

Co-funded  
by the European Union



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



Co-funded and implemented  
by the Council of Europe

# CONCEPT NOTE

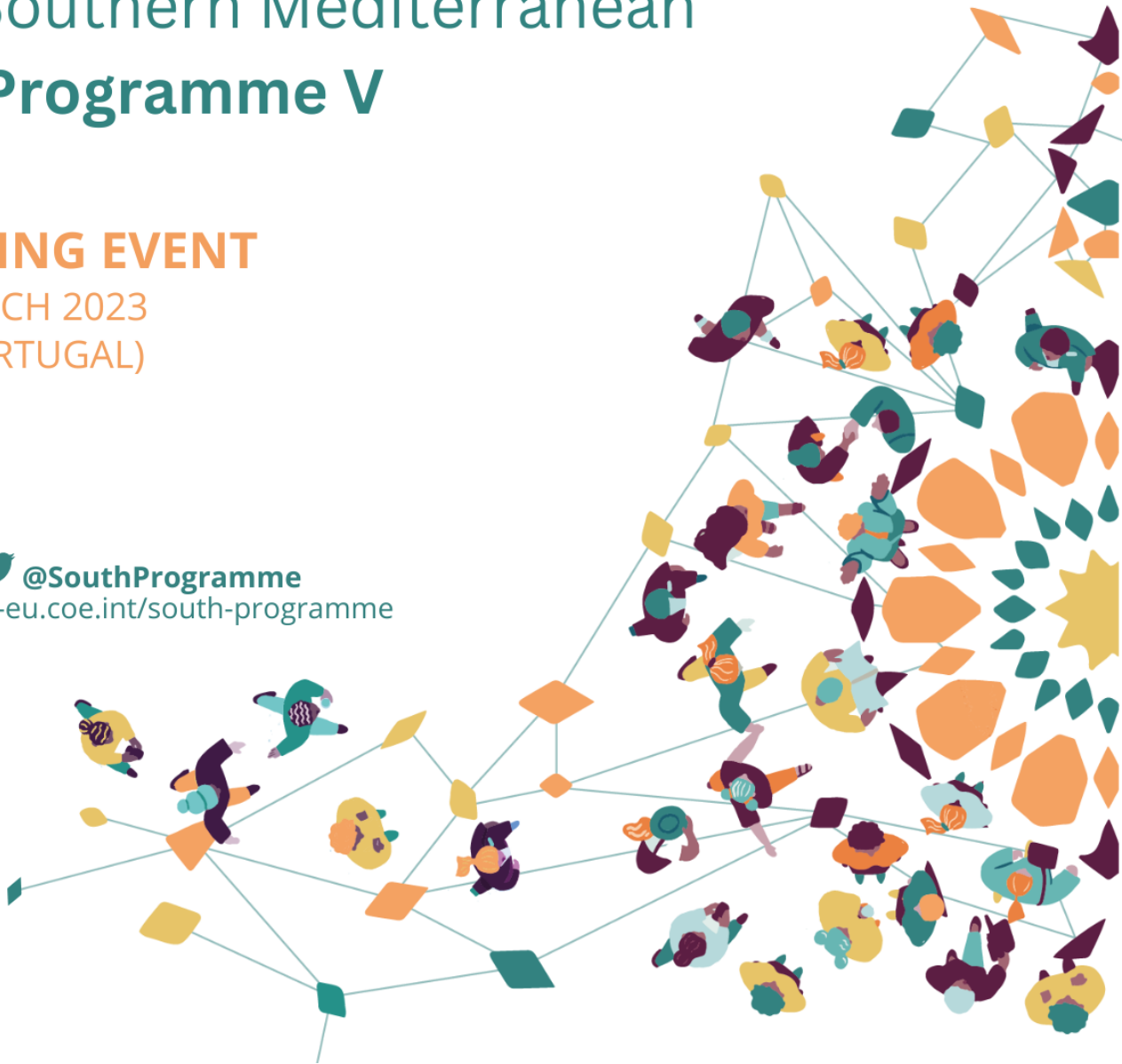
## Protecting human rights, rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern Mediterranean **South Programme V**

### LAUNCHING EVENT

13 – 14 MARCH 2023  
LISBON (PORTUGAL)



 [@SouthProgramme](https://twitter.com/SouthProgramme)  
[pjp-eu.coe.int/south-programme](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/south-programme)



## South Programme V

### CONTEXT

The South Programme is a joint initiative between the European Union (EU) and the Council of Europe as part of their strategic Partnership for the Southern Mediterranean, in line with the European Union Renewed Partnership with the Southern Mediterranean and the Council of Europe's Policy towards its Neighbouring Regions<sup>1</sup>.

Since the launch of the South Programme in 2012, one of the main objectives of the South Programme has been the progressive establishment of an enlarged common legal space between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean based on human rights, rule of law and democratic governance standards, enshrined in Council of Europe's conventions. More than a decade after its launch, significant progress has been achieved in this regard, in particular:

- **Expansion of the common legal space** through 19 accessions of several countries of the region to key Council of Europe conventions, as well as harmonisation of national legal frameworks with European and international standards;
- **Establishment of institutional relations** through participation of partner authorities in the region to Council of Europe bodies and regional networks involving the two shores of the Mediterranean;
- **Strengthened institutional capacities** of partners in the region through unique tools, such as the European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP), and the University for Democracy for the Southern Mediterranean (UniDem Med) of the Venice Commission;
- **Development of innovative tools and establishment of sustainable mechanisms** adapted to the needs of partners, such as the National Referral Mechanism for Victims of Human Trafficking, and the support to the first online reporting platforms to combat cyberviolence against children<sup>2</sup> in the region.

In a context marked by growing interdependences and relations, global challenges such as fighting organised crime (including anti-corruption; anti-money laundering; financing of terrorism; cybercrime; trafficking in human beings); preventing and combating violence against women; ensuring data protection and access to information; and safeguarding freedom of expression will be at the centre of the Programme. The Programme also includes provision of legislative support tailored to the needs of partners, continued promotion of Council of Europe standards and conventions, capacity-building of relevant professionals, and fostering regional dialogue and cooperation.

Pursuant to the strong commitment of the Council of Europe and European Union to empower and further associate civil society in their joint initiatives, the new phase of the South Programme will benefit from reinforced links with the Council of Europe's North-South Centre<sup>3</sup>. The latter will contribute its long-standing expertise in empowering civil society, in particular youth and women organisations in the Council of Europe's neighbouring regions. These ties will be instrumental to further ensure ownership of democratic reforms by young people in the Southern Mediterranean.

<sup>1</sup>See the European Union [Renewed Partnership with the Southern Mediterranean](#) and the [Council of Europe Policy towards neighbouring regions](#)

<sup>2</sup> Developed by Internet Watch Foundation (IWF)

<sup>3</sup> [European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity of the Council of Europe](#), based in Lisbon

## South Programme V

The launching event will allow for the presentation of the objectives and new features of the fifth phase of the South Programme<sup>4</sup>. It will provide a platform for exchanges on the relevance of Council of Europe standards and their implementation in the region. Representatives of partner authorities will present their experience in this regard, discuss challenges and opportunities to strengthen human rights, rule of law and co-operation in the region. It will also provide further information on key intervention areas of the South Programme V through parallel thematic workshops. Based on the demand-driven approach underlying the South Programme, the discussions will feed into recommendations to ensure the most suited and relevant approach to the needs of partners and as such will provide guidance for the implementation of the fifth phase of the South Programme.

### EXPECTED OUTCOMES

The objectives of this event are as follows:

- Reaffirm the EU/CoE engagement in the Southern Mediterranean region to advance human rights, rule of law and democratic governance based on shared values and in line with the democratic reform agendas of partners in the region;
- Exchange on Council of Europe conventions and standards which are most relevant and their added value for people in the region;
- Promote regional networking;
- Increase the outreach of the South Programme V among a broader range of partners in the region, including through strengthened contributions by civil society with the support of the North-South Centre.

### Format and participants

This regional event will bring together high-level representatives of Ministries of Foreign Affairs and other relevant line ministries, the judiciary, including legal professionals and judiciary supervisory bodies; national institutions of the partner authorities, human rights and good governance institutions and independent bodies; civil society representatives; and media.

### Languages

The official languages of this event will be **English, Arabic and French**

*The South Programme V ("Protecting human rights, rule of law and democracy through shared standards in the Southern Mediterranean") is a joint programme of the Council of Europe and the European Union, financed by the European Union and the Council of Europe and implemented by the Council of Europe.*

---

<sup>4</sup> Implemented over the period September 2022 – August 2025.