Revised Terms of reference for the CDDH and the DH-SYSC (2024–2027) (18 November 2025)

STEERING COMMITTEE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS (CDDH)

Set up by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with Resolution CM/Res(2021)3-consolidated on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Category: **Steering committee**

Duration: **1 January 2024 until 31 December 2027**

PROGRAMME/SUB-PROGRAMME ▼

Programme: Securing human rights and fundamental freedoms
Sub-programme: Effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at European and national level

MAIN TASKS ▼

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers and bearing in mind the Council of Europe legal standards as well as the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights, the CDDH will conduct the intergovernmental work of the Council of Europe in the human rights field and will advise and give its legal expertise to the Committee of Ministers on all questions within its field of competence. In particular, the CDDH is instructed to:

i. take due account of the Reykjavik Declaration[1] in conducting its activities and submit proposals for its implementation as appropriate;
ii. take account of the relevant key findings and challenges set out in the Secretary General's annual reports on the state of democracy, human rights and rule of law[2] and contribute, where relevant, to the process towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe;
iii. work on the protection, development and promotion of human rights in Europe to:
    a. contribute to enhancing the protection of human rights by improving the effectiveness of the control mechanism of the European Convention on Human Rights and the implementation of the Convention at national and European levels, this work being a permanent priority for the CDDH;
    b. provide effective responses at the normative and general policy levels to the challenges posed to human rights in European societies;
iv. follow the implementation of the non-binding instruments that it has prepared as well as conventions for which it has been given responsibility by the Committee of Ministers;
v. advise other bodies of the Organisation to ensure that their activities concerning human rights duly reflect the requirements of the European Convention on Human Rights and the case law of the European Court of Human Rights;
vi. contribute to co-operation and support activities to national initiatives in the field of the protection, development and promotion of human rights;
vii. without prejudice to the mandates of intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe that already follow the work of monitoring mechanisms, follow the activities of the relevant monitoring and other bodies protecting human rights;
viii. orient and oversee the work of its subordinate bodies (cf. separate terms of reference);
ix. oversee and finalise the work on the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights;
x. respond to the human rights challenges that European societies face by means of providing guidance to member States through the preparation of non-binding instruments of the Committee of Ministers (e.g. declarations, recommendations or guidelines) while ensuring co-ordination and co-operation with relevant Council of Europe bodies;
xi. in co-ordination notably with the presidencies of the Committee of Ministers and representatives of civil society, ensure follow-up to the national implementation of various recommendations of the Committee of Ministers prepared by the CDDH;

[1] Reykjavik Declaration - United around our values.
[2] Cf. Secretary General's report 2025 "Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe".

xii. organise thematic debates on the right of access to official documents taking into account the entry into force of the Tromsø Convention (CETS 205);

xiii raise-awareness about Council of Europe standards and tools in its field of competence in the member States and beyond, through the neighbourhood policy and in other international and global fora where relevant;

xiv. hold an exchange of views annually in order to evaluate its activities and advise the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General on future priorities in its sector, including possible new activities and those that might be discontinued;

xv. take due account of the following mainstreamed perspectives in the performance of its tasks: gender, youth, children's rights, rights of persons with disabilities, and Roma and Traveller[3] issues;

xvi. where relevant, contribute to strengthening meaningful engagement with civil society organisations and national human rights institutions in its work;

xvii. in accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, carry out, at regular intervals, within the limits of the available resources and bearing in mind its priorities, an examination of some or all of the conventions for which it has been given responsibility,[4][in co-operation, where appropriate, with the relevant convention-based bodies, and report back to the Committee of Ministers;

xviii. contribute to the achievement of, and review progress towards, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular with regards to Goal 3: Good health and well-being, Goal 5: Gender equality, Goal 8: Decent work and economic work, Goal 10: Reduced inequalities, Goal 13: Climate action and Goal 16: Peace, Justice and Strong institutions;

xix. contribute, where appropriate, to activities related to the abolition of the death penalty;

xx. where relevant, take account of, and propose effective responses to, the challenges posed in its field of competence by the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine.

MAIN DELIVERABLES ▼

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, the CDDH is instructed to complete these deliverables, within the following deadlines:

	Priority ▼	Deadline ▼
1. Draft non-binding legal instrument on the effective protection of human rights in situations of crisis based on lessons learnt from the Covid-19 pandemic	1	30/06/2024
2. Study on the need for and feasibility of a further instrument or instruments in the field of human rights and the environment	1	30/06/2024
3. Report evaluating the effectiveness of the system for the selection and election of the judges of the European Court of Human Rights and the means to ensure due recognition for those judges' status and service on the Court and providing additional safeguards to preserve their independence and impartiality (cf. DH-SYSC terms of reference)	1	31/12/2024
4. Final agreement on instruments setting out the modalities for the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights	1	31/12/2027
5. Report evaluating the first effects of Protocol No.16 (cf. DH-SYSC terms of reference)	2	30/06/2025
6. Handbook on human rights and artificial intelligence	1	31/12/2025
7. Report evaluating the first effects of Protocol No.15 (cf. DH-SYSC terms of reference)	2	31/12/2025

[3] The term "Roma and Travellers" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "*Gens du voyage*", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

[4] Cf. relevant decisions of the Committee of Ministers (CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2) and list of Conventions in document CM(2025)132.

8. Study on the need for and feasibility of (an) additional non-binding instrument(s) to complement the 2011 Committee of Ministers' Guidelines on the eradication of impunity for serious human rights violations	2	31/12/2025
9. Study on the need for and the feasibility of updating Committee of Ministers' Recommendation No. R(97)22 to member States containing Guidelines on the Application of the Safe Third Country Concept	2	30/06/2026
10.Subject to the result of main deliverable 8, draft (a) non-binding instrument(s) to complement the 2011 Committee of Ministers' Guidelines on the eradication of impunity for serious human rights violations	2	31/12/2026
11.Draft recommendation on bringing human rights to the heart of drug and addiction policies, based notably on the policy document: "Guidance for aligning drug and addiction policies with human rights" adopted by the Permanent Correspondents of the Council of Europe International Cooperation Group on Drugs and Addictions (Pompidou Group) at their 95th meeting in November 2024, as well as on the relevant case law of the European Court of Human Rights (cf. terms of reference of DH-PDA)	1	31/12/2026
12.Subject to a decision of the Committee of Ministers on the result of main deliverable 2, draft (an) instrument(s) in the field of human rights and the environment (cf. DH-ENV terms of reference)	1	30/06/2027
13.Subject to the result of main deliverable 10, updated Committee of Ministers' Recommendation No. R(97)22 to member States containing Guidelines on the Application of the Safe Third Country Concept	2	31/12/2027
14.Report on the use of new technologies by the European Court of Human Rights (cf. DH-SYSC terms of reference)	2	31/12/2027
15.Report on new tendencies in litigation before the European Court of Human Rights (cf. DH-SYSC terms of reference)	2	31/12/2027
16.Report on its examination of implementation of the following Committee of Ministers' Recommendations to member States: - CM/Rec(2018)11 on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe - CM/Rec(2019)5 on the system of the European Convention on Human Rights in university education and professional training - CM/Rec(2019)6 on the development of the Ombudsman institution - CM/Rec(2021)1 on the development and strengthening of effective, pluralist and independent national human rights institutions - CM/Rec(2021)2 on measures against the trade in goods used for the death penalty, torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment - CM/Rec(2021)4 on the publication and dissemination of the European Convention on Human Rights, the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights and other relevant texts - CM/Rec(2022)20 on human rights and the protection of the environment - CM/Rec(2014)2 on the promotion of human rights of older persons	3	Up to 2 per year
17.Study on the protection of the right to vote and to stand for election under the European Convention on Human Rights, taking into account the work of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission)	1	31/12/2027
18.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	1	31/06/2026
19.Report on possible amendment of Appendices 1 and 3 to Committee of Ministers' Recommendation CM/Rec(2021)2 on measures against the trade in goods used for the death penalty, torture and other cruel,	2	31/12/2026

inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and on the possibility of introducing a simplified amendment procedure for Appendix 2		
20.Guidance on best practice for State officials and private actors involved in the organisation of and participation in law enforcement equipment trade fairs	2	31/12/2027
21.Report on developments concerning regulation at international level of the trade in goods used for the death penalty, torture, and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment	2	31/12/2027

COMPOSITION ▼

- Members

Governments of member States are invited to designate one or more representatives of the highest possible rank in the field of human rights.
The Council of Europe will bear the travel and subsistence expenses of one representative from each member State (two in the case of the State whose representative has been elected Chair).
Each member of the Committee shall have one vote. Where a government designates more than one member, only one of them is entitled to take part in the voting.
In accordance with decisions CM/Del/Dec(2013)1168/10.2 of the Committee of Ministers, in cases where there is no convention-based body including all the Parties, non-member States are invited to take part, with a right to vote, in the committee meetings pertaining to the conventions to which they are Parties.

- Participants

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and at the charge of their corresponding administrative budgets:
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- European Court of Human Rights;
- Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe;
- Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe;
- Committees or other bodies of the Council of Europe engaged in related work, as appropriate.

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:
- European Union (one or more representatives, including, as appropriate, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA));
- Observer States to the Council of Europe: Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico, United States of America;
- other international organisations (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)).

- Observers

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:
- non-member States with which the Council of Europe has a Neighbourhood Partnership including relevant co-operation activities;
- States having been invited by decision of the Committee of Ministers to participate in the negotiations;
- interested organisations from Civil Society: the Council of Europe welcomes and promotes the widest participation of civil society, in line with the Guidance note on Civil Society Participation in the Intergovernmental Work of the Council of Europe CDDEM(2024)14, as Observers. Observer status may be requested in accordance with Article 8 of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3-consolidated on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

WORKING METHODS ▼

THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE COMMITTEE ARE GOVERNED BY RESOLUTION CM/RES(2021)3-CONSOLIDATED ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEES AND SUBORDINATE BODIES, THEIR TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORKING METHODS. ONLINE PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS WILL BE AVAILABLE.

	Plenary meetings ▼			Bureau meetings ▼		
	Members	Meetings	Days	Members	Meetings	Days
2024	47	2	4	8	2	2
2025	47	2	4	8	2	2
2026	47	2	4	8	2	2
2027	47	2	4	8	2	2

The CDDH will appoint from amongst its members up to 5 Rapporteurs on mainstreamed perspectives, including a Gender Equality Rapporteur.
Subject to the agenda, the chairs of its subordinate structures may be invited to attend CDDH Bureau and/or plenary meetings.
The CDDH will hold regular exchanges of views with the Steering Committee on Human Rights in the fields of Biomedicine and Health (CDBIO).

SUBORDINATE STRUCTURE(S) ▼

The CDDH co-ordinates, supervises and follows the work of its subordinate bodies:
- Committee of Experts on the System of the European Convention on Human Rights (DH-SYSC) (cf. separate terms of reference);
- subject to the decision of the Committee of Ministers on the result of main deliverable 2, Drafting Committee on Human Rights and Environment (DH-ENV) (cf. separate terms of reference).

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE SYSTEM OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS (DH-SYSC)

Set up by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with Resolution CM/Res(2021)3-consolidated on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Type of committee: **Subordinate body**

Terms of reference valid from: **1 January 2024 until 31 December 2027**

PROGRAMME/SUB-PROGRAMME ▼

Programme: Securing human rights and fundamental freedoms
Sub-programme: Effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at European and national level

DELIVERABLES ▼

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, and of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), the DH-SYSC is instructed to complete these deliverables, within the following deadlines:

	Priority ▼	Deadline ▼
1. Report evaluating the effectiveness of the system for the selection and election of Court's judges and the means to ensure due recognition for judges' status and service on the Court and providing additional safeguards to preserve their independence and impartiality	1	31/12/2024
2. Report evaluating the first effects of Protocol No.16	2	30/06/2025
3. Report evaluating the first effects of Protocol No.15	2	31/12/2025
4. Report on the use of new technologies by the European Court of Human Rights	2	31/12/2027
5. Report on new tendencies in litigation before the European Court of Human Rights	2	31/12/2027

COMPOSITION ▼

- Members

Governments of member States are invited to designate one or more representatives of the highest possible rank in the field of the system of the European Convention on Human Rights.
The Council of Europe will bear the travel and subsistence expenses of one representative from each member State (two in the case of the State whose representative has been elected Chair).
Each member of the Committee shall have one vote. Where a government designates more than one member, only one of them is entitled to take part in the voting.

- Participants

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and at the charge of their corresponding administrative budgets:

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- European Court of Human Rights;
- Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe;
- Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe;
- HELP Network Consultative Board;

- Committees or other bodies of the Council of Europe engaged in related work, as appropriate.

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:
- European Union (one or more representatives, including, as appropriate, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA));
- Observer States to the Council of Europe: Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico, United States of America;
- other international organisations (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)).

- Observers

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:
- non-member States with which the Council of Europe has a Neighbourhood Partnership including relevant co-operation activities;
- States having been invited by decision of the Committee of Ministers to participate in the negotiations;
- interested organisations from Civil Society: the Council of Europe welcomes and promotes the widest participation of civil society, in line with the Guidance note on Civil Society Participation in the Intergovernmental Work of the Council of Europe CDDEM(2024)14, as Observers. Observer status may be requested in accordance with Article 8 of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3-consolidated on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

WORKING METHODS ▼

THE RULES OF PROCEDURE OF THE COMMITTEE ARE GOVERNED BY RESOLUTION CM/RES(2021)3-CONSOLIDATED ON INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEES AND SUBORDINATE BODIES, THEIR TERMS OF REFERENCE AND WORKING METHODS. ONLINE PARTICIPATION IN MEETINGS WILL BE AVAILABLE.

	Plenary meetings ▼		
	Members	Meetings	Days
2024	47	1	3
2025	47	1	3
2026	47	1	3
2027	47	1	3

The DH-SYSC will appoint from amongst its members a Gender Equality Rapporteur.

DRAFTING GROUP ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT (DH-ENV)

Set up by the Committee of Ministers under Article 17 of the Statute of the Council of Europe and in accordance with Resolution CM/Res(2021)3-consolidated on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Category: Subordinate body
Duration: second half of 2024 - 31 December 2027
Programme: Advancing social justice, good health and a sustainable environment
Sub-programme: Protection of the environment and human rights

Deliverables

Under the authority of the Committee of Ministers, and of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), the DH-ENV is instructed to complete this deliverable(s), within the following deadline(s):

	Priority ▼	Deadline ▼
1.Subject to the decision of the Committee of Ministers on the result of the study on the need for and feasibility of a further instrument or instruments in the field of human rights and the environment, draft (an) instrument(s) in the field of human rights and the environment	1	31/12/2027

Composition

· Members

Governments of member States are invited to designate one or more representatives of the highest possible rank in the field of human rights and the environment.

The Council of Europe will bear the travel and subsistence expenses of one representative from each member State (two in the case of the State whose representative has been elected Chair).

Each member of the Committee shall have one vote. Where a government designates more than one member, only one of them is entitled to take part in the voting.

· Participants

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and at the charge of their corresponding administrative budgets:

- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe;
- Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
- European Court of Human Rights;
- Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe;
- Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe;
- HELP Network Consultative Board;
- Committees or other bodies of the Council of Europe engaged in related work, as appropriate.

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:

- European Union (one or more representatives, including, as appropriate, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA));
- Observer States to the Council of Europe: Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico, United States of America;

- other international organisations (Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) / Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)).

· Observers

The following may send representatives, without the right to vote and without defrayal of expenses:
- non-member States with which the Council of Europe has a Neighbourhood Partnership including relevant co-operation activities;
- States having been invited by decision of the Committee of Ministers to participate in the negotiations;
- interested organisations from Civil Society: the Council of Europe welcomes and promotes the widest participation of civil society, in line with the Guidance note on Civil Society Participation in the Intergovernmental Work of the Council of Europe CDDEM(2024)14, as Observers. Observer status may be requested in accordance with Article 8 of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3-consolidated on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods.

Working methods

The rules of procedure of the Committee are governed by Resolution CM/Res(2021)3-consolidated on intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies, their terms of reference and working methods. Online participation in meetings will be available.

	Plenary meetings ▼		
	Members incl. Chair	Meetings per year	Days per meeting
2024	47	1/2	3
2025	47	3	3
2026	-	-	-
2027	-	-	-

The DH-ENV will appoint from amongst its members a Gender Equality Rapporteur.