

Council of Europe HELP online course on Introduction to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights

The [European Convention on Human Rights](#) ('the ECHR') is the most important instrument of the Council of Europe. It was the first instrument to give effect to certain of the rights stated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and make them binding. All 47 Council of Europe member States have ratified it and incorporated it into their legal systems.

The ECHR, as interpreted by the European Court of Human Rights ('the ECtHR'), has greatly contributed to shape a distinct legal identity throughout Europe and to promote principles that are integral to democracy and the rule of law. It does not simply protect a series of fundamental civil and political rights. It also influences all branches of domestic, both public and private, law.

It is a text of fundamental importance for all legal practitioners: judges, prosecutors, lawyers, law enforcement agents and other stakeholders. The prime responsibility to apply the ECHR lies with the national authorities.



The ECHR constitutes an important part of the everyday practice of legal professionals. In order to apply it properly, national actors need to have basic knowledge on the ECHR and how it is interpreted by the ECtHR in its work.

This HELP course on Introduction to the ECHR and the ECtHR is aimed precisely at providing this necessary basis. It offers a possibility to be acquainted both with the text of the ECHR itself and with the methodology and the procedure followed by the ECtHR in interpreting it.

In a new separate module developed in 2019, the course also explains the execution of the judgments of the ECtHR and of the terms of friendly settlements. This module can be taken autonomously or together with the two other modules.

The knowledge and skills gained through this course will facilitate users in further exploring the case-law of the ECtHR in the separate topical areas, covered by the topical [CoE HELP courses](#).

The topics are developed in a practical way, by using presentations, interactive screens and knowledge checks.

The course was initially produced in 2016. **Un updated version of the course, including the Module on the Execution of the Judgments of the ECtHR, was published on the Council of Europe HELP online platform in March 2020.**

Target audience

The course is primarily addressed to all **legal professionals** (judges, prosecutors, lawyers or court staff) and justice professionals in the wider sense.

It can also be used by other **public authorities**, including national human rights institutions, law-enforcement, parliamentary staff, public administration staff etc.

It can be a great resource for **university students** or **civil society organizations**, and in a general for anyone who wishes to be introduced to the human rights protection system established with the European Convention on Human Rights.

Course outline (3 substantive modules)

Introductory Module: welcome message; navigation instruction; course authors; course target group

Module 1: Introduction to the European Convention on Human Rights

- Structure of the ECHR
- Interpreting the ECHR
- the ECHR within the national legal order

Module 2: Introduction to the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR)

- Structure of the ECtHR
- The life of an application before the ECtHR

Module 3: Execution of the Judgments of the ECtHR

- Introduction to the module
- Supervision of the implementation of the ECtHR judgments
- Execution of the ECtHR judgments

Development of the course

The course was developed by the Council of Europe HELP Programme, in close cooperation with the Department for the Execution of the Judgments of the ECtHR of the Council of Europe. This version of the course was partly produced with the financial support of the European Union and the Council of Europe through the action "Strengthening the effective legal remedies to human rights violations in Serbia", implemented under the EU/CoE "Horizontal Facility for the Western Balkans and Turkey II".

Acces the free online course

The course is publicly available on the HELP online platform <http://help.elearning.ext.coe.int/>. To access the course, you will need to open a HELP account if you have not yet done so (2 minutes).

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