

Committee of Ministers

The texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2021 can be consulted at: www.coe.int/cm

The Committee of Ministers acts as the main decision-making body of the Council of Europe. It is made up of member states' foreign ministers or their permanent diplomatic representatives in Strasbourg.

During 2021, the Committee of Ministers was chaired by Germany until 21 May, then by Hungary until 17 November and thereafter by Italy.

■ The 131st Ministerial Session was held by video-conference from Hamburg (Germany) on 21 May 2021, when the Committee took several decisions. During the Session, the Committee of Ministers welcomed the Secretary General's progress report on reform measures and expressed its opinion on the Secretary General's **Strategic framework for the Council of Europe** for the next four years. The Committee agreed to introduce a four-year programming period for the Organisation, while maintaining the existing two-year budgetary cycle. The Ministers underlined the Organisation's role and responsibility for ensuring the implementation of its conventions, developing new legally binding standards in response to new challenges, and providing assistance to member states through its co-operation programmes. They recalled the importance of the Council of Europe co-operating with its main international partners and, when it comes to unresolved conflicts, working together towards political solutions in conformity with the norms and principles of international law.

■ At its 131st Session, and in the context of the 60th anniversary of the 1961 European Social Charter, the Committee of Ministers stressed the importance of the Charter in guaranteeing social rights across the continent and took note of the report of the Secretary General "Improving the implementation of social rights – reinforcing the European Social Charter system" as well as the continuing intergovernmental work on this issue. On 13 October 2021, the Deputies adopted a **Declaration**, reiterating the Committee's resolve to ensure that the Charter system is given the political support, tools and means required to ensure its effectiveness.

■ During the Session in Hamburg, the Committee called upon the states parties to continue strengthening the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention) at the national level and in accordance with previous declarations on securing the long-term effectiveness of the Convention system. The year saw an increase in the number of new judgments delivered by the European Court of Human Rights (the Court) followed by an increase in the number of pending cases before the Committee of Ministers (1 379 new cases in 2021 compared to 983 in 2020). During its four specific human rights meetings devoted to the supervision of **the execution of judgments** and decisions delivered by the Court, 5 533 cases were pending at the end of the year (**5 233** cases at the end of 2020). Some 1 122 cases were closed, of which 170 were leading cases.

■ During the year, the Committee also held **exchanges of views** with the President of the European Court of Human Rights, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees.

■ Throughout the year, the Committee of Ministers, through various decisions, reaffirmed its unequivocal opposition to the **death penalty**, including any re-introduction of it, in all places and in all circumstances, and reiterated its aim to create a death penalty-free zone in Europe.

■ In July, in the field of **gender equality and diversity**, the Deputies took note of the 2020 annual report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023.



President of the Supreme Court of Ukraine **Vsevolod Kniaziev** and Director General of Human Rights and Rule of Law of the Council of Europe **Christos Giakoumopoulos** during the conference “Developing the case-law of the Ukrainian courts on adequate remedies: case-law of the Strasbourg Court and Committee of Ministers’ practices” (Strasbourg, 17 December 2021)

■ In the field of artificial intelligence, the Deputies took note of the feasibility study of the **Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI)** on a legal framework for the development, design and application of artificial intelligence, based on Council of Europe standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law, which had been unanimously adopted by **CAHAI**.

■ On 28 April, the Deputies adopted a **Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the need to protect children’s privacy in the digital environment**.

■ In November 2021, and on the occasion of the 10th anniversary of the **Convention on the Counterfeiting of Medical Products and Similar Crimes involving Threats to Public Health (the MEDICRIME Convention)**, the Deputies adopted a **Declaration – “Protecting public health through criminal law measures”**, underlining the importance of the convention in guaranteeing and promoting the protection of public health by combating fake medical products and similar crimes.

■ In the field of sports, the Committee of Ministers adopted the **Revised European Sports Charter** which formulates the principle of a “right to sport” that everyone should enjoy.

■ In June, the Deputies adopted **Resolution CM/Res(2021)4 on the Council of Europe International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group) and its revised Statute appended thereto**. In this context, the Committee of Ministers adopted a **Declaration to mark the 50th Anniversary of the Pompidou Group**.

■ On 21 March, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, the President of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Secretary General joined their voices for a statement concerning **Turkey’s announced withdrawal from the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention)**.

■ In May, the Deputies adopted **Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on upholding equality and protecting against discrimination and hate during the Covid-19 pandemic and similar crises in the future**.

■ With regard to migration and asylum, the Deputies adopted the **Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)** and invited the Secretary General to ensure its effective implementation.



Meeting between **Rik Daems**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, and **Péter Szijjártó**, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 21 June 2021)

■ As regards **counter-terrorism**, the Deputies adopted the Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the links between terrorism and transnational organised crime, prepared by the Council of Europe Committee on Counter-Terrorism.

■ On 17 November 2021, the Deputies adopted a **Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime**, on enhanced co-operation and the disclosure of electronic evidence. In this context, they took note of the Assembly's opinion on this important text.

■ The situation in several member states was regularly discussed in the Committee of Ministers, including co-operation activities aimed at accompanying individual countries in their efforts to bring legislation, institutions and practice further into line with European standards in the areas of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In this respect, the Deputies took note of the progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan for **Armenia** for 2019-2022 and welcomed the progress made.

■ The Deputies took note, with satisfaction, of the final report on the implementation of the Action Plan for the **Republic of Moldova** for 2017-2020. Bearing in mind the positive results obtained in the implementation of the Action Plan for 2017-2020, the Deputies reiterated their invitation to member and observer states to consider making voluntary contributions to complete the funding available for the Action Plan for the Republic of Moldova for 2021-2024.

■ In April, the Deputies took note of a progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan for **Azerbaijan** for 2018-2021 and welcomed the progress made on its implementation. They encouraged the achievement of all the objectives set out in the action plan and instructed the Secretariat to continue implementing it and to present a final report on the results once it had been completed.

■ In December 2021, the Deputies approved an action plan designed to provide assistance to **Bosnia and Herzegovina** for the period 2022-2025 and took note of a report on the Council of Europe's co-operation activities in **Kosovo**.¹

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



131st Session of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.

Robert Spano, President of the European Court of Human Rights;

Péter Szijjártó, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary;

Rik Daems, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;

Heiko Maas, Federal Minister of Foreign Affairs of Germany;

Leendert Verbeek, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities;

Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and

Dunja Mijatović, Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (Hamburg, 21 May 2021)

■ In May, the Ministers' Deputies adopted a series of decisions on the **human rights situation in the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol (Ukraine)**. In particular, they reiterated their commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes, to the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and expressed their profound concern that the human rights situation in Crimea had been significantly deteriorating under Russian occupation, with multiple and grave violations of human rights. They urged the Russian Federation to uphold all its obligations under international law and restore the territorial integrity of Ukraine within its internationally recognised borders and invited the Secretary General to report on a regular basis, at least once per year, on the human rights situation in Crimea.

■ In May, the Committee of Ministers adopted a series of decisions on the **conflict in Georgia**. In particular, it stated that, more than 12 years after the armed conflict between the Russian Federation and Georgia, the Russian Federation continues to impede the peaceful conflict resolution process and to undermine the security and stability in the wider region through its continuing military presence in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Tskhinvali region). It also expressed further profound concern that the human rights situation had been further deteriorating and encouraged the Secretary General to continue the submission of her biannual consolidated reports on the conflict in Georgia to the Committee of Ministers. In November 2021, the Secretary General presented the 24th consolidated report on the conflict in Georgia, covering the period from April to September 2021.

■ The Deputies took note of the Secretary General's review of the policy towards neighbouring regions and the Council of Europe's contribution to global governance. They also approved Neighbourhood Partnerships for the period from 2022 to 2025 with **Morocco** and **Tunisia**, while calling on the Tunisian authorities to respect and guarantee democracy, fundamental rights and the rule of law in Tunisia. In the same context, the Deputies took note, with satisfaction, of the progress review report on the implementation of the neighbourhood co-operation priorities for 2019-2021 with **Kazakhstan**.



Opening of the “Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe in Italy: a European heritage” exhibition.
Mr Stefano Dominioni, Executive Secretary of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes;
 Ambassador **Michele Giacomelli**, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Council of Europe;
Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 24 November 2021)

■ In 2021, co-operation with other international bodies and civil society organisations remained high on the Committee’s agenda. In February, the Deputies held their annual exchange of views (human rights questions) with the **United Nations** and with the President of the United Nations Human Rights Council on the agenda of the next session of the Human Rights Council and on human rights and the Covid-19 pandemic, in addition to a thematic discussion on human rights and artificial intelligence.

■ Regarding the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**, the Deputies took note of the report of the Chair on the results of the 33rd and 34th meetings of the Co-ordination Group between the Council of Europe and the OSCE, held respectively in April and November 2021.

■ In 2021, the Committee of Ministers took note of the Progress Review Report for 2020, which highlighted, in particular, the **impact of Covid-19 on the implementation of the Council of Europe’s Programme and Budget**. The Deputies adopted a revised resolution on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods, which entered into force on 1 January 2022. This revision provides a better adapted and more efficient legal framework within which to work during the next quadrennium. In September, the Deputies adopted new Staff Regulations to enter into force on 1 July 2022 which streamline the legal framework governing the management of staff, the reform of which represents the central pillar in the continued enhancement of the Organisation’s efficiency and effectiveness. In November 2021, the Deputies adopted the **Council of Europe’s first four-year Programme for the period 2022 to 2025** and the Budget for 2022, as well as the Budget for 2023 on a provisional basis, based on the decisions adopted by the Ministers in Hamburg in May 2021 and building on the Secretary General’s Key Strategic Priorities.



Transfer of the presidency of the Committee of Ministers from Germany to Hungary.
Harry Alex Rusz, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe;
Péter Sztáray, Minister of State for Security Policy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary;
Julia Dumay, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg;
Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and
Rolf Mafael, Permanent Representative of Germany to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 21 May 2021)

Transfer of the presidency of the Committee of Ministers from Hungary to Italy.
 Inauguration of the tramway in the colours of Italy. Ambassador Harry **Alex Rusz**, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe;
Julia Dumay, Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg;
Marija Pejčinović Burić, Secretary General of the Council of Europe; and
 Ambassador **Michele Giacomelli**, Permanent Representative of Italy to the Council of Europe (Strasbourg, 17 November 2021)

