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AD HOC MULTIDISCIPLINARY GROUP ON THE ENVIRONMENT (GME)

**DRAFT PROGRESS REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE COUNCIL OF
EUROPE STRATEGY ON THE ENVIRONMENT
2025-2030**

as adopted by the GME on 3 December at its 5th meeting

Document prepared by the Secretariat

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INTRODUCTION

The 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe recognised, in May 2023, “the urgency of additional efforts to protect the environment, as well as to counter the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity on human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. It committed to initiate the Reykjavík process of strengthening work in the field of the environment with the aim of making it a visible priority, promoting cooperation among member States, streamlining activities and coordinating efforts as laid down in Appendix V of the Reykjavík Declaration on “The Council of Europe and the environment”¹.

The recently adopted New Democratic Pact² of the Secretary General emphasises that the coming years will be crucial in shaping Europe's response to the ongoing environmental challenges. While existing legal frameworks and policy commitments provide a solid foundation, their success will ultimately depend on continued implementation, political will and civic participation. The Council of Europe reaffirms its commitment to working with member states to close the gap between commitments and realities, ensuring that environmental protection remains at the heart of democratic governance in Europe.

The Democratic Pact acknowledges the progress made by the member States in enhancing environmental governance, integrating human rights protections and addressing environmental crime. At the same time, it highlights the shortcomings in implementation, enforcement and accountability. Continued efforts are needed to turn these commitments into tangible results. The Council of Europe is dedicated to supporting member States in fulfilling their obligations, monitoring progress and developing effective tools to tackle emerging environmental challenges.

As a follow-up to the 4th Summit, the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers established an [Ad Hoc Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment \(GME\)](#), including member States as well as Participants and Observers representing a wide range of bodies and institutions, international intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations.

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, the GME's primary objective was to prepare the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment, along with an Action Plan for its implementation.

The GME has delivered the following key outcomes:

- [Compendium](#) on existing activities, planned activities, and proposals for new activities on the environment, which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 23 January 2025. It shows the actions undertaken and planned by various Council of Europe sectors, bodies and institutions as a follow-up to the Reykjavík Declaration and as a contribution to the development of the draft Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment.
- The [Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment \(2025-2030\)](#) and a related [Action Plan](#)³.

In its work, the GME gave careful consideration to the Reykjavík Declaration, particularly Appendix V on "The Council of Europe and the Environment," while it also took into account other relevant documents. The GME ensured a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach, coordinating efforts with other intergovernmental committees and Council of Europe bodies working on environmental issues. It also integrated perspectives of intergenerational solidarity and youth.

¹ [United around our values - Reykjavík declaration](#) (2023)

² [Towards A New Democratic Pact for Europe](#)

³ [Council of Europe Adopts Comprehensive Environment Strategy Highlighting Human Rights - Reykjavík process and the Environment](#)

On 14 May 2025 the Committee of Ministers adopted the Strategy on Environment reflecting its commitment to a forward-looking, holistic vision that aligns human rights, democracy, and the rule of law with environmental protection. The Committee of Ministers took note of the Action Plan which lists the first activities undertaken to ensure the Strategy's effective implementation.

The Strategy calls for just transitions, inclusive public participation, enhanced transparency and accountability, and makes environmental protection a transversal priority across all areas. It also addresses democratic backsliding, misinformation, and the disproportionate impacts of environmental degradation on vulnerable communities.

By integrating human rights into environmental policies, the Strategy lays the groundwork for a future where both ecological conservation and human well-being are prioritised. It is a bold step towards ensuring that the enjoyment of human rights goes hand in hand with environmental stewardship, paving the way for a healthier, more equitable planet.

The GME is entrusted with the preparation of the Progress report on the implementation of the Council Europe Strategy on the Environment.

The present progress report focuses on the main steps taken as a follow-up to the Reykjavik Summit until the end of 2025, which lays the foundations for a successful implementation of the Strategy.

I. LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS

Action on environment has a long history within the Council of Europe (CoE). In 1961, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) proposed to the Committee of Ministers (CM) to integrate environment in its work program which it accepted. In 1965 the CM adopted a resolution instituting the European Diploma for protected areas – an award for exemplary management of outstanding European natural heritage. In 1967 the Naturopia Center was created which aimed at collecting information on environment conservation and increasing visibility and sensibility towards environmental matters. CoE has only further developed its action on the environment.

The Council of Europe's work on the environment has evolved significantly since its early initiatives, reflecting a growing awareness of the complexity and urgency of contemporary environmental challenges. As ecological issues became increasingly prominent on the international agenda, it became evident that a more integrated and focused approach was necessary to adequately address the multifaceted nature of environmental protection. With the recognition of the urgency for additional action on the protection of the environment, as outlined in Appendix V of the Reykjavík Declaration, the Secretariat was restructured. By the decision of the Secretary General, a new department was created which concentrated the Secretariat of all environment-focused initiatives and instruments. From 1 January 2024 onwards, this newly created department brought together several of the Council's most important environmental conventions, agreements and initiatives, including the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats, the European Landscape Convention, and the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, under a single unified secretariat structure, which also assisted the work of the Ad hoc Multidisciplinary Group on the Environment (GME) once it was created in July 2024.

The GME engaged in discussions on the challenges posed by the triple planetary crisis – climate change, pollution, and biodiversity loss – at the national level, from the perspective of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The synthesis of the contributions highlighted the systemic threat the triple planetary crisis poses to these values. Contributors emphasised the need for collective action, increased awareness, and capacity-building to address these interconnected challenges and ensure a sustainable future. These findings have been incorporated into the preparation of the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment.

In recognition of the complex and inherently multilateral nature of environmental issues, and in order to further strengthen the coordination of related initiatives, an Inter-Secretariat Task Force was created which sought to identify and catalogue all activities across the Council of Europe that pertain to the environment, ensuring that efforts would be aligned, duplications minimised, and gaps addressed. A Secretariat-wide survey was launched in January 2024, inviting all units and departments to contribute information on their respective activities, projects and engagements with a link to the environmental. The resulting data was gathered and synthesised into the [Compendium](#) on the Council Europe's environment activities. The Task force still meets regularly to give updates on new developments linked to the environment within different Council Europe departments. Consultations with the task force are also ongoing. This structured dialogue helps anticipate potential challenges, identify opportunities for synergy, and cultivate a unified, organisation-wide strategy for environmental protection.

The Council Europe has also increased its communication on the environment. With the creation of the GME, a new Council Europe [webpage](#) was also created to present the work of the committee as well as the Strategy and Action Plan. To further diversify its outreach, the Council Europe established two new thematic social media accounts on environment on X and LinkedIn in order to communicate developments on environment within the Council Europe to a specialised audience.

The Council Europe also organised events to promote the work of the Council Europe on environment and create partnerships with other institutions. In July 2024 the Secretariat

organised a Side-Event “*Charting the way forward: Combating the impact of climate change on human rights*” at the at the 2024 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development on SDGs 13 and 16. This event provided a critical platform for dialogue, bringing together experts, policymakers, and stakeholders to discuss the urgent implications of climate change for human rights.

In November 2024, a Council of Europe delegation participated at the COP29 in Baku, Azerbaijan, reinforcing the Council’s commitment to international cooperation on climate issues and raising awareness of its initiatives within the global community. In 2025 the Council of Europe was also represented in COP30 in Belém, Brazil.

II. THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE STRATEGY ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Recognising that a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment is essential for the full enjoyment of human rights by present and future generations, the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment pursues five key objectives:

1. **Integrating human rights considerations in environment-related strategies, instruments, legislation, policies and actions, and vice versa.** This entails:
 - Holistic and inclusive strategies that align environmental goals with the realisation of human rights.
 - Just transition ensuring that social equity remains at the core of environmental action, leaving no one behind.
 - Reflecting on the nature, content, and implications of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and actively considering its recognition as a human right at the national level.
2. **Strengthening good democratic governance in environmental matters** through:
 - Integration of good democratic governance principles in environmental governance.
 - Enhanced transparency, access to information, awareness, and education. Combat misinformation and disinformation.
 - Inclusive, meaningful, and effective public participation.
 - Access to justice and strengthened accountability.
3. **Supporting and protecting Environmental Human Rights Defenders, Environmental Defenders and Whistle blowers** by:
 - Enabling individuals, groups, and associations to freely strive for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms in environment-related matters.
 - Empowering and protecting young people and children who act as environmental human rights defenders.
 - Integrating the protection of defenders and whistle-blowers into environmental governance.
4. **Preventing and prosecuting environment-related crimes** through the:
 - Ratification of the new Council of Europe Convention on the protection of the environment through criminal law.
 - Comprehensive policies and national strategies for the prevention and prosecution of environment-related crime.
 - Enhance corporate environmental accountability.
5. **Protecting wildlife, ecosystems, habitats, and landscapes**, meaning:
 - Embed Nature-based Solutions and ecosystem-based approaches in the broader governance structures.
 - Harness synergies of biodiversity conservation and restoration measures with climate change mitigation and adaptation measures.
 - Sustainable landscape management and planning.
 - Assess and reduce risks of major natural and technological hazards, improve preparedness and post-crisis analysis.

III. STATE OF PROGRESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE ACTION PLAN IN 2025

Action Plan

Each action in the Action Plan of the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment is allocated to one of the five strategic objectives, even if it may be contributing to achieving other objectives as well. In line with the Council of Europe's commitment towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, each strategic objective identifies the most relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)⁴ to be considered.

It shows the actions undertaken and planned by various Council of Europe sectors, bodies and institutions as a follow-up to the Reykjavík Declaration and as a contribution to the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment.

Their integration in the Programme of Activities follows their respective decision-making processes and is to be considered in the context of the Organisations' Programme and Budget cycle.

Two separate sections on mainstreaming and on coordination and communication ensures the visibility of the efforts deployed to implement these important aspects of the 4th Summit's mandate.

This Action Plan is designed as a living tool allowing for the integration of new actions as they emerge. By clearly outlining concrete steps for implementation, the Action Plan also serves as a practical tool to track progress and facilitate reporting.

Strategic Objective 1: Integrating human rights considerations in environment-related strategies, instruments, legislation, policies and actions, and vice versa.

Action 1.1: Examination of the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)20 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and the protection of the environment

On 10 November 2025, on the margins of UN Climate Conference COP30 in Belém, Brazil, the Council of Europe in partnership with the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB) co-organised the side-event "Human Rights and climate change", which explored how climate impacts affect fundamental rights – including the rights to life, energy, health, and housing – and showcased human rights-based approaches for equitable climate policies. Speakers included representatives from the Council of Europe, the Council of Europe Development Bank and Youth and Environment (YEE), as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.

Action 1.2: Adoption by PACE of reports with a major environment dimension (Right to housing; Guidelines for a sustainable and socially fair energy transition; Food security in times of crises; Right to water and sanitation) including draft resolutions addressed to member States and draft recommendations addressed to the Committee of Ministers.

⁴ Goal 1. No Poverty, Goal 3. Good Health and Well-being, Goal 4. Quality Education, Goal 5. Gender Equality, Goal 6. Clean Water and Sanitation, Goal 7. Affordable and Clean Energy, Goal 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth, Goal 10. Reduced Inequality, Goal 11. Sustainable Cities and Communities, Goal 12. Responsible Consumption and Production, Goal 13. Climate Action, Goal 14. Life Below Water, Goal 15. Life on Land, Goal 16. Peace and Justice Strong Institutions.

In 2025, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) adopted the following reports with a major environment dimension:

- Guidelines for a sustainable and socially fair energy transition: [Resolution 2611\(2025\)](#) addressed to member States
- Analysis and guidelines to guarantee the right to housing: [Resolution 2626 \(2025\)](#) addressed to member States
- [Opinion](#) on the Draft Convention of the Council of Europe on the protection of environment through criminal law.

Action 1.3: Organisation of events to promote reports on environment in national parliaments and raise awareness among parliamentarians on the right to a healthy environment, CoE legal instruments and monitoring mechanisms: events in selected national parliaments in follow-up to the Assembly's resolutions on environment related issues, visit of the Tournée du Climat et de la Biodiversité at PACE.

In follow-up to the Assembly's [resolutions](#) on environment related issues, PACE organised events to promote reports on environment in national parliaments and raise awareness among parliamentarians on the right to a healthy environment:

- [Parliamentary Conference](#) on 'The role of national parliaments in protecting the right to a healthy environment' 14 February 2025 in Luxembourg. The [minutes](#) of the Conference have been published;
- [Seminar](#) on 'The role of the Dutch parliament in protecting the right to a healthy environment' 5 March 2025 at the Dutch House of Representatives;
- The exhibition [The Climate and Biodiversity Tour](#) took place during the session of the Parliamentary Assembly in Strasbourg on 24 June 2025;
- The Parliamentary Network for a Healthy Environment has published a flyer "10 key messages of the Assembly for the environment" and is actively updating its [website](#);
- The Network is active at local level with a meeting in Gaziantep (Türkiye) on 9 October 2025.

Action 1.4: Targeted questions are included in the context of the European Social Charter's regular and ad hoc reporting procedures on: 1) impact of environmental degradation and climate change on social rights; 2) measures taken by the States Parties to address this impact.

The following [targeted questions](#) related to the impact of climate change on social rights were asked to the States relating to the application of the European Social Charter (ESC) concerning the [first group of provisions](#) in 2024 and 2025:

- Provide information on the content and implementation of national policies on psychosocial or new and emerging risks, including in jobs affected by climate change risks (Article 3§1 of the ESC);
- Provide information on measures taken to ensure the supervision of implementation of health and safety regulations concerning vulnerable categories of workers such as workers exposed to environmental-related risks such as climate change and pollution (Article 3§3 of the ESC);
- Provide information if there has been any joint consultation on matters related to the green transition (Article 6§1 of the ESC).

The European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) started to examine the States' responses in 2025 and will pursue its work in 2026.

The ECSR published a review on "[Social rights and the cost-of-living crisis](#)" in March 2025 in which the ECSR underlined the strong link between energy rights and environmental and climate justice. Cost-of-living crises exacerbate the disproportionate impact of climate change on marginalised communities as rising energy costs limit their access to clean, sustainable energy sources. An equitable transition to renewable energy systems is therefore necessary in order both to mitigate climate impacts and reduce the financial burden on disadvantaged groups, thus ensuring that energy is affordable and reliable for all.

Action 1.5: Support States Parties in implementing ESC rights taking into account their environmental dimension and the need to protect the rights of persons in vulnerable situations and/or exposed to discrimination, including through co-operation activities in different States Parties.

The [decision on the merits of the ECSR in the collective complaint *Defence for Children International \(DCI\), European Federation of National Organisations working with the Homeless \(FEANTSA\), Magistrats Européens pour la Démocratie et les Libertés \(MEDEL\), Confederación Sindical de Comisiones Obreras \(CCOO\) and International Movement ATD Fourth World v. Spain*](#), Complaint No. 206/2022, decision of 11 September 2024, became public on 26 February 2025. The ECSR considered that stable, consistent and safe access to adequate energy is both a prerequisite for and a key element of the enjoyment of the rights guaranteed by the ESC such as: the right to housing, the right to protection of health, the right to education, the right of the family to social, legal and economic protection, the rights of older persons, rights of persons with disabilities, and the rights of children and young people to social, legal and economic protection. To be "adequate" for the purposes of ESC rights, energy must satisfy a number of conditions, including affordability, cleanness and sustainability. The ECSR thus considered that a situation where people experience intermittent access to energy, or no access to energy at all, over a prolonged period of time renders the persons concerned energy poor.

A study visit of the representatives of the Public Defender's Office of Georgia (PDO) took place from 8 to 10 September 2025, within the framework of the Council of Europe Project "[Further Enhancement of Social and Economic Rights in Georgia](#)." The project is implemented as part of the [Council of Europe Action Plan for Georgia 2024-2027](#). There were discussions, inter alia, on healthy environment and environmental justice under the ESC. The visit enabled the PDO to further strengthen its expertise in monitoring and promoting social and economic rights, while also reinforcing its co-operation with European partners.

The Department of Social Rights took part in a methodological meeting (9-10 June 2025, Campus Luigi Einaudi, Law Department, University of Turin, Italy), organised in the framework of the project "[SustAge - Integrating green and grey transitions. Design and governance of sustainable home care services for active ageing in rural and mountain areas with renewable energy communities](#)". The Department of Social Rights delivered a presentation on the ESC system as a multi-stakeholder project: the role of third-party organisations in the monitoring procedures of the ESC. This presentation provided project team members unfamiliar with the ESC system and the role of third-party organisations with first-hand information.

The project explores how home healthcare services (HHCSs) and renewable energy communities (RECs) can be integrated to promote both social inclusion and the green transition, especially for elderly people in low-density rural or mountain areas vulnerable to age-related and energy poverty challenges. Focusing on Italy (Piedmont) and France (Atlantic Pyrenees and Landes), the project compares different local governance models under shared international sustainability goals.

Using a human rights-based and interdisciplinary approach (combining law, systemic design, anthropology, real estate, and energy engineering), GREENCARE aims to:

- Propose sustainable models of HHCS delivery aligned with RECs;
- Define efficient territorial and governance structures;
- Develop normative and design recommendations.

Action 1.6: A study prepared by Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) on the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and loss of biodiversity on persons exposed to discrimination on the grounds covered by CDADI and measures to prevent and alleviate such impact.

Underway.

Action 1.7: Support education and capacity-building on the environment, the triple planetary crisis, and the interlinkage between sustainable development and respect for human rights (children, young people, legal professionals, businesses, civil society, administrations at all levels of governance, etc.). Promote and strengthen educational and awareness-raising activities, using both formal and non-formal methodologies.

The [Human Rights Education for Youth](#) (HEY) online training course on the Environment has been developed by the Council of Europe's [North-South Centre](#) (NSC), in collaboration with the Department on [Reykjavík process and the Environment](#), and [UN Environment Programme](#) and the African Union as part of the [iLEGEND III](#) project. From 3 to 30 November 2025, over 40 young participants from Europe, Middle East and Africa reflected on the triple planetary crisis and the different approaches to environmental protection. They analysed the interconnection between human rights and environmental protection, explored the legal instruments to protect vulnerable populations and to promote climate justice, and designed youth-led environmental litigation and advocacy actions. Launched by the NSC, the HEY Programme aims to empower young people to advocate for human rights, by raising their knowledge and understanding of European and other international legal frameworks for human rights protection. Designed according to the [methodological approach of the NSC](#), HEY consists of thematic online tutored courses and training for young tutors ensuring a cascading of national courses adapted to local contexts.

In March 2025, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' Chamber of Local Authorities held a thematic debate on "*Environmental protection: How can local elected representatives make a difference?*". This was publicised by means of a [communication](#) and a [video](#) of the proceedings.

On 13 June 2025, a conference on "*Multilevel Governance approaches to address environmental challenges: Overcoming institutional silos and developing cross-sector collaboration*", in cooperation with the Centre of Expertise for Multilevel Governance was organised in Malta during Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers (May-November 2025). The Conference has drawn several important [conclusions](#) on this topic.

On 19-20 February and on 16 September 2025, the [EU-Council of Europe Youth Partnership](#) participated in meetings of the Climate Justice Think Tank, which were hosted by [SALTO Inclusion & Diversity](#), part of JINT - the Belgian Flemish-speaking National Agency of Erasmus+. During the meetings, Youth Partnership presented and promoted Council of Europe's work on youth climate action, the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment and other relevant frameworks (i.e. CM/Rec(2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people and climate action), as well as its own [work on youth climate action](#) to think tank members, mostly representatives of youth civil society organisations.

Action 1.8: Support the implementation of the CM/Rec(2024)06 of the Committee of Ministers on young people and climate action in member States, by raising awareness, building capacity, and providing funding opportunities to youth civil society.

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Other Actions:

Actions that were not included in the Action Plan were also launched or carried out in various sectors of the Council of Europe.

Action 1.9

A study on national climate litigation was adopted by the European Committee on Legal Cooperation (CDCJ) in November 2025 at the request of the Committee of Ministers as a reply to the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2213 (2021) - Addressing issues of criminal and civil liability in the context of climate change. The study deals with climate change litigation against states and corporations in Europe involving civil liability.

Action 1.10

The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities has published, in May 2025, a [Factsheet](#) highlighting the environmental challenges faced by national minorities, including indigenous communities such as the Sami, and outlining key actions to address them. The publication draws on the findings of the Advisory Committee, which has consistently addressed environmental issues since its first monitoring cycle. Recent opinions have emphasised the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation and climate change on minority communities, affecting their health, livelihoods, and cultural heritage. By presenting key concerns and recommended actions, the factsheet aims to support member States in ensuring that environmental policies respect and promote the rights of national minorities, in line with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

Action 1.11

In the exercise of his independent mandate, following a visit to North Macedonia in April 2025, the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights released a memorandum on 29 July 2025 on the human rights of Roma and on issues related to the right to a clean and healthy environment in North Macedonia containing findings and recommendations including on effective access to legal remedies, training for judges and prosecutors, support for environmental human rights defenders, and climate action.

Strategic Objective 2: Strengthening good democratic governance

Action 2.1: Collection of good practices in Council of Europe member States on publication of information relating to the environment by public authorities on their own initiative as well as upon request.

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Action 2.2: Building upon the analysis of existing frameworks, development of a guidance document “Applying the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)”

The publication “[*Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture \(RFCDC\) – Guidance document for Education for Sustainable Development*](#)” has been finalised. Building on the analysis of existing frameworks, the guidance document is designed to support education policymakers, educators across pre-primary, primary and secondary levels, as well as non-formal educators, in applying the RFCDC to ESD. The work has been carried out with the involvement of the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) and in close cooperation with key partners including the Electronic Platform for Adult Learning in Europe, European Students' Union, Federation for European Education, Lifelong Learning Platform, and the Organising Bureau of European School Student Unions.

Action 2.3: Development of the “Education in times of emergencies and crisis toolkit” (EDURES), a policy-making tool for education actors that aims to strengthen the resilience and responsiveness of education in the face of crises and emergencies, ensuring the continuation of quality education and mitigating impact of crises and emergencies on vulnerable groups.

Significant progress was made in the development of the tool:

- A piloting is being completed in Italy and Albania – preliminary results allowed to adjust the toolkit aids for the development of strategies that ensure quality, inclusive education even in the face of emergencies and crises;
- [*EDURES Toolkit*](#) is finalised with the main focus on fostering preparedness for educational systems and informed strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation for more sustainable, fair and inclusive education systems. The concept of “resilience competence” was particularly highlighted with respect to a learning environment’s ability to deploy resources effectively in emergencies and crises. Like competences for democratic culture, resilience competences encompass values, attitudes, skills and knowledge. In the same vein, EDURES toolkit empowers education systems for current and future challenges and contributes to more sustainable and inclusive democratic European societies.

Action 2.4: Development of a European Space for Citizenship Education to sustain democracy through quality citizenship through a two-year co-creation process. Education for Sustainable development will be part of this new European Space. The result will be considered at the next Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in 2026/2027.

Action 2.4 is in progress.

- With an overall objective to create a space where learners, educators and the wider community play an active role in democratic society, a first draft of the key

documents on the European Space for Citizenship Education (ESCE), namely the Principles for Education for Democratic Citizenship and the Framework on Quality Assurance, were discussed and endorsed by the Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU) on 23 September 2025;

- The annual conference of the European Space was held in Montenegro on 13-14 October 2025 where key school stakeholders, especially teachers from all levels of education as well as students met to discuss the key documents of the ESCE and to identify their most pressing challenges;
- On 20-21 November 2025 the Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) further developed the principles and quality assurance in the spirit of co-creation of the European Space to ensure that education for democratic citizenship enhances understanding and awareness of rights and responsibilities and empower everyone to exercise and defend them.

Action 2.5: Preparation of a study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, which will include a focus on decision-making in environmental matters.

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Action 2.6: Address the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss on European Social Charter (ESC) rights, social equity, climate justice at the High-Level Conference on the ESC.

Preparation work on the High-Level Conference has started in 2025. The High-Level Conference on the ESC will take place on 19 March 2026 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova.

Action 2.7: Preparation of a set of tools, such as videos and other child-friendly educational material for youth and children on the European Social Charter rights related to the environment.

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Action 2.8: Promote inclusive dialogue and meaningful participation with civil society, social partners, in the context of transition to a green economy and other environment-related matters through conferences, seminars, discussions, reports and studies with the active participation of civil society organisations and social partners. Promote civil society and social partner's involvement in decision-making, including in impact assessment processes.

The following three [study sessions](#) on climate and environment topics in cooperation with international youth organisation partners were hosted in 2025 at the European Centres Strasbourg and Budapest as follows:

- Ecumenical Youth Council in Europe (EYCE) and Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women (EFECW): [Faith in Action: Addressing Climate Change and Strengthening Democracy Through Christian Youth Movements](#) (1 - 5 September 2025, European Youth Centre Budapest);
- Youth and Environment Europe: [Young Environmental Defenders and Climate Activists United for Human Rights - Youth](#) (1 – 5 September 2025, European Youth Centre Strasbourg);

- Generation Climate Europe: [Bridging Generations for Just and Green Transitions](#) (29 September – 3 October 2025, European Youth Centre in Strasbourg).

The following additional study session was organized on the theme of political participation, culture, youth in cooperation with an environmental youth organisation:

- Development Network Eastern Europe (CDN) and the Federation of Young European Greens (FYEG): Canvas of Change: Youth, Culture, and Political Participation. (29 September – 4 October 2025, European Youth Centre in Strasbourg).

Action 2.9: Follow-up and reflection on the possible revision of the CM Recommendation (2016)³ on human rights and business with the aim of considering the incorporation of corporate environmental responsibility requirements.

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Action 2.10: Development of a tool for member States' judicial administrations to integrate sustainability practices in their functioning, taking also into consideration digitalised practices and their impact on the environment.

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Action 2.11: Setting up a specific CEPEJ evaluation exercise on environmental justice (including related to effective access to justice and remedies in environmental issues, efficiency of justice in environment-related cases, execution of judgments).

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Action 2.12: Preparation of a draft Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government – a Protocol dedicated to environmental protection at local level.

In October 2024, the Monitoring Committee of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities tasked the Group of Independent Experts on the European Charter of Local Self-Government (GIE) with preparing a possible text for an Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the environment.

In March 2025, the Monitoring Committee approved the draft report on “An additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the environment” with the text of a possible draft additional protocol, in appendix of the report.

During the 49th plenary session (October 2025), the Congress adopted the report on “[An additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the environment](#)”, which “calls on the Committee of Ministers to consider drafting and adopting an Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government in order to ensure that member States enable local authorities to integrate environmental considerations in local governance to address the challenges arising from the triple planetary crisis and environmental degradation”.

Action 2.13: Adoption and implementation of a report on “Water resources under stress: towards better local and regional governance”.

In March 2025, during its 48th session, the Congress adopted the report “[Water resources under stress: towards better local and regional governance](#)”.

Action 2.14: Adoption and promotion of the implementation of a Report on coastal erosion.

In June 2025, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities Committee on Governance, Civic Engagement and Environment organised a study visit in Paris, France to assess the consequences of coastal erosion and current adaptation and mitigation policies. A second visit took place in Normandy and Nouvelle-Aquitaine (France) in November 2025, to further support the preparation of the report on coastal erosion.

In May 2025, the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes approved the establishment of a Reflection Group to assess the thematic, geographic, and social representativeness of the Cultural Routes Programme. The Group, currently in its establishment phase, will also examine the Programme's alignment in relation to the Council of Europe Strategy on the environment.

Other actions:

Actions that were not included in the Action Plan were also launched or carried out in various sectors of the Council of Europe.

Action 2.15: Fighting Climate disinformation

On 11 November 2025, on the margins of UN Climate Conference COP30 in Belém, Brazil, the Council of Europe co-organised with Youth and Environment Europe (YEE), an observer NGO to the GME, the side-event "Human Rights and Climate Disinformation: Responding to Youth". The event addressed climate disinformation as a human rights issue, promoting access to reliable environmental information, especially for youth, and exploring joint actions to safeguard information integrity and empower informed climate participation. Speakers included representatives from the Council of Europe, Portugal and YEE as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change.

Strategic Objective 3: Supporting and protecting Environmental Human Rights Defenders, Environmental Defenders and Whistle Blowers

Action 3.1: Protection of environmental human rights defenders: Examination of the implementation of the relevant provisions in the Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)20 to member States on human rights and the protection of the environment.

The implementation of the relevant provision of CM/Rec(2022)20 on the protection of environmental human rights defenders has not started yet.

The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights followed up in 2025 on his [letter](#) sent on 16 December 2024 to the President of the Senate of Italy in relation to a draft piece of legislation. Among other things, the letter highlighted measures within the bill which appeared specifically designed to target environmental protesters, including young human rights defenders, and noted increasing reports from Italy of legal action and restrictive measures targeting individuals advocating for urgent action to protect the environment.

On 29-30 September 2025, a representative of the Commissioner's Office attended the triennial global workshop of regional and international mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights in Geneva, Switzerland. The thematic focus of the meeting was the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the situation of environmental human rights defenders.

On the 25th of February 2025, during RightsCon 2025, the 13th edition of the world's leading summit on human rights in the digital age, the Council of Europe hosted an online roundtable "[Scarier than eco-anxiety: how the law is abused to silence information on the environment](#)" with the participation of wide range of relevant stakeholders, from civil society organisation to tech companies, from government representatives to human rights defenders.

On 11 November 2025, on the margins of UN Climate Conference COP30 in Belém, Brazil, the Council of Europe in co-operation with the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), organised the side event "Environmental Human Rights Defenders" focusing on the ways to foster a safe and enabling environment for defenders and to integrate stronger protection standards into environmental governance. During the event, the European Forum on Environmental Human Rights Defenders was launched, aiming to enhance coordination among civil society, governments, Indigenous Peoples, and international institutions. Speakers included representatives from the Council of Europe, Portugal, the OHCHR and Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL), as well as the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change and the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention.

Action 3.2: Follow-up meeting between PACE and the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention on action by national parliaments.

This activity has been postponed *sine die*. In this vein, PACE Secretariat participated in the [Study session](#) "Uniting for a safer Europe: empowering environment defenders", organised by the Youth for Democracy programme in cooperation with Youth and environment Europe, European Youth Center in Strasbourg, 1-5 September 2025.

Action 3.3: Organisation of the pre-event to the Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments on Youth for Planet Protection: A Call to Action.

On 20 March 2025, the pre-event to the Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments was dedicated to "Youth for planet protection" aiming to engage young leaders in shaping

sustainable policies, promoting accountability and legislative action for a greener, more sustainable Europe.

Action 3.4: Support to member States in the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people and climate action, particularly in relation to protecting the rights of human rights defenders.

Partnership activities ([Study Sessions](#)) have been organised between youth organisations and the Youth Department:

- A Study session with Youth and Environment Europe held in the first week of September 2025: [Young Environmental Defenders and Climate Activists United for Human Rights - Youth](#);
- A Study session in cooperation with the Generation Climate Europe called “Bridging Generations for Just and Green Transitions” in October 2025, which aimed to unite participants from diverse backgrounds to explore intergenerational fairness, gender equality in the green transition, and citizen engagement, aiming to foster collaboration and create actionable solutions for a just and inclusive climate transition;
- The Council of Europe is implementing a project “Youth and Environment” under the auspices of the Action Plan in Azerbaijan (2025) to support young people’s access to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment through quality youth policy interventions, youth work, and youth participation in environmental and climate-related processes on a local level. Central to the project are capacity-building activities, provision of expert advice, and educational resources in the Azerbaijani language. Through support of the quality of non-formal education provided by youth organisations in Azerbaijan, the project aims to increase youth awareness and develop their knowledge and skills regarding environmental and climate matters.

Strategic Objective 4: Preventing and prosecuting environment-related crimes

Action 4.1: Promotion of the signature, ratification and implementation of the CoE Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law.

The Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law, adopted on 14 May 2025, was opened for signature on 3 December 2025 in Strasbourg. The Republic of Moldova, Portugal and the European Union signed the Convention.

A dedicated [website](#) was designed to promote the Convention.

Action 4.2: The provision of guidance for the development of comprehensive policies and national strategies for the prevention and prosecution of environment-related crimes.

The Council of Europe, through the European Union and the Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye: [Action against Economic Crime in the Western Balkans](#), provided support to strengthen regional response to environmental crime, corruption and money laundering.

In 2025, a regional guidance paper was developed to support the implementation of a risk-based approach to detecting and preventing money laundering and terrorist financing risks associated with environmental crime. The guidance targets private sector entities obliged to comply with anti-money laundering standards, including financial institutions, real estate agents, accountants, notaries, lawyers, and dealers in precious metals and stones. Designed to help these entities apply a risk-based approach effectively, the guidelines outline typologies of financial flows linked to environmental crime, red-flag indicators, and recommendations for enhanced due diligence and suspicious transaction reporting.

An additional regional guidance paper on preventing and disrupting money laundering linked to environmental crime was developed to capture recurring typologies across various criminal sectors and provide practical tools for policymakers and practitioners. The guidance includes step-by-step instructions for law enforcement agencies on conducting effective financial investigations into environmental offences, models to enhance inter-agency and cross-border cooperation, and frameworks to strengthen public-private partnerships supporting prevention and investigative efforts.

In October 2025, a regional review on corruption and money laundering risks linked to environmental crime in the Western Balkans was completed and shared with national beneficiaries. It recommends tools to strengthen detection, investigation, and disruption of illicit financial flows in line with international anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing (AML/CFT) standards. The report highlights the need for greater use of financial intelligence, asset forfeiture, and protection for whistle-blowers and witnesses. It also calls for improved risk assessments, data collection, inter-agency cooperation, regulatory frameworks, and training.

Action 4.3: Development of cooperation on the role of judges and prosecutors in environment-related cases.

On 23 – 24 September 2025, a multi-stakeholder workshop was held in Strasbourg, France, to address the nexus between environmental crime, corruption, and money laundering, in the framework of the European Union and the Council of Europe Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Türkiye: [Action against Economic Crime in the Western Balkans](#). The workshop provided a platform to discuss ways to integrate corruption and money laundering risks associated with environmental crime into national and sectoral risk assessments. Representatives of the law enforcement authorities also explored measures to strengthen financial investigations, enhance inter-agency cooperation and shared good practices in

investigating and prosecuting illicit financial flows linked to environmental crime. The findings of the regional review and the developed guidelines for LEAs were presented and discussed during the workshop.

Action 4.4: Exploring measures to enhance corporate accountability.

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Strategic Objective 5: Protecting wildlife, ecosystems, habitats and landscapes

Action 5.1: Launching the 9th Session of the Landscape Award (2025-2026) and awarding a new project.

The call for applications was announced for the 9th session of the [Landscape Award](#) (2025-2026). Through the award, awareness is raised on the importance of landscapes, and exemplary practices in the implementation of the Landscape Convention will be show-cased. The Landscape Award will be granted in 2026.

Action 5.2: Adoption and promotion of the implementation of a Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on "Landscape and Health".

[Recommendation CM/Rec\(2025\)1](#) on Landscape and Health, was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 26 February 2025 during its 1520th meeting. This recommendation underscores the vital connection between landscape and health, affirming the importance of healthy surroundings for human well-being.

To ensure the follow-up to the implementation of the recommendation, the States Parties to the Landscape Convention held exchange of initiatives for the effective implementation of the Recommendation during the Meeting of representatives of the States Parties and Observers on 27 October 2025 in Florence, Italy.

Action 5.3: Informal Ministerial Conference on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Landscape Convention.

An informal [Ministerial Conference](#) was held in Florence, Italy, on 27-28 October 2025 to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Council of Europe Landscape Convention. The event offered an opportunity to reflect on key milestones, achievements and impact of the Convention since its opening for accession in 2000, as well as to address current challenges and future opportunities for landscape protection and management in a rapidly evolving world.

The Conference concluded with a [Declaration](#) outlining a strategic vision to strengthen multilateral co-operation and promote the effective implementation of the Convention, including its integration into national policies.

Action 5.4: Preparation and adoption of a draft Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on "Landscape, a living environment".

A Group of Experts on "Landscape, a Living Environment" was established in April 2025 to prepare a recommendation on "Landscape, a Living Environment" and its explanatory report. The Group met three times.

The work on the draft recommendation will continue in 2026.

Action 5.5: Reinforcing the impact of the Bern Convention, in particular in the context of the case-file system.

The Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention discussed several strategic topics aimed at improving the impact of the Convention at its September 2025 meeting.

Regarding the case-file system, the Bureau held a hearing with an international expert on litigation and arbitration and exchanged views on ways to enhance the procedure across its different phases—namely, the admissibility, procedural, and closing stages. The discussion with the expert covered several key issues, including the sources of information used in decision-making and the need for a more structured dialogue with the complainant and the respondent. The Bureau welcomed this exchange and agreed that certain aspects of the case-file system require reform.

The Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee are being revised. A possible reorganisation of the Groups of Experts and Working Groups that support its work is envisaged. These reflections are expected to contribute to enhancing the overall impact of the Bern Convention.

Action 5.6: Development of guidelines and considering adoption of a recommendation by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement on strengthening public access to information and public participation in decision-making.

After the focus and title of the draft recommendation has evolved, the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement (in a joint meeting with Directors of Specialised Centres) adopted a recommendation on Citizen-centred Prevention and Preparedness in the face of natural hazards connected to climate change at its 84th meeting (6 and 7 November 2025).

Action 5.7: Preparation of a study to assess the relevance of the animal welfare conventions.

No activity has started on this in 2025.

Action 5.8: Promote the implementation of the measures included in the Report on “Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards: from risk preparedness to resilience”.

In March 2024, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopted [Recommendation 510 \(2024\)](#) and [Resolution 500 \(2024\)](#) on “Local and regional responses to natural disasters”.

In 2025, the Congress developed a [leaflet](#) summarising this guidance and produced an exhibition that can be borrowed upon request.

Action 5.9: Support for the implementation of the recommendations included in the report on “Fostering a circular economy at local and regional levels”.

On 9 October 2025, Congress rapporteur Linda Gillham (United Kingdom, ILDG) presented the Congress report and recommendations on “Fostering a circular economy at local and regional levels” ([CG\(2024\)47-14](#)) at the 86th Session of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) - Committee on Urban Development, Housing and Land Management in Geneva.

Other Actions:

Actions that were not included in the Action Plan were also launched or carried out in various sectors of the Council of Europe.

Action 5.10: The 14th Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes

The 14th Advisory Forum on Cultural Routes (22-24 October 2025, Cappadocia, Türkiye) focused on the preservation and enhancement of European landscapes, emphasising the role of cultural heritage and local communities in ensuring the sustainability of ecosystems and territories. The Forum concluded with recommendations for community-centred, sustainable cultural tourism, integrating landscape protection with local knowledge and expertise.

Action 5.11: Study on soft mobility along the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe

The work on a study on soft mobility (non-motorised or low-impact travel modes such as walking, cycling, and energy-efficient public transport), launched in 2024 by the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe, is still ongoing. The study aims to assess the current state of soft mobility within the certified Cultural Routes network and to provide concrete recommendations and actionable strategies for stakeholders.

Activities related to the environment in support of the Strategy:

Mainstreaming of Environmental objectives and concerns in Council of Europe governance and operations

Action M1: Implementation of the Road map for sustainable development and carbon footprint reduction within the Council of Europe and of the Action Plan for sustainable development within the Council of Europe.

Action M1.1

In accordance with the decision taken by the Committee of Ministers in December 2024 ([CM/Del/Dec\(2024\)1515/11.2](#)), the Secretariat of the Council of Europe has drawn up an initial action plan with the Sustainable Development Study Group (GEDD) for the reduction of the carbon footprint of the Organisation's activities. In April 2025, the implementation of the proposed action plan for sustainable development and carbon footprint reduction within the Council of Europe has been confirmed ([CM/Del/Dec\(2025\)1524/11.5](#)). This action plan ([CM\(2025\)33](#)) is aligned with the objectives set out in the carbon trajectory ([CM\(2024\)178](#)), which aims to initially reduce the Council of Europe's carbon emissions from 53 900 tonnes of CO₂ equivalent (tCO₂e) to around 40 000 tCO₂e by 2030. All projects and activities that will be implemented, as stakeholders and main outcomes are detailed in the appendix II of the action plan, for which the Committee of Ministers has invited the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to report annually on its implementation.

Action M1.2

The Council of Europe's two European Youth Centres – in Budapest and Strasbourg – are advancing environmental sustainability through concrete daily practices and long-term planning. The European Youth Centre Budapest follows a "Reduce, Test, Demonstrate & Educate" strategy, with initiatives such as "Meatless Mondays" in the restaurant, reusable water jugs, compostable cups, selective waste collection and composting, an eco-film club, a herb garden, insect hotels, eco-friendly cleaning materials, and energy-saving measures like reduced linen cleaning and extensive use of video-conferencing. It has also developed a comprehensive renovation plan focused on renewable energy and environmentally friendly technologies. The European Youth Centre Strasbourg has modernised its cooling systems and converted nearly all lighting to LED, introduced rainwater collection for garden irrigation, pesticide-free and pollinator-friendly landscaping, water fountains to reduce plastic use, and bicycles for staff and visitors, while preparing further upgrades to create energy-efficient and accessible facilities. Both centres engage young people and a diverse array of partners in shaping these efforts, positioning themselves as models of environmentally responsible, inclusive, and innovative youth education spaces in Europe.

Action M1.3

The Council of Europe's co-operation dimension aims to make the fight against climate change and environmental degradation an integral and more explicit part of its action. This is done through: 1) mainstreaming environmental protection and climate change considerations at the level of strategic co-operation documents and projects; 2) conceiving and designing co-operation documents and projects with environment-specific objectives; and 3) improving the working methods and practices of the Council of Europe to be more environmentally sound and climate neutral.

The country Action Plans for [Georgia 2024-2027](#), for the [Republic of Moldova 2025-2028](#) and for [Bosnia and Herzegovina 2026-2029](#) already mainstream the protection of the environment as a cross-cutting topic.

Coordination, consultation and communication

Action C1: Development of a specific web page on the Environment.

A webpage "[Protecting the environment using human rights law](#)" was developed in 2025 to serve as an entry point to the Council of Europe activities in this field. It is reachable from the main Council of Europe website. Various links to Council of Europe webpages dedicated to the environment are included, together with news items on Council of Europe activities in this domain.

Action C2: Publication of a (ISBN) book featuring key aspects of the Council of Europe work in the field of the environment (key treaties, case law and decisions of monitoring bodies, key recommendations, the Strategy, etc.).

The preparation and production of a book on key aspects of the Council of Europe work in the field of the environment was postponed.

The following other ISBN publications have however been published in 2025:

- The "[Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture \(RFCDC\) – Guidance document for Education for Sustainable Development](#)" was published in September 2025;
- Education in Times of Emergencies and Crises (EDURES) - [Resilience toolkit to ensure the right to education in times of emergencies and crises](#).
- The text and explanatory report of the Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats was published as an ISBN publication in December 2025 following the change in the protection status of the *Canis lupus* from a "strictly protected species" Appendix II to "protected species" Appendix III.

Several non ISBN publications have also been published since the beginning of 2025, such as:

- The [Strategy on the Environment](#);
- A flyer: [The Council of Europe and Environment](#) – overview of the Council of Europe work on environment;
- A flyer with the [10 key messages for the Environment of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe](#);
- Report of a Conference organised by the Assembly of the Council of Europe: "[The role of national parliaments in protecting -the right to a healthy environment](#)";
- [Factsheet on the right to protection of health, Article 11 of the Revised European Social Charter](#), Department of Social Rights;
- [European Committee of Social Rights review on Social Rights and the Cost-of-living Crisis](#) – a review of States Parties' ad hoc reports, March 2025;
- Symposium [Report](#): Youth people, democracy and climate action (2025);
- Podcast: Youth action for climate justice (2025) <https://share.transistor.fm/s/c0b81f91>;
- [Youth action for climate: compendium of practices](#) (upcoming 2025);
- [Baseline Study of Legislation, Policy and Judicial Practice on Human Rights and Environment in South-East Europe](#) (exists also in [Serbian](#), [Albanian](#) and [Macedonian](#));
- [Report on Ukraine's Citizens' Assembly on Household Waste Management in Slavutych](#).

IV. NEXT STEPS

The Strategy on the Environment proposes the establishment of an intergovernmental multidisciplinary committee within the existing programmatic and budgetary framework. The proposed committee would increase the efficiency, coherence, impact and visibility of the Council of Europe's response to environmental degradation and its impact on human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. It would support the further implementation of the Reykjavík Declaration and ensure effective and coordinated delivery of the Strategy on the Environment.

At the 134th Session held in Luxembourg on 14 May 2025, the Committee of Ministers invited its Deputies to consider setting up an intergovernmental multidisciplinary committee on environment in the context of the negotiation of the Programme and Budget for the next biennium.

The new Steering Committee on the Environment (CDENV) will co-ordinate the intergovernmental work in the field of the environment and advise the Committee of Ministers on appropriate action to be taken in its field of competence, ensuring a multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach, promoting democratic governance and inclusive participation, and leveraging synergies with partners and stakeholders.

The CDENV will oversee, support and report on the implementation of the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment (2025-2030) and its Action Plan. It will also provide a forum for exchange on existing and emerging environmental challenges and their impact on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The CDENV will gather and share expertise, support the implementation of the relevant conventions of the Council of Europe, raise awareness, and promote the integration of environmental objectives and concerns into the Council of Europe governance and activities.

A series of activities are already planned in 2026 and beyond to implement the various objectives of the Strategy.

Strategic Objective 1: Integrating human rights considerations in environment-related strategies, instruments, legislation, policies and actions, and vice versa.

Action 1.1: Examination of the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)20 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and the protection of the environment

CM/Rec(2022)20 includes a provision for review of its implementation by the Committee of Ministers within five years of its adoption, i.e. 2027. The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), under its terms of reference for 2024 – 2027, has been mandated to conduct this review.

Action 1.2: Adoption by PACE of reports with a major environment dimension (Right to housing; Guidelines for a sustainable and socially fair energy transition; Food security in times of crises; Right to water and sanitation) including draft resolutions addressed to member States and draft recommendations addressed to the Committee of Ministers.

PACE will continue working on the topic, with the following motions currently in the pipeline:

- [Motion for a resolution](#) on Ensuring sustainable food security in times of crisis: strengthening resilience and access to food;
- [Motion for a resolution](#) on Guaranteeing the right to access to drinking water;

- [Motion for a resolution](#) on Climate and gender equality – Strengthening the protection of women's rights in the face of climate disruption;
- [Proposal for a motion](#) on Climate action as a human and democratic responsibility (to be tabled at the Standing Committee on 21 November 2025).

Action 1.3: Organisation of events to promote reports on environment in national parliaments and raise awareness among parliamentarians on the right to a healthy environment, CoE legal instruments and monitoring mechanisms: events in selected national parliaments in follow-up to the Assembly's resolutions on environment related issues, visit of the Tournée du Climat et de la Biodiversité at PACE.

Such events will continue to be organised in 2026 and in the following years.

Action 1.4: Targeted questions are included in the context of the European Social Charter's regular and ad hoc reporting procedures on: 1) impact of environmental degradation and climate change on social rights; 2) measures taken by the States Parties to address this impact.

The following [targeted questions](#) to the States relating to the application of the European Social Charter (ESC) concerning the [first group of provisions](#) in 2024 and 2025. Questions related to the impact of climate change on social rights:

- Provide information on the content and implementation of national policies on psychosocial or new and emerging risks, including in jobs affected by climate change risks (Article 3§1 of the ESC);
- Provide information on measures taken to ensure the supervision of implementation of health and safety regulations concerning vulnerable categories of workers such as workers exposed to environmental-related risks such as climate change and pollution (Article 3§3 of the ESC);
- Provide information if there has been any joint consultation on matters related to the green transition (Article 6§1 of the ESC).

The European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) will pursue in 2026 its study of the States' responses to the following [targeted questions](#) related to the impact of climate change on social rights relating to the application of the European Social Charter (ESC):

- Provide information on the content and implementation of national policies on psychosocial or new and emerging risks, including in jobs affected by climate change risks (Article 3§1 of the ESC);
- Provide information on measures taken to ensure the supervision of implementation of health and safety regulations concerning vulnerable categories of workers such as workers exposed to environmental-related risks such as climate change and pollution (Article 3§3 of the ESC);
- Provide information if there has been any joint consultation on matters related to the green transition (Article 6§1 of the ESC).

This will allow the ECSR to assess how national occupational health and safety policies take into account climate change risks and how the environmental-related risks are monitored in the context of safety and health at work.

Action 1.5: Support States Parties in implementing ESC rights taking into account their environmental dimension and the need to protect the rights of persons in vulnerable

situations and/or exposed to discrimination, including through co-operation activities in different States Parties.

Work will continue in 2026 and beyond.

Action 1.6: A study prepared by Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) on the impact of the environmental crisis on persons exposed to discrimination and on measures to prevent and alleviate such impact.

The Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI) is preparing a study on the impact of the environmental crisis on persons exposed to discrimination on the grounds covered by CDADI and on measures to prevent and alleviate such impact.

The completion of the study is foreseen for December 2026. The study is aimed at supporting member States in preventing and combating the discriminatory effects of environmental factors on groups covered by the mandate of CDADI.

Action 1.7: Support education and capacity-building on the environment, the triple planetary crisis, and the interlinkage between sustainable development and respect for human rights (children, young people, legal professionals, businesses, civil society, administrations at all levels of governance, etc.). Promote and strengthen educational and awareness-raising activities, using both formal and non-formal methodologies.

A new edition of the [Human Rights Education for Youth](#) (HEY) online training course on the Environment developed by the Council of Europe's [North-South Centre](#) (NSC), in collaboration with the Department on the [Reykjavík process and the Environment](#), and [UN Environment Programme](#) and the African Union as part of the [iLEGEND III](#) project is scheduled for 2026.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will continue to support initiatives and activities that heighten awareness and responsibility of local and regional authorities with regards the triple planetary crisis.

Action 1.8: Support the implementation of the CM/Rec(2024)06 of the Committee of Ministers on young people and climate action in member States, by raising awareness, building capacity, and providing funding opportunities to youth civil society.

No activity is planned at this stage.

Other Actions:

Actions that were not included in the Action Plan were also launched or carried out in various sectors of the Council of Europe.

Action 1.9

A study on national climate litigation was adopted by the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ) [n November 2025.

Action 1.10

The Steering Committee on Human Rights (CDDH) is expected to discuss the possible implications of the conclusions of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 23 July 2025 on the obligations of States in respect of climate change and those of the advisory opinion A0-32/25 of 29 May 2025 of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights on the climate emergency and human rights by 30 June 2026.

Strategic Objective 2: Strengthening good democratic governance

Action 2.1: Collection of good practices in Council of Europe member States on publication of information relating to the environment by public authorities on their own initiative as well as upon request.

No activity is planned yet.

Action 2.2: Building upon the analysis of existing frameworks, development of a guidance document “Applying the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture (RFCDC) to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD)”

The publication “[*Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture \(RFCDC\) – Guidance document for Education for Sustainable Development*](#)” has been finalised in 2025.

Action 2.3: Development of the “Education in times of emergencies and crisis toolkit” (EDURES), a policy-making tool for education actors that aims to strengthen the resilience and responsiveness of education in the face of crises and emergencies, ensuring the continuation of quality education and mitigating impact of crises and emergencies on vulnerable groups.

EDURES Toolkit was finalised in 2025.

Action 2.4: Development of a European Space for Citizenship Education to sustain democracy through quality citizenship through a two-year co-creation process. Education for Sustainable development will be part of this new European Space. The result will be considered at the next Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in 2026/2027.

Action 2.4 is in progress.

The results will be considered at the next Standing Conference of Ministers of Education, which will take place on March 2027.

Action 2.5: Preparation of a study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making, which will include a focus on decision-making in environmental matters.

In line with the terms of reference of the Gender Equality Commission, preparatory work on the study on equal participation of women and men in political and public decision-making will begin in 2026, with completion foreseen in the same year. The study will provide an overview of promising practices.

Action 2.6: Address the impact of the triple planetary crisis of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss on European Social Charter (ESC) rights, social equity, climate justice at the High-Level Conference on the ESC.

No activity is planned yet.

Action 2.7: Preparation of a set of tools, such as videos and other child-friendly educational material for youth and children on the European Social Charter rights related to the environment.

No activity is planned yet.

Action 2.8: Promote inclusive dialogue and meaningful participation with civil society, social partners, in the context of transition to a green economy and other environment-related matters through conferences, seminars, discussions, reports and studies with the active participation of civil society organisations and social partners. Promote civil society and social partner's involvement in decision-making, including in impact assessment processes.

No activity is planned yet.

Action 2.9: Follow-up and reflection on the possible revision of the CM Recommendation (2016)³ on human rights and business with the aim of considering the incorporation of corporate environmental responsibility requirements.

No activity is planned yet.

Action 2.10: Development of a tool for member States' judicial administrations to integrate sustainability practices in their functioning, taking also into consideration digitalised practices and their impact on the environment.

No activity is planned yet.

Action 2.11: Setting up a specific CEPEJ evaluation exercise on environmental justice (including related to effective access to justice and remedies in environmental issues, efficiency of justice in environment-related cases, execution of judgments).

No activity is planned yet.

Action 2.12: Preparation of a draft Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government – a Protocol dedicated to environmental protection at local level.

The Congress stands ready to support any follow-up steps taken by the Committee of Ministers.

Action 2.13: Adoption and implementation of a report on “Water resources under stress: towards better local and regional governance”.

The report “[Water resources under stress: towards better local and regional governance](#)” was adopted in 2025 and the Congress will continue promoting this report.

Action 2.14: Adoption and promotion of the implementation of a Report on coastal erosion.

The Report on coastal erosion is expected to be adopted at the 51st Session of Congress in October 2026.

Other actions:

Action 2.15: Fighting Climate disinformation

Activities against climate disinformation will continue in 2026 and beyond.

Strategic Objective 3: Supporting and protecting Environmental Human Rights Defenders, Environmental Defenders and Whistle Blowers

Action 3.1: Protection of environmental human rights defenders: Examination of the implementation of the relevant provisions in the Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)20 to member States on human rights and the protection of the environment.

CM/Rec(2022)20 includes a provision for review of its implementation by the Committee of Ministers within five years of its adoption. The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), under its terms of reference for 2024 – 2027, has been mandated to conduct this review.

The Council of Europe will host the first European Forum on Environmental Human Rights Defenders (EHRDs) will take place during the second quarter of 2026. Co-organised with the UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner and in collaboration with Special Procedures of the HRC, the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention, the UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA), and EHRDs networks, the event will gather more than 200 participants. The purpose of the Forum is to enhance the coordination between EHRDs, civil society organisations, Indigenous Peoples, government representatives and national, regional and international institutions and mechanisms, and other relevant stakeholders to address challenges, share experiences, and promote stronger protections for EHRDs. The Forum will serve to increase awareness, sharing best practices and peer learning, and address the risks and challenges faced by defenders in the region, as well as for the issues they advocate for.

Action 3.2: Follow-up meeting between PACE and the Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders under the Aarhus Convention on action by national parliaments.

This activity is expected to take place at a later stage.

Action 3.3: Organisation of the pre-event to the Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments on Youth for Planet Protection: A Call to Action.

The pre-event to the Conference of the Presidents of Parliaments on “Youth for planet protection” took place in 2025.

Action 3.4: Support to member States in the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on young people and climate action, particularly in relation to protecting the rights of human rights defenders.

Activities to support member States in the implementation of the Recommendation CM/Rec(2024)6 will continue in 2026 and beyond.

Strategic Objective 4: Preventing and prosecuting environment-related crimes

Action 4.1: Promotion of the signature, ratification and implementation of the CoE Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law.

The promotion of the signature of the Convention will continue in 2026 and beyond with a view to its rapid ratification.

Action 4.2: The provision of guidance for the development of comprehensive policies and national strategies for the prevention and prosecution of environment-related crimes.

No activity is planned yet.

Action 4.3: Development of cooperation on the role of judges and prosecutors in environment-related cases.

A side-event will be held following the plenary meeting of the Consultative Council of European Prosecutors (CCPE) in 2026 to showcase CCPE Opinion No. 17 (2022) on the role of prosecutors in the protection of the environment.

The Consultative Council of European Judges (CCJE) will prepare in 2026 a thematic study on the role of judges in the protection of the environment, taking into account the recently adopted Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law, and which will serve as a groundwork for developing the relevant standards in one of the future CCJE Opinions.

Action 4.4: Exploring measures to enhance corporate accountability.

No activity is planned yet.

Strategic Objective 5: Protecting wildlife, ecosystems, habitats and landscapes

Action 5.1: Launching the 9th Session of the Landscape Award (2025-2026) and awarding a new project.

The Landscape Award will be granted in 2026.

Action 5.2: Adoption and promotion of the implementation of a Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on "Landscape and Health".

The promotion of the implementation of [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2025\)1](#) on Landscape and Health will continue in 2026 and beyond.

Action 5.3: Informal Ministerial Conference on the occasion of the 25th Anniversary of the Landscape Convention.

The follow-up of the informal Ministerial Conference held in Florence, Italy, on 27-28 October 2025 to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Landscape Convention will continue in 2026 and beyond.

Action 5.4: Preparation and adoption of a draft Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on "Landscape, a living environment".

The draft recommendation on "Landscape, a living environment" is expected to be endorsed by the Steering Committee on the Environment (CDENV) in 2026 and to be submitted to the Committee of Ministers in view of its adoption.

Action 5.5: Reinforcing the impact of the Bern Convention, in particular in the context of the case-file system.

The Bureau of the Standing Committee of the Bern Convention will continue exploring potential improvements of the case-file system in April 2026, following the preparation of an information document by the expert and the Secretariat.

The work on the revision of the Rules of Procedure of the Standing Committee will continue in 2026 with a possible reorganisation of the Groups of Experts and Working Groups that support its work to contribute to enhancing the overall impact of the Bern Convention.

Action 5.6: Development of guidelines and considering adoption of a recommendation by the Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement on strengthening public access to information and public participation in decision-making.

The recommendation on Citizen-centred Prevention and Preparedness in the face of natural hazards connected to climate change was adopted by Committee of Permanent Correspondents of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement in 2025. Its follow-up is envisaged.

Action 5.7: Preparation of a study to assess the relevance of the animal welfare conventions.

No activity is planned yet.

Action 5.8: Promote the implementation of the measures included in the Report on “Local and regional responses to natural disasters and climate hazards: from risk preparedness to resilience”.

The Congress will continue promoting the content of this report including at relevant conferences and other events.

Action 5.9: Support for the implementation of the recommendations included in the report on “Fostering a circular economy at local and regional levels”.

The Congress will continue promoting the content of this report including at relevant conferences and other events.

Activities related to the environment in support of the Strategy:

Mainstreaming of Environmental objectives and concerns in Council of Europe governance and operations

Action M1: Implementation of the Road map for sustainable development and carbon footprint reduction within the Council of Europe and of the Action Plan for sustainable development within the Council of Europe.

Action M1.1

The first review of the action plan for the reduction of the carbon footprint of the Council of Europe's activities will be presented in March/April 2026.

Action M1.2

The Council of Europe's two European Youth Centres – in Budapest and Strasbourg –will continue advancing environmental sustainability through concrete daily practices and long-term planning in 2026 and beyond.

Coordination, consultation and communication

Action C1: Development of a specific web page on the Environment.

The webpage "[Protecting the environment using human rights law](#)" will continued to be updated.

Action C2: Publication of a (ISBN) book featuring key aspects of the Council of Europe work in the field of the environment (key treaties, case law and decisions of monitoring bodies, key recommendations, the Strategy, etc.).

Work on the preparation and production of a book on key aspects of the Council of Europe work in the field of the environment is expected to be resumed.

A flyer with updated information on the work of the Bern Convention will be published in 2026.

Further publications will be released in 2026 and beyond.

CONCLUSION

The steady implementation of the Council of Europe's Strategy on the Environment (2025-2030) since its launch and adoption in May 2025 is already evident. Many activities were carried out in 2025, and others will be implemented in 2026. New actions are already being prepared for 2026 and subsequent years thanks to the collective work of all sectors of the Council of Europe.