

COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

MICHAEL O'FLAHERTY

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2025

Presented to the Committee of Ministers
and the Parliamentary Assembly

Content

Opening Observations by the Commissioner	3
1 Country Focus	6
Introduction	6
1.1 Visits	6
1.2 Memoranda, letters and statements	9
1.3 Meetings with authorities	13
2 Priority Areas of Action	16
Introduction	16
2.1 Impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on human rights	16
2.2 Embedding human rights in the great issues of the day	18
2.2.1 Migration (human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants)	18
2.2.2 Artificial Intelligence (AI) and human rights	20
2.2.3 Environment and human rights	21
2.2.4 Inequality (child poverty)	21
2.3 Forgotten people: human rights of Roma and Travellers	22
2.4 Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society	23
3 Other Thematic Work	24
4 Engagement with Council of Europe Institutions	29
4.1 System of the European Convention on Human Rights	29
4.2 Committee of Ministers	30
4.3 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe	31
4.4 Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe	32
4.5 Other	32
5 External cooperation and complementarity	33
5.1 National Human Rights Structures	33
5.2 Cooperation with European and international organisations	35
5.3 Other meetings	37
6 Communication Work	39
7 Staff and Budget	41

OPENING OBSERVATIONS BY THE COMMISSIONER

It has recently become commonplace to distinguish between the notions of an era of change and a change of era. The distinction has been termed as follows*: era of change refers to a situation in which societal changes occur within an existing, stable cultural framework; change of era addresses a context in which the framework is shattered by rapid social and technological advances that surpass the capacity of human culture to grasp them.

There can be no doubt now that we are experiencing a change of era. The evidence is around us.

There is the impact of artificial intelligence. Then there is the triple planetary crisis and all its destabilising dimensions. There are the shocking and worsening levels of inequality. There is the as yet underappreciated impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

We see the widespread diminishment of trust: trust between citizens and the state, between young and old, and between old and young.

There is the rise of populist politics.

Multilateralism is in decline.

What is more, our invaluable *aquis* of human rights law and practice, is under threat. Unimaginably, we risk losing it.

There are a number of dimensions to this threat.

There is the sheer scale of human rights abuses and violations that we see across the world. The levels of violence are higher than they have been for a very long time; there have been more wars in recent years than in a generation.

However, it is not just the scale of abuse that makes me perceive the threat. Human rights abuses have always been a significant issue.

There is a second dimension: the extent to which the standards, treaties, and instruments themselves have been repudiated. Until recently, we saw this in the extremes of politics. We could consider that this could be contained. However, something has been happening recently that worries me greatly. The shift towards the possibility of repudiation in the middle ground of our politics is accelerating.

This is particularly evident in the management of migration, where there is a willingness by some to disavow fundamental human rights principles at borders - something that would have been unthinkable just a short time ago.

Alongside all these worrying developments there is increasing pressure on institutions and civil society across the continent. There are some countries, where, if the state had its way, there would be no free and challenging civil society.

What then must we do?

We must begin by acknowledging the significance of the moment. Despite its banal daily iterations, we need to recognise the significance of this time in history, the accident of the moment of history, in which we, are living. We must acknowledge the treasure of human rights that we risk losing.

Then we need put the human at the heart of public affairs.

* commentator Austen Ivereigh.

We must demand and work towards honouring human dignity as the primary consideration.

In so doing we should demonstrate how the roadmap for honouring human dignity is, above all, the corpus of human rights standards.

Furthermore, we must be applied and confront the great issues and challenges of our time.

Here in Europe, the single greatest issue and challenge is the war being waged against Ukraine.

You, dear reader of this annual report, do not need me to recall to you the horrors of the blatant aggression, the killing of civilians and soldiers, the abduction of children, the destruction of infrastructure and the trauma inflicted by years of attacks. And we must not forget that this is a war both against the people of Ukraine and against us all, against Europe and our values.

Some initiatives towards peace are also concerning in as much as they smack of great power politics. Negotiations seem transactional. Ordinary people are missing. I see little mention of the six million people in the occupied territories, the millions of internally displaced people and refugees, or the destruction of the social infrastructure. I see no mention of the involvement of women or civil society. In fact, I see a near-total absence of the things we have learned over generations are needed to ensure lasting peace.

Over the period covered in my annual report one of my greatest preoccupations has been the peace process; working with others seeking to find a way to shift the dial back to where it should be.

Last July, I presented to the Ukrainian government a memorandum outlining ten areas of action that would be required to restore human dignity and human rights to the heart of the efforts for peace.

Then, in November, I convened a meeting in Warsaw with human rights and peace-making leaders from around the world, to see if we could distil those ten areas into core messages. There were three clear takeaways from the meeting.

First, we need to put the well-being and concerns of ordinary people to the forefront in peace discussions. Who are these ordinary people? They are the prisoners of war and the civilian detainees. They are the displaced people. They are the refugees. They are the veterans. They are the people in temporarily occupied territories.

The second issue is the need to ensure justice, accountability and redress. The Warsaw meeting reiterated that there can be no peace without justice. This was stated not just as a matter of principle but also as an empirical observation: a peace without justice will not survive.

The third issue concerns the ongoing need to engage all relevant actors in discussions on peace in Ukraine. For instance, the UN, given its extensive knowledge and experience of peacebuilding around the world, could play a heightened role.

Will we succeed in embedding human rights in Ukraine's pathway to peace? I do not know. However, I do believe that these efforts are gaining traction in some places where there is the capacity to shift the agenda, however slightly.

Turning to another set of issues, I consider that an essential test for the survival, wellbeing and resilience of our societies is our willingness to stand up for the human rights of our most marginalised communities. I think of the situation of our 12-million strong community of Roma and Travellers.

I have long considered that Europe's Traveller and Roma communities experience the most widespread denial of human rights on this continent.

Again, dear reader, you are well-aware of the appalling data regarding patterns of discrimination, exclusion, hatred and exposure to violence and shocking deprivation. You do not need to learn from me of life expectancy disparities

with the rest of the population, of shocking youth suicide statistics, of the levels of anti-Traveller, anti-Roma racism in our societies and the often-intractable barriers to progress at local, national and international levels. It is because of this situation that I have paid very close attention to the wellbeing of the Roma and Traveller communities since I took up my role in April of 2024. In that time, I have undertaken five dedicated country visits and otherwise met with numerous community representatives across Europe.

In October last I published the book, "The Unheard 12 Million". This is not a report. Instead, it is my effort to convey the voices of Roma and Travellers and what I have learned from them. It addresses problems but also celebrates culture and acknowledges achievements. It reflects on how women are and can be the main catalyst for change, driving the delivery of respect for the human rights of their communities.

But, turning back to the bigger struggle, how will we fare as we transition through this change of era? Will human rights survive it intact? In large part the answer to that question will lie within the way we engage such great human rights issues as the wellbeing of the people of Ukraine, the situation of the Roma communities and how we manage our borders.

More generally, while we face some deeply challenging years, I am hopeful. We have the toolbox for survival. The challenge lies in deploying it properly.

We are also fortunate that there is so deep a pool of decency within and across our populations and it our task to help people understand how the struggle for human rights can be the channel for that decency.

Even if my hopefulness were in question, I consider that we must act.

This is the duty of our generation.

Michael O'Flaherty

1 COUNTRY FOCUS

Introduction

The country-specific work of the Commissioner in 2025 was guided by the four priority areas of work that drive all activities of the Commissioner and that are further described in Section 2 of this Activity Report: the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; embedding human rights in the great issues of the day (including migration, artificial intelligence, the environment and inequality); forgotten people; and human rights defenders and civil society. When warranted by the circumstances, the Commissioner's country-specific work also covered some additional issues. This work entailed visits to member states followed by written outputs (typically, Memoranda) but also the preparation of letters addressed to the national authorities (in most cases, governments and parliaments). In some cases, the Commissioner addressed human rights situations that required urgent attention through statements. All along 2025, the Commissioner also pursued his dialogue with member States of the Council of Europe on these and other human rights issues in one-on-one meetings with authorities both in Strasbourg and abroad.

1.1 Visits

Georgia

From 21 to 23 January, the Commissioner visited Georgia. He focused on the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, the protection of civil society, and the rights of LGBTI people. During the visit, the Commissioner met with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lasha Darsalia; the Deputy Minister of Internal Affairs, Aleksandre Darakhvelidze; the Deputy Ministers of Justice, Beka Dzamashvili and Niko Tatulashvili; the Head of the Special Investigation Service, Koka Katsitadze; the First Deputy Prosecutor General, Giorgi Badashvili; and the Public Defender of Georgia, Levan Ioseliani; as well as representatives of international organisations. The Commissioner also engaged extensively with civil society and visited journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli in prison. The Commissioner's findings and recommendations contained in a [statement](#) issued after the visit were further developed in a Memorandum published in March (see below *Memoranda, letters and statements*).

Greece

From 3 to 7 February, the Commissioner visited Greece. He focused on the protection of human rights in the context of border control operations and on the human rights of Roma. During the visit he met with the Minister of Migration and Asylum, Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos; the Minister of Maritime Affairs and Insular Policy, Christos Stylianides; the Minister of Social Cohesion and Family Affairs, Sofía Zaharáki; the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexandra Papadopoulou; the Greek delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE); the General Prosecutor of the Supreme Court, Georgia Adeilini; the Greek Ombudsman, Andreas Pottakis; the National Commission for Human Rights; and the Deputy Mayor of Halandri, Kostas Efthimiou. He also met with representatives of UNHCR, the European Commission and Frontex, as well as with experts, legal professionals, civil society organisations, and victims of human rights violations committed at the borders. The Commissioner also engaged with members of the Roma community of Halandri. He met online with the Minister of Citizen Protection, Michális Chryssohoidis on 10 February. The Commissioner's findings and recommendations contained in a [statement](#) issued after the visit were further developed in two Memoranda published in May and June (see below *Memoranda, letters and statements*).

Ukraine

From 17 to 21 March, the Commissioner visited Ukraine. He focused on the centrality of human rights in efforts toward peace and recovery following Russia's full-scale invasion. During his visit, the Commissioner [met](#) with the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine - Minister of National Unity, Oleksiy Chernyshov; the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mariana Betsa; the acting Prosecutor General, Oleksiy Khomenko; the Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets; the Secretary of the Coordination Headquarters for the Treatment of Prisoners of War, Brigadier General Dmytro Usov; the Presidential Commissioner for the Protection of the Rights of Military Personnel and their Families, Olha Kobylenska; and the Gender Advisor of Ukraine's Armed Forces, Olena Hrihoriyeva. He also [met](#) with representatives of Ukraine's civil society and international organisations. In Lviv, he [met](#) with the First Deputy Mayor of Lviv, Andriy Moskalenko, and spoke to representatives of the Lviv region IDP Council in a local centre for IDPs from Mariupol. In nearby Novyi Rozdil, he met with a group of internally displaced

persons living in an IDP collective residence. The Commissioner laid flowers in commemoration of Ukrainian soldiers at Lviv's Lychakiv Cemetery and in Kyiv, accompanied by the Deputy Minister of Health for European Integration, Maryna Slobodnichenko, he [visited](#) the Children's Hospital 'Okhmatdyt' which was partly destroyed by a Russian missile strike in July 2024. In a [statement](#) issued after the visit, the Commissioner highlighted the importance of human rights in peace and recovery efforts following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, emphasizing the need for justice, accountability, and reparations for victims. The Commissioner's findings and recommendations were further developed in a Memorandum published in July (see below *Memoranda, letters and statements*).

North Macedonia

From 22 to 25 April, the Commissioner visited North Macedonia. He focused on the human rights of Roma and on the interplay between a clean and healthy environment and human rights. During the visit, the Commissioner met with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Environment and Physical Planning, Izet Medziti; the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Timčo Mucunski; the Minister of Justice, Igor Filkov; the Minister of Education, Vesna Janevska; the Deputy Minister of Social Policy, Demography and Youth, Gjoko Velkovski, and the Director of the State Environment Inspectorate, Ivana Ginovska. The Commissioner also met with the Ombudsman of North Macedonia, Naser Ziberi, and members of the Commission for the Prevention and Protection against Discrimination. He held discussions with representatives of the United Nations and of the EU delegation. He also met with civil society organisations and human rights defenders working on the issues covered during the visit. The Commissioner visited the municipality of Šuto Orizari in Skopje, where he met the mayor, Kurto Dudush and visited a settlement lacking infrastructure, before visiting a daycare centre for street children. The Commissioner's findings and recommendations contained in a [statement](#) issued after the visit were further developed in a Memorandum published in July (see below *Memoranda, letters and statements*).

Serbia

From 25 to 27 April, the Commissioner carried out a [mission](#) to Serbia, focusing on the policing of demonstrations and on the working environment for civil society and human rights defenders. He stressed the need to ensure that the framework for democratic policing is maintained and warned against discourse that stigmatises demonstrators. He urged the authorities to effectively investigate all acts of violence committed during demonstrations and to bring the perpetrators to justice. The Commissioner further expressed concern about the unfavourable working environment for NGOs and human rights defenders, which has been further negatively affected by the reported recent action by the authorities.

Hungary

On 25 June, the Commissioner carried out a [mission](#) to Hungary, to participate in the Budapest Pride 30 International Human Rights Conference. He observed that the ongoing crackdown on LGBTI people in Hungary should be seen in the context of successive constitutional and legislative amendments that appear aimed at silencing civil society organisations and independent media by restricting the space in which they can operate and stigmatising them in campaigns fuelled by disinformation. He noted that civil society actors face intimidation and harassment in relation to their work of defending human rights or exposing corruption and reiterated his concern about the Draft Law on Transparency in Public Life which, in the version pending before Parliament, fundamentally undermined civic space in Hungary.

United Kingdom

From 30 June to 4 July, the Commissioner [visited](#) the United Kingdom. He focused on child poverty, migration, the right to protest, the situation of trans people, and the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland. After meeting in Strasbourg with the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP, during the visit the Commissioner met the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Hilary Benn MP; the Minister of State (Minister for Women and Equalities) at the Department of Education, Baroness Smith of Malvern; the Minister for Transformation at the Department of Work and Pensions, Andrew Western MP; the Second Permanent Secretary at the Home Office, Simon Ridley; the Chair of the Parliament's Joint Committee on Human Rights, Lord Alton of Liverpool and Baroness Lawrence, member of the Committee; and with the UK's delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. He also met with the Chair of the Equality and Human Rights Commission, Baroness Kishwer Falkner, and other Commission members and held extensive discussions with civil society. Following the visit, he met online with the Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission, Professor Angela

O'Hagan. In a [statement](#) issued after the visit, the Commissioner welcomed the government's efforts, including expanding free school meals for Universal Credit families, while urging further measures as child destitution rises. He highlighted the urgent need to end the two-child limit and reconsider the benefit cap, ensuring social security policies do not worsen poverty for families with disabilities. He also stressed broader support for parents and children through initiatives like family hubs and voluntary sector work, while considering regional disparities and the unique challenges faced by rural, remote, and devolved areas. The Commissioner expressed particular concern for vulnerable groups, including asylum-seeking and migrant children, affected by policies like "No Recourse to Public Funds" and unsuitable temporary accommodation. He underscored that combating child poverty is a human rights imperative that should not be restricted by budgetary constraints. He discussed the application of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) in migration-related cases, as well as externalisation. He called attention to restrictions on protests, including in view of new legislative proposals. He expressed concern about the current climate for trans people and reiterated that all relevant legal or policy developments must be human rights compliant. He also followed up on a mission he carried out to Belfast in February by having exchanges on the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Germany

From 13 to 17 October, the Commissioner [visited](#) Germany. He focused on issues related to migration and asylum, on freedom of peaceful assembly and expression in the context of protests in relation to the war in Gaza and on racism and discrimination, in particular antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred. During the visit, the Commissioner met with the Federal Minister of the Interior, Alexander Dobrindt; the Federal Minister of Justice and Consumer Protection, Dr Stefanie Hubig; members of the German delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe; the Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid, Prof. Dr Lars Castellucci; the Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight against Antisemitism, Dr Felix Klein; the Vice-President of the Federal Agency for Migration and Refugees, Katrin Hirsland; the Independent Federal Anti-Discrimination Commissioner, Ferda Ataman; the Vice President of the Berlin Police, Marco Langner; and the Head of the Berlin State Police Directorate, Roman Seifert. He also met with the German Institute of Human Rights, UNHCR Germany, the Secretariat of International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), and held extensive discussions with civil society on the issues of focus during the visit. In a [statement](#) issued after the visit, the Commissioner, focused on the steps taken to implement the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. With the draft legislation to transpose the Pact into domestic law before the Parliament, the Commissioner underlined the importance of including clear provisions for independent human rights monitoring in connection with screening and asylum border procedures directly in the law. The also Commissioner raised concerns about the significant increase in antisemitism in Germany and across Europe. He considered that the increased attention given to policing and criminal law must continue to be matched by an ever-strengthened focus on fostering dialogue, and long-term support of and investment in awareness-raising, Holocaust remembrance and educational initiatives. He was also concerned about the surge in anti-Muslim hatred in Germany in recent years and urged the authorities to address this phenomenon effectively.

Türkiye

From 1 to 5 December, the Commissioner [visited](#) Türkiye. He discussed the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly, association, and aspects of the administration of justice. During the visit, the Commissioner met with the Minister for Family and Social Services, Mahinur Özdemir Göktaş; the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mehmet Kemal Bozay; the Deputy Minister of Justice, Niyazi Acar; the Deputy Minister of Interior, Münir Karaloğlu; the President of the Constitutional Court, Kadir Özkaya; and members of the delegation of Türkiye to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. He also met with the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (TİHEK); the Union of Turkish Bar Associations; the Istanbul Bar Association; and held extensive discussions with civil society and youth on the issues of focus during the visit. In a statement issued after the visit, the Commissioner encouraged the authorities to make full use of the ongoing "Terror-Free Türkiye Initiative" process to advance reforms and strengthen human rights protections. He raised concerns about bans on assemblies and the excessive use of force against peaceful demonstrators. He pointed to ongoing concerns regarding online freedom of expression, including the extensive use of access blocking and content removal measures, contrary to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). He examined restrictions to the work of civil society organisations and expressed concerns about pressures faced by bar associations and members of the legal profession. While Türkiye maintains a generally high execution rate for the judgments of the Court, the Commissioner noted a low level of implementation of leading

judgments and raised concerns about the lack of progress in the cases of *Osman Kavala*, *Selahattin Demirtaş (no.2)* and *Yüksekdağ Şenoğlu and Others*. He also noted that the refusal of lower courts to implement some key Constitutional Court decisions undermined the rule of law and the principle of legal certainty.

1.2 Memoranda, letters and statements

Azerbaijan

[Statement](#) requesting that the Azerbaijani authorities promptly release Anar Mammadli and all other human rights defenders, journalists and civil society activists imprisoned for their legitimate work or for expressing dissenting or critical opinions and to drop the criminal charges against them, as well as any related restrictions, published on 29 April.

[Statement](#) expressing concern about the criminal conviction of seven journalists from Abzas media, who received prison sentences of 7.5 to 9 years, and reiterating his call for the release of imprisoned human rights defenders, journalists and civil society activists in the country, published on 24 June.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

[Statement](#) on the adoption of the law on the Special Registry and Transparency of the Work of Non-Profit Organisations in Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), expressing concerns about another setback for freedom of association and freedom of expression in Republika Srpska, following the re-criminalisation of defamation in 2023, published on 28 February.

Bulgaria

[Letter](#) addressed to the Prime Minister, Rosen Zhelyazkov, raising concern about the situation of numerous Roma people left homeless following the demolition of their homes by the authorities in Sofia, despite an interim measure issued by the European Court of Human Rights, published on 5 May.

[Letter](#) addressed to the President of the National Assembly, Nataliya Kiselova, asking parliamentarians to refrain from adopting proposed amendments to the Child Protection Act and other laws, expressing concern about their compatibility with international human rights standards and potential to reinforce stigma and prejudice against LGBTI people, published on 22 October.

Czech Republic

[Social media post](#) welcoming the Czech Parliament's approval of the bill extending the deadline for victims of forced sterilisations to claim compensation, published on 13 June.

Finland

[Memorandum](#) on the human rights of Roma in Finland following the visit in September 2024, covering Roma inclusion in society, the situation of Roma women, youth and Roma from other EU member states, participation in policymaking and implementation and representation of Roma, their history and culture, published on 25 February. The Commissioner noted Finland's efforts to promote the human rights of Roma, particularly through the third National Roma Policy, and the long-established National Advisory Board on Romani Affairs. He also welcomed a new Action Plan to combat racism and promote equality, which specifically includes Roma, and which was launched in the same month as his visit. However, concerns remain over persistent antigypsyism and experiences of discrimination in all areas of life, including employment and housing. Roma women and youth face intersectional discrimination, while Roma from other EU member states often experience further marginalisation. The Commissioner recommended stronger action, including securing adequate, long-term funding, tackling all forms of discrimination, amplifying Roma voices in policymaking, addressing the specific needs of women and youth, as well as those coming from other EU member states, and fostering a supportive environment for Roma civil society.

Germany

[Letter](#) to the Federal Minister of the Interior, Alexander Dobrindt, raising concerns about restrictions to freedom of expression and freedom of peaceful assembly of persons protesting in the context of the conflict in Gaza, as well as about reports of excessive use of force by police against protesters, published on 19 June.

Georgia

[Memorandum](#) on the human rights situation in Georgia following the visit in January 2025 (see above, *Visits*), covering the rights to freedom of assembly and freedom of expression, notably in the context of protests, the protection of civil society and the rights of LGBTI people, published on 26 March. The Commissioner expressed concerns over the mistreatment of protesters and journalists, noting the lack of accountability for law enforcement while protesters face criminal charges. He recommended requiring police to wear identifiable uniforms and improving investigations into abuses. He criticized recent amendments to laws on assembly, which restrict protests and expand police powers, urging alignment with international human rights standards. The Commissioner also highlighted challenges to independent journalism and civil society, calling for better protection for NGOs and human rights defenders. Lastly, he condemned violence and discrimination against LGBTI people and urged the repeal of laws that provide a legal footing for such discrimination.

[Statement](#) expressing concern about intrusive inquiries into at least eight NGOs as part of an inquiry by the Anti-Corruption Bureau into possible violations of the Foreign Agents Registration Act, published on 1 July.

[Social media post](#) raising concerns that the two-year prison sentence given to journalist Mzia Amaghlobeli was disproportionate and raised serious issues under the Convention, published on 6 August.

[Letter](#) addressed to the Prosecutor General, Giorgi Gvarakidze, about the lack of tangible progress in the criminal investigations into the disproportionate use of force by law enforcement and groups of unidentified masked men against protesters and journalists in November and December 2024, published on 10 December.

Greece

[Memorandum](#) on migration and border control in Greece following the visit in February 2025 (see above *Visits*), covering the protection of the human rights of asylum-seeking and migrant people at Greece's land and maritime borders, issues affecting accountability for human rights violations at the borders and accountability for the Pylos shipwreck, published on 6 May. The Commissioner acknowledged that Greece faces significant pressure from irregular arrivals and that border law enforcement operates in difficult conditions. However, he expressed concern about ongoing reports of summary returns at land and sea borders. Such practices, when carried out without individual identification procedures, risk violating Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights and other international and EU laws. He urged Greece to adopt a zero-tolerance policy toward summary returns, to ensure proper investigations into allegations, and to guarantee that all individuals have access to individualized procedures and effective remedies. The Commissioner also highlighted weaknesses in accountability mechanisms for border-related human rights violations and called for a review to strengthen their effectiveness and independence. He recommended empowering national human rights bodies to monitor border practices and ensuring accountability for the Pylos shipwreck, while safeguarding the work of civil society, media, and human rights defenders.

[Memorandum](#) on the human rights of Roma in Greece following the visit in February 2025 (see above *Visits*), published on 3 June. The Commissioner welcomed Greece's National Strategy and Action Plan for the Social Inclusion of Roma (2021–2030) and the efforts of national, regional, and local authorities to implement it, as well as the important role of civil society in empowering Roma communities and defending their rights. However, he expressed concern about the continued difficulties Roma face in accessing adequate housing and essential services, noting that many live in poor conditions in settlements or segregated neighbourhoods. He urged the Greek authorities to accelerate implementation of the strategy, strengthen coordination among authorities, and improve monitoring of Local Action Plans. Authorities were also encouraged to connect Roma settlements to water and electricity networks and avoid forced evictions without providing sustainable alternative housing. Additionally, the Commissioner called for effective investigations into police violence against Roma, improved training for law enforcement, stronger action against hate speech, and full implementation of relevant ECHR judgments.

[Statement](#) urging members of the Greek Parliament to reject an amendment providing for the suspension of the registration of asylum applications by persons arriving by boat from North Africa, as well as for their forcible return, without registration, to their country of origin or provenance, published on 10 July.

Hungary

[Letter](#) addressed to László Kövér, the Speaker of the National Assembly, regarding pending constitutional and other amendments to the law on assemblies that threatened the human rights of LGBTI people and raised concerns about their compatibility with human rights standards, published on 2 April.

[Letter](#) addressed to László Kövér, the Speaker of the National Assembly, asking parliamentarians to refrain from adopting the Draft Law on Transparency of Public Life unless it is amended to comply with international human rights law, notably freedom of expression and association, the right to respect for private life, the right to a fair trial and the prohibition of discrimination, published on 4 June.

Ireland

[Memorandum](#) on the human rights of Travellers and Roma in Ireland following the visit in October 2024, covering anti-Traveller racism and antigypsyism in the criminal and civil justice system, access to culturally appropriate accommodation, and inequalities in access and outcomes regarding the right to education and the right to health, published on 25 February. The Commissioner stressed that Ireland had developed ambitious strategies aimed at a more effective protection of the rights of Travellers and Roma. In particular, the Commissioner commended the extensive consultation process with representatives of these communities that informed the development of the new National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy. Despite these positive developments, progress on the ground remains thwarted by structural anti-Traveller racism and antigypsyism in Irish society, which permeates all aspects of life. Adverse effects include over-policing and the significant overrepresentation of Travellers in the criminal justice system, the lack of culturally appropriate accommodation and overall substandard housing conditions for the communities, significant inequalities experienced by Traveller and Roma children in schools from early years onwards, and poor health outcomes compared to the majority population. The Commissioner recommended stronger political commitment to overcome entrenched discrimination practices and ensuring sustainable funding for targeted peer-led initiatives, including in the area of mental health.

Latvia

[Social media post](#) raising concerns about the criminalisation of humanitarian assistance following the sentencing of a Latvian human rights defender for providing such assistance to asylum seekers at the border, published on 20 August.

[Social media post](#) on the Latvian Parliament's Foreign Affairs Committee's decision to advance a proposal to the Saeima to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention and called on parliamentarians to disregard disinformation and consider the hard-gained protection from gender-based violence for women and girls and the comprehensive framework the Istanbul Convention offers to safeguard women's rights, published on 23 October.

Montenegro

[Statement](#) calling on members of the Parliament not to adopt proposed amendments to the Law on Public Gatherings and Public Events that excessively restrict freedom of peaceful assembly, published on 24 July.

North Macedonia

[Memorandum](#) on the human rights of Roma and on issues related to the right to a clean and healthy environment in North Macedonia following the visit in April 2025 (see above *Visits*), published on 29 July. The Commissioner called on the authorities to strengthen efforts to combat antigypsyism, to show no tolerance for violence and discrimination against Roma in the criminal justice system and to continue to tackle *de facto* segregation of Roma children in schools. The Commissioner called for full execution the judgment in the case *Elmazova and Others v. North Macedonia* and drew attention to the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on the human rights of the most marginalised, including Roma. He called on the authorities to adopt the long-awaited Law on Climate, ensuring that it takes into consideration the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights in the case *Verein Klimaseniorinnen Schweiz v. Switzerland*.

Poland

[Letter](#) to the Marshal of the Polish Senate, Małgorzata Kidawa-Błońska, asking the Senate to refrain from adopting the draft law amending the Act on Granting Protection to Foreigners in Poland due to concerns as to its compatibility with human rights standards, published on 11 March.

[Social media post](#) welcoming the acquittal of activists providing humanitarian assistance on the border in Poland, published on 9 September.

Serbia

[Statement](#) expressing concern over the disproportionate use of force by police, arbitrary arrests, including of children, and criminal charges imposed on demonstrators, published on 4 July.

[Social media post](#) reiterating the call on the authorities to avoid excessive use of force, end arbitrary arrests and de-escalate the situation following clashes between police and demonstrators in Valjevo on 14 August, published on 15 August.

Slovakia

[Memorandum](#) on the human rights of Roma in Slovakia following the visit in July 2024, covering barriers to the enjoyment of human rights, living conditions of marginalised Roma communities and access to healthcare and forms of discrimination in healthcare settings, published on 25 February. The Commissioner recognises the commitment of Slovakia to addressing the human rights situation of the Roma communities, in particular through the National Strategy of Equality, Inclusion and Participation of Roma by 2030, ensuing action plans and other measures. In particular, he commends the initiatives put in place to overcome barriers in access to healthcare for marginalised Roma communities. Yet, the memorandum sets out that more efforts are needed by all competent authorities, including at local level, to ensure the prompt and effective implementation of the 2030 Strategy in all priority areas. The Commissioner particularly calls for urgent measures to address the inadequate living conditions of marginalised Roma communities, to prevent further deterioration of their already critical human rights situation. These should be combined with integrated and long-term strategic plans, adapted to the local needs and supported by long-term commitment and funding. While the Commissioner welcomes initiatives empowering Roma to act as bridges between the communities and public health and other services, he calls for measures to address all forms of discrimination in access to healthcare for Roma, especially women and girls. A compensation mechanism for victims of forced sterilisation should be established without delay. The Commissioner makes further recommendations on guaranteeing access to inclusive and quality education for Roma children and ending their segregation, and on addressing antigypsyism and discrimination, especially in the area of policing.

[Letter](#) addressed to the National Council (Parliament), asking parliamentarians to refrain from adopting a draft law on non-profit organisations or any amendments which are not fully in compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights, published on 9 April.

[Statement](#) calling on Slovak Parliamentarians not to adopt amendments to the Constitution and noting that the proposal that the Slovak Republic retains sovereignty in matters falling within the notion of 'national identity' conflicted with the obligation under the European Convention on Human Rights to give full effect to the rights and freedoms defined therein, published on 13 June (see also [social media post](#) of 24 September).

Türkiye

[Statement](#) concerning reports about disproportionate use of force by the police and restrictions of the right to receive and impart information in Türkiye during the protests following the arrest and detention of the Mayor of Istanbul, Ekrem İmamoğlu, published on 24 March.

[Social media post](#) raising concerns about the arrest and detention of Enes Hocaogulları, Congress youth delegate in respect of Türkiye, following his intervention during a plenary sitting of the Congress, published on 6 August.

Ukraine

[Memorandum](#) on human rights elements for peace in Ukraine following the visit in March 2025 (see above *Visits*), published on 8 July. The memorandum promotes the integration of human rights in peace negotiations by combining the perspectives of both human rights advocates and conflict resolution practitioners and sets out the Commissioner's observations and recommendations regarding elements of a human rights roadmap for achieving just, lasting and effective peace, as well as Ukraine's reconstruction and recovery. The Commissioner emphasized that lasting peace can only be achieved by grounding it in international human rights principles. He welcomed international accountability efforts including the Register of Damage for Ukraine and the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine and urged support for war crimes prosecutions. The memorandum highlighted the importance of reparations for all victims of Russia's aggression since 2014 and called for peace talks to address the release of prisoners, the fate of missing persons, and the return of Ukrainian children taken to Russia. It also underscored the need for continued protection of refugees and displaced persons and attention to the human rights situation of people living in areas of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia and called for oversight on Ukraine's wartime restrictions to ensure the restoration of democratic standards. The focus of Ukraine's reconstruction should be human rights-based and inclusive, especially for vulnerable groups. The Commissioner called for inclusive peace processes and emphasized Ukraine's central role in negotiations, reaffirming his commitment to supporting Ukraine's human rights amidst the ongoing war.

United Kingdom

[Letter](#) addressed to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP, on the regulation of protests asking the government to ensure that counter-terrorism legislation does not unnecessarily restrict freedom of peaceful assembly, published on 14 October.

[Letter](#) addressed to the Lord Alton of Liverpool, Chair of the Joint Committee on Human Rights of the UK Parliament and to Sarah Owen MP, Chair of the Women and Equalities Committee of the House of Commons on the situation of trans people, published on 14 October.

1.3 Meetings with authorities

Meeting with the Attorney General for England and Wales and Advocate General for Northern Ireland

On 31 January, the Commissioner met with the Rt Hon Lord Hermer KC, Attorney General for England and Wales and Advocate General for Northern Ireland. Among other issues, they discussed the rule of law situation in Europe and the human rights aspects of migration policy as well as the UK government's approach to the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Meeting with Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland

On 12 February, the Commissioner met with Henryka Mościcka-Dendys, Undersecretary of State in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland and discussed, among other things, the human rights situation at the Poland-Belarus border.

Meeting with Minister of Justice of Poland

On 11 March, the Commissioner met with Adam Bodnar, Minister of Justice of Poland. The Commissioner raised his concerns about the changes in the Law on International Protection as shared with the Polish Parliament in a letter (see above, *Memoranda, letters and statements*).

Meeting with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia

On 14 May, in the margins of the 134th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Luxembourg, the Commissioner [met](#) with the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Armenia, Ararat Mirzoyan. They discussed respective priorities in the field of human rights.

Meeting with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan

On 14 May, in the margins of the 134th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Luxembourg, the Commissioner [met](#) with the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Elnur Mammadov. They discussed respective priorities in the field of human rights.

Meeting with the Minister for Legal Protection of the Netherlands

On 14 May, in the margins of the 134th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Luxembourg, the Commissioner [met](#) with the Minister for Legal Protection of the Netherlands, Teun Struycken. They discussed respective priorities in the field of human rights.

Meeting with the Minister for Human Rights and Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords of the United Kingdom

On 14 May, in the margins of the 134th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Luxembourg, the Commissioner [met](#) with the Minister for Human Rights of the United Kingdom and Deputy Speaker of the House of Lords, Lord Collins of Highbury. They discussed respective priorities in the field of human rights.

Meeting with the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice of the United Kingdom

On 17 June, the Commissioner [met](#) with the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice of the United Kingdom, the Rt Hon Shabana Mahmood MP. They discussed the UK's relationship with the system of the European Convention on Human Rights. They also discussed the Commissioner's upcoming visit (see above, *Visits*), including issues around migration and protests, as well as other topics of mutual interest.

Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Ukraine and Minister of National Unity of Ukraine

On 18 June, the Commissioner [met](#) with Oleksiy Chernyshov, Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for National Unity, in Strasbourg. They discussed the protection of the human rights of Ukrainians living under temporary protection in Europe and those displaced internally by the war.

Meeting with Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine

On 9 July, the Commissioner [met](#) with Mariana Betsa, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, in Strasbourg. They discussed the protection of victims of Russia's aggression, including people living in territories under temporary Russian occupation, as well as various issues set out in the Commissioner's memorandum on human rights elements for peace in Ukraine (see above, *Memoranda, letters and statements*).

Meeting with the State Secretary of the Ministry of Children and Families of Norway

On 15 September, the Commissioner [met](#) with Kjetil Skeide Edvardsen, State Secretary at the Norwegian Ministry of Children and Families, in Strasbourg. They discussed issues pertaining to children's rights and young people's participation in democracy and society.

Meeting with the Minister of Justice of Norway

On 19 September, the Commissioner [met](#) with Astri Aas-Hansen, Minister of Justice of Norway, in the margins of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers for Justice on "Cross-Border Cooperation and Mutual Assistance: The Strengthening of Cooperation to Counter Transnational Crimes" held in Valletta. They discussed human rights challenges in migration and the importance of safeguarding the system of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Meeting with the Prime Minister of Armenia

On 30 September, the Commissioner [met](#) with Nikol Pashinyan, Prime Minister of Armenia, in Strasbourg. They discussed the protection and promotion of human rights in Armenia, in view of a forthcoming visit of the Commissioner to the country.

Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria

On 2 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Atanas Zafirov, Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria, in the margins of the 18th European Platform for Roma Inclusion in Brussels. They discussed the human rights situation of Roma communities in Bulgaria, in particular in the area of access to adequate housing.

Meeting with the Czech Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs

On 2 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Lucie Fuková, Czech Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs, in the margins of the 18th European Platform for Roma Inclusion in Brussels. They discussed the situation of Roma women survivors of forced sterilisation and antigypsyism, including in healthcare settings.

Meeting with the Human Rights Ambassador of Finland

On 6 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Katja Pehrman, Human Rights Ambassador of Finland, in the margins of the Warsaw Human Dimension Conference 2025. They exchanged on common priorities.

Meeting with Head of the Human Rights Department of the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the United Kingdom

On 6 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Tom Woodroffe, Head of the Human Rights Department at the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office of the United Kingdom, in the margins of the Warsaw OSCE ODIHR Human Dimension Conference 2025. They exchanged on current human rights challenges to the system of the ECHR.

Meeting with the Minister for Social Security of Finland

On 7 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Sanni Grahn-Laasonen, Minister for Social Security of Finland, in the margins of the meeting of the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI in Hämeenlinna, Finland. They exchanged on the human rights challenges faced by women and girls, including those in the Roma and Traveller communities.

Meeting with the Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers

On 7 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Karen Ellemann, Secretary General of the Nordic Council of Ministers in Hämeenlinna, Finland. They discussed areas of mutual concern and explored future cooperation.

Meeting with the Minister of Education, Science and Innovation of Portugal

On 11 November, the Commissioner [met](#) with Fernando Alexandre, Minister of Education, Science and Innovation of Portugal, in the margins of the Lisbon Web Summit. They discussed the importance of artificial intelligence (AI) literacy in schools, child protection, and other topics of mutual interest.

Meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland

On 17 November, the Commissioner [met](#) with Radosław Sikorski, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, in the margins of the Warsaw Seminar for Human Rights. They discussed migration and human rights, as well as the human rights situation in relation to Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine.

Meeting with members of the Government of Scotland, United Kingdom

On 26 November, the Commissioner [met](#) with Shirley-Anne Somerville MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Social Justice, and Kaukab Stewart MSP, Minister for Equalities of the Government of Scotland online as follow up to the Commissioner's [visit](#) to the United Kingdom in July. They discussed human rights-based approaches to tackling child poverty, the incorporation of international human rights treaties, and issues related to the ECHR.

Meeting with Ambassador for Conventions of Denmark

On 26 November, the Commissioner met with Nicolaj Hejberg Petersen, Denmark's Ambassador for Conventions, in Strasbourg. They exchanged views on the system of the ECHR, particularly in the context of migration.

Meeting with the Secretary for relations with States and international organisations of the Holy See

On 16 December, the Commissioner [met](#) with Archbishop Paul Richard Gallagher, Secretary for relations with States and international organisations of the Holy See, in Vatican City. They discussed pathways to people-centred peace for Ukraine, migration, Roma and Travellers rights, AI and the need to uphold the universality of human rights.

2 PRIORITY AREAS OF ACTION

Introduction

All activities of the Commissioner are guided by the four priority areas addressed in this section, namely: the impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine; embedding human rights in the great issues of the day (including migration, artificial intelligence, the environment and inequality); forgotten people; and human rights defenders and civil society. While country-specific activities were covered in Section 1, this Section describes their thematic dimension, which includes the publication of thematic documents, the organisation of events, the participation in conferences as well as meetings with a wide range of partners. The Commissioner strives to mainstream gender equality and youth perspectives in his activities, and this Section illustrates this cross-cutting work as well.

2.1 Impact of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine on human rights

Throughout 2025 the Commissioner called for standing up for the human rights of the people of Ukraine and responded to the human rights consequences of the armed aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine. His priorities included keeping human rights centred pathways to peace and recovery on the international political agenda; defending the human rights of people living in the temporarily occupied territories; addressing immediate humanitarian needs of Ukrainian people; maintaining a strong focus on accountability for international crimes; delivering victim-centred justice and release of all detainees.

The Commissioner visited Ukraine in March and published a [Memorandum on human rights elements for peace in Ukraine](#) in July (see *Country focus*). His engagement included direct exchanges with Ukrainian authorities, international organisations, as well as addressing specific human rights issues in statements and speeches.

- On 31 January, the Commissioner met with Ukrainian human rights activist and former prisoner of war, Maksym Butkevych, and a civilian released from Russian detention, Leniye Umerova, to listen to the testimonies of their illegal detention and ill-treatment in Russia. Following the meeting, the Commissioner [called](#) for further efforts to secure the unconditional release of all Ukrainians unlawfully detained in Russia.
- On 27 February, the Commissioner delivered a [speech](#) at a conference entitled 'The Role of the Council of Europe in the Pursuit of Peace, Justice and Accountability in Ukraine', organised by the European Law Institute at Dublin City University in Dublin, Ireland. In his speech, the Commissioner condemned the

widespread human rights violations resulting from Russia's aggression and outlined a ten-point roadmap focusing, among other things, on the need for accountability, reparation, and addressing the human rights situation of missing people and displaced persons. He stressed the importance of inclusive peace processes with the active involvement of women and the participation of civil society.

- On 11 March, the Commissioner published a [Shout Out](#) entitled "Human rights should be an integral part of any peace talks on Ukraine". He outlined his ten-point roadmap for a just and sustainable peace in Ukraine, centred around issues such as accountability for the perpetrators; redress for victims; the situation of prisoners, children, missing persons, IDPs, refugees, and people living in Ukraine's temporarily occupied territories; Ukraine's martial law, reconstruction and EU accession pathway; the role of women in peace processes; and the involvement of actors, including intergovernmental organisations.
- On 20 June, the Commissioner [met](#) with Oleksandra Matviichuk, Head of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Ukrainian organisation Centre for Civil Liberties, in Strasbourg. They discussed the human rights situation in Ukraine and how to incorporate human rights in pathways to peace in Ukraine.
- On 10 July, the Commissioner delivered a [speech](#) at the Ukraine Recovery Conference in Rome with a firm condemnation of ongoing Russian attacks on civilians and underscoring the urgent need to place human rights at the centre of Ukraine's reconstruction efforts. He laid out eight recommendations to ensure that the return of refugees and internally displaced persons is conducted with dignity, on a voluntary basis and in full respect for international commitments. He also stressed the need for inclusive planning, support for war veterans and people living in territories under temporary Russian occupation, and continued international efforts to secure the return of Ukrainian civilians, including children, from Russia.
- On 13 August, ahead of the meeting between the US and Russian Presidents in Alaska, the Commissioner issued a [statement](#), in which he noted that news reports had focused on issues of security and territory and that comprehensive, just and lasting peace for Ukraine required a firm human rights foundation. Insisting on Ukraine's central role in any talks as the sovereign victim of Russia's aggression, he observed that upholding human rights offered the strongest safeguard against aggression and the only reliable path to a just and sustainable peace.
- On 30 September, the Commissioner [met](#) with Ukrainian journalists Dmytro Khyliuk and Vladyslav Yesypenko who spoke of their own and their colleagues' arrests and torture in Russian detention. Their stories highlighted the urgent need to secure the release of all Ukrainians illegally held by Russia.
- On 13-14 November, the Commissioner convened a high-level, [closed-door meeting](#) in Warsaw, focused on charting human rights centred pathways to peace and recovery in Ukraine. The meeting brought together 35 senior officials and experts from governments, international organisations, and civil society. The discussions built on the ten core human rights elements for achieving a just, lasting, and effective peace outlined in the Commissioner's Memorandum published in July (see above *Memoranda, letters and statements*). On 11 December, the Commissioner published a [report](#) summarising the key conclusions from the meeting. The report emphasised the need to secure a people-centred peace by prioritising the rights of those most affected, including victims, refugees, internally displaced persons, prisoners of war, civilian detainees, unlawfully transferred Ukrainian children and people living in the territories of Ukraine temporarily occupied by Russia.
- On 24 November, in the context of diplomatic efforts intensifying around the world to lay foundations for peace in Ukraine, the Commissioner [reiterated](#) in a statement that a comprehensive, just, and lasting peace can only be achieved if it is anchored in human rights.
- On 4 December, the Commissioner published an [opinion article](#) jointly with Oleksandra Matviichuk, Head of the Nobel Peace Prize-winning Center for Civil Liberties from Ukraine, in which they warned that diplomatic efforts to end Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine must not be merely transactional. They

stressed that any peace must be anchored in human rights and international law, with justice, accountability, and protection for the most vulnerable at its core. They cautioned that a settlement focused on territories and military capacity, ignoring criminal accountability, or neglecting the needs of displaced people and populations in temporarily occupied territories would be unjust, unsustainable, and set a dangerous precedent for the future of international law.

- On 10 December, the Commissioner delivered a video message to the annual conference in Kyiv organised by the Ukrainian Parliamentary Commissioner for Human Rights, Dmytro Lubinets. He expressed deep appreciation for the tireless work of the Parliamentary Commissioner to protect human rights amid the ongoing Russian aggression and called for more resources to support the institution.
- On the same day, in a [video message](#) marking Human Rights Day 2025, the Commissioner expressed grave concern over the current risks facing the future of the global human rights protection system and underlined that the most urgent task in Europe is supporting a free and thriving Ukraine. He called for the provision of comprehensive human rights support to the country.

Throughout the year, the Commissioner reacted to Russia's deadly attacks on civilians in Ukraine. On 13 April, he [expressed](#) his dismay at the Russian missile strike on the Ukrainian city of Sumy. Noting that the attack took place during religious celebrations, he deplored the loss of human life, expressed his solidarity with Ukraine, and called for those responsible to be held to account. On 23 April, he [condemned](#) a Russian drone strike on a bus which killed and injured civilians in the Ukrainian city of Marhanets. He called for holding the perpetrators accountable and providing redress to the victims. On 24 April, he condemned a wave of deadly Russian missile and drone attacks which targeted Kyiv and other Ukrainian cities on the previous night. He [stressed](#) the urgent need to help Ukraine protect the human rights of its people and to ensure that no human rights violations resulting from Russian aggression go unpunished. On 11 June, he [reacted](#) to a series of Russian attacks across Ukraine, denouncing them as blatant violations of international law and expressing solidarity with the Ukrainian people. On 17 June, he [reacted](#) to Russia's attack on Kyiv on the previous night, which resulted in the deaths of at least 15 civilians and injuries to a further 114 people. On 26 June, he [expressed](#) outrage at Russia's relentless attacks on Dnipro, which resulted in the loss of life and injury to hundreds of civilians as well as the destruction of many homes, schools and nurseries. Stressing that the perpetrators must be held accountable, the Commissioner welcomed the establishment of the Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine. On 1 August, the Commissioner [reacted](#) to a missile attack on Kyiv that killed at least 31 people, including five children, and injured at least 159 others. On 28 August, he [reacted](#) to the previous day's attack on Kyiv which killed at least 18 civilians, including four children. In his statements, the Commissioner has urged the international community to intensify efforts to hold Russia accountable and to provide redress for the victims of the war. On 9 September, he [reacted](#) to an attack in Yarova, deploring the war's terrible impact on people living near the frontline, especially older persons, and expressing solidarity with the families. On 19 November, he [reacted](#) to attacks in Ternopil, calling for accountability and redress for the victims.

2.2 Embedding human rights in the great issues of the day

2.2.1 Migration (human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants)

In 2025, the Commissioner's engagement on the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants was intensive, with specific attention paid to systematic violations at borders, including in relation to the phenomenon of instrumentalization of migration and to externalisation.

The Commissioner made several country-specific interventions related to these issues, including visits to Greece and to the United Kingdom (see *Country focus*); his participation in the hearing of the Grand Chamber in cases against Poland, Latvia and Lithuania concerning alleged summary returns (see *Engagement with the System of the European Convention on Human Rights*); and a letter from the Commissioner to the Marshal of the Senate of Poland concerning legal changes enabling the suspension of the receipt of asylum applications (see *Country focus*). He further raised the human rights of refugees, asylum seekers and migrants in his work in Germany and Poland (see *Country focus*).

On 4 September, the Commissioner published a [report](#) on *Externalised asylum and migration policies and human rights law*, providing an overview of the challenges that come with transferring asylum, return and border control functions to other countries. He underlined that external cooperation on asylum and migration needs to be designed and implemented with great care, so as not to put human rights at risk. Governments developing externalisation policies in this field should carefully assess their potential negative impact on human rights, as such policies can expose women, men and children to significant risks of serious harm and protracted suffering. In the absence of adequate human rights preconditions and safeguards, externalisation policies might result in people being subjected to torture or other ill-treatment, collective expulsions and arbitrary detention or may put their lives in danger. Such policies might also hinder effective access to asylum and deprive individuals of legal remedies. The document identifies three areas in which risks are particularly acute: external processing of asylum claims; external return procedures, including through so-called “return hubs”; and the outsourcing of border control to other countries, some of which have a documented history of serious violations against people on the move.

On 18 November, in his [exchange of views](#) with the Committee of Ministers' Deputies, the Commissioner presented general observations in response to the questioning by certain member states of the law and practice of the ECHR and the Court concerning migration management. He emphasised the importance of evidence-based arguments in challenging misleading claims, such as the association of irregular migrants with crime. The Commissioner stressed that national security is best achieved by upholding human rights and the rule of law. He highlighted misconceptions about migration law and asylum, urging respect for the right to seek asylum and the universality of human rights. The Commissioner further cautioned against weakening the independence of the European Court of Human Rights and warned that any erosion of protections could set dangerous precedents for other marginalised groups. On 10 December, the Commissioner reiterated these messages at the Informal Conference of Ministers for Justice of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (see *Engagement with the System of the European Convention on Human Rights*).

In addition:

- On 23 April, the Commissioner participated by means of a [video address](#) in the Parliamentary Conference 'Envisioning effective public policy to prevent and address cases of missing migrants', organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. He encouraged member states to invest in resources to identify those who have died in or on route to Europe, as well as in tracing missing migrants. He also called for the establishment of focal points in each member state, and for preventive action through enhanced search and rescue and the provision of safe and legal routes.
- On 16 June, the Commissioner published a [Shout Out](#) on recent attacks on the human rights of refugee and migrants, warning against rising anti-migrant sentiment and violence across Europe, and linking these to the spread of online disinformation and the mainstreaming of rhetoric disparaging and “othering” migrants. The Commissioner expressed concern at a joint letter issued in May by nine member states, portraying migrants as a security threat, disregarding the protection needs of people fleeing conflict or human rights violations, suggesting that public safety considerations should outweigh human rights protections, and questioning rulings adopted by the European Court of Human Rights to uphold relevant standards. The Commissioner rebutted claims that rulings by the European Court of Human Rights would hinder the protection of societies, instead arguing that member states can pursue legitimate goals like securing their borders without backtracking on respect for human rights. The Commissioner urged all member states to defend the rights and dignity of every individual, warning that failure to do so would endanger all people.
- On 21 October, the Commissioner addressed the 3rd International Conference on the smuggling of migrants and meeting of the Network of Prosecutors organised by the Council of Europe's Committee on Crime Problems, in Strasbourg. Speaking via video message, he urged participants to not forget human rights considerations in their deliberations, reiterating that the criminalisation of humanitarian activity is an inappropriate means to combat smuggling. The Commissioner called on states to deal with issues of migration via safe and legal pathways.

- On 23 October, the Commissioner participated, by means of a [video message](#), in the launch of a new report on externalisation by Gehad Madi, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants. He welcomed the report as a key tool to protect human rights, and committed to working in complementarity with the Special Rapporteur on this issue.
- On 17 November, the Commissioner delivered the [keynote speech](#) at the 16th Warsaw Human Rights Seminar on “Human Rights and the Legal and Geopolitical Contexts of Migration and Asylum” organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland. The Commissioner underlined the key role the European Convention on Human Rights has in shaping human rights law and its transformative impact on European society. He highlighted how the European Court of Human Rights has helped safeguard democracy, the rule of law, and human dignity. He stressed that the European human rights architecture is a roadmap for navigating volatile times and urged against weakening human rights protections, particularly in response to migration issues and populism, stressing the importance of defending universal human rights for all, especially the most vulnerable.
- On 20 November, the Commissioner met with the EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration, Magnus Brunner. They exchanged on a range of issues related to migration, including externalisation and returns.
- On 26 November, the Commissioner [met](#) with member of the European Parliament Malik Azmani, rapporteur on proposed Return Regulation for the Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), to discuss human rights safeguards in proposed EU migrant return legislation.
- On 2 December, the Commissioner supported the [call](#) of UN experts on the European Parliament and European Council to ensure the new EU Facilitation Directive does not lead to the criminalisation of humanitarian assistance to refugees and migrants. He joined Siobhán Mullally, UN Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children; Gehad Madi, UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants; Mary Lawlor, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; and Cecilia M. Bailliet, UN Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity, in their appeal.

2.2.2 Artificial Intelligence (AI) and human rights

Throughout the year, the Commissioner raised the need for human rights compliant artificial intelligence and the importance of effective human oversight, both in meetings with authorities and civil society actors. The issue was addressed in his [speech](#) at 134th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 14 May and during his [exchange of views](#) with the Committee of Ministers on 18 November.

On 27 and 28 May, the Commissioner brought together a group of experts working on artificial intelligence to [discuss](#) the risks and opportunities of emerging AI technologies and a human-centred approach to AI governance. The group was composed of interdisciplinary experts which made it possible for different perspectives to be brought to the discussion. On 20 October, he issued his [Chair's Notes](#) following the consultation. They provide a new governance roadmap and warn that a lack of human-centric design poses a high risk to democracies and human rights. On 6-7 November, the Commissioner held a [consultation](#) with civil society representatives in Paris on embedding human rights in the governance of generative AI. In addition:

- On 30 January, the Commissioner delivered a [speech](#) at the Embassy of Ireland in Paris on human rights oversight of artificial intelligence. He reiterated that human rights must remain central in addressing challenges posed by artificial intelligence and underlined the importance of making use of the current momentum for regulation to advance human rights in AI in Europe and beyond.
- On the occasion of UNESCO's World Press Freedom Day, during a panel [discussion](#) in Brussels on 7 May entitled “Reporting in the Brave New World: The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Press Freedom and the

Media”, the Commissioner emphasised the need for AI regulations grounded in human rights to protect democratic discourse and help humanity to thrive.

- At the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) held on 12 May, the Commissioner [emphasised](#) that safeguarding human rights requires balancing regulation and innovation. He highlighted how regulatory frameworks are needed to ensure the safety of and trust in technology. He urged swift ratification of the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence, full enforcement of EU legislation, stronger self-regulation by industry, and clever human rights impact assessment tools, such as the Council of Europe’s HUDERIA, stressing that innovation and regulation must advance together.
- On 21 October, the Commissioner [addressed](#) the 15th Europol Data Protection Experts Network (EDEN) conference on “Data Protection & Cybersecurity in Law Enforcement” in Valletta. He highlighted the importance of maintaining commitment to human and regulatory oversight, strong institutions, and transparency in AI and law enforcement.
- On 11 November, the Commissioner [spoke](#) at the Lisbon Web Summit on “Protecting human rights in the age of AI”. He discussed how emerging AI technologies are shaping human rights, reiterating that these must be designed and deployed with a human-centred approach – fostering innovation while explicitly protecting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The Commissioner emphasised that oversight is essential and called for efforts to promote digital literacy to counter manipulation.
- On 26 November, the Commissioner [met](#) with Michael McNamara and Brando Banifei, Co-Chairs of the European Parliament Working Group on the Implementation and Enforcement of the AI Act to discuss the European Commission’s Digital Omnibus proposal to simplify the EU Artificial Intelligence Act.
- On 15 December, the Commissioner delivered a [keynote speech](#) at the Parliamentary Conference on Artificial Intelligence organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Parliament of the United Kingdom, in London. He highlighted the need for smart oversight to protect human rights from the risks brought by AI technology.

2.2.3 *Environment and human rights*

In 2025, the Commissioner focussed on the interplay of a healthy environment and the protection of human rights for all in society during a visit to North Macedonia (see *County work*) and on supporting the work of environmental human rights defenders.

- On 29 January, the Commissioner met online with several environmental legal experts and litigators. The expert discussion revolved around various human rights aspects of environmental and climate litigation and the growing recognition of the right to a healthy environment.

2.2.4 *Inequality (child poverty)*

In 2025, the Commissioner focused on child poverty as a means to counter inequalities and exclusion. Addressing child poverty ensures that all children, regardless of their socioeconomic or other background, can grow in safety, access opportunities, participate in society, and live with dignity, fulfilling their basic human rights.

The Commissioner’s work in this area included notably a visit to the United Kingdom with a strong focus on child poverty (see *County focus*).

On 16 November, the Commissioner [welcomed](#) the UK Government’s scrapping of the two-child limit on welfare benefits for 2026, as one of the most effective actions to protect children’s rights and lift them out of poverty.

2.3 Forgotten people: human rights of Roma and Travellers

In 2025, the Commissioner's work on forgotten people focused on the human rights of Roma and Travellers and a significant part of his agenda was devoted to bringing the challenges they face to the forefront of human rights discussions and to showcasing the special role of Roma and Traveller women as changemakers.

During the October PACE session, the Commissioner launched his book [The Unheard 12 Million](#), published by the Council of Europe, along with an accompanying [photo exhibition](#), curated by the European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture (ERIAC). This first-person account is a call for European decision makers to act decisively to improve the lived experience and secure the human rights of the 10-12 million Roma and Travellers across the continent. It tells the compelling stories of those at the forefront, particularly Roma and Traveller women and girls, fighting for their own rights and for those of others pushed to the margins of society. While addressing Europe as a whole, the book specifically features experiences from Finland, Greece, Ireland, North Macedonia, and Slovakia.

In 2025, the Commissioner's work in this area included visits to Greece and North Macedonia with the publication of the ensuing Memoranda, as well as the publication of Memoranda on Finland, Ireland and Slovakia following visits in 2024. It further includes a letter sent to the Bulgarian Prime Minister, a social media post on the Czech Republic and meetings with the Deputy Prime Minister of Bulgaria and Czech Government Commissioner for Roma Minority Affairs (see *Country focus*). In addition to this country-specific dimension, his engagement on the human rights of Roma and Travellers included the following:

- On 30 January, the Commissioner addressed a [video message](#) to the 'National Forum on the Implementation of the Roma Strategy - Valuing Diversity', organised by the NGO Voice of Romni, in Kyiv. Noting the challenges Roma face across Europe, he stressed the importance of standing up for the human rights of Roma by working together in combating antigypsyism, celebrating Roma culture and empowering Roma women to be leaders of change.
- From 3 to 4 April, the Commissioner [travelled](#) to Heidelberg, Germany, where he met with Romani Rose, Chair of the Central Council of German Sinti and Roma and of the Documentation and Cultural Centre of German Sinti and Roma. Visiting the Permanent Exhibition on the Sinti and Roma Holocaust, the Commissioner underscored their essential work and leadership in ensuring the past is never forgotten.
- On 8 April, the Commissioner [exchanged views](#) with Roma and Traveller youth and participated in the flower casting ceremony to mark International Roma Day organised by the Council of Europe. The Commissioner [acclaimed](#) the activism and leadership of Roma and Traveller youth and women, noting that they are driving change within and for the communities. He highlighted the richness and diversity of the communities' cultural identities and language and the importance of promoting awareness of Roma history, including the Holocaust.
- On 24 April, the Commissioner [expressed](#) concern about the plight of Roma who were left homeless after the demolition of their homes in Zaharna Fabrika, Sofia, Bulgaria, and urged the central and local authorities to act to prevent further deterioration of their critical human rights situation.
- On 9 May, the Commissioner [met](#) with Zeljko Jovanovic, President of the Roma Foundation for Europe, and discussed ways to advance respect for the human rights of Roma communities across Europe.
- On 16 May, on the occasion of Roma Resistance Day, the Commissioner [addressed](#) a video message to the Roma Rights Network meeting organised in Vienna by the European Roma Rights Centre on 15 and 16 May 2025. Paying tribute to the memory of those who courageously resisted the Nazi regime, the Commissioner honoured the work of Roma rights defenders amid shrinking civic space and emphasised the importance of unity in combating racism and sustaining their efforts.

- On 2 August, on the occasion of the European Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, the Commissioner [stressed](#) the importance of investing in initiatives that preserve the memory of the over 500,000 Roma and Sinti murdered during the Second World War, and supporting the communities to tell their own history.
- On 30 September, the Commissioner addressed the human rights situation of Roma and Travellers in Europe during an [exchange](#) with the PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination and in a [meeting](#) with Georgios Stamatis, PACE General Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers.
- On 2 October, the Commissioner [addressed](#) the 18th European Platform for Roma Inclusion (EPRI) in Brussels where he stressed the need to confront racism and discrimination, to listen to and work with Roma and Travellers, to support the empowerment of women as agents of change and improve the deplorable living conditions faced by many Roma and Travellers across Europe. In the margins of the event, the Commissioner also [met](#) with the European Roma Rights Centre and the Fundación Secretariado Gitano to discuss the human rights situation of Roma communities across Europe and the essential work carried out by Roma-led NGOs.
- On 16 October, the Commissioner had an [exchange](#) with representatives of Roma and Sinti Women and Youth organisations from Germany, during the launch of the photo exhibition at the at the ERIAC Gallery Space in Berlin.
- On 5 November, the Commissioner [marked](#) International Romani Language Day, reiterating that Romani language is central to Roma identity and culture and it is often kept alive through the voices of Roma women.
- On 18 November, the Commissioner had an [exchange of views](#) with the Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) and shared the activities conducted in this area. He spoke about challenges in the areas of housing, inclusive and quality education, and participation in public and political life. He reiterated the importance of history teaching, memorialisation initiatives and of the preservation and celebration of Roma and Traveller arts and cultures in combating antigypsyism.
- On 29 November, the Commissioner and the PACE General Rapporteur on Roma and Travellers, Georgios Stamatis, jointly [took part](#) in the 16 Days of Activism campaign marking the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women. They highlighted Roma women's fight for justice and redress for forced sterilisation and drew attention to continuing abuses and intersectional discrimination faced by Roma and Traveller women and girls in healthcare. They reiterated their support for survivors and urged all member states to deliver justice, provide reparation, and guarantee equal care.
- On 12 December, the Commissioner [spoke](#) at an event jointly organised by the Department of Applied Social Studies of Maynooth University and Pavee Point Traveller and Roma Centre, on the occasion of International Human Rights Day. The event celebrated 40 years of collaboration between the two hosts in the field of social justice, community development and human rights advocacy for Roma and Travellers in Ireland and presented the John O'Connell Award.

2.4 Human Rights Defenders and Civil Society

In 2025, the Commissioner continued to pay close attention to the situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states, using the range of tools at his disposal. He underlined that undue restrictions on civil society and human rights defenders are often signs of a broader democratic backsliding, which provides the context for further human rights violations.

On 20 February, the Commissioner published a [Shout Out](#) on "US aid freeze is leaving a void. Europe must fill it". He described the negative impact of the USAID freeze on people living in Council of Europe member states, such as

humanitarian consequences in Ukraine, and pressure on civil society, states and international organisations. He stressed the need to strengthen the role of member states in the defence and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and fill the void in resources and leadership.

On 9 October, the Commissioner published a [Shout Out](#) on the crisis facing civil society and human rights defenders. He expressed concern at the rapidly deteriorating working conditions faced in Council of Europe member states, driven by three alarming trends: restrictive legislation, crackdowns and harassment and the funding crisis.

In addition, the Commissioner addressed the situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member states through country-specific interventions, including public interventions on Azerbaijan and Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Georgia, Latvia and Türkiye (see *Country focus*), and through exchanges and meetings with a wide range of partners, which include the following:

- From 13 to 15 January, the Commissioner attended the 19th [Wilton Park annual Human Rights conference](#), which included a focus on improving the support and protection of human rights defenders, especially those working in a context of conflict or facing transnational repression. During the conference the Commissioner participated in a panel and delivered closing remarks.
- On 28 January, the Commissioner met with Ucha Nanuashvili, Vice-President of the International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH), to discuss among other things the situation of human rights in Europe.
- On 31 January, the Commissioner met online with Binaifer Nowrojee, President of Open Society Foundations. They exchanged on current challenges in the field of human rights.
- On 8 April, the Commissioner [participated](#) in an exchange of views with the General Assembly of INGO Conference. Issues discussed included the protection of human rights defenders and civil society, the need for human rights to be at the heart of any path to peace in Ukraine and the human rights situation of Roma and Travellers.
- On 18 May the Commissioner sent a video message for the opening of the Sandbox Conference “Human Rights Defenders Under Attack”, organised by the Belgrade Centre for Security Policy (BCSP). He highlighted the fact that human rights defenders are under extraordinary pressure in far too many places.
- On 26 May, the Commissioner delivered a [guest lecture](#) at the *Centre Culturel Irlandais* in Paris on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the UNESCO Convention on the Diversity of Cultural Expressions. He emphasised the vital role of art and artists in promoting and defending human rights.
- On 21 November, the Commissioner [met](#) with Delphine Moralis, Chief Executive Officer of the Philanthropy Europe Association in Brussels. They discussed the philanthropic sector’s support for civil society organisations and human rights defenders in the context of severe funding crises, restrictive laws and crackdowns on activists.

3 OTHER THEMATIC WORK

The following section outlines the Commissioner’s other thematic work in the following areas: human rights of LGBTI people; freedom of association and freedom of assembly; freedom of expression, media freedom and safety of journalists; combating racism and intolerance; women’s rights and gender equality; children’s rights and rights of young people and transitional justice. In 2025, he also looked at violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the context of the conflict in Gaza and human rights as a strategic security asset.

On the *human rights of LGBTI* people, the Commissioner highlighted the increase in discrimination, harassment, violent attacks, disinformation and gender identity denial; the political instrumentalisation of, in particular, trans people; and the chilling effect of so-called foreign funding laws, already adopted in a number of member states, and their impact on LGBTI organisations in particular. The Commissioner made country-specific interventions in relation to legislative developments in [Bulgaria](#), [Hungary](#), [Slovak Republic](#) and [United Kingdom](#) (see *Country focus*). In addition:

- On 20 May, in a [speech](#) delivered at the Opening Plenary Session of the IDAHOT+ Forum 2025 in Valletta, Malta, the Commissioner underlined that attacks against the human rights of LGBTI people must be seen as assaults on the rule of law and made a number of recommendations, directed at political leaders and governments, on how to push back against such attacks. The Commissioner also participated in a panel on protecting equality and inclusion in Europe.
- On 17 June, the Commissioner [expressed](#) his support for the renewal of the mandate of the UN Independent Expert on protection against violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity (IESOGI), underlying the key role played by the IESOGI in safeguarding the human rights of LGBTI people in Europe and globally.
- On 25 June, the Commissioner addressed a video message to the Proud Pupils IGLYO LGBTQI Inclusive Education Conference 2025 in Barcelona (Spain), co-organised with the Council of Europe SOGIESC Unit and others. The Commissioner underlined the intersecting challenges faced by LGBTI youth and called for their voices and leadership to be recognised.
- On 25 June, the Commissioner delivered the opening [speech](#) at the Budapest Pride 30 International Human Rights Conference in Budapest (Hungary). He emphasised his strong solidarity with LGBTI people in the country, in the context of a decision to prohibit the Budapest Pride March. He further called on the Hungarian authorities to enable peaceful participants to march safely, without fear of reprisals. The Commissioner underlined that the prohibition was the latest in a series of repressions against LGBTI people in the country, while pointing out that similar bans and crackdowns on Pride marches and gatherings exist in other member states.
- On 7 October, the Commissioner held an [exchange](#) with the Nordic Council of Ministers for Gender Equality and LGBTI in Hämeenlinna, Finland. The exchange focused on the growing resistance to the human rights of LGBTI people. The Commissioner identified areas of concern and provided recommendations to states on how to respond.
- On 23 October, the Commissioner delivered a [speech](#) at the ILGA-Europe Annual Conference in Vilnius, Lithuania. He reflected on the current challenges facing the human rights of LGBTI people, identifying key factors contributing to the worsening environment: identity politics that marginalise certain groups, especially trans and intersex people; the rise of populism, exploiting societal inequalities; the role of social media platforms in spreading anti-democratic and anti-human rights messages, including through AI; and the weakening of the political centre, which threatens democratic stability. The Commissioner called for increased support of LGBTI human rights defenders and civil society organisations, including through the use of diplomatic, legal, and advocacy tools to support their human rights, challenging repressive laws within Council of Europe member states, and strong political leadership against hate and fear.
- In the margins of the conference, the Commissioner [met](#) with human rights defenders and civil society, including Chaber, Executive Director of ILGA-Europe and Dan Christian Ghattas, Executive Director at OII Europe (Organisation Intersex International Europe).
- Finally, on 27 October, at a high-level launch event organised under the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Commissioner [welcomed](#) the Committee of Ministers' [Recommendation](#) CM/Rec(2025)7 on equal rights for intersex persons, underlining its global

significance and importance in providing a pathway towards better respect for human rights and called for awareness-raising and implementation.

On *freedom of association and of peaceful assembly*, the Commissioner reminded member states that any restrictions on these rights must be prescribed by law, necessary, proportionate, non-discriminatory, and subject to independent judicial review. The issue was addressed in his [speech](#) at the 134th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on 14 May. The Commissioner made a number of country-specific interventions in this thematic area in relation to legislative developments in [Hungary](#) and [Montenegro](#) and policing of demonstrations in [Georgia](#), [Serbia](#) and [Türkiye](#) (see *Country focus*).

On *freedom of expression, media freedom and safety of journalists*, the Commissioner addressed the lack of accountability for crimes committed against journalists, government repression and the use of criminal charges and abusive lawsuits to stifle independent reporting. In addition to his country-specific work, which in the reference period covered situations in Azerbaijan and Georgia (see *Country focus*), the Commissioner engaged with issues relating to freedom of expression, media freedom and safety of journalists in the following manner:

- On 9 January, the Commissioner, following the measures for adjustments to the fact-checking policy that were taken by META and previously by X, [urged](#) states to redouble their efforts and demonstrate leadership in enforcing the relevant legal standards to ensure that internet intermediaries mitigate the risks of disinformation and unchecked speech. While recalling the main principles to combat disinformation such as legality, necessity and proportionality but also transparency and accountability, the Commissioner stressed that state actors, platforms and civil society should work together to uphold human rights and democratic principles while striking a balance between upholding freedom of expression and preventing disinformation.
- On 3 March, the Commissioner had an exchange of views with [partners of the Safety of Journalists Platform](#) who presented him the findings of their [Europe Press Freedom Report](#). The exchange mainly concentrated on tackling current challenges such as combating dis/misinformation; SLAPPs; new ways of restricting freedom of expression including by using spyware technology; threats against journalist; impunity; and erosion of support for public media broadcasting.
- On 28 March the Commissioner sent a [video message](#) for the Council of Europe European Year of Digital Citizenship Education in which he stressed the importance of embedding human rights in education, including in the digital space.
- On 30 April, the Commissioner published a [statement](#) ahead of World Press Freedom Day stressing that protecting press freedom is a legal obligation, and reaffirming his commitment to continuing to monitor press freedom in member states and to collaborate with the relevant actors to ensure the application of international standards.
- On 20 May, the Commissioner [met](#) in Malta with Matthew Caruana Galizia and Corinne Vella, the son and the sister of Daphne Caruana Galizia, Maltese journalist murdered in 2017. The meeting provided an opportunity to hear about the family's efforts to ensure accountability and to discuss broader challenges faced by journalists.
- On 17 September, the Commissioner took part in a [panel discussion](#) at the Council of Europe [High-level Conference on Building Democratic Resilience to Disinformation](#), organised in Valletta under the auspices of the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. He highlighted that disinformation poses a threat to democracies and human rights as it distorts public debate, undermines trust in institutions, and fuels discrimination and violence. The Commissioner outlined the harmful impact of disinformation on individuals, society and institutions and the policy and regulatory responses needed.

On *combating racism and intolerance*, the Commissioner paid special attention to the rise of antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred in Europe, the need to combat antigypsyism and the importance of interfaith dialogue. The Commissioner raised concerns about racism and discrimination during his visit to Germany with particular attention to antisemitism and anti-Muslim hatred (see *Country focus*).

- On 27 January, marking International Holocaust Remembrance Day, the Commissioner stressed the imperative of keeping the truth alive and [called](#) for joined efforts to fulfil the right of all to live in dignity and peace.
- On 29 January, the Commissioner attended the ceremony, including laying of wreaths in tribute to the victims of the Holocaust, organised at Council of Europe premises to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp.
- On 28 January, the Commissioner delivered a [speech](#) at the PACE side event “For a Permanent Platform of Interreligious and Inter-convictional Dialogue at the Council of Europe”, co-organised by the Committee for Interreligious and Inter-convictional Dialogue of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations. Noting growing patterns of hatred, the Commissioner [stressed](#) the importance of engaging with faith and non-faith actors on all issues of society and of addressing challenges by harnessing shared values of dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity and justice. He identified migration, combating poverty, the climate crisis, and artificial intelligence as major areas of cooperation.
- On 29 January, the Commissioner [met](#) with representatives of the European Association of Jehovah’s Witnesses. The discussions focused on the importance of respecting freedom of conscience and religion in challenging contexts.
- On 23 October, the Commissioner addressed, via video message, the [2025 Annual Seminar with Equality Bodies](#) “Advancing equality in an era of democratic backsliding” organised by the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in cooperation with the European Network of Equality Bodies (EQUINET) and the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD). The Commissioner highlighted the complementarity of the work of the different institutions in combating racism and intolerance promoting equality.
- On 5 November, in the margins of the world Forum for Democracy, the Commissioner participated in the opening of the [El Holocausto tapestry exhibition](#). The tapestry depicts a mural completed in 1945 by Mexican artist Manuel Rodríguez Lozano as an artistic response to the horrors of the Holocaust and was commissioned and funded by Bill Shipsey, founder and executive director of [Art for Human Rights](#).

During 2025, *women’s rights and gender equality* were central to the Commissioner’s work in a number of areas, including the human rights of Roma and Traveller people (see *Forgotten People: human rights of Roma and Travellers*) and ensuring human rights centred pathways to peace and recovery in Ukraine. The Commissioner’s reaction to the Latvian Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee proposal to withdraw from the Istanbul Convention is another aspect of the Commissioner’s work in this thematic area (see *Country focus*). In addition:

- On 5 June, the Commissioner participated in the opening panel of an informal meeting held under Malta’s Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on “Dismantling Gender Norms: A discussion on Harmful Gender Stereotypes” in Strasbourg. His [speech](#) stressed that achieving gender equality and combating violence against women must be a top priority in Europe, which requires dismantling harmful gender stereotypes and addressing disinformation online by investing in inclusive education on digital literacy, robust data collection, and human rights based legal protections.
- On 5 June, the Commissioner [met](#) with Gender Equality Ambassadors and discussed how gender is mainstreamed throughout his work. He discussed particularly the crucial role of women in peace processes

such as in Ukraine's path to peace, women as agents of change in Roma and Traveller communities, and his work on women human rights defenders.

On *children's rights and rights of young people*, the Commissioner addressed a number of concerns of children and young people, recognising the importance of issues such as access to rights and the inadequate representation of young people's concerns and interests in democratic processes.

- On 17 November, the Commissioner held an online [exchange](#) with the Advisory Council on Youth on current human rights priorities, focusing on the increasing crackdown on young protesters and issues related to the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. He confirmed his commitment to addressing the specific human rights issues of young people and to regular engagement with youth actors to properly understand their interests and the challenges they face.
- On 10 December, the Commissioner addressed a video message to the 2025 Human Rights Education Forum organised at the European Youth Centre in Budapest to mark International Human Rights Day, and to enhance universal human rights education for, with and by young people.

On *transitional justice*, the Commissioner addressed the importance of remembrance, of honouring the victims, of countering the denial of genocide and the glorification of those who perpetrated it, and of acting to prevent gross human rights violations in the future. The Commissioner addressed transitional justice issue as part of his work in Ukraine (with a focus on the need to address violations of human rights and international humanitarian law for sustainable peace and on accountability, reparations and missing persons) and on the human rights of Roma and Travellers (with a focus on memorialisation).

- On 16 January, the Commissioner was represented in Geneva at the Opening of the 1st World Congress on Enforced Disappearances, organised by the UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances, the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the NGO CEDI. His statement highlighted enforced disappearances and an enduring lack of truth and justice for the victims as longstanding serious human rights issue in Europe, aggravated by the war in Ukraine. He made five concrete [pledges](#) to continue playing his part toward ending enforced disappearances in Europe.
- On 10 July, the Commissioner [published](#) a message sent to the [international conference "Srebrenica 1995-2025: dealing with the past"](#) to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the Srebrenica genocide, in which he stressed the importance of honouring the victims and of listening to civil society to prevent human rights violations in the future. He highlighted the key role of civil society in remembrance and for building a better and more peaceful future, as the voice insisting on justice and the prevention of further atrocities. He acknowledged the current trends threatening civic space in the region and called for the protection of civil society.
- On 29 August, on the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the Commissioner published a [joint statement](#) with international and regional human rights bodies, drawing attention to the lasting suffering inflicted by enforced disappearances on victims, their relatives, and society as a whole. The Commissioner called on all Council of Europe member states that have not done so yet to ratify the UN International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

On *violations of human rights and humanitarian law in the context of the conflict in Gaza*:

- On 12 August, the Commissioner published a [statement](#) in which he reiterated his call on Council of Europe member states to do their utmost to prevent and address violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in the context of the conflict in Gaza, including by applying existing legal standards to ensure that arms transfers are not authorised where there is a risk that they may be used to commit human

rights violations. He further stressed the need to intensify relief efforts, by supporting efforts to ensure unhindered access to humanitarian assistance and by pressing for the immediate release of hostages.

- On 16 September, following the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry finding that Israel has committed genocide against the Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, the Commissioner [reiterated](#) his call on Council of Europe member states to [refrain](#) from arms transfers that could lead to such atrocities and to prevent them and further human rights and humanitarian violations.

On *Human rights as a strategic security asset*, the Commissioner published a [Shout Out](#) entitled 'Refute the critics: human rights are Europe's greatest strategic asset', on 18 December. He notes that geopolitical shifts challenge Europe's commitment to human rights, democracy and rule of law, but this commitment provides tangible resilience, fostering the mutual trust necessary for long-term security. Human rights provide the roadmap for navigating today's challenges and should be at the heart of Europe's strategic repositioning, through action in three areas. First, reinforcing human rights in foreign and domestic policy, unlocking the full potential of Europe's soft power. This requires avoiding silence and double standards, investing in international human rights programmes and diplomacy, and a robust domestic rights agenda as the only effective counterpoint to the narrative of decline. Second, 'future-proofing' democratic institutions, which are the first under attack when illiberal actors come to power. Governments should conduct an urgent 'health check' of such institutions, before irreversible damage to them is done. Third, leaders need courage to speak up for our values. They should not imitate the language of those who seek to undermine rights and democratic norms. The 'civilisational decline' predicted by critics will not come from sticking to values and principles, but from abandoning them.

4 ENGAGEMENT WITH COUNCIL OF EUROPE INSTITUTIONS

4.1 System of the European Convention on Human Rights

In 2025, the Commissioner continued to consolidate the important role of the Institution in monitoring compliance with the Convention and the Court's judgments, as recognized in the Reykjavik Declaration. He reaffirmed his commitment to supporting the European Convention on Human Rights, the Court, its judgments and their execution. On 10 December, the Commissioner [addressed](#) the informal Conference of Ministers of Justice, held in Strasbourg, noting that discussions about the ECHR and migration should be evidence-based and respect legal frameworks. He stressed that there should be no interference with the principle of non-refoulement, that hierarchies of rights holders who are more or less deserving of protection should not be created, and that the independence of the Court, as well as domestic courts, should be respected.

The Commissioner [intervened](#) in three hearings before the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the cases of *R.A. and Others v. Poland*, *H.M.M. and Others v. Latvia*, and *C.O.C.G. and Others v. Lithuania*, in which he encouraged the Court to use the opportunities of these cases to provide clear guidance on ensuring that non-refoulement obligations are honoured without exception. The Commissioner put before the Court information about access to asylum and summary returns in each of the three respondent states and the human rights and humanitarian situation of those subjected to such returns to Belarus. More generally, the Commissioner highlighted the importance of not interpreting the case-law in a way that could render ineffective the Convention's protection against returning people to torture or inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, which is prohibited under Article 3 of the Convention. As regards the prohibition of collective expulsions under Article 4 of Protocol No. 4 to the Convention, the Commissioner commented on the current practice of member states interpreting the criteria set by the Court in its case-law in a way that may allow them not to carry out an individual examination of a person's circumstances before returning them. He also set out how the instrumentalisation of migration might impact on the above-mentioned issues, noting that the challenges stemming from this phenomenon should be addressed in line with the long-standing principles set out by the Court.

He exercised his right, pursuant to Article 36, paragraph 3 of the Convention, to submit [written comments](#) to the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights in the case of *Georgian Young Lawyers' Association and*

Others v. Georgia. The case, lodged by 120 civil society organisations, 16 media outlets and four individuals, concerns the 2024 Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence. The Act requires civil society organisations and media outlets receiving over 20% of their funding from abroad to register as “organisations serving the interests of a foreign power.” In his third party intervention, the Commissioner submitted that the Act’s adoption constituted a component of broader restrictions on the freedoms of expression and association of civil society in Georgia. He provided information to the Court on the basis of which it may consider that the law’s provisions are inconsistent with the criteria of legality, legitimacy, necessity and proportionality, within the meaning of Articles 10(2) and 11(2) of the European Convention on Human Rights. The Commissioner also highlighted that several aspects of the law undermined its declared purpose of ensuring transparency regarding foreign influence over the funding of civil society organisations.

The Commissioner [published](#) two communications to the Committee of Ministers in the context of the supervision of the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in two groups of cases against Georgia. The communication in [Tsintsabadze v. Georgia](#) concerned various violations of the Convention related to ill-treatment, mostly by law enforcement officers, and ineffective investigations into these violations. [Makarashvili and Others v. Georgia](#) is related to the arbitrary use of administrative detention during peaceful assemblies and insufficient judicial review.

On 31 January, the Commissioner attended the Solemn hearing for the Opening of the Judicial Year of the European Court of Human Rights.

The Commissioner [met](#) with President of the European Court of Human Rights Mattias Guyomar, on 15 September and [reiterated](#) his message of support to the Court and Convention system on the 75th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights on 4 November.

4.2 Committee of Ministers

Exchange of views with the Committee of Ministers Deputies

On 30 April, the Commissioner had an [exchange of views](#) with the Committee of Ministers’ Deputies. In his introductory remarks, the Commissioner reflected on his first year in office and the challenges facing the human rights system in Europe.

Participation in the Ministerial Session of the Committee of Ministers

On 14 May, the Commissioner participated in the 134th session of the Committee of Ministers. In his [address](#), the Commissioner focused on the need to adhere to human rights obligations in the field of democracy including the protection of civil society and the freedoms of assembly, association and expression. He also applauded the Council of Europe’s commitment to achieving a just and lasting peace in Ukraine through efforts to ensure accountability, while stating the importance of embedding human rights in all other aspects of the path to peace in Ukraine.

Exchange of views with the Committee of Ministers Deputies

On 3 September, the Commissioner had an [exchange of views](#) with the Committee of Ministers’ Deputies. In his introductory remarks, the Commissioner focused on externalised migration policies, Roma and Travellers rights and pressure on civil society.

Exchange of views with the Committee of Ministers Deputies

On 18 November, the Commissioner had an [exchange of views](#) with the Committee of Ministers’ Deputies. In his introductory remarks, the Commissioner focused on human-centred pathways to peace in Ukraine, AI oversight and the defence of the Convention system.

4.3 Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Presentation of Annual Activity Report 2024

Presenting his first annual report to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on 7 April, the Commissioner [underscored](#) the pressing need for national parliaments to reclaim their role as guardians of human rights. He urged members of parliaments to systematically check the human rights compliance of legislation and to enhance the visibility of human rights across parliamentary committees.

Meeting with the Chair of the Türkiye PACE delegation

On 28 January, the Commissioner met with the Chair of the Türkiye PACE delegation, Yıldırım Tuğrul Türkeş. They exchanged on various legislative proposals being debated by the Grand National Assembly of Türkiye and their human rights implications, and some broader issues.

Meeting with former President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

On 29 January, the Commissioner met with the former President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Tiny Kox, to discuss the situation of Ukrainian civilians, including children, missing or detained by Russia.

Meeting with a member of the Irish PACE Delegation

On 8 April, the Commissioner met with Conor Murphy, member of PACE and of Ireland's Senate. They discussed issues related to the legacy of the Troubles in Northern Ireland.

Meeting with members of the Türkiye PACE delegation

On 9 April, the Commissioner met with members of the Türkiye PACE delegation, Namık Tan, Aysun Bankoğlu, Gökçe Gökçen and Yunus Emre. They discussed relevant human rights issues pertaining to recent developments in the country.

Meeting with a member of the Irish PACE Delegation

On 9 April, the Commissioner met with Senator Patricia Stephenson, member of PACE and of Ireland's Senate. They exchange on the human rights situation in Europe and in particular the situation of human rights defenders and the human rights of Roma and Travellers.

Address to PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

On 10 April, the Commissioner addressed the PACE Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media on the issue of Ukrainian journalists held in Russian captivity. He expressed concern at the continuing detention of Ukrainian journalists by Russia and set out points for the way forward: to insist on the release of the journalists and on access to them for the human rights monitoring mechanisms (in the territories of Ukraine occupied by Russia); to demand accountability for the human rights violations perpetrated against these journalists; and to require that their release is part of the path to peace.

PACE Monitoring Committee hearings in Riga

On 15 June, the Commissioner [participated](#) in hearings of the PACE Monitoring Committee in Riga, during which he shared his findings from his recent work on the human rights situation in Georgia and in Hungary.

4.4 Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Meeting with President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

On 28 January, the Commissioner met with Marc Cools, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, to exchange on a number of human rights issues including the situation in Georgia. The Commissioner discussed the preliminary findings following his visit to the country from 21 to 23 January.

Exchange of views with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

On 25 March, the Commissioner had an [exchange of views](#) with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, during which he focused on the vital role of local and regional governments in defending human rights. Drawing on his recent work, he highlighted the urgent need for grassroots action, the respect for international standards, and deeper partnerships to uphold human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

4.5 Other

Informal Conference of Ministers for Justice of the Council of Europe on cross border cooperation and mutual assistance

On 19 September, the Commissioner [addressed](#) the Informal Conference of Ministers for Justice of the Council of Europe on “Cross border cooperation and mutual assistance: the strengthening of cooperation to counter transnational crimes”, organised in Valletta under the auspices of the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

Venice Commission: exchange of views and 35th anniversary

On 10 October, the Commissioner had an [exchange of views](#) with the Venice Commission, during its 144th plenary session in Venice. In his speech, the Commissioner stressed the complementary relationship between his work – seeking the application of law and promoting legal norms– and the Venice Commission’s role in developing human rights standards and guidance, emphasising continued cooperation. The Commissioner [reiterated](#) the importance of the institutions as complementary human rights actors during the celebration of the [35th anniversary](#) of the Venice Commission, on 11 October.

Meeting with member of the Venice Commission in respect of the United States

On 4 November, the Commissioner met with David Kaye, member of the Venice Commission in respect of the United States and former UN Special rapporteur on freedom of opinion and expression. They discussed topics of mutual interest.

World Forum for Democracy

On 5 November, the Commissioner participated in the [World Forum for Democracy](#) discussion on how democracies can rekindle citizen engagement. As democracies face disengagement and the erosion of core freedoms, the discussion explored whether tools such as deliberative forums, citizens’ assemblies, and other forms of public participation can break down barriers, rebuild trust, and help revive democratic life, especially in an era where new technologies present both risks and opportunities for more direct, inclusive and informed participation.

5 EXTERNAL COOPERATION AND COMPLEMENTARITY

5.1 National Human Rights Structures

Dialogue and close partnership with national human rights structures (NHRs) was paramount for the Commissioner in 2025. The Commissioner recognised the NHRs frontline role in realising human rights in people's daily lives and the value of effective co-operation between them and the Office, as well as with the Council of Europe as a whole.

The Commissioner maintains close contacts with national human rights structures during his country visits and missions as well as in Strasbourg to discuss mainly national human rights developments. He also interacts with networks of national human rights structures, including the European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI).

In 2025 this work included the following:

- On 30 January, in a speech delivered at the Irish Embassy in Paris on human rights oversight of artificial intelligence, the Commissioner drew attention to the key role of NHRs (see *Thematic focus: Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights*).
- On 17 February, in Brussels the Commissioner [met](#) the Directors of UNIA Centre for Equal Opportunities and Opposition to Racism, to discuss the need to further strengthen Equality Bodies in order to better fight discrimination and promote equality.
- On 25 February, the Commissioner delivered the [Annual Human Rights Lecture](#) at the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, entitled “Uphold the rule of law – resist the pushback” and met with the Chief Commissioner, Alyson Kilpatrick.
- On 11 March, the Commissioner [met](#) with Anahit Manasyan, the Human Rights Defender (Ombuds) of Armenia. They discussed the human rights situation in Armenia.
- On 26 March, the Commissioner [met](#) with the European Ombudsman, Teresa Anjinho, to discuss issues of common interest with human rights implications, including in the field of migration and artificial intelligence. They committed to continuing a constructive and mutually reinforcing cooperation between their institutions.
- On 27 March, the Commissioner [met](#) with Ceslav Panico, People's Advocate (Ombuds) of the Republic of Moldova. The Commissioner emphasised that the Moldovan authorities should ensure that People's Advocate can exercise his independent human rights mandate free from interference and stressed that he looked forward to cooperating with him for the promotion of human rights in the country.
- On 27 March, the Commissioner participated in the High-Level Conference for Ombudsperson Institutions and NHRs organised by the Luxembourg Presidency of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. In his [opening remarks](#) the Commissioner noted the crucial role of NHRs in the context of the incremental crisis of human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe.
- On 8 April, the Commissioner delivered a video message at the opening of the finals of the 2025 edition of the Slovak Human Rights Olympiad, an event aimed at secondary school students focusing on the promotion and protection of human rights, organised by the Slovak National Centre for Human Rights. In the message, the Commissioner welcomed the event as an important opportunity to engage young people on human rights.

- On 6 May, during his mission to Geneva, the Commissioner met with Katharina Rose, the Representative of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) to the United Nations to discuss respective priorities and future cooperation.
- On 20 and 21 May, the Commissioner held [meetings](#) with the Maltese Ombudsman, with the Acting Executive Director of the National Commission for the Promotion of Equality, and with the Human Rights Directorate of the Maltese government, to discuss the need for a National Human Rights Institution in the country.
- On 9 July, the Commissioner met online with Professor Angela O'Hagan, Chair of the Scottish Human Rights Commission. They discussed developments at the Scottish Human Rights Commission; poverty and human rights; the situation of trans people and defending the rule of law and international human rights institutions.
- On 9 September, the Commissioner [addressed](#) a conference held at the Bocconi University in Milan on "The role of National Human Rights Institutions in promoting rights and preventing rights-related litigation and mediating conflicts". He emphasised the key role of NHRIs in a country's human rights architecture and regretted the fact that certain member states, including Italy, still do not have an NHRI. Referring to the national context, the Commissioner called on stakeholders to rally around one model that best fits the specificities of the country. He highlighted several criteria for the NHRI to be effective, including pluralism and inclusivity, a broad human rights mandate, independence and adequate funding.
- On 23 October, the Commissioner addressed [ECRI's Annual Seminar with Equality Bodies](#) (see *Other thematic work*).
- On 20 November, the Commissioner [spoke](#) at European Network of National Human Rights Institutions (ENNHRI) event on Strategic Partnerships, in Brussels. Looking at the current context for human rights, he suggested that we are in a period of profound transition and that the survival of international law, democracy and the rule of law is not guaranteed. He highlighted three areas in which to intensify engagement: the human rights implications of the war in Ukraine; artificial intelligence; and challenges to the ECHR.
- On 20 November, in the margins of the ENNHRI event on Strategic Partnerships in Brussels, the Commissioner met with Debbie Kohner, ENNHRI Secretary General, and several ENNHRI Board members. They exchanged on topics of current common interest, including challenges to the European Convention on Human Rights and the ongoing review of implementation of the Committee of Ministers' Recommendation on NHRIs.
- On 25 November, the Commissioner [spoke](#) at a workshop on 'Ombudsperson Institutions and National Human Rights Institutions: Implementation of Committee of Ministers Recommendations and Other International Standards', organised by the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH). He underlined that national human rights institutions and ombudsperson institutions with a human rights mandate are crucial elements of a state's democratic and human rights architecture.
- On 26 November, the Commissioner met with Levan Ioseliani, Public Defender (Ombudsman) of Georgia to discuss recent developments in the country.
- On 1 December, the Commissioner congratulated the Ombudsperson Institution of Kosovo* on its 25th anniversary, underlining its key role in the protection of human rights and as champion for equality. Speaking via [video message](#), he emphasised that Ombudsperson institutions and NHRIs are essential to

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

build bridges between the authorities and the population and, in doing so, help ensuring implementation of international human rights standards, including the European Convention on Human Rights.

- In his [statement](#) following a visit to Türkiye in December, the Commissioner encouraged the authorities to pursue a reform of the Human Rights and Equality Institution of Türkiye (TİHEK).
- On 11 December, the Commissioner addressed through video message a parliamentary event on “the State of Human Rights in Scotland” at the invitation of the Scottish Human Rights Commission. He welcomed the focus of the event on the delivery of social rights. He also stressed the responsibility of parliament in ensuring that the NHRI has the resources and capacities to carry out its mandate across all human rights, stressing that an effective and independent NHRI is one of the indicators of delivering the UN Sustainable Goals.

5.2 Cooperation with European and international organisations

The Commissioner gives a high level of priority to working together with other international organisations and seeking to strengthen synergies with them.

On 12 February, the Commissioner met with the President of the UN Human Rights Council, Ambassador Jürg Lauber. They discussed inter-institutional cooperation, including the potential for joint initiatives, closer engagement with Special Procedures, and mutual learning from review mechanisms. The Commissioner used the opportunity to highlight the importance of integrating human rights in Ukraine-related peace and reconstruction efforts.

From 18 to 20 February, the Commissioner carried out a mission to Brussels which was aimed at pursuing high level dialogue with EU institutions. The key topics of the mission were migration, equality (including Roma and Travellers), the situation in Ukraine and the importance of human rights in the EU enlargement process. The Commissioner held exchanges with the European Parliament LIBE committee and DROI sub-committee. He [met](#) with Commissioner for Equality, Preparedness and Crisis Management, Hadja Lahbib and [engaged](#) with the European External Action Service and the European Commission.

On 3 March, the Commissioner [met](#) with the new Director of OSCE/ODIHR, Maria Telalian. They discussed the priorities for their respective mandates, ways to strengthen human rights protection across the region and to enhance cooperation between their institutions in addressing common challenges.

On 12 March, the Commissioner [met](#) with Marta Santos Pais, Commissioner of the International Commission Against the Death Penalty, and her team, who presented their current activities. The Commissioner stressed the importance of joining forces for the abolition of the death penalty worldwide.

On 10 April, the Commissioner met with Balakrishnan Rajagopal, UN Special Rapporteur on the right to adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context. Discussions focused among other things on discrimination against Roma and Travellers in Europe.

On 29 April, the Commissioner [met](#) with the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, Christophe Kamp. They discussed issues relating to national minorities where their mandates overlap, including embedding the voices and experiences of national minority women and girls in their work and explored ways to strengthen cooperation between their offices.

From 6 to 7 May, the Commissioner carried out a mission to Geneva to strengthen inter-institutional cooperation with partners from the United Nations and other international organisations. The aim of the mission was to discuss key human rights issues in Europe and identify avenues for closer cooperation. The Commissioner met with the [President of the UN Human Rights Council](#) Ambassador Jürg Lauber; the [UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) Volker Turk; the [UNHCR Assistant High Commissioner for Protection](#), Ruvendrini Menikdiwela; and the [ICRC Vice-President](#) Gilles Carbonnier. He also met with the representative of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GHANRI) to the United Nations Katharina Rose, and representatives of the [World Economic Forum](#).

On 4 June, the Commissioner had an exchange with the chairpersons of the [UN Treaty Bodies](#) during their 37th meeting in Geneva. The Commissioner noted that stronger cooperation and genuine complementarity of regional and international human rights mechanisms is more vital than ever.

On 16 June, the Commissioner [met](#) with Michael McGrath, EU Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection to discuss areas of mutual concern and explore cooperation. They discussed the state of civil society in Europe and the rule of law and human rights situation in Council of Europe member states.

On 16 June, the Commissioner [met](#) with the Executive Vice-President of the European Commission for Technological Sovereignty, Security, and Democracy, Henna Virkkunen. They discussed current human rights challenges in Europe, including on AI and human rights, migration, combating disinformation and civic space protection.

On 18 June, the Commissioner [met](#) with Sirpa Rautio, the Director of the EU Fundamental Rights Agency to reaffirm shared commitment to human rights and close cooperation.

On 29 August, the Commissioner published a [joint statement](#) with international and regional human rights bodies on the occasion of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances.

On 17 September, the Commissioner [met](#) with Jan Braathu, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media, in the margins of the CoE High-level Conference on Building Democratic Resilience to disinformation, held in Valletta. They discussed the state of freedom of expression across OSCE and Council of Europe states.

On 2 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Kajsa Ollongren, EU Special Representative for Human Rights in Brussels. They discussed human rights issues of common interest and avenues for further cooperation.

On 2 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Nicolae Ștefănuță, Vice-President of the European Parliament (EP) in Brussels. They discussed the importance of mainstreaming the human rights of Roma and Travellers across all EU policies and funding.

On 6 October, the Commissioner delivered the [keynote speech](#) at the OSCE ODIHR Human Dimension Conference 2025 in Warsaw. Addressing the role of multilateralism and human rights in overcoming global dysphoria, the Commissioner underlined the OSCE's essential work and pledged his support in a complementary and cooperative role. In the margins of the event, the Commissioner [met](#) with Vesa Häkkinen, Ambassador of Finland to the OSCE; Neil Holland, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the OSCE and with Maria Telalian, Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, where they explored ways to nurture Europe's culture of human rights and make it more resilient.

On 23 October, the Commissioner [met](#) with Carlien Scheele, Director of the European Union's Gender Equality Agency (EIGE), in the margins of ILGA-Europe 27th Annual Conference in Vilnius. They exchanged on their common goal of advancing gender equality and strengthening human rights.

On 20 November, the Commissioner [met](#) with Magnus Brunner, EU Commissioner for Internal Affairs and Migration in Brussels. They discussed current human rights challenges in Europe in relation to migration, including asylum rights and externalisation.

On 26 November, the Commissioner had an [exchange](#) with Chair Sophie Wilmès, and several members of the LIBE Democracy, Rule of Law and Fundamental Rights Monitoring Group, during the European Parliament session in Strasbourg. They discussed topical issues such as people-centred pathways to peace for Ukraine and pressures on civil society and NHRIs.

On 28 November, the Commissioner met with Mariana Katzarova, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation. They exchanged on common priorities.

5.3 Other meetings

Meeting with Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists, the Turkish Litigation Support Project and the European Implementation Network

On 27 January, the Commissioner met with a group of civil society organisations including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, the International Commission of Jurists, the Turkish Litigation Support Project and the European Implementation Network. They discussed the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

Meeting with the Chair of the European Implementation Network

On 10 February, the Commissioner met with Maciej Nowicki, Chair of the European Implementation Network and his team. They discussed issues related to civil society's contribution to the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

50th anniversary of the Community Law and Mediation Centre

On 26 February, the Commissioner took part in a panel discussion at an event celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Community Law and Mediation Centre based in Dublin, Ireland. In his remarks, the Commissioner highlighted the role of communities as drivers of action on protecting human rights and social justice and stressed the importance of standing up for the human rights of the most vulnerable members of our societies, such as Roma and Travellers.

Meeting with Standing Committee on Local Government and Public Administration of the Norwegian Parliament

On 11 March, the Commissioner [met](#) with members of the Standing Committee on Local Government and Public Administration of the Norwegian Parliament. They discussed key human rights issues in Europe, the situation of human rights institutions and civil society, as well as the importance of parliamentarians in protecting human rights.

Meeting with Executive Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy

On 13 March, the Commissioner met online with Thomas Greminger, Executive Director of the Geneva Centre for Security Policy for an exchange on their respective work on Ukraine.

Meeting with a member of the National Assembly of Serbia

On 8 April the Commissioner met with Pavle Grbović, a member of the National Assembly of Serbia and President of the Movement of Free Citizens and discussed relevant human rights issues.

Meeting with the Chairperson of the Constitutional Court and the Deputy Chairperson of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan

On 10 April, the Commissioner met with the Chairperson of the Constitutional Court of Kazakhstan, Elvira Azimova and the Deputy Chairperson of the Senate of the Parliament of Kazakhstan, Olga Perepechina. The Commissioner was informed about the human rights structure in Kazakhstan and recent legislative changes aimed at enhancing the protection of human rights in the country.

Strategic Ark 2025

On 23 May, the Commissioner took part in a panel on laws of peace and conflict during the [Strategic Ark](#) conference organised in Warsaw by the Polish Institute of International Affairs.

First Global Network on National Human Rights Action Planning

On 4 June, the Commissioner delivered a video keynote address to a workshop of the First Global Network on National Human Rights Action Planning on "[Uncovering 30 years of NHRAPing, Lessons from the Five Continents](#)", organised by the University of Liverpool.

Visit to the René Cassin Foundation

On 5 June, the Commissioner carried out a visit to the René Cassin Foundation. At the end of a meeting with the Chairman, Director and staff members of the Foundation where the strengthening of the cooperation with this institution was discussed, the Commissioner [stressed](#) the crucial importance of human rights education for all and praised the excellent work done by the Foundation in this field.

Event on behavioural science during UN 2.0 week

On 10 June, in his [video message](#) addressed to a side event on behavioural science during UN 2.0 Week, co-organised by the Council of Europe and UNOHCHR, the Commissioner welcomed structured, evidence-based use of behavioural sciences to advance human rights.

Conference to mark the adoption and opening for signature of the CoE Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer

On 16 June 2025, the Commissioner delivered a [speech](#) at the conference marking the adoption and opening for signature of the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer, organised by the European Committee on Legal Cooperation.

Exchange with a delegation from the National Student Travel Foundation, Malta

On 7 July, the Commissioner [met](#) with a delegation of secondary school students from Malta, who had travelled to Strasbourg for a study visit organised by the National Student Travel Foundation.

Model European Parliament conference on "Balancing Acts: Fundamental Rights, Collective Security and Societal Interests in Contemporary Governance"

In a video message for the Model European Parliament conference on "Balancing Acts: Fundamental Rights, Collective Security and Societal Interests in Contemporary Governance" held in Ventotene on 11 July, the Commissioner argued that human rights and security are not mutually exclusive.

European Forum Alpbach 2025: Europe in the World Days

During the panel discussion "'Democracy in the Digital Age: Unmasking the Power of Deception" at the European Forum Alpbach on 28 August, the Commissioner [emphasised](#) that, given the impact of technologies such as AI on human rights and dignity, it is necessary to adopt regulation that engages the private sector in developing practices that comply with human rights law.

Università Statale di Milano Conference on Human Rights and Rule of Law in Europe

On 8 September, the Commissioner delivered a [speech](#) on the role of human rights in upholding the rule of law. Speaking at the Università Statale di Milano, the Commissioner reflected on the progress made in human rights, democracy, and rule of law since World War II, highlighting the role of international organisations.

Meeting with the General Secretary of the European Federation of Public Service Unions

On 24 September, the Commissioner met with Jan Willem Goudriaan, General Secretary of the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU), in Strasbourg. They discussed current human rights challenges in Europe in relation to migration and Roma rights.

Lecture at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, University of Galway

On 30 October, the Commissioner delivered a [guest lecture](#) at the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the University of Galway, Ireland. He emphasised the essential role of human rights in building a better future and reflected on how to embed human rights at the heart of today's global challenges.

Exchange with students at the Catholic University of Portugal

On 11 November, the Commissioner had an [exchange](#) with students at the Catholic University of Portugal in Lisbon on current human rights challenges in Europe.

Meeting with Belarusian Opposition Leader

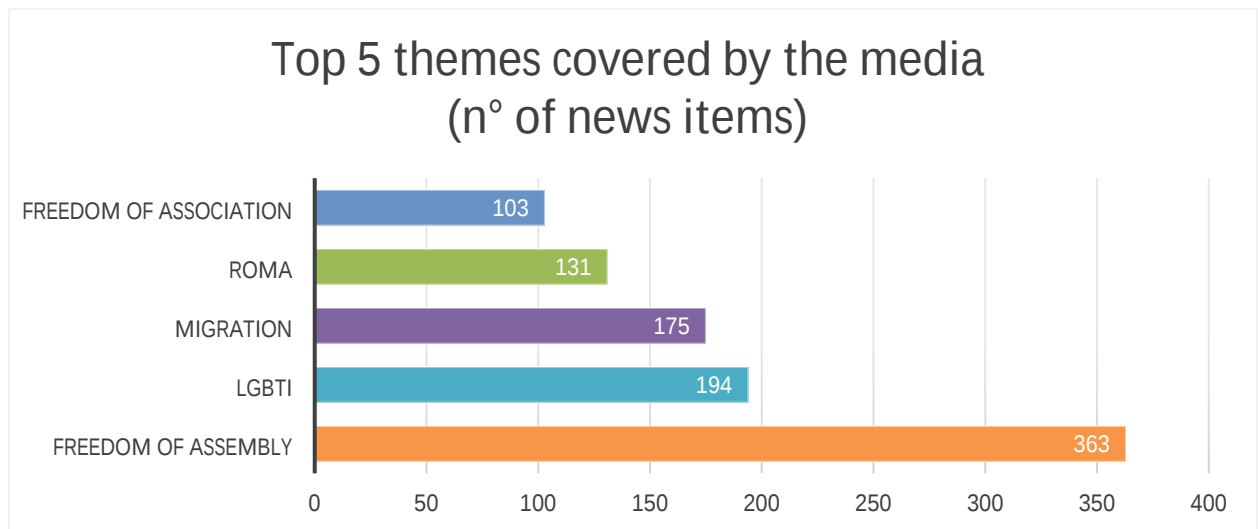
On 11 November, the Commissioner met with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Belarusian Opposition Leader in the margins of the Web Summit in Lisbon.

Symposium on the 250th anniversary of the birth of Daniel O'Connell

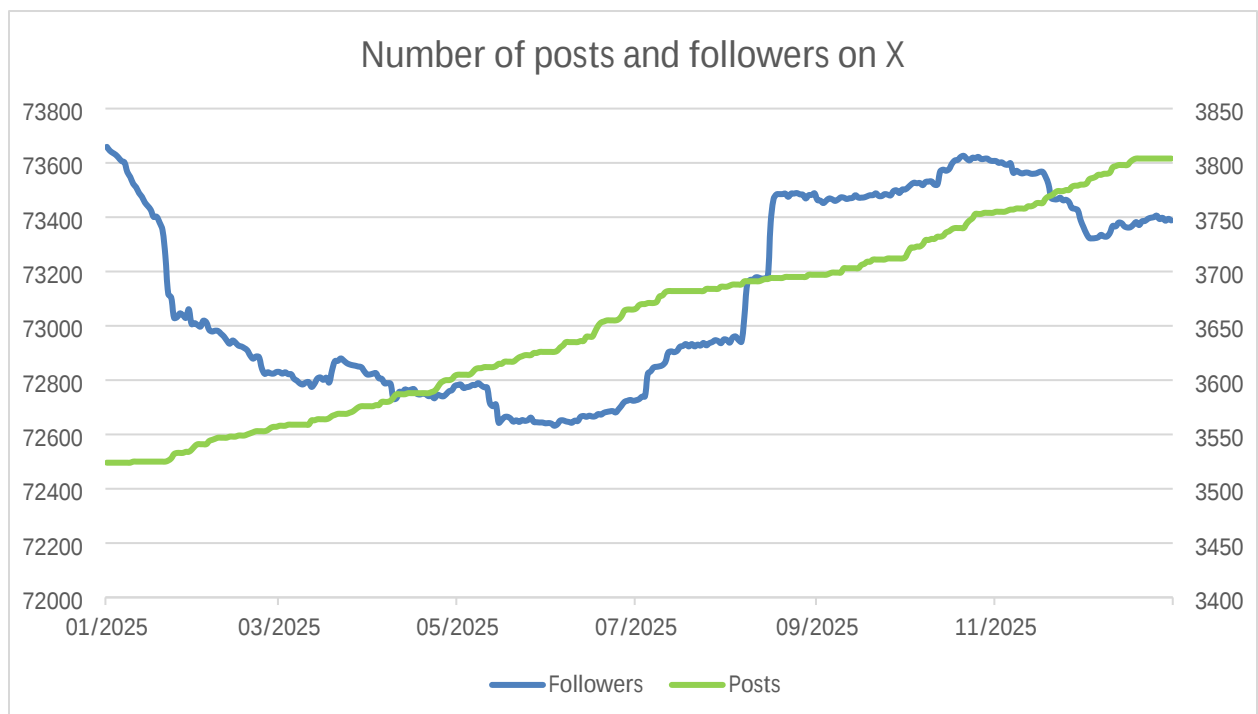
On 16 December, the Commissioner delivered the [keynote speech](#) at the commemorative symposium for the 250th anniversary of Daniel O'Connell "Finding the heart of his global legacy in the 21st Century", organised by the Embassy of Ireland to the Holy See and the Pontifical Irish College in Rome. The Commissioner explored the resonance of Daniel O'Connell's legacy in a new era for human rights.

6 COMMUNICATION WORK

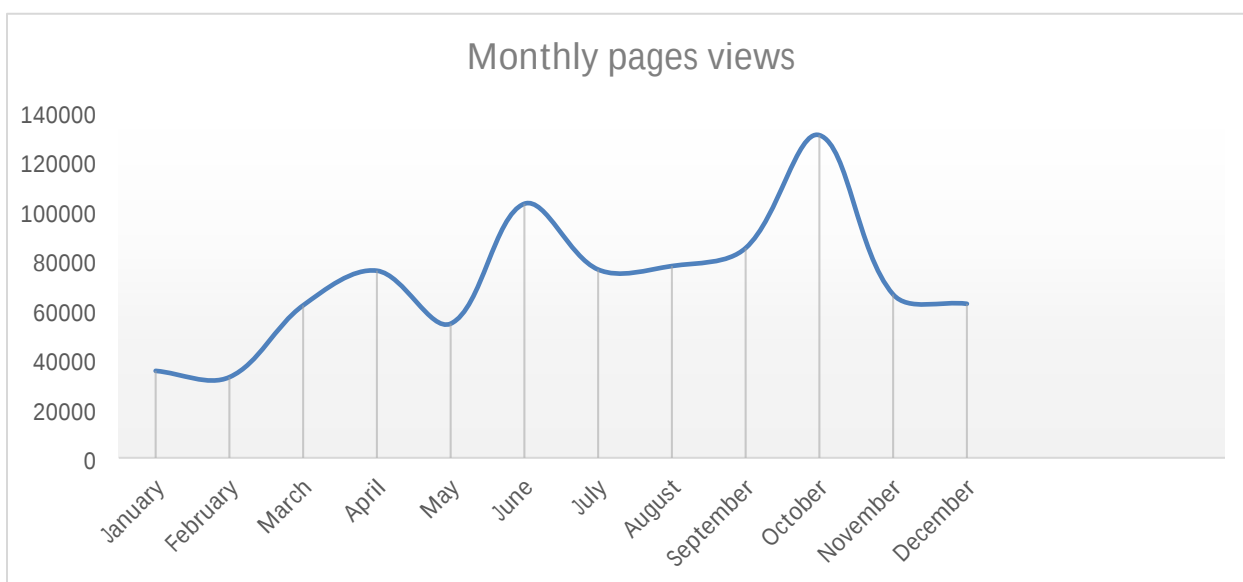
More than 1650 news items covered the Commissioner's work during the reporting period (January – December 2025). The most covered topics were freedom of assembly, LGBTI rights, migration, Roma and Travellers rights, freedom of association, freedom of expression and the war of aggression against Ukraine.



280 posts were published on X, generating a total of over 900 000 impressions and an engagement rate of over 7%. Despite a considerable disengagement from X worldwide, the number of new followers increased by over 2 100.



Over the year, more than 400,000 unique visitors visited the site, with more than 620,000 page views.



7 STAFF AND BUDGET

In 2025, the total number of permanent jobs in the Commissioner's office remained at 30 posts (22 A-grade posts and 8 B-grade posts). The Office employed four temporary staff members financed by the ordinary budget. The ordinary overall budget appropriations were of €4,602,100 which represents 1.4% of the total ordinary budget of the Organisation.

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.