Dečani Monastery, a UNESCO world heritage site, and met with a returnee from a Serb non-majority community in Gjakovë/Đakovica

Following the mission, the Commissioner published a [memorandum](#) on 18 October where she noted the need for Kosovo to tackle shortcomings in the investigation, prosecution and trying of war-related crimes now under the responsibility of its justice system and enhance cooperation with the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office. She encouraged cooperation between Belgrade and Pristina on the search for persons who

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\* All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population, shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999) and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo.

remain missing as a result of the conflict. The Commissioner further underscored the need to ensure all civilian war victims are given access to reparations and safe conditions to come forward, as well as the need to address obstacles to sustainable returns.

The Commissioner called for prompt implementation of the judgment of the Constitutional Court concerning the Visoki Dečani Monastery. She also underlined the importance of addressing ethnic divisions in public education by developing a single education system and recommended enhancing the implementation of the Law on the Use of Languages.

Regarding media freedom, while noting an overall diverse media landscape, the Commissioner called for stepping up the implementation of the existing relevant legal framework, notably regarding access to information. She also stressed the importance of ensuring that journalists can conduct their work free from pressure, threats and physical attacks, and emphasised the need to provide sustainable funding for the Press Council and the public broadcaster RTK.

The Commissioner noted the need for countering gender inequalities in women's access to education, healthcare, property rights and inheritance, participation and representation in public life, as well as for harmonisation of domestic legislation with the Istanbul Convention. Kosovo should also continue promoting gender equality and women's empowerment as tools in the prevention of gender-based violence.

The memorandum is available on the Commissioner's website.

### ***Visit and report on the United Kingdom***

The Commissioner visited the United Kingdom (UK) from 27 June to 1 July 2022, with a focus on the overall human rights landscape, children's rights, and specific issues relating to Northern Ireland (especially the legacy of the Troubles). During the visit the Commissioner met with the Lord Chancellor, Secretary of State for Justice and Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP; the Minister of State (Minister for South and Central Asia, North Africa, United Nations and the Commonwealth) of the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office, Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon; and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice, Tom Pursglove MP. She also met with the Equality and Human Rights Commission, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Victims and Survivors and the Victims and Survivors Forum, and the office of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People. In addition, the Commissioner met with civil society and academics, and with children and young people on different topics covered by the visit. In the context of the visit, the Commissioner also held online meetings with the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State of the Northern Ireland Office, Lord Caine; the Welsh Minister for Justice, Jane Hutt MS; the Welsh Counsel General and Minister for the Constitution, Mick Antoniw MS; the Scottish Minister for Equalities and Older People, Christina McKelvie MSP; and the Scottish Minister for Children and Young People, Clare Haughney MSP; as well as the Scottish Human Rights Commission and the Children and Young People's Commissioner of Scotland.

On 9 December the Commissioner published her [report](#) following her visit to the UK. She expressed concern about an increasingly antagonistic attitude towards human rights by the UK government, in view of recent and proposed changes to laws and policies, the increasing presentation of human rights as an obstacle to the effective implementation of government policies, and the verbal targeting of human rights defenders. The report sets out how the Bill of Rights would weaken rather than strengthen human rights in the UK. It also addresses the impact of the Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act, especially its chilling effect on the right to peaceful assembly, which would be worsened if the Public Order Bill is adopted. The Commissioner noted a significant regression in the observance of the UK's international obligations to uphold the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants, the toxic public discourse towards trans persons, and the impact that the extradition of Julian Assange would have on media freedom.

The Commissioner reiterated the need to combat child poverty, including through comprehensive strategies and establishing binding targets, as well as by addressing structural elements of the welfare and benefits system, tackling food insecurity among children, and realising their right to adequate housing. Other measures recommended

comprise reviewing the use of stop and search powers against children, including the practice of strip-searching, raising the minimum age of criminal responsibility to bring it in line with international standards, and ensuring that 16- and 17-year-olds can fully benefit from child-friendly justice. The Commissioner called on the authorities to build on good practices to promote the participation of children in decision-making, including by lowering the voting age where applicable.

The Commissioner encouraged the UK government to consider withdrawing the Legacy Bill in view of the widespread opposition in Northern Ireland and the serious issues of compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights it raises and called for any steps on legacy to place the rights and needs of victims at its heart. The report also addressed the need for steps to be taken to enhance overall human rights protection in Northern Ireland, including by providing adequate resources to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission so that it can carry out its functions fully. The Commissioner highlighted the urgency of protecting journalists, as well as other groups at risk, in the light of continuing threats against them, and reiterated that there can be no impunity for the murders of journalists Martin O’Hagan and Lyra McKee. She also recommended tackling the widespread segregation in the Northern Ireland education system, including by significantly expanding the number of integrated schools, as a crucial step to move forward as a society. Finally, the Commissioner highlighted the need for adequate and sustained funding of abortion services in Northern Ireland to safeguard women’s sexual and reproductive health and rights.

The report is available on the Commissioner’s website together with the comments of the UK authorities.

### ***Visit to Spain***

During her [visit](#) to Spain from 21 to 25 November, the Commissioner focused on issues pertaining to social rights, in particular the rights to housing and to health, freedoms of expression and assembly, and the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. She met with the President of the Congress of Deputies, Ana Meritxell Batet Lamaña; the Minister of Justice, Pilar Llop Cuenca; the Minister of Inclusion, Social Security and Migration, Jose Luis Escrivá Belmonte; and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, José Manuel Albares Bueno. She also met with the Secretary of State for Health, Silvia Calzon Fernández; the Secretary of State for Equality and against Gender Violence, Ángela Rodríguez; the Secretary of State for Security, Rafael Pérez; the Secretary of State for the 2030 Agenda, Lilith Verstryngge; and the Secretary of State for the European Union, Pascual Ignacio Navarro Ríos. The Commissioner also met with the Ombudsman. She further held meetings with civil society and international organisations. She also travelled to Melilla, where she met with officials and civil society and visited the border perimeter, including Beni Enzar crossing point and Barrio Chino.

The Commissioner noted that while Spain has made significant efforts to advance the protection of social rights in recent years, the authorities should allocate resources transparently and sustainably and adopt common standards, in co-operation with authorities at central and local levels, to address inequalities in access to social rights and ensure that the needs of the most vulnerable are met. As regards access to adequate housing, she urged the authorities to address long-standing issues, such as the low social housing stock, high costs for renting or buying a home, forced evictions, and rising levels of homelessness. The Commissioner also urged the authorities to strengthen universal access to quality public healthcare for all throughout Spain, noting that regional differences are particularly notable in the provision of primary healthcare and specialised care.

As regards freedom of expression and assembly, the Commissioner called for the 2015 Citizens’ Security Law to be brought fully in line with European and international human rights standards. She highlighted that all allegations of police abuse in this context must be investigated and made fully accessible to judicial review. She also recommended strengthening the overall accountability framework for law enforcement officials and ensuring an adequate oversight of the use of coercive powers and imposition of sanctions.

The Commissioner noted that access to rights and protection for many refugees and asylum seekers varies significantly throughout the country and remains challenging. Based on her findings from her discussions in Madrid and in Melilla, the Commissioner concluded that there is no genuine and effective access to asylum at the border between Nador, in Morocco, and Melilla and urged the authorities to address the situation comprehensively to make sure that those in need of protection can access the territory through legal and safe means. She also highlighted that

Spain should not directly or indirectly contribute to human rights violations through measures taken to implement their migration co-operation with third countries and underscored the urgent need for Council of Europe member states to improve responsibility-sharing and solidarity measures between them.

The Commissioner's report on her visit to Spain is forthcoming.

## 1.2 Continuous dialogue

### ***Letter to the President of Azerbaijan on the adoption of a new media law***

On 25 January, the Commissioner published a [letter](#) to the President of Azerbaijan, Ilham Aliyev, concerning the compliance of the new media law with human rights standards on free and independent media and pluralism. The Commissioner expressed concern that the law granted discretionary powers to state authorities via licencing and otherwise restricting journalists' work and limiting the financial and operational activities of media entities. She stressed that this affected the ability of journalists and mass media to work freely and independently and undermined the right of individuals to receive information. She also referred to her previous concerns about the lack of pluralism and arbitrary interferences with media freedom in the country and invited the President to use his authority to return the law to the Parliament for its substantial revision in line with the Council of Europe standards on media freedom.

The letter is available on the Commissioner's website along with the reply of the Azerbaijani authorities.

### ***Letter to the Parliament of Spain on the review of the 2015 Law on Citizens' Safety***

On 11 February, the Commissioner published a [letter](#) addressed to the President of the Interior Committee of the Congress of Deputies of Spain, José Luis Ábalos Meco, the President of the Congress of Deputies, Ana Meritxell Batet Lamaña, and the President of the Senate, Ander Gil García. Reiterating the concerns expressed in 2018 about the 2015 Law on Citizens' Safety, she called on the Parliament to ensure that the review of the Law is used as an opportunity to bring it fully in line with human rights standards, in particular as regards the provisions impinging on freedoms of expression and assembly, the right to seek asylum and the prohibition of *refoulement*. She highlighted the difficulty of appealing administrative sanctions imposed on the grounds of the Law and the need to strengthen the overall accountability framework for law enforcement officials.

The letter is available on the Commissioner's website together with the reply from the Presidents of the Senate and the Congress of Deputies.

### ***Letter to the Home Secretary of the United Kingdom on the possible extradition of Julian Assange***

On 18 May, the Commissioner published a [letter](#) in which she called on the Home Secretary Priti Patel not to extradite Julian Assange. Writing in view of the impending decision on Mr. Assange's extradition, the Commissioner noted that the wider human rights implications of doing so had not yet been adequately considered in the extradition proceedings. She highlighted that the indictment by the United States against Mr. Assange raised important questions about the protection of those that publish classified information in the public interest, including information that exposes human rights violations. She concluded that allowing Mr. Assange's extradition on this basis would have a chilling effect on media freedom and could ultimately hamper the press in performing its task as purveyor of information and public watchdog in democratic societies.

The letter is available on the Commissioner's website together with the reply from the Home Secretary.

### ***Letter to the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice of Bulgaria on improving protection from violence against women and domestic violence***

On 20 May, the Commissioner published a [letter](#) to the Prime Minister, Kiril Petkov, and the Minister of Justice of Bulgaria, Nadezhda Iordanova, calling on the Bulgarian authorities to improve the legal and institutional protection

of victims of violence against women and domestic violence. She especially urged the authorities to repeal the requirement of “systematic” violence provided by the Criminal Code regarding offences committed in the context of domestic violence, which exposes victims to serious risks, limits the possibilities to sanction perpetrators and sends a dangerous message to society that domestic violence is acceptable. She also reiterated her previous recommendations about the need to address the lack of support services for victims of domestic violence and to enhance measures to promote equality between women and men, including through awareness raising, training, and education to challenge sexist prejudices.

The letter is available on the Commissioner’s website together with the reply from the Minister of Justice.

***Letter to the President of the Estonian Parliament regarding amendments to the State Borders Act***

On 23 May, the Commissioner published a [letter](#) to the President of the Estonian Parliament, Jüri Ratas, calling for amendments to a bill which, if adopted, would allow border guards to refuse applications for international protection if not made at the designated border crossings, and pushbacks in situations of emergency with a mass influx of migrants. The Commissioner stressed the importance of individual assessments to protect against *refoulement* and uphold the human rights of people arriving at the border. Even when dealing with challenging border situations, Council of Europe member states should respect human rights and treat migrants and asylum seekers humanely. Having expressed her deep appreciation for Estonia’s generous welcome of refugees from Ukraine, she noted that all people in need of protection should be handled in a fair manner, irrespective of their background and the manner of their arrival.

The letter is available on the Commissioner’s website together with the reply from the Chair of the Constitutional Committee of the Estonian Parliament.

***Letter to the Minister of the Interior of Hungary on refugee protection issues***

On 21 June, the Commissioner published her [letter](#) to the Minister of the Interior of Hungary, Sándor Pintér, regarding refugee protection issues. She expressed appreciation to the Hungarian authorities and society for welcoming those fleeing the war in Ukraine but raised concerns about the longer-term perspectives for non-Ukrainians not covered by the temporary protection scheme who had no possibility to apply for asylum in Hungary. The Commissioner stressed that the differentiation by government officials of Ukrainians as ‘real refugees’ and those fleeing atrocities and war elsewhere as economic migrants was contradictory to the core principle that human rights exist to protect everyone and urged the Minister to pursue the establishment of an asylum system in line with Hungary’s international protection obligations. This would benefit all persons fleeing Ukraine who did not fall under the temporary protection scheme and everyone else seeking a fair assessment of their asylum claim in Hungary.

The letter is available on the Commissioner’s website.

***Letter to the Minister of Interior of Spain on the deaths of migrants at Melilla’s border***

On 13 July, the Commissioner published her [letter](#) to the Minister of the Interior of Spain, Fernando Grande-Marlaska Gómez, urging the authorities to conduct an independent, full and effective investigation into the events leading to the deaths of at least 23 migrants who attempted to cross the fence between Nador, in Morocco, and Melilla on 24 June. Stressing that border control measures, including in co-operation with other states, must not directly or indirectly contribute to human rights violations, the Commissioner requested information concerning the steps the Spanish government intends to take to ensure that co-operation in the field of migration prioritises human rights in full compliance with Spain’s international obligations.

The letter is available on the Commissioner’s website together with the reply of the Minister of Interior of Spain.

***Letter to the Minister of the Interior of Finland regarding amendments to the Border Guard Act***

On 4 August, the Commissioner published a [letter](#) to the Minister of Interior of Finland, Krista Mikkonen, concerning amendments to the Border Guard Act, which give the government the power to restrict border access and concentrate asylum applications at one or more border crossings in specific situations. This could deprive individuals of the effective possibility to claim international protection. She therefore called for safeguards to ensure that the amendments do not lead to human rights violations and stressed the importance of examining each case individually. The Commissioner also referred to the proposal to amend the Aliens Act to allow for border procedures. She noted that this should not deprive asylum seekers of a thorough examination of their applications and recommended that unaccompanied minors and other vulnerable people be excluded from these procedures.

The letter is available on the Commissioner's website together with the reply of the Minister of Interior.

***Letter to the Minister of Interior of Latvia on the situation at the border with Belarus***

On 9 August, the Commissioner published her [letter](#) to the Latvian Minister of the Interior, Kristaps Eklons, expressing concern about reports of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants having been violently prevented from entering Latvia from Belarus, held in inhumane conditions in the forest, denied access to the asylum procedure, and forced into signing voluntary return declarations. She urged the Latvian authorities to conduct an independent and thorough investigation resulting in full accountability for any abuses that might have occurred. She also called for full access to the border area by representatives of civil society and the media to ensure that adequate humanitarian assistance and legal aid could be provided to all people in need. She underlined that Latvia remains bound to protect its borders in a fully human rights compliant manner despite the significant challenges it faces in relation to irregular border crossings.

The letter is available on the Commissioner's website together with the reply from the Minister of the Interior.

***Letter to the Minister of Migration of the Netherlands on reception conditions for asylum seekers***

On 2 September, the Commissioner published her [letter](#) to the Dutch Minister for Migration, Eric van der Burg, about asylum reception conditions in the Netherlands. The Commissioner's letter followed a further worsening of the situation, especially at the Ter Apel registration centre. The conditions appeared to fall short of even the minimum standards under Article 3 of the ECHR. The Commissioner urged the government to take all necessary measures to effectively protect the right to health of those involved, to promptly identify vulnerable people and provide them with appropriate accommodation. The Commissioner further stressed that any steps to address the current situation should be fully in line with the Netherlands' international obligations. She also encouraged the authorities to work towards a more sustainable system of reception.

The letter is available on the Commissioner's website along with the reply of the Minister for Migration.

***Letter to the Prime Minister of Malta on strengthening the protection of the media and access to information***

On 6 October, the Commissioner published a [letter](#) to the Prime Minister of Malta, Robert Abela, urging the Maltese authorities to ensure that legislative work launched following the public inquiry report into the assassination of Daphne Caruana Galizia complies with international standards and is fully open to public scrutiny and participation. She called on the authorities to ensure broad public consultation on draft legislation concerning the media sector and strategic lawsuits against public participation; strengthen the protection of journalists' safety; increase efforts to identify and bring to justice all those responsible for Daphne Caruana Galizia's murder; avoid measures impinging on media freedom and the right to access information of public interest; and set out a plan to implement the recommendations of the public inquiry report and communicate it clearly to the public.

The Commissioner's letter is available on her website, along with the reply from the Prime Minister.

***Letter to the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration of Belgium on asylum reception conditions***

On 21 December, the Commissioner published her [letter](#) to the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, Nicole de Moor, about asylum reception conditions in Belgium. The Commissioner expressed concern about the lack of available accommodation in reception facilities and delays in the registration and processing of asylum applications which have serious consequences for the human rights of asylum seekers, including their right to health and their access to shelter and other basic needs. She sought information from the authorities about steps they envisage to take to ensure the provision of accommodation and material assistance to asylum seekers and to address the structural shortcomings in the asylum system in Belgium.

The letter is available on the Commissioner's website along with the reply of the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration of Belgium.

***Letter to the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister for Public Order and Security and Minister of Interior of Bulgaria on pushbacks***

On 21 December, the Commissioner published a [letter](#) to the Prime Minister, Galab Donev, and the Deputy Prime Minister for Public Order and Security and Interior Minister of Bulgaria, Ivan Demerdzhiev, expressing concern about media reports regarding pushbacks at Bulgaria's land borders and requesting information on the investigations launched by the authorities into allegations of unlawful detention and ill-treatment of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants and of situations which have led to the death or injury of those trying to cross the border into Bulgaria. She called on the Bulgarian authorities to safeguard the right to life of asylum seekers and migrants, protect them from ill-treatment, and ensure that they are not being forced back across borders without an individual assessment of their human rights protection needs.

The letter is available on the Commissioner's website, together with the reply from the Deputy Prime Minister for Public Order and Security and Minister of Interior.

### **1.3 Meetings with authorities**

***Meeting with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia***

On 19 April, the Commissioner held a meeting in Strasbourg with Lasha Darsalia, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, during which they discussed co-operation between her Office and the Georgian authorities following her visit to the country in February 2022.

***Meeting with the Secretary of State for the European Union in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain***

On 28 April, the Commissioner met with Pascual Ignacio Navarro Rios, Secretary of State for the European Union in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Spain. They discussed issues of common interest including developments concerning the human rights situation in Europe.

***Meeting with the President of the National Assembly of Armenia***

On 9 June, the Commissioner met with Alen Simonyan, President of the National Assembly of Armenia, and discussed recent developments in the field of human rights in Armenia.

***Meeting with the Joint Committee on Human Rights of the UK Parliament***

On 14 June, the Commissioner met with the Joint Committee on Human Rights (JCHR) of the UK Parliament. They exchanged views on the recently introduced Bill of Rights Bill, which would repeal and replace the Human Rights Act 1998. They also discussed issues around the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, including in view of the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill, as well as other recent developments in relation to human rights in the UK, particularly in the areas of policing and of asylum and migration.



***Meeting with the Prime Minister of Iceland***

On 20 June, the Commissioner met with Katrín Jakobsdóttir, Prime Minister of Iceland. They discussed current human rights challenges, both in general and in the context of the Icelandic Presidency of the Committee of Ministers from November 2022 to May 2023.

***Meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence of Ireland***

On 21 June, the Commissioner met with Simon Coveney, Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence, in Strasbourg. They discussed issues of common interest, focusing on several human rights challenges facing Europe, both in general and in the context of the Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

***Meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland***

On 21 June, the Commissioner met with Pekka Haavisto, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, in Strasbourg. The discussion covered various human rights issues of common interest.

***Meeting with the President of the Hellenic Republic***

On 22 June, the Commissioner met with Katerina Sakellariopoulou, President of the Hellenic Republic, in Strasbourg, with whom various human rights issues, including those pertaining to the consequences of the war in Ukraine, were discussed.

***Meeting with His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands***

On 23 June, the Commissioner met His Majesty King Willem-Alexander of the Netherlands in the context of his working visit to the Council of Europe. His Majesty was accompanied by the Minister for Legal Protection, Franc Weerwind. They exchanged on various recent general developments in Europe affecting human rights, as well as specific topics of mutual interest.

***Meeting with the Prosecutor General of Ukraine***

On 14 October, the Commissioner met in Strasbourg with Andriy Kostin, Ukraine's Prosecutor General. The Prosecutor General presented his vision for achieving justice and redress for victims and survivors of human rights violations resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the steps taken by his office to hold those responsible accountable. During the meeting, the Commissioner and the Prosecutor General also discussed the sensitivities of investigating war-related sexual violence while avoiding the re-traumatisation of victims, and the situation of Ukrainian children transferred to Russia and Russian-controlled territory of Ukraine.

***Meeting with the Vice-President of the Council of State of the Netherlands***

On 18 October, the Commissioner met with Thom de Graaf, Vice-President of the Council of State of the Netherlands. During the meeting, the Commissioner provided information about her mandate, interaction with the ECHR system, and her engagement with civil society. Other topics of discussion concerned democratic oversight of intelligence services, including in view of legislative changes in the Netherlands.

***Meeting with the Minister of Justice and Security of the Netherlands***

On 19 October, the Commissioner met with Dilan Yesilgöz-Zegerius, Minister of Justice and Security of the Netherlands. They discussed issues related to asylum, including reception conditions in the Netherlands, in view of the Commissioner's earlier [letter](#) on this topic, as well as the importance of protecting freedom of expression and freedom of assembly, and the issue of repatriation of nationals of Council of Europe member states, especially children, held in camps in North-East Syria or detained in Iraq.

### ***Meetings with the President of Ireland and the Minister of State for European Affairs of Ireland***

On 25 October, in Dublin, the Commissioner met with the President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, jointly with three human rights defenders: the President of Homo Faber (Poland), Anna Dąbrowska; the Associate Director of the Europe and Central Asia Division of Human Rights Watch, Tanya Lokshina; and the Executive Director of the Centre for Civil Liberties (Ukraine), Oleksandra Romantsova. The Commissioner also met with Thomas Byrne, the Irish Minister of State for European Affairs, to discuss issues of common concern.

### ***Online meeting with the Minister of the Interior of Finland to follow up on letter of 27 July***

On 8 November, the Commissioner had an online meeting with Krista Mikkonen, the Minister of Interior of Finland. This meeting allowed for further discussion of the Commissioner's [letter](#) to the Minister and the difficulties faced by member states in tackling the instrumentalisation of migration in a human rights compliant manner, as well as the protection of human rights defenders from abroad.

### ***Meeting with the Minister of Justice of Slovenia***

On 30 November, the Commissioner met in Strasbourg with the Slovenian Minister of Justice, Dominika Švarc Pipan. They discussed several developments of human rights significance in Slovenia, including the opening of the first Barnahus house for children, the adoption of the law on equal rights for same-sex partners, the law on strengthening the independence of the public broadcaster, steps to repair excessive limitation of freedom of assembly, the creation of a governmental task force on combating hate speech, and the ratification of the Trømso convention on access to official documents.

## **2 THEMATIC ACTIVITIES**

### **Introduction**

In 2022, the Commissioner covered a wide range of human rights themes. Particular attention was paid to the impact of the war in Ukraine on human rights; the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants; media freedom, the safety of journalists and freedom of expression; women's rights and gender equality; the human rights of LGBTI people; transitional justice, especially in the former Yugoslavia; and freedom of peaceful assembly. The Commissioner continued to highlight children's rights; the human rights of people with disabilities, of Roma and Travellers and of older persons; and combating racism and intolerance. Social rights, environmental protection and human rights and human rights education were also among the topics covered.

#### **2.1 Impact of the war in Ukraine on human rights**

The Russian Federation's armed aggression against Ukraine has had a major impact on the Commissioner's work in 2022. From the first days of the invasion, the Commissioner has been actively engaged in responding to its consequences for human rights.

In addition to the missions to countries neighbouring Ukraine, the visit to Ukraine in May and the publication of the ensuing memorandum on the human rights consequences of the war in Ukraine (see under 'Country Work – Visits, Missions and Reports'), the Commissioner's engagement on the human rights consequences of the war in Ukraine throughout the year included many direct exchanges with Ukrainian authorities, institutions and human rights defenders, as well as numerous statements on specific human rights issues and the situation of particularly vulnerable persons.

On 24 February, the first day of the Russian aggression, the Commissioner issued a [statement](#) in which she urged the Russian authorities to immediately put a stop to all military actions in Ukraine and to adhere strictly to international humanitarian and human rights law, and called on all Council of Europe member states to stand in

unity and solidarity with Ukraine and to receive people fleeing Ukraine with open arms to help protect their dignity, safety, and human rights. One week into the invasion, on 1 March, the Commissioner [reiterated](#) her call on the Russian authorities to put an end to the war.

On 6 April, the Commissioner [reacted](#) to reports of extrajudicial killings of civilians in Bucha and other localities in the Kyiv region previously under the control of Russian troops. On 8 April, she [reacted](#) to reports of a Russian ballistic missile attack on the railway station in Kramatorsk in eastern Ukraine, which claimed the lives of dozens of civilian evacuees and injured hundreds more. On 31 May, the Commissioner [condemned](#) an attack on a convoy evacuating civilians in the Luhansk region, in which a French journalist was killed. On 28 June, she [expressed](#) shock at seeing images of the inferno caused by a Russian missile strike on a busy shopping mall in the city of Kremenchuk. In a [statement](#) issued on 10 October, the Commissioner reacted to another barrage of missile and rocket strikes carried out by Russia on busy urban areas and electricity infrastructure in Ukraine.

On several occasions, the Commissioner paid particular attention to the dire humanitarian situation in Ukraine's south-eastern city of Mariupol, affected by incessant shelling by Russian troops, which had killed thousands of the city's residents and erased its infrastructure. On 10 March, she [expressed](#) her dismay at the atrocious consequences of the reported bombing and destruction of a children's hospital and maternity ward in the city. On 17 March, she [called](#) for an urgent ceasefire and a humanitarian agreement to allow relief efforts to reach the hundreds of thousands of the city's inhabitants. She reiterated that call in a follow-up statement [issued](#) on 28 March. On 20 April, the Commissioner again [expressed](#) concern about the lives and human rights of the people trapped by intense fighting in Mariupol, calling for the immediate provision of humanitarian corridors to enable civilians to evacuate to safety and for captured soldiers and those who surrender, as well as the wounded and sick, to be treated humanely and with respect for their inherent dignity and basic human rights.

Ensuring accountability for human rights violations committed during the war remained high on the Commissioner's agenda. On 18 March, the Commissioner met online with the then Prosecutor General of Ukraine, Iryna Venediktova, to discuss ways of ensuring accountability for war crimes committed in Ukraine, protecting children's rights, and safeguarding the needs of children who are victims of human rights violations committed during the war. On 20 May, the Commissioner met again online with the Prosecutor General to discuss an opportunity to raise public awareness on war-related sexual violence in Ukraine through a [podcast](#) hosted by the Alliance for Peacebuilding, and to relay useful information about technical and documentation assistance made available to Ukraine's investigative authorities by several non-governmental organisations. On 14 October, the Commissioner met in Strasbourg with Andriy Kostin, Ukraine's new Prosecutor General, to discuss his vision for achieving justice and redress for victims and survivors of human rights violations resulting from Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the steps taken by his office to hold those responsible accountable (see under 'Country Work – Meetings with Authorities'). On 21 October, the Commissioner attended a meeting convened by Andriy Yermak, Head of the Office of the President of Ukraine, for representatives of various international organisations on the issue of lack of access to Ukrainian prisoners of war held by Russian or Russian-controlled forces and the international community's role in protecting their rights and in responding to the human rights consequences of the war in Ukraine in general.

The Commissioner remained actively involved in the response to reports of war-related sexual violence committed by Russian and Russian-controlled troops in Ukraine. On 28 April, the Commissioner discussed this issue in a meeting she held in Strasbourg with the then Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights of Ukraine, Liudmyla Denisova. On 10 June, the Commissioner facilitated an online information exchange meeting between non-governmental organisations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo with experience in assisting victims of sexual violence, and a group of Ukrainian organisations, professionals and volunteers involved in providing such assistance. On 22 June, the Commissioner participated in a hearing on "Developing mechanisms and concrete means to detect crimes of sexual violence of armed conflict and support the rehabilitation of survivors" organised by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Network "Women Free from Violence", where she highlighted the need to detect conflict-related sexual violence and assist survivors as a priority through an adequate legal framework, swift and rigorous investigations and a victim-centred approach.

Throughout the year, the Commissioner and her Office remained in close contact with Ukrainian human rights defenders. On 9 March and 22 April, the Commissioner held an online meeting with a group of Ukrainian human

rights defenders to learn about their situation and safety and their work on documenting violations of human rights and international humanitarian law. She also met with a group of human rights defenders during her visit to Kyiv in May. The Commissioner also regularly met with Ukrainian parliamentarians to discuss the human rights consequences of the war. On 15 March, she met to that end in Strasbourg with the Chair and members of the Ukrainian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). On 8 June, she further met with a delegation from two committees of the Ukrainian Parliament.

Lastly, on 20 December, the Commissioner sent a video message to the participants of a Council of Europe roundtable held in Strasbourg devoted to the human rights developments which took place in Crimea in the aftermath of the Russian armed aggression against Ukraine. Referencing the work done by her Office in relation to the human rights situation in Crimea, she stressed her intention to continue to pay close attention to the human rights developments in the peninsula.

## 2.2 Human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants

The protection of the rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants continued to be a central area of the Commissioner's thematic work. A substantial part of this work concerned the human rights situation of people fleeing Ukraine. On 3 March, the Commissioner [praised](#) the efforts by member states to protect people fleeing Ukraine and set out ten principles that should inform their further actions. Also in March, in order to assess the initial response to arrivals of people fleeing Ukraine, the Commissioner and her Office undertook a series of missions to countries bordering Ukraine (Republic of Moldova, Poland, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia) and to the Czech Republic (see under 'Country Work – Visits, Missions and Reports').

At the same time, the Commissioner's work in relation to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants more broadly continued. This thematic area was covered in the reports following her visits to Malta, Austria and the United Kingdom and during her visit to Spain (see under 'Country Work – Visits, Missions and Reports'). In addition, the Commissioner sent letters on this matter to Spain, Estonia, Hungary, Finland, Latvia, the Netherlands, Bulgaria and Belgium (see under 'Country Work – Reports and Continuous dialogue'). On 8 November, following up on her letter, the Commissioner had a meeting with the Minister of Interior of Finland (see under 'Country Work – Meetings with Authorities').

The Commissioner published a third-party intervention before the European Court of Human Rights concerning the situation of asylum seekers and migrants stranded at the border between Poland and Belarus. She also made a submission to the Committee of Ministers in relation to the execution of judgments in a case concerning the expulsion of asylum seekers and migrants by Hungary (see under 'System of the European Convention of Human Rights').

On 5 January, the Commissioner had an exchange with Harlem Désir, Senior Vice President for Europe of the International Rescue Committee. The discussion covered several situations at member states' borders, as well as wider issues, such as pushbacks, solidarity measures and safe and legal routes.

On 20 January, the Commissioner's Office participated in an inter-agency round table on missing migrants, organised by the International Commission on Missing Migrants.

On 7 April, the Commissioner published a [Recommendation on ending pushbacks in Europe](#). The Recommendation shows that pushbacks risk becoming a permanent feature of the way in which refugees, asylum seekers and migrants are treated in Europe. It outlines four areas of action. Firstly, states must re-focus on the implementation in good faith of their human rights obligations towards refugees, asylum seekers and migrants at borders. Secondly, states must strengthen independent monitoring of border control activities and bolster accountability mechanisms. Thirdly, member states must acknowledge pushbacks as a pan-European problem requiring collective action by all member states. Fourthly, parliamentarians must mobilise to stand up against pushbacks, including by holding their governments to account and by preventing the adoption of measures that are not human rights compliant. On 20

June, World Refugee Day, the Commissioner [recalled](#) that pushbacks were a pan-European problem and that states must tackle them collectively.

The Commissioner also addressed the situation of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants crossing the English Channel. On 14 April, the Commissioner published a [statement](#) on the United Kingdom's announced intention to offshore asylum processing to Rwanda as a response to irregular crossings. She underlined that the plans raised questions about the protection of the human rights of those involved and risked undermining the global system of international protection. On 22 November, the Commissioner [reacted](#) to the update in the investigations on a shipwreck occurred in November 2021, recalling that human rights should take centre stage in the actions related with crossings of the English Channel.

On 29 September, the Commissioner published a [Human Rights Comment](#) on the plight of migrants going missing. The Commissioner noted that disappearances of migrants must be prevented, calling on member states to establish safe and legal routes, to ensure humanitarian assistance along migration routes, and search and rescue at sea. The Commissioner also stressed the importance of upholding the right of the relatives of the missing to know the truth. To this end, she urged member states to establish effective search mechanisms, identify the deceased and track migrants' disappearances.

Throughout the year, the Commissioner also held meetings with the authorities of member states, Council of Europe bodies, and civil society organisations related to refugees, asylum seekers and migrants (see under 'Country Work - Meetings with Authorities'). On 27 April, the Commissioner had an exchange of views with the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of PACE, which took place in the context of the preparation of PACE's report on 'Pushbacks on land and sea: illegal measures of migration management'. The Commissioner highlighted the key points in her [Recommendation on pushbacks](#) mentioned above, focusing in particular on those relating to the role of parliamentarians in ending and preventing pushbacks, including strengthening legislative scrutiny; using their mandates to carry out fact-finding and monitoring activities; resorting to tools such as parliamentary inquiries into allegations of pushbacks; and challenging stigmatising rhetoric against refugees, asylum seekers and migrants. On 12 October, the Commissioner met with Julian Pahlke, the Rapporteur on missing migrants of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons of PACE. The Commissioner presented her recommendations on [missing migrants](#) and also discussed the main aspects of her Recommendations on [Pushbacks](#) and on the [Central Mediterranean](#).

### 2.3 Safety of journalists, media freedom and freedom of expression

The Commissioner's work on freedom of expression, media freedom and the safety of journalists focused mainly on legislative measures, SLAPPs, impunity and the safety of media professionals covering conflicts.

These topics were covered notably in her reports on Malta and the United Kingdom, in her Memorandum following her mission to Kosovo and in her visit to Spain, as well as in letters to Azerbaijan, Malta, Spain and the United Kingdom.

On 17 February the Commissioner [observed](#) that the sentencing of Crimean journalist Vladislav Yesipenko to six years in prison fundamentally undermined his right to a fair trial on account of numerous flaws in the proceedings, and called for his release.

On the fourth anniversary of the murders of investigative journalist Jan Kuciak and of Martina Kušnírová in the Slovak Republic on 18 February, the Commissioner [stressed](#) the need to ensure justice in their case and to end impunity.

On 28 March, the Commissioner [stated](#) that the decision of the Russian media Novaya Gazeta to suspend its activities was an indicator of the repression and censorship of independent journalism in Russia and called for support for independent Russian media.

On 18 April, three years after the murder of Northern Irish journalist Lyra McKee, the Commissioner [highlighted](#) the need to protect journalists, especially those reporting on organised crime, paramilitary activity, and legacy issues.

In a video message for a conference on “Freedom of expression in political speech” hosted by the University of Geneva and the Council of Europe on 28 April, the Commissioner stressed the importance of free speech in a democracy and emphasised the importance of a more responsible political debate in which politicians respect free speech and avoid racist, antisemitic, homophobic, misogynist, and undemocratic speech.

The Commissioner addressed the Roman Broadmann colloquium on 28 April, [emphasising](#) that states should implement standards to protect journalists covering conflicts, including the duty to prevent and punish crimes against them.

In [Human Rights Comment](#) published on 2 May, the Commissioner recommended several measures to improve the safety of journalists covering conflict situations, including supporting initiatives of journalists’ associations and media organisations; facilitating combat and first aid training; ensuring assistance to evacuate or relocate journalists; providing psychological help to journalists and their family members; and respecting the confidentiality of journalistic sources.

On 15 July, on the occasion of the first anniversary of the murder of Dutch journalist Peter R. de Vries, the Commissioner [noted](#) the encouraging developments in the prosecution of those allegedly responsible for his murder and underscored the duty of member states to end impunity for crimes against journalists.

On 13 September, the Commissioner [demanded](#) the immediate release of human rights lawyer Elchin Sadykov and independent journalist Avaz Zeynalli in Azerbaijan, who were detained on remand following an overnight trial which raised serious questions of compatibility with European human rights standards.

In a keynote [speech](#) at a European Parliament seminar on press freedom organised for the Daphne Caruana Galizia Prize 2022 on 19 October, the Commissioner emphasised the need to act to end impunity, implement existing standards, push for a change in the political discourse regarding the press and support initiatives aimed at protecting journalists, including police protection systems and psychological help.

On 20 October the Commissioner [addressed](#) the first European Anti-SLAPP conference in which she called for the adoption of national legislation so that SLAPPs can be dismissed at an early stage, the punishing of the abuse of the justice system, and the provision of practical support and free legal aid to those sued. She also emphasised the need to decriminalise defamation and libel and the importance of national and international organisations monitoring violations.

In a conference organised in Vienna by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFoM) on 2 November, the Commissioner highlighted the need to close the gap between press freedom standards and reality and stressed the importance of the OSCE RFoM and international organisations in promoting human rights and the compliance of states with their obligations.

The need to improve the safety of journalists was the main topic of her speech given on 4 November in a panel discussion held in the framework of a high-level conference on “Safety of Journalists: Protecting media to protect democracy” organised by the Austrian Ministry for European and International Affairs, UNESCO and OHCHR in Vienna to mark the 10th anniversary of the UN Plan of Action on the Safety of Journalists.

The Commissioner discussed media freedom and SLAPPs with the PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education, and Media on 6 December. She stressed the crucial role of PACE members in protecting journalists, particularly by fighting impunity, sharing best practices, and creating a safe and free press environment. The Commissioner also cited the decline of the rule of law and the growing polarisation in several member states as systemic issues that must be addressed to improve the safety of journalists.

Similar issues were raised in an exchange of views with the Council of Europe Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) on 7 December, where the Commissioner emphasised the important role of the CDMSI in improving the safety of journalists and media actors in Europe.

#### 2.4 Freedom of peaceful assembly

The increased restrictions imposed on freedom of peaceful assembly in Europe prompted several actions from the Commissioner.

These issues were covered notably in the Commissioner's letter and visit to Spain and in the report on the United Kingdom. In addition, on 7 March, the Commissioner [urged](#) the authorities of the Russian Federation to end the repression against human rights defenders, journalists, activists, and ordinary citizens in Russia who oppose the war in Ukraine and to fully respect their human rights, including the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. In a statement of 25 May, the Commissioner [called](#) on the Slovenian authorities to drop lawsuits and fines against peaceful demonstrators. In a [statement](#) on 13 September, she called on the Serbian authorities to withdraw the ban on the Europride march and protect participants.

On 28-30 November a member of the Office participated in a consultation convened by the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights to Peaceful Assembly and of Association together with civil society representatives in Warsaw to discuss avenues for collaboration to strengthen the promotion and protection of the rights to peaceful assembly and association.

#### 2.5 Women's rights and gender equality

In 2022, the Commissioner continued to actively address issues related to women's rights as one of her priority areas of work, with a focus on violence against women and the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, on the sexual and reproductive health and rights of women and girls, and on the position of women in conflict situations.

Concerning her work on the promotion of the Istanbul Convention, the Commissioner welcomed the ratification of the Convention by the [Republic of Moldova](#), [Ukraine](#) and the [United Kingdom](#). She continued to pay particular attention to the longstanding problem of cyberviolence against women in Europe. On 15 March, she published a [Human Rights Comment](#) on violence against women and girls in the digital world in which she called on member states to recognise it as yet another manifestation of gender-based violence and a continuum of violence affecting women and girls in all areas of life. To combat this phenomenon, she urged all member states to ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention, taking into account GREVIO [General Recommendation No.1 on the digital dimension of violence against women](#). On 1 April, the Commissioner participated in the [Regional Gender Equality Forum for the Western Balkans](#), hosted in Montenegro by the AIRE Centre where she spoke about "Fighting violence against women and girls by promoting gender equality". On 21 April, the Commissioner published a [Human Rights Comment](#) addressing the invisibility of women and girls with disabilities where she deplored, among other things, the widespread violence against women and girls with disabilities – including violations of their sexual and reproductive health and rights, often linked to their deprivation of legal capacity. On 13 June, the Commissioner held an online meeting with women's human rights defenders from Türkiye, which gave the Commissioner an opportunity to obtain information about the most recent developments concerning women's human rights since Türkiye's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention. On 17 November, the Commissioner held [an exchange of views](#) with the Council of Europe Gender Equality Commission. On 24 November, ahead of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, the Commissioner noted that women human rights defenders are increasingly the target of violence because of their work, including to defend women's right to be free from violence, and for being women.

As regards the Commissioner's work on sexual and reproductive health and rights, on 26 September, on the occasion of World Contraception Day, the Commissioner [called](#) on member states to guarantee effective access to modern contraception, including their availability and affordability, as this is critical to safeguard sexual and reproductive health and rights. On 28 September, on the occasion of International Safe Abortion Day, the Commissioner [called](#) on all member states to continue the progress achieved so far in ensuring women and girls' access to safe and legal

abortion care. On 5 December, the Commissioner [underscored](#) that a bill before the Maltese Parliament, aimed at allowing abortion when a woman's life or health is at risk, was a first imperative step to protect women's rights, with further measures needed to fully guarantee women's access to safe and legal abortion care.

The Commissioner also addressed the situation of women in conflict situations. On International Women's Day, the Commissioner issued a [statement](#) expressing her solidarity with Ukrainian women and girls caught up in the war. She also [contributed](#) to the EU initiative [#Women4Multilateralism](#) developed around International Women's Day to show support for multilateralism and the crucial role that women play in the advancement of human rights, development and peace all across the world. On 22 June, the Commissioner participated in the Joint Hearing on "Developing mechanisms and concrete means to detect crimes of sexual violence of armed conflict and support the rehabilitation of survivors" organised by the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence. The Commissioner highlighted the need to detect conflict-related sexual violence and assist survivors as a priority through an adequate legal framework, swift and rigorous investigations and a victim-centred approach, with the overarching aim of ensuring justice, accountability and prompt and adequate reparations for victims.

As part of her country work, the Commissioner raised issues pertaining to women's rights and gender equality in her reports on Austria, Georgia, Malta and the United Kingdom, in her letter to Bulgaria and in her Memorandum following her visit to Ukraine.

## 2.6 Children's rights

The protection of children and their rights remained an important area of focus for the Commissioner in 2022, addressed in country work, including on Austria, Georgia, Ukraine and the UK as well as in thematic work in other areas, including social rights, anti-discrimination issues, and migration-related concerns. Children have been disproportionately impacted by the war in Ukraine as well as by the continued effects of the pandemic and the mounting rise in poverty, inequality, and social exclusion in Europe.

On 8 February, the Commissioner participated, jointly with EU Vice President and Commissioner for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica, and Eurochild in a trilateral [meeting](#) on the impact of anti-child rights movements on the exercise of children's rights. The Commissioner and Vice President Šuica expressed their solidarity and strong support for children's rights and for Eurochild members and children experiencing threats and attacks when advocating for children's rights. The Commissioner stressed that the voices of child rights defenders had to be heard more loudly and undertook to co-operate closely to ensure that politicians remained accountable to their human rights and children's rights obligations.

On 7 April, the Commissioner [intervened](#) at the High-Level Launching Conference of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027 in Rome. She welcomed the comprehensive approach of the Strategy given the interdependence of children's rights challenges related, for instance, to poverty, marginalisation, and mental health. The Commissioner emphasised the centrality of effective child participation in all matters that affect them, stressing that children are often disproportionately impacted by the key challenges facing society.

On 20 June, the Commissioner inaugurated an exhibition of the [War Childhood Museum](#) held at the Council of Europe during the PACE session, together with PACE President Tiny Kox, the Museum's Founder and President, Jasminko Halilović, and the Museum's Ukraine project manager, Svitlana Osipchuk. Emphasising the devastating long-term effects of war on children, the Commissioner urged decision makers to listen to children's voices and ensure the safety and wellbeing of all children.

On 19 and 20 September, the Office of the Commissioner participated in the [Annual Conference of the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children](#) in Reykjavik which focused on children's rights and climate justice. ENOC members, experts, representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations and young advisors exchanged experiences of promising and problematic practices and discussed ways to improve the realisation of children's rights in the context of climate change.



On 18 November, the Commissioner published a [statement](#) ahead of World Children’s Day, calling on member states to make protection of and support to the children impacted by the war in Ukraine a top priority. She underlined that the war had been especially devastating for children, whether they remained in Ukraine or lived in displacement somewhere in Europe. The Commissioner called for increased humanitarian assistance to Ukraine throughout the winter and sustained provision of dignified housing, healthcare, education, and other basic needs to children in displacement. Referring to reports of forcible transfers of children to Russia, she condemned the widespread and systematic violations of the human rights of children in the context of the war in Ukraine and called on member states to support all efforts to locate and reunify children separated from their families, in full consideration of the child’s best interests.

## 2.7 Human rights of persons with disabilities

The Commissioner kept the rights of persons with disabilities high on her agenda throughout 2022. Her work on this subject touched both on long-standing concerns and on topical issues regarding human rights protection in emergency and conflict situations.

The Commissioner addressed the rights of persons with disabilities in the labour market and at the workplace during her visit to Georgia. She also stressed the need to pay urgent and special attention to the rights of persons with disabilities in the context of her visit to Ukraine and of the missions carried out by her and her Office to the neighbouring member states, focusing on the situation of persons fleeing the war (see ‘Country Work – Visits missions and reports’).

In a [Human Rights Comment](#) published on 21 April, the Commissioner urged member states to ensure the full participation and involvement of women and girls with disabilities in decision making; prioritise deinstitutionalisation and legal capacity reforms; address violence against women and girls with disabilities, including violations of their sexual and reproductive health and rights; and ensure that humanitarian support reaches them (see ‘Thematic activities – Women’s rights and gender equality’). She further [emphasised](#) the importance of these measures in a webinar organised by University Women of Europe and Femmes pour le Dire – Femmes pour Agir, on 14 November.

As part of the Commissioner’s awareness-raising work on this topic, on 24-25 November, her Office participated in the [European Day of Persons with Disabilities Conference](#) organised in Brussels by the European Commission and partners. Lastly, on 2 December, ahead of the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, the Commissioner [urged](#) member states to guarantee the full and effective participation and inclusion of persons with disabilities in society.

## 2.8 Human rights of LGBTI people

Over the course of 2022, the Commissioner continued to actively promote the need for upholding and respecting the rights of LGBTI people.

The Commissioner highlighted the impact which the war in Ukraine has had upon LGBTI people, as confirmed during a series of missions that she and members of her Office carried out to border countries (see ‘Country Work – Visits, missions and reports’). On the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia (IDAHOT), she [called](#) for particular attention to be paid to the needs of both LGBTI persons who remain in Ukraine, as well as those who have sought refuge in other member states.

As in previous years, work within this thematic area took place under a climate of increasing intolerance, hostility and even violence against LGBTI people across Europe. The Commissioner repeatedly stressed that more needed to be done by states to combat hate and prejudice against LGBTI people, including through her country visit work ([Georgia](#)) and in response to individual attacks against an LGBTI service centre in [Podgorica, Montenegro](#), and against a gay club ahead of the Pride March in [Oslo, Norway](#). She warned of the political instrumentalisation of the human rights of LGBTI people, notably in [Hungary](#), where a national referendum on children’s access to information concerning sexual orientation and gender identity issues was conducted on the same day as the parliamentary

elections. The increasingly toxic public discourse on LGBTI people, and in particular transgender persons, was also underscored following the Commissioner's [visit to the UK](#).

After several years of disruption due to the COVID-19 pandemic, pride marches took place again in 2022, but several were disrupted by the authorities. From 15-17 September, the Commissioner participated in events in Belgrade, Serbia, the host of 2022 Europride and reacted to the announcement of a [potential](#), and later [confirmed](#) ban on the Europride march, stressing the need to protect LGBTI people's fundamental rights to freedom of expression and assembly. During her speech at the event's closing session, she [condemned](#) the political backtracking and displays of hatred surrounding the event. In June, the Commissioner [urged](#) the Istanbul authorities to repeal a ban on Istanbul Pride and ensure the safety and right to peaceful assembly of participants.

Following-up on several similar interventions in recent years, the Commissioner [submitted](#) her written observations to the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Irina Borisovna Fedotova and Irina Vladimirovna Shipitko and 2 others v. Russia*, underlining that the absence of legal recognition for same-sex couples is a barrier to full enjoyment of the right to respect for private and family life and is discriminatory.

Interacting with and supporting LGBTI human rights defenders continued to be a priority for the Commissioner. The essential work of lesbian human rights defenders in ensuring that LGBTI women are visible, and that their rights are upheld, was [underscored](#) by the Commissioner during the opening of the third conference of the European Lesbian Conference. The Commissioner also delivered an online address to the 8<sup>th</sup> Transgender Europe (TGEU) Council in Berlin. On 9 November, she convened an experts' brainstorming meeting in Strasbourg, composed of transgender and non-binary people and activists from several member states as well as academics, to inform her future work on the human rights of transgender people.

The Commissioner paid particular attention to the human rights issues of transgender people in 2022. On Trans Day of Remembrance (18 November), the Commissioner [encouraged](#) member states to ensure legislative progress to protect transgender people's human rights and secure improvements in their lived experiences. On 20 December, the Commissioner [restated](#) her support for legal gender recognition reform based on self-determination in view of an ongoing debate within the Scottish Parliament, and [welcomed](#) the subsequent adoption of the relevant Scottish law.

The Commissioner continued to call for states to outlaw non-urgent and non-vital surgeries on intersex children without consent, including through a [keynote speech](#) at a Seminar organised by the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Human Rights in the fields of Biomedicine and Health (CDBIO). On 22 July, she [welcomed](#) a new legal ban of these practices adopted by Greece.

## 2.9 Human rights of older persons

In 2022, the Commissioner continued to address the human rights of older persons both in her country and in her thematic work.

In the memorandum following her visit to Ukraine, she noted that the war had a disproportionate impact on older persons, especially women, and stressed that older persons among those fleeing Ukraine and internally displaced persons should be provided with adequate support at border crossings, reception centres and in accommodation places in receiving countries. Following her visit to Spain, she welcomed the Spanish authorities' initiative to reform the care system for older persons and underlined that this should be based on an integrated provision of social and health care which should fully respect older persons' dignity, autonomy and independence (see 'Country work– Visits missions and reports').

On 30 September, ahead of the International Day of Older Persons, the Commissioner [highlighted](#) the importance of the promotion of active ageing to ensure the full enjoyment of human rights throughout life. She called on member states to take measures to counter ageism in all its forms, including by prohibiting age discrimination in all areas and to ensure that policies reflect the diversity of older persons, including intersectional dimensions that may lead to higher risks of discrimination.

## 2.10 Human rights of Roma and Travellers

In 2022, the Commissioner paid attention to instances of discrimination and prejudices against Roma fleeing the war in Ukraine and continued to stress the importance of combating antigypsyism, including through the media.

Following the series of missions to assess the initial response to the arrival of people fleeing Ukraine (see under ‘Country Work – Visits, Missions and reports’), the Commissioner called for special attention to the protection of specific groups, including Roma. Particularly, on 7 April, ahead of International Roma Day, the Commissioner [called](#) on Council of Europe member states to fight discrimination and prejudices against Roma fleeing the war in Ukraine. She urged states to increase awareness of the vulnerabilities and difficulties faced by Roma fleeing the war; provide humanitarian assistance, including emergency and permanent shelter and adequate transportation, to all without any discrimination; and scale up consultations with Roma networks and NGOs. She also stressed the need to protect Ukrainian Roma women and children from the risk of trafficking and exploitation and gender-based violence. In a message delivered on 19 May, on behalf of the Commissioner for an event on “The Role of the Media in Combating Antigypsyism”, organised by the Council of Europe Roma and Traveller Team and the European Commission, the need for the media to help debunk prejudices against Roma through training within the media and the enforcement of codes of ethics for journalists was emphasised.

On 1 August, ahead of the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, the Commissioner [called](#) on all states to recognise past and present human rights violations affecting Roma people and to step up efforts to ensure the protection of their rights in all fields of life. She stressed the importance of exploring and exposing the history of Roma in Europe by supporting the remembrance of the Roma Holocaust.

## 2.11 Social Rights

The protection of social rights featured prominently among the priorities of the Commissioner in 2022. The Commissioner addressed topics including shortages in affordable housing and suitable accommodation for refugees, access to quality healthcare, labour rights, and food insecurity in her country work on Belgium, Georgia, the Netherlands, Spain, and the UK, and concentrated her thematic work on the rising levels of poverty, inequality, and social exclusion in Europe.

On 6 April, ahead of World Health Day, the Commissioner published her statement ‘[Inclusive and resilient health care for all – are we closer?](#)’, highlighting the need for a targeted and timely focus on particularly vulnerable groups during health emergencies. She also called on member states to expand their global solidarity to build effective resilience against current and future health threats.

On 14 October, the Commissioner [called](#) on all member states to address intergenerational poverty resolutely, including through equitable fiscal policies and the sustainable resourcing of comprehensive and rights-based poverty eradication programmes. She underlined that poverty had been on the rise again world-wide and called for a shift in the narrative from charity to human rights based entitlement. Direly needed social assistance programmes must be insulated from short-term political pressures.

On 8 December, the Commissioner participated in a [seminar](#) on strengthening the implementation of social rights in Europe, organised by the Secretariat of the European Social Charter. She stressed that the work of the European Committee of Social Rights had gained even more urgency in recent years given the successive crisis situations Europe had been facing and called on member states to closely follow the guidance of the Committee.

## 2.12 Combating racism and intolerance

In 2022, the Commissioner’s work on combating racism and intolerance focused on Holocaust remembrance and on combating racial discrimination, antisemitism, antigypsyism, xenophobia, hate speech and hate crime.

On 26 January, ahead of the International Day of Commemoration in memory of the victims of the Holocaust, the Commissioner [called](#) for continued commitment to remembering the Holocaust and for strengthening measures to prevent and confront hate speech and Holocaust denial and distortion.

On 21 March, on the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, she [urged](#) all member states to ensure access to their territories to all persons fleeing wars and persecution without discrimination on grounds of race, colour, descent, national or ethnic origin or immigration status.

The Commissioner's office discussed measures to effectively combat antisemitism during a meeting on 28 March with Petra Bayr, PACE General Rapporteur on combating racism and intolerance.

The Commissioner also continued to address issues concerning racism and intolerance in her country work on Austria, Georgia and the United Kingdom.

### 2.13 Human rights education

On 12 April the Commissioner addressed the [Forum on Human Rights and Citizenship Education](#) held in Turin in which she stressed the importance of promoting human rights education and democratic citizenship. Highlighting challenges to human rights in contemporary European society, the Commissioner stressed that education is key in addressing these challenges, protecting our individual liberties, and contributing to pluralist societies.

The Commissioner and her Office further engaged in awareness raising activities, by participating in conferences, presenting her work to students, lawyers and other groups and by engaging with the press.

### 2.14 Transitional justice

In 2022, the Commissioner continued to be vocal on member states' legal obligations to ensure accountability for serious human rights violations, as well as to fulfil victims' rights to truth and reparations. She recalled that justice, remembrance of past abuses, as well as honouring the victims' suffering, are necessary foundations for long-term peace and cohesive societies based on respect for human rights and the rule of law, and trust in state institutions.

With the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine and multiple reports of alleged serious human rights violations and grave breaches of international humanitarian law, the Commissioner [repeatedly stressed](#) that such horrific crimes cannot be left unpunished. She [insisted](#) notably on the importance of creating the necessary conditions to ensure justice for the victims of sexual violence. The Commissioner held meetings with the previous and the current Prosecutor General of Ukraine to discuss the importance of ensuring accountability for war crimes (see 'Thematic activities – Impact of the war in Ukraine on human rights'). In the [Memorandum](#) published after her visit to Ukraine, the Commissioner welcomed the actions taken by the Ukrainian authorities in advancing accountability and encouraged them to continue to align the country's legal framework with the relevant international standards. Stressing the importance of effective coordination in the field of justice among domestic and international accountability mechanisms and actors, and the need to prioritise the interests of victims and their families, she called for co-operation with the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the continued provision of long-term support to the Ukrainian justice system.

The Commissioner also continued to pay attention to transitional justice developments in societies grappling with a violent past. In relation to the region of the former Yugoslavia, she carried out a mission to The Hague between 31 January and 1 February, where she held a series of meetings at the International Residual Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals, and at the Kosovo Specialist Chambers and Specialist Prosecutor's Office. Discussions focused on the remaining challenges in the fight against impunity for war crimes in the region, as well as ways to promote the legacy of international justice efforts to fight denial of genocide and war crimes. During that mission, the Commissioner also visited the International Commission on Missing Persons and its DNA laboratory and exchanged with the Executive Director and her team on the lessons learned from the region. The Commissioner also emphasised the importance of remembrance. In February, she [welcomed](#) the state apology extended by the Slovenian President to the "erased", furthermore calling on the authorities to include substantial information about

this issue in the school curriculum. In May, the Commissioner [condemned](#) the banning of the annual White Armband Day walk in Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina, which commemorates the victims of war crimes committed there in 1992-1993. On 10-11 July, she conducted a mission to Srebrenica to take part in the commemoration of the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide and several events organised in this context, including the inauguration of the “Mother’s Scarf” art installation initiated by the Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa enclave as part of the Srebrenica Heroines Initiative. Throughout the mission, the Commissioner [underscored](#) the importance of remembering, the role played by the Mothers in this regard, and the imperative of [countering](#) genocide denial to enable reconciliation and true peace.

The Commissioner examined issues related to dealing with the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in her [report](#) following a country visit to the United Kingdom and in a [submission](#) to the Committee of Ministers regarding the supervision of the McKerr group of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, which relate to shortcomings in the investigation of deaths during the Troubles.

The Commissioner expressed support to the ICC as a key international institution to ensure justice for the most serious crimes. During her above-mentioned mission to The Hague, the Commissioner held substantive exchanges with the President, the Registrar, and the Prosecutor of the Court, discussing, among other things, the Court’s ongoing need for states parties’ support and cooperation. On the ICC’s 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in June, the Commissioner [called on](#) the few Council of Europe member states that have not yet done so to ratify the Rome Statute. She emphasised the importance of political, technical, and financial support to the Court, stressing that it should be sustained in the long term, be respectful of the Court’s independence and aimed at structurally strengthening the institution.

In relation to missing persons, the Commissioner issued a [statement](#) highlighting the current situation in Ukraine and observing that the lack of truth and justice for thousands of missing persons remains a serious human rights issue in Europe, urging ratification of the UN International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

### 2.15 Counter-terrorism and human rights protection

In 2022, the Commissioner pursued her work on the issue of repatriation, reintegration and rehabilitation of European suspected ISIS fighters and their family members. She held discussions on this topic with several interlocutors at national and international level, including with the UN Special Rapporteur on Counter-terrorism and Human Rights, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, with whom she held an online meeting on 7 November.

The Commissioner also closely followed developments related to democratic and effective oversight of national security services and to undue restrictions imposed on human rights in the context of the fight against terrorism and members of her Office participated in several events related to these issues.

### 2.16 Trafficking in human beings

On 29 March, the Commissioner held an exchange of views with the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA). Issues of mutual interest that were discussed included trafficking of unaccompanied children and Roma children as well as the increased risks of trafficking and exploitation of Ukrainian women and girls, inside or outside Ukraine, in the context of the war.

On 29 July, ahead of the World Day against Trafficking in Persons, the Commissioner [stressed](#) that Europe is not immune to this serious human rights violation and that the war in Ukraine and the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the risks of trafficking, in particular for some vulnerable groups such as women, children and people on the move due to conflicts and economic hardship. She stressed that, including in times of crisis, member states should prevent trafficking, protect the victims and prosecute perpetrators by using the tools at their disposal, such as the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

The Commissioner also addressed the risk of trafficking in human beings in a number of country contexts, including during the series of missions to assess the initial response to the arrival of people fleeing Ukraine, her memorandum on Ukraine and the country visit to Georgia (See Country Work – Visits, missions and reports).

### 2.17 Artificial Intelligence

The Commissioner continued to examine the ongoing developments surrounding the design and use of artificial intelligence (AI) systems in public and private life, notably also the efforts at European level to advance regulatory tools for their application. On 18 July, she participated in a panel discussion on AI regulation during the [Digital Rights Summer School](#), stressing the need for human rights safeguards to be integrated into all AI design and deployment, and emphasising that new regulatory instruments should not weaken existing protections under international human rights law.

### 2.18 Data protection

The Commissioner continued to pay close attention to the right to privacy and personal data protection safeguards as enshrined in Article 8 of the European Convention, and the modernised Convention on the protection of individuals with regard to the automatic processing of personal data. On 28 January, World Data Protection Day, the Commissioner [stressed](#) that existing data protection safeguards could only protect individuals from the multiple threats that existed in today's environment if they were properly enforced. She reiterated her call on member states to empower and fund independent data protection authorities so that they could effectively fulfil their functions.

### 2.19 Environmental protection and human rights

In 2022, the Commissioner's work in the area of human rights and the environment remained focused on helping to advance the recognition – at the global, regional and national level – of the human right to a clean and healthy environment, and on protecting environmental human rights defenders, in particular among young people. Certain aspects related to human rights and the environment and the protection of environmental human rights defenders were raised by the Commissioner in the context of her country visits to [Georgia](#) in February and the [United Kingdom](#) in June (see under 'Country Work – Visits, missions and reports').

On 24 June, the Office delivered [remarks](#) on behalf of the Commissioner at a [Roundtable](#) on Environmental Defenders organised during the Meeting of the Parties to the Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters (Aarhus Convention).

On 28 July, the Commissioner [welcomed](#) the recognition, in a United Nations General Assembly Resolution, of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right at global level, calling it a powerful tool for climate action. She called on member states of the Council of Europe to deliver for the present and future generations in this respect.

In October, Michel Forst, the new Aarhus Convention [Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders](#), appointed in June 2022 to provide a rapid response to environmental human rights defenders facing persecution, penalisation or harassment for exercising their rights under the Aarhus Convention, participated in the round-table in Dublin organised by the Commissioner with human rights defenders from across Europe to discuss key challenges they face in times of crises and to explore ways to strengthen their protection (see under 'Human Rights Defenders').

### 2.20 Situation around Nagorno-Karabakh following the blocking of the Lachin Corridor

On 22 December, the Commissioner published a statement on the situation around Nagorno-Karabakh following the blocking of the Lachin Corridor, emphasising the urgent need to restore the movement of people, goods and services, including food supplies and urgent medical care, to prevent the deterioration of the humanitarian situation there. She also highlighted the importance of ensuring free and unhindered access to humanitarian assistance and international human rights missions to all areas and people, including those residing in Nagorno-Karabakh, indicating her readiness to engage with all the relevant interlocutors to assist in overcoming the existing challenges.

### 3 HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

The year 2022 was characterised by a rapidly deteriorating environment for human rights defenders and civil society organisations caused by several overlapping crises in many parts of Europe. As a result, the Commissioner paid close attention to their situation throughout the year.

As a part of her response to the human rights consequences of Russia's aggression against Ukraine, the Commissioner met with human rights defenders during her visit to Ukraine and addressed the safety and working environment of human rights defenders operating in the context of the ongoing war in her [memorandum](#) following that visit. Throughout the year, the Commissioner maintained regular contact with human rights defenders from Ukraine, drawing public attention to the need to better protect them and support their crucial work in documenting human rights violations.

Bearing in mind the exclusion of the Russian Federation from the Council of Europe and the fact that Belarus is not a member state, the Commissioner considers Russian and Belarusian human rights defenders to be natural partners in that they share the same values and work for human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe. In accordance with the Committee of Ministers [Resolution](#) on the legal and financial consequences of the cessation of membership of the Russian Federation in the Council of Europe, in March, the Commissioner stated her intention to continue [supporting](#) Belarusian and Russian human rights defenders, independent journalists and civil society actors, including those who had increasingly [faced reprisals](#) and intimidation in their countries and those who had to flee abroad, including to Council of Europe member states, seeking safety. After having carried out several in-person and online consultations with them, in August the Commissioner published a [Human Rights Comment](#) on the need to support Russian and Belarusian civil societies and human rights defenders with a set of recommendations to Council of Europe member states. In particular, she highlighted the need to be outspoken in denouncing violations against human rights defenders in those countries, implement sustainable relocation policies, including residence and social benefits for them and their family members, and facilitate their civil society work in host countries. On 12 October, the Commissioner issued a [statement](#) following up on the same issue.

On 24-25 October, the Commissioner organised a round-table in Dublin with human rights defenders from across Europe to discuss key challenges they face in times of crises and to explore ways to strengthen their protection. During the round-table, participants also interacted with key international stakeholders and mechanisms established to support human rights defenders at UN and regional level in view of strengthening the protection, networking, and strategic cooperation of human rights defenders. The [report](#) is available on the Commissioner's website.

The Commissioner continued to pay attention to specific cases where human rights defenders had faced risks to their personal safety, liberty and integrity in various Council of Europe member states. In particular, the Commissioner publicly reacted to the criminal prosecution and deprivation of liberty of activists assisting migrants and asylum seekers in [Poland](#); a human rights lawyer and a journalist in [Azerbaijan](#); as well as the conviction of several journalists, human rights defenders and Crimean Tatar leaders in Crimea in [February](#), [April](#) and [September](#) 2022. She also intervened in the infringement proceedings in the case of Osman Kavala in [Türkiye](#) (see under 'System of the European Convention on Human Rights').

The Commissioner also intervened as a third party in the proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights in a case against [Poland](#) concerning the situation of asylum seekers and migrants stranded at the border with Belarus, noting the chilling effect of harassment and intimidation targeting organisations and people, including local residents, providing help to migrants (see under 'System of the European Convention on Human Rights').

As part of her efforts to promote an enabling environment for human rights defenders and civil society organisations in Europe, the Commissioner also participated in several public events and conferences devoted to various aspects of human rights activism, including the rights of civil society organisations to [participate in public affairs](#) while respecting the requirements of transparency and accountability, and the issue of [defending human rights defenders](#). In October, the Commissioner delivered a keynote speech and exchanged views with Mary Lawlor, the UN Special

Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, in the Frontline Defenders' bi-annual conference - the [Dublin Platform](#).

On the occasion of the awarding of the 2022 Nobel Peace Prize to prominent human rights defenders from Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, the Commissioner attended the official ceremony in Oslo and participated in a conference organised by the Norwegian Helsinki Committee in partnership with the Nobel Peace Center. During the meeting, she delivered a keynote [speech](#) stressing the importance of solidarity with and among human rights defenders. On 10 December, to celebrate International Human Rights Day, the Commissioner [called](#) on member states to better protect and support human rights defenders given their crucial role in contributing to peace, freedom, justice and democracy.

The Commissioner continued to maintain regular dialogue and meet with various human rights defenders throughout the year. In July, she met in Strasbourg with a group of women human rights defenders from around the world – laureates of the French government's programme, the [Marianne Initiative](#). In October, she [met](#) with Evgenia Kara-Murza, representing her husband Vladimir Kara-Murza, the winner of the 2022 Václav Havel Human Rights Prize, and with representatives of the Hungarian Rainbow Coalition/Invalid Campaign for LGBTQIA+ and the Ukrainian 5 AM Coalition, who were also nominated for this prize. The Commissioner paid tribute to their courageous and dedicated work in defending human rights in their respective societies and expressed her intention to continue supporting them and all other human rights defenders in Europe.

#### 4 CO-OPERATION WITH NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS STRUCTURES

The Commissioner is mandated to facilitate the work of national Ombudsman institutions and other national human rights structures, such as National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Equality Bodies, National Preventive Mechanisms and others. National human rights structures are essential partners, including for the Commissioner's dialogue with member states. In 2022, she maintained close contact with these structures both bilaterally and through their networks, including the European Network of NHRIs (ENNHRI), the International Ombudsman Institute (IOI), EQUINET and the European Network of Ombuds for Children (ENOC).

The Commissioner held numerous bilateral meetings with national human rights structures in the context of her country visits, as well as in Strasbourg, to discuss national human rights developments. In Strasbourg, this included meetings with the Public Defender of Georgia, the Ombuds of Bulgaria, the National Ombuds of the Netherlands, the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights of Ukraine, and the Human Rights Defender of Armenia.

In the specific context of the war in Ukraine, the Commissioner consulted the relevant national human rights structures about the human rights consequences both in Ukraine and for people fleeing the war. In the framework of the above-mentioned [missions](#) to the borders of Ukraine, the Commissioner and her staff met with representatives of several national human rights structures to discuss human rights challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees. As part of her monitoring of grave human rights violations in Ukraine as a result of the Russian Federation's aggression, the Commissioner also held several meetings in 2022 with the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights.

The Commissioner continued to use her own work to give visibility to the important contribution by national human rights structures in the promotion and protection of human rights. For example, in a [Human Rights Comment](#) on violence against women and girls in the digital world, the Commissioner highlighted examples of work done by the national human rights structures in Belgium, Montenegro and Denmark to combat violence against women online. The Commissioner also discussed the role of national human rights structures in monitoring and seeking accountability for human rights violations against migrants and asylum seekers at European borders in a [Recommendation](#) on ending pushbacks.

The Commissioner continued to speak up in support of the independence, integrity, and effectiveness of national human rights structures. In her report on [Georgia](#), she discussed the selection and appointment of the next Public



Defender, stressing the importance of a timely, competence-based and transparent process to secure the effective functioning of the institution. In Ukraine, the Commissioner [observed](#) that the dismissal of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights by the Ukrainian parliament through an urgent vote based on martial law was in disregard of the relevant international standards and weakened the institution at a critical time for human rights. In the [report](#) following her visit to the UK, among the steps to be taken to enhance overall human rights protection in Northern Ireland, the Commissioner called on the UK authorities to provide adequate resources to the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission so that it can carry out its functions fully. The Commissioner furthermore continued to collaborate with other regional and international organisations in supporting national human rights structures and her Office participated in a [meeting](#) organised by the OSCE's ODIHR on building the resilience of NHRIs.

## 5 CO-OPERATION WITH EUROPEAN AND INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

### 5.1 European Union

In 2022, co-operation with the European Union focused on issues such as asylum and migration, women's rights and gender equality, rule of law, inequality and the impact of the pandemic on human rights, as well as civil society and human rights defenders.

In February, the Commissioner carried out a mission to Brussels where she had meetings with Vice President of the European Commission and Commissioner for Values and Transparency Věra Jourová; Commissioner for Justice Didier Reynders; Commissioner for Equality Helena Dalli; Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič; and EU Special Representative for Human Rights Eamon Gilmore, to exchange information about current activities and priorities. In January, she had a meeting with Janina Ochojska, Member of the European Parliament, and held an exchange of views with the Ambassador for Gender and Diversity at the European External Action Service, Stella Ronner-Grubačić in June. In November, she met with the Director of the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE), Carlien Scheele.

As regards co-operation with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), in February the Commissioner held an online exchange with the FRA staff during which she discussed issues of human rights importance and strategies for the promotion and protection of human rights in Europe. In November, she had an exchange of views in Strasbourg with the FRA Director, Michael O'Flaherty. Furthermore, the Commissioner's Office attended the meeting of human rights experts and leaders on "Putting human rights at the heart of Europe's future", organised by the FRA in September.

### 5.2 Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Co-operation with the OSCE focused on issues related to freedom of the media, the situation of national minorities, and equality and non-discrimination.

In January, the Commissioner took part in an online exchange of views with officials from the OSCE and the UN (see below). The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, Teresa Ribeiro and a senior representative of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) were in attendance.

In February, during her mission to the Hague, she met with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Kairat Abdrakhmanov. In April, she had a meeting in Strasbourg with the Personal Representative of the OSCE Chairman-in-Office on Combating Anti-Semitism, Rabbi Andrew Baker, and the Personal Representative on Combating Racism, Xenophobia and Discrimination, also focusing on Intolerance and Discrimination against Christians and Members of Other Religions, Associate Professor Dr Regina Polak.

In November, the Commissioner participated in a conference organised by the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media for the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the institution (see under 'Thematic activities – Safety of journalists, media freedom and freedom of expression').

The Commissioner's visit to the border crossing point between Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova in March (see under 'Country Work – Visits, missions and reports') was carried out together with the OSCE field mission.

### 5.3 United Nations

Co-operation with the UN institutions focused in particular on migration and refugees, transitional justice, freedom of expression and the media, the protection of human rights defenders and the human rights of LGBTI people. The Commissioner and her Office had regular contacts with the UNHCR Representation in Strasbourg, and the field missions, notably in the context of her country visits.

In January, the Commissioner participated in an online meeting with officials from the OSCE and the UN which was attended by the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and Opinion, Irene Khan. In February, during her mission to The Hague, the Commissioner held meetings at the International Residual Mechanism for International Criminal Tribunals (see under 'Thematic activities – Transitional Justice'). In April, the Commissioner held an online meeting with UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor. In July, during her mission to Srebrenica, the Commissioner [met](#) with United Nations Special Adviser on the prevention of genocide, Alice Wairimu. In November, the Commissioner held an online meeting with the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, Fionnuala Ní Aoláin. The Commissioner's Office was represented at the workshop on enhancing co-operation between the United Nations and regional mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights which took place on 18 and 19 October in Geneva.

## 6 OTHER MEETINGS

### ***Meeting with the President of the Venice Commission***

At a meeting on 14 March, the Commissioner and the President of the Venice Commission Claire Bazy exchanged on a number of topics of mutual interest, including transitional justice, issues relating to the rule of law and tackling disinformation and misinformation.

### ***Meeting with Holy See officials***

On 8 April the Commissioner [met](#) with His Holiness Pope Francis during a private audience held in Vatican City. The Commissioner highlighted her main concerns relating to the erosion of the protection of the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in Europe and to the need to strengthen the response to the humanitarian and human rights consequences of the war in Ukraine.

The Commissioner also met with the Holy See Secretary of State, His Eminence Cardinal Pietro Parolin, and the Prefect ad interim of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, His Eminence Cardinal Michael Czerny. Discussions focused on the need to improve the protection of migrants in Europe and humanitarian assistance to people internally displaced by the war in Ukraine or fleeing abroad, as well as on the need to strengthen human rights education and intercultural dialogue to prevent tensions, in particular in the Balkans.

### ***Meeting with the Executive Director of Open Society Justice Initiative***

On 29 April, the Commissioner met with James Goldston, Executive Director of Open Society Justice Initiative, in Strasbourg. They discussed various human rights issues, with a focus on the consequences of the war in Ukraine and the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

### ***Meeting with the Human Rights Ambassador for France***

On 6 July, the Commissioner met with Delphine Borione, Human Rights Ambassador for France. Discussions covered issues of common interest, including the situation of human rights defenders, the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, the war in Ukraine and the death penalty.

### ***Exchange of views with PACE Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy***

On 12 October, the Commissioner held an exchange of views with the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy of the PACE. The discussions focused on the human rights consequences of the war in Ukraine and the importance of upholding the human rights of women and LGBTI people. The Commissioner also indicated her intention to remain engaged with Russian and Belarusian human rights defenders and civil societies who play a crucial role in promoting the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

### ***Meeting with the President of the European Court of Human Rights***

On 15 November, the Commissioner met with Síofra O'Leary, President of the European Court of Human Rights. They discussed various human rights issues of common interest including the role of the institution of the Commissioner for Human Rights in the Convention system, and the continuing cooperation between the Court and the Commissioner's Office.

## **7**

## **SYSTEM OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

### ***European Court of Human Rights' Solemn Hearing for the Opening of the Judicial Year***

On 24 June, the Commissioner delivered a keynote [speech](#) at the European Court of Human Rights' solemn hearing for the opening of the judicial year. In her speech, the Commissioner praised the efforts made by the Court to adapt to major challenges. In addition, deploring the attacks on the Convention system in some European countries and the non-implementation of key judgments of the Court, the Commissioner called on Council of Europe member states to recommit to the values and norms of the Organisation.

### ***Third-party interventions***

Third-party interventions before the European Court of Human Rights are among the tools at the Commissioner's disposal to help promote and protect human rights. They are provided for by Article 36, paragraph 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and are based on the Commissioner's country and thematic work. In 2022, the Commissioner made three submissions before the Court.

On 27 January, the Commissioner submitted written comments to the Court in the case of [R.A. and others v. Poland](#) concerning the situation of asylum seekers and migrants stranded at the border between Poland and Belarus. The Commissioner considered that a repeated and systematic practice of pushing migrants and asylum seekers back to Belarus existed in Poland and that this practice was likely to put them at risk of torture or inhuman or degrading treatment at the hands of Belarusian state agents. The Commissioner further underlined that the Polish authorities' failure to provide humanitarian assistance to asylum seekers and migrants, and the restrictions put in place by Poland on access to the border zone for persons and organisations providing humanitarian assistance and legal aid, raised concerns under Article 2 (the right to life) and Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

On 16 March, the submitted written comments in the cases of [Irina Borisovna Fedotova and Irina Vladimirovna Shipitko and 2 other applications v. Russia](#), concerning the absence of legal recognition of same-sex relationships in Russia. In her comments, the Commissioner underlined that stable same-sex couples, with or without children, are part of the rich diversity of families that make up our societies – regardless of whether a state recognises them or not. She stressed that in the absence of such recognition however, they are barred from fully enjoying their right to

respect for private and family life guaranteed under the Convention. The Commissioner further stressed that states should provide effective and non-discriminatory legal recognition to same-sex couples and highlighted that the absence of consensus at the national level in favour of providing legal recognition to same-sex couples should not be considered as a valid argument to deny legal recognition to same-sex couples. Finally, the Commissioner underlined that the principle of equality before the law requires that legal recognition should be available to same-sex partners and that its absence constitutes discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and perpetuates prejudices about same-sex relationships.

The Commissioner also submitted on 6 April written comments in the infringement proceedings in the case of [Osman Kavala v. Turkey](#), concerning the non-implementation by Türkiye of the Court's judgment in this case. The Commissioner provided her observations on the implementation by Türkiye of individual measures relating to the applicant's detention and addressed the broader legal and political context prevailing in Türkiye, which she finds crucially important for assessing whether Türkiye has acted in good faith and in a manner compatible with the "conclusions and spirit" of the judgment. Having considered the detention on remand of the applicant and the pursuit of criminal proceedings against him as a seamless extension and continuation of the violations found in the Court's judgement, the Commissioner concluded that by not releasing the applicant from detention, the authorities failed to abide by the Court's judgement.

### ***Communications to the Committee of Ministers regarding the supervision of the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights***

The Commissioner can address communications to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, which supervises the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. Pursuant to Rule 9 of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers for the supervision of the execution of judgments, in 2022 the Commissioner used this possibility in two cases.

On 12 August, the Commissioner submitted written comments to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the execution of the judgements delivered by the European Court of Human Rights in the cases of [Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary grouped with Shahzad v. Hungary](#) concerning the expulsion of applicants from Hungary to Serbia without carrying out a thorough examination of the risk of ill-treatment. In her comments, the Commissioner considered that the underlying issues identified by the Court have not been addressed as laws, policies and practices related to asylum and removal procedures in Hungary remain characterised by a lack of safeguards to ensure compliance with Article 3, Article 4 of Protocol 4 (prohibition collective expulsions), and Article 13 of the Convention (effective remedies). In her opinion, the Hungarian authorities should undertake far-reaching measures to bring the asylum system in line with the country's international human rights and refugee protection obligations, including by establishing a fair and effective asylum procedure and refraining from all arbitrary removals of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants to Serbia.

On 31 August, the Commissioner published her [submission](#) to the Committee of Ministers regarding the supervision of the execution of the *McKerr* group of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights. This group of judgments relates to several shortcomings in the investigation of deaths during the Troubles in Northern Ireland leading to procedural violations of Article 2 of the Convention. In her submission, the Commissioner specifically dealt with the Northern Ireland Troubles (Legacy and Reconciliation) Bill, which has potentially far-reaching implications for the handling of so-called 'legacy cases' involving killings and other serious violations during the Troubles. The submission draws from the discussions that the Commissioner had about the Bill with stakeholders in Northern Ireland during her recent [visit](#) to the United Kingdom. The submission particularly highlighted concerns about a newly proposed review mechanism for legacy cases being able to meet all the requirements of an independent and effective investigation of deaths under Article 2 of the Convention, the shutting down of existing mechanisms for truth and justice which are valued greatly by victims' families, and the compatibility with the Convention of a conditional immunity scheme, which would prevent the prosecution of perpetrators of violations.

## 8 COMMUNICATION AND INFORMATION WORK

The Commissioner's work in 2022 continued to generate media coverage in leading national and international media outlets and social media engagement. Almost 2800 news pieces were published by media outlets.<sup>1</sup>

The main themes covered by the media concerned the Commissioner's work on migration, media freedom, the rights of LGBTI people, women's rights and freedom of expression.

### **Human Rights Comments**

Five Human Rights Comments were published in 2022 covering missing migrants; human rights defenders from Russia and Belarus; safety of journalists reporting from conflict areas; and women's rights and the rights of persons with disabilities.

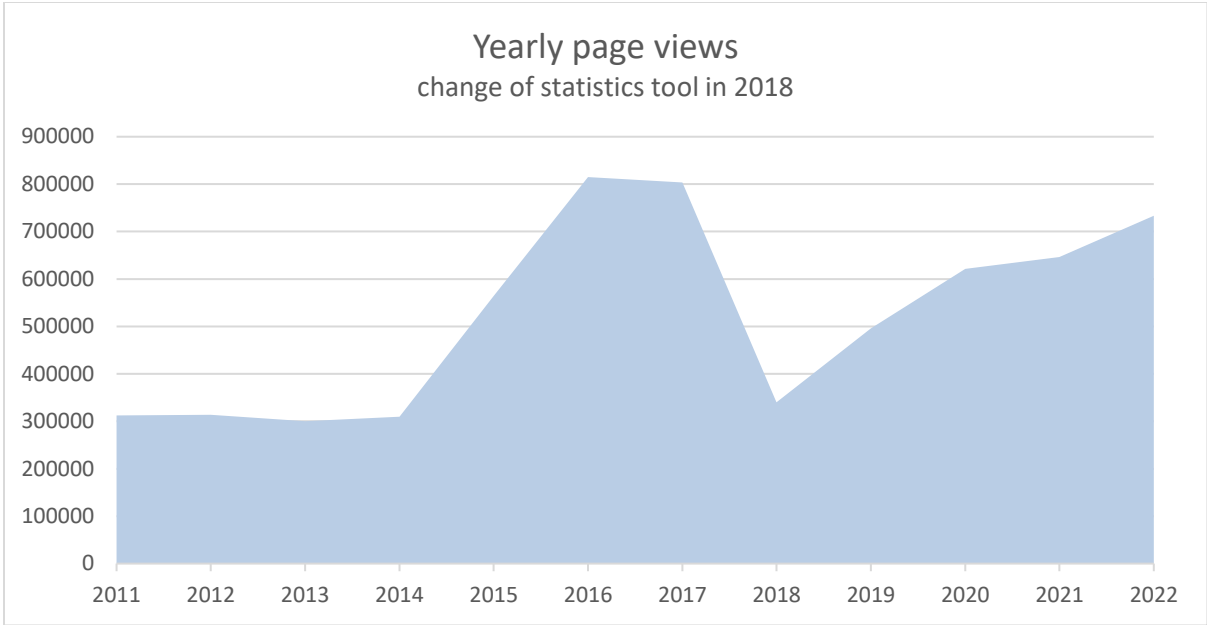
- [No space for violence against women and girls in the digital world](#) (15 March)
- [Addressing the invisibility of women and girls with disabilities](#) (21 April)
- [Not a target – the need to reinforce the safety of journalists covering conflicts](#) (2 May)
- [Support Russian and Belarusian civil societies and human rights defenders](#) (31 August)
- [For the rights of the living, for the dignity of the dead – Time to end the plight of missing migrants in Europe](#) (29 September)

### **Website**

More than 420 000 unique users visited the Commissioner's website, a record number and an increase of 17% compared with the total number of unique users of 2021. A similar trend is visible in the number of page views which exceeded 730 000 units.



<sup>1</sup> Data retrieved from CISION and FACTIVA news monitoring.

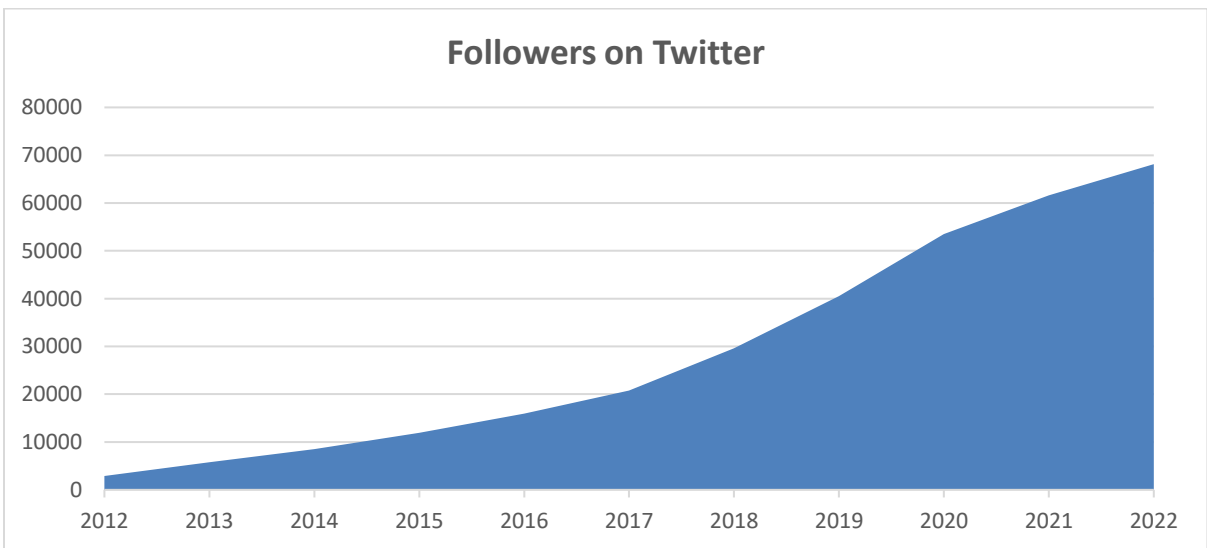


The top five news viewed over the year 2022 amongst all the news shown on the website were those on [comprehensive sexuality education](#), [violence against women in the digital world](#), the Commissioner’s statement on the [need to stand with Ukrainian women](#), [corruption](#) as a factor undermining human rights and the rule of law, and the statement concerning the [need to not extradite Julian Assange](#).

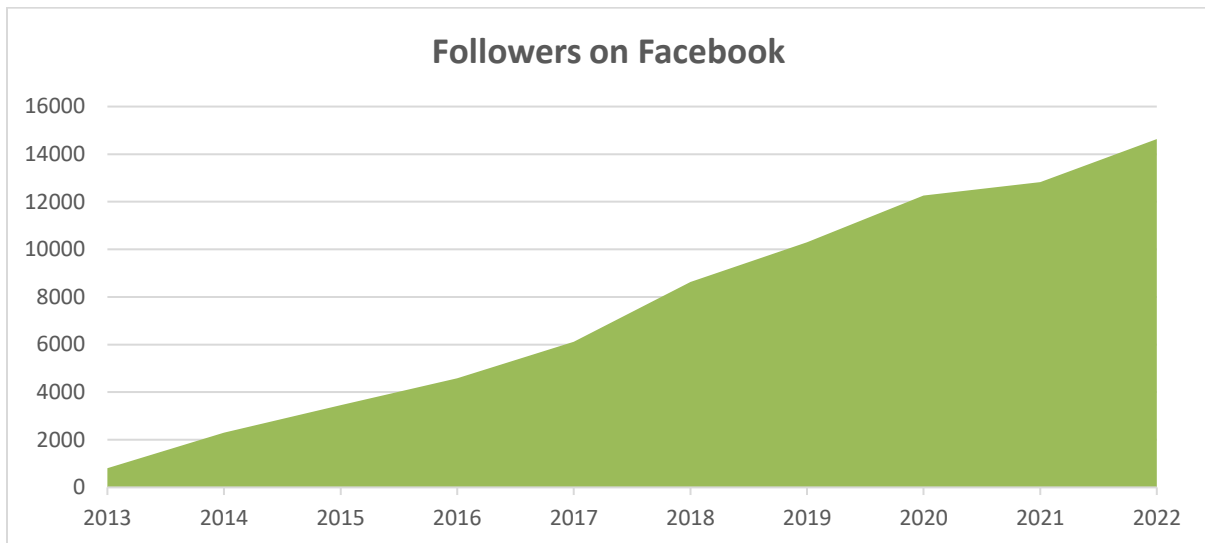
The five pages most visited were the homepage, the thematic page on freedom of expression, the contact page, the Commissioner’s profile and the thematic page on counter-terrorism.

**Social media**

The 183 tweets published earned a reach of 2.6m impressions and 6519 new followers with a total of 68 128 followers (an increase of +10,5% compared to 2021. The average engagement rate is 3.4%.



On Facebook, 155 posts earned a reach of 158 798 people and 999 new followers with a total of 14 634 followers at the end of the year (an increase of 7,3% from last year).



## 9 STAFF AND BUDGET

In 2022, the total number of permanent posts in the Commissioner's office remains at 27 posts (19 A-grade posts and 8 B-grade posts). The Office employed ten temporary staff members financed by the ordinary budget. The ordinary overall budget appropriations were of €3,850,600 which represents 1.5% of the total Ordinary Budget. The budget of the Commissioner for Human Rights covers the basic structure necessary for the implementation of the mandatory activities which should be assured by permanent means from the ordinary budget of the Council of Europe.

## APPENDIX

### List of office activities in 2022

#### A. Visits and reports

In 2022 the following country visits and missions were carried out:

21 to 24 February	Georgia
6 to 8 March	Republic of Moldova
18 to 22 March	Czech Republic
16 to 18 March	Hungary
16 to 19 March	Poland
16 to 19 March	Romania
17 to 21 March	Slovak Republic
2 to 7 May	Ukraine
30 May to 3 June	Kosovo*
27 June to 1 July	United Kingdom
21 to 25 November	Spain

In 2022, the following country reports and letters were published:

#### *Austria*

- [Report](#) by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights following her visit to Austria from 13 to 17 December 2021 (published on 12 May 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)10).

#### *Azerbaijan*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to Ilham Aliyev, President of Azerbaijan, regarding the new media law (dated 18 January 2022 and published on 25 January 2022).

#### *Belgium*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, Nicole de Moor on the asylum registration and reception situation in Belgium (dated 13 December 2022 and published on 21 December 2022).

#### *Bulgaria*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the Prime Minister Kiril Petkov and the Minister of Justice, Nadezhda Iordanova on improving protection from violence against women and domestic violence (dated 12 May 2022 and published on 20 May 2022).
- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the Prime Minister, Galab Donev, and the Deputy Prime Minister for Public Order and Security and Minister of Interior, Ivan Demerdzhiev on pushbacks (dated 13 December 2022 and published on 21 December 2022).

#### *Estonia*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the President of the Estonian Parliament, Jüri Ratas, regarding amendments to the State Borders Act (dated 16 May 2022 and published 23 May 2022).



*Finland*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the Minister of Interior, Krista Mikkonen, regarding amendments to the Border Guard Act (dated 27 July 2022 and published 4 August 2022).

*Georgia*

- [Report](#) by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights following her visit to Georgia from 21 to 25 February 2022 (published on 15 July 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)17).

*Hungary*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the Minister of the Interior, Sándor Pintér on the establishment of a fair and effective asylum system (dated 10 June 2022 and published 21 June 2022).

*Latvia*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the Minister of the Interior, Kristaps Eklons on the situation at Latvia's border with Belarus (dated 29 July 2022 and published 9 August 2022).

*Malta*

- [Report](#) by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights following her visit to Malta from 11 to 16 October 2021 (published on 15 February 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)1).
- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the Prime Minister of Malta, Robert Abela, on strengthening the protection of the media and access to information (dated 23 September 2022 and published on 6 October 2022).

*The Netherlands*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to Eric van der Burg, Minister for Migration regarding reception conditions for asylum seekers (dated 26 August 2022 and published 2 September 2022).

*Spain*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the Parliament of Spain on the review of the 2015 Law on Citizens' Safety (dated 8 February 2022 and published 11 February 2022).
- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to Fernando Grande-Marlaska Gómez, Minister of the Interior Justice on the death of migrants in Melilla (dated 1 July 2022 and published 13 July 2022).

*Ukraine*

- [Memorandum](#) by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights consequences of the war in Ukraine following her visit to Ukraine from 2 to 7 May 2022 (published on 8 July 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)18).

*United Kingdom*

- [Letter](#) from the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights to the Rt Hon Priti Patel MP, Secretary of State for the Home Department, regarding the extradition of Julian Assange (dated 10 May 2022 and published 18 May 2022).
- [Report](#) by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights following her visit to the United Kingdom from 27 June to 1 July 2022 (published on 9 December 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)27).

*Kosovo\**

- [Memorandum](#) by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights following her mission to Kosovo\* from 30 May to 3 June 2022 (published on 18 October 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)26).

**B. System of the European Convention Human Rights**

The Commissioner fosters the effective observance of human rights by assisting member states in the implementation of Council of Europe human rights instruments, in particular the European Convention on Human Rights. The Commissioner submitted written observations concerning the following cases:

- Third party intervention by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights: Application No. 42120/21, [R.A. and others v. Poland](#), submitted on 27 January 2022 and published on 4 February 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)3;
- Third party intervention by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights: Applications Nos. 40792/10, 30538/14 and 43439/14, [Irina Borisovna Fedotova and Irina Vladimirovna Shipitko and 2 other applications v. Russia](#), submitted on 16 March 2022 and published on 24 March 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)7;
- [Written comments](#) in the infringement proceedings before the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Osman Kavala v. Turkey (application No. 28749/18, judgment of 10 December 2019)*, submitted on 6 April 2022 and published on 14 April 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)9;
- [Rule 9 submission in the case of Ilias and Ahmed v. Hungary \(application no. 47287/15, Grand Chamber judgment of 21 November 2019\) grouped with Shahzad v. Hungary \(application no. 12625/17, judgment of 8 July 2021\)](#), submitted on 12 August 2022 and published on 31 August 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)19;
- [Rule 9 submission in the McKerr group of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights](#), submitted on 16 August 2022 and published on 31 August 2022 with reference CommDH(2022)22.

**C. Events organised by the Office**

With the aim of promoting awareness of human rights and exploring specific concerns, the institution of the Commissioner organises workshops and conferences on topical questions. The Commissioner and her Office also contribute to debates on human rights through their participation in major conferences.

In 2022, the Commissioner’s office organised or co-organised the following events:

- Online meeting with human rights defenders working in Ukraine (11 March);
- Online meeting with NGOs assisting victims of sexual violence in Ukraine (10 June);
- Online meeting with Turkish women’s rights defenders (13 June);
- Online meeting with human rights defenders from Russia and Belarus (13 July);
- CommHR round-table with human rights defenders on “Human rights defenders in the Council of Europe area in times of crises” (Dublin, 24-25 October).
- Meeting with Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian human rights defenders (Oslo, 9 December).

#### **D. Events in which the Commissioner or the Office took part**

The Commissioner or her Office took part in the following main events during 2022:

- Online exchange with International Rescue Committee (5 January);
- American Society of International Law "Human Rights Talks" online series (19 January);
- EuroChild High-level meeting on Anti-Rights Movements in Europe and their Impact on Children's Rights, Brussels (8 February);
- Online exchange between the Commissioner and Fundamental Rights Agency staff (14 February);
- Exchange of views with GRETA – the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, Strasbourg (29 March);
- Gender Equality Forum for the Western Balkans, Bečići (1-2 April);
- High-Level Launching Conference of the Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027, Rome (7 April);
- Forum on the present and future of citizenship and human rights education in Europe, Turin (11-13 April) (written message);
- Exchange of views with PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Strasbourg (27 April);
- Exchange of views with European Parliament Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group ALDE, Strasbourg (27 April);
- "Freedom of expression in political speech" online event hosted by University of Geneva and Council of Europe Task Force on freedom of expression (28 April);
- Roman Broadmann online colloquium on "Media freedom in a state of emergency" (28 April);
- European Union/Council of Europe Joint Project "CP4EUROPE - Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe" mid-term conference (23 May) (written message);
- Online conference "The Role of the Media in Combating Antigypsyism. From stereotypes and bias to fighting racism and injustice", jointly organised by Council of Europe Roma and Travellers Team and DG Justice and Consumers of the European Commission (19 May);
- Seminar on Early intervention on intersex children organised by Council of Europe Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO), Strasbourg (31 May);
- Tbilisi Women's International Conference on "Leaders on Conflicts, Peace, and Security", Tbilisi (17 June), (video message);
- Inauguration of War Childhood Museum exhibition, Strasbourg (20 June);
- PACE Equality Committee Round Table on "Developing mechanisms and means to detect and prosecute crimes of sexual violence and support the rehabilitation of survivors", Strasbourg (22 June);

- Europe Abortion Access BAR2LEGAB project final conference “Women travelling to seek abortion care in Europe: the impact of barriers to legal abortion on women living in countries with ostensibly liberal abortion laws”, Barcelona (22-23 June);
- 2022 Annual Research Day of the Netherlands Network for Human Rights Research (online) (23 June);
- Solemn Hearing for the Opening of the Judicial Year, Strasbourg (24 June);
- Round Table on Environmental Defenders at Aarhus Convention ExMoP3, Geneva (24 June);
- Summer School on International Humanitarian Law in Theory and Practice, Leiden University (4-7 July);
- Meeting with 'Marianne Initiative' 2022 laureates, Strasbourg (5 July);
- 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide commemorative event: inauguration of the “Mother’s Scarf” art installation initiated by the Mothers of Srebrenica and Žepa enclave as part of the Srebrenica Heroines Initiative, Srebrenica-Potočari (10 July)
- South-East Europe Digital Rights Summer School, Perast (17 July);
- Conference “Lighting the Shade: Effective Application of ECHR in Contested European Territories” convened by the Irish Centre for Human Rights and the School of Law at the University of Galway, in the framework of the Irish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, Galway (1 September);
- OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights high-level meeting for Heads of NHRIs from the OSCE region, Warsaw (5-6 September);
- Fundamental Rights Agency human rights expert and leaders meeting on “Putting human rights at the heart of Europe’s future”, Rust (7-8 September);
- International Round Table on “Civil Society: empowerment and accountability” co-organised by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR within the framework of the Irish Presidency of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg (13 September);
- International Human Rights Conference EuroPride 2022, Belgrade (16 September);
- European Network of Ombudspersons for Children ENOC’s 26<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference “Shaping the Future: Children’s Rights in a Climate Crisis”, Reykjavik (19-20 September);
- World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and the *Fédération internationale pour les droits humains* (FIDH) tenth “inter-mechanisms” meeting on the protection of human rights defenders, Brussels (29-30 September);
- TGEU European and Central Asian Trans Council 2022, Berlin (29 September -1 October);
- OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights side event Counter-terrorism and shrinking civic space: the misuse of counter-terrorism measures against dissenting voices, organised in the margins of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference (4 October)
- OHCHR International Workshop on “Enhancing cooperation between regional and international mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights”, Geneva (18-19 October);
- European Parliament seminar on "Safeguarding Media Freedom: the role of the European Union", Strasbourg (19 October);

- 1<sup>st</sup> European Anti-SLAPP Conference, Strasbourg (20 October);
- ILGA Annual Conference, Sofia (20-22 October) (video message);
- Dublin Platform, FrontLine Defenders Biannual Conference, Dublin (26-27 October);
- Belgrade Security Conference “Human Dimension of Security in the Western Balkans – Is there protection for Human Rights Defenders?”, Belgrade (28 October);
- 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the OSCE Office of the Representative on Freedom of the Media, Vienna (2 November);
- High-Level multi-stakeholder conference "Safety of Journalists: Protecting media to protect democracy" hosted by the Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in cooperation with UNESCO and OHCHR, Vienna (4 November);
- Ceremony for the presentation of the Liber Amicorum in honour of Robert Spano (7 November);
- University Women Europe and Femmes pour le Dire – Femmes pour Agir Webinar on the situation of women with disabilities (14 November);
- Exchange of views with Gender Equality Commission, Strasbourg (17 November);
- Conference to mark the European Day of Persons with Disabilities 2022 organised by the European Commission and the European Disability Forum, Brussels (24-25 November);
- 11<sup>th</sup> United Nations Forum on Business and Human Rights, Geneva (28-30 November);
- Strategic Meeting on “Strengthening collaboration between UNSR and regional mechanisms to protect peaceful assembly”, Warsaw (28-30 November);
- High-level event for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Ombuds institution of Croatia, Zagreb (30 November) (video message);
- 15<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues, Geneva (1-2 December);
- PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media Joint hearing on “Guaranteeing media freedom and the safety of journalists: an obligation of member States”, Paris (6 December);
- International Anti-Corruption Conference 2022 online panel on “Defending the defenders, those who uncover the truth and the victims of corruption and the violations of human rights” (7 December);
- Exchange of views with Steering Committee on Media and Information Society – CDMSI, Strasbourg (7 December);
- “Strengthening the implementation of social rights in Europe – the role of the European Social Charter” Seminar on the European Social Charter to mark the end of mandate of several members of the European Committee of Social Rights, Strasbourg (8 December);
- National Human Rights Forum Lithuania, Vilnius (9 December) (video message);
- Norwegian Helsinki Committee and Nobel Peace Centre panel discussion on “A Nobel Peace Prize in times of war”, Oslo (9 December);

- Nobel Peace Prize Award Ceremony, Oslo (10 December);
- 24<sup>th</sup> EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights “The road to accountability and justice - Human Rights in Crisis and Conflict”, Brussels (14-15 December);
- Round Table with representatives of civil society and the Crimea Platform, Strasbourg (20 December) (video message).