

# Committee of Ministers

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*The texts adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2018 can be consulted at: [www.coe.int/t/cm/](http://www.coe.int/t/cm/)*

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

**During 2018, the Committee of Ministers was chaired by Denmark until 18 May, then by Croatia until 21 November and thereafter by Finland.**

**T**he Committee held its **128th Ministerial Session** in Elsinore (Denmark) on 17 and 18 May 2018. On the eve of the session, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs held an informal discussion on the main current challenges facing the Council of Europe, and the Secretary General was invited to make reform proposals with a view to boosting the long-term impact of the Council of Europe's activities. These will cover a range of aspects such as ways to better protect and promote human rights throughout Europe, including in unresolved conflict zones; providing responses to new technological developments; and ways to stabilise the financing of the Organisation and to strengthen synergies between the Council of Europe's key bodies and with other international organisations.

■ The Ministerial Session was an opportunity for the Committee to consider important issues such as **the long-term effectiveness of the system of the European Convention on Human Rights** (ETS No. 5, the Convention). In this respect, it endorsed the Copenhagen Declaration adopted on the occasion of the High-level Conference "Continued Protection of the European Human Rights Convention System – Better Balance, Improved Protection" (Copenhagen, April 2018). The Committee welcomed the positive results achieved by all stakeholders over the last few years to strengthen the implementation of the Convention at the national level and the resulting decrease in the number of cases pending before the European Court of Human Rights (the Court). However, it also noted with concern that the Convention system continues to face significant challenges, notably linked to serious or widespread violations, to systemic and structural problems of human rights in states parties, and to the situation in unresolved conflict zones. It urged those states parties that have not yet signed and ratified Protocols Nos. 15 (CETS No. 213) and 16 (CETS No. 214) to the Convention to consider doing so without further delay.



**Meeting of the Committee of Ministers**  
(Strasbourg, 24 October 2018)

At its session, the Committee also adopted the **Protocol amending the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data** (ETS No. 108), which addresses the challenges to privacy resulting from the use of new information and communication technologies and strengthens the convention's mechanism to ensure its effective implementation.

The Committee of Ministers also took note of the 5th report of the Secretary General entitled "State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law – Role of institutions. Threats to institutions". Finally, with regard to the Russian Federation's non-payment of its financial obligations since June 2017, it was recalled at the Ministerial Session that financial contributions are a statutory obligation from which no member state can be exonerated and which member states willingly undertake when becoming a member of the Council of Europe.

The Committee of Ministers held four specific human rights meetings to supervise **the execution of judgments** delivered by the European Court of Human Rights. It decided to close its supervision of 2 703 judgments of the Court, thus leaving approximately 6 000 cases pending before it at the end of the year (compared to 7 584 cases the previous year).

During the year, it also held exchanges of views with the President of the European Court of Human Rights and with the Commissioner for Human Rights.

Important developments took place in other priority areas in 2018. In the field of **migration**, the Committee held regular exchanges with Ambassador Tomáš Boček, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Migration and Refugees, with regard to his fact-finding missions in member states and also with regard to progress made in the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plan on Protecting Refugee and Migrant Children in Europe (2017-2019). The activities carried out under the action plan have a special focus on unaccompanied and separated children and aim at ensuring access to rights and child-friendly procedures, providing effective protection from violence and enhancing the integration of children who remain in Europe.

**The fight against terrorism** remains a priority for the Organisation. To this end, in July, the Committee approved the Council of Europe Counter-Terrorism Strategy (2018-2022), which is structured around three main pillars: prevention of terrorism, prosecution of perpetrators of terrorist offences and protection of all persons present on the territories of the member states against terrorism. It also held an exchange of views with Ms Michèle Coninsx, Assistant Secretary General, Executive Director of the UN Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTED).

Opening ceremony for the  
Croatian Chairmanship of  
the Committee of Ministers  
(Strasbourg, 30 May 2018)



■ The Committee of Ministers, through various decisions and declarations throughout the year, reaffirmed its unequivocal opposition to the **death penalty**, including any reintroduction of it, in all places and in all circumstances. It reiterated the objective to create a death penalty-free zone in Europe, welcomed the global trend towards abolition of the death penalty and encouraged all member states to support this trend by lobbying the authorities of those countries which still use the death penalty. The Committee deeply regretted that executions continued to be carried out in Japan and the United States, two Council of Europe observer states, as well as in Belarus.

■ In November, the Committee of Ministers adopted a series of decisions to strengthen the monitoring mechanism of the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** (ETS No. 148), to mark the 20th anniversary of the charter and to allow, in particular, a greater co-ordination with the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (ETS No. 157). This will lead to a comprehensive evaluation of the situation of national minorities and regional or minority languages in Europe every five years. In the field of **Roma**<sup>1</sup> protection, the Deputies examined and took

note of an implementation report on the Thematic Action Plan on the Inclusion of Roma and Travellers (2016-2019).

■ In the field of **sport**, the Committee of Ministers held an exchange of views with Mr Aleksander Čeferin, President of UEFA, in the framework of the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). A Memorandum of Understanding was also approved with the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA). In the field of **gender equality**, in March the Committee of Ministers adopted a new **Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023**. As regards **the fight against racism**, the Committee took note of the revised General Policy Recommendation No. 2 of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) on equality bodies to combat racism and intolerance at the national level.

1. 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 Traveller.



**128th session of the Committee  
of Ministers in Denmark**  
(Elsinore, 18 May 2018)



■ The situation in a number of member states was regularly discussed by the Committee of Ministers, including co-operation activities aimed at accompanying individual countries in their efforts to bring legislation, institutions and practice further into line with European standards in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy. In this respect, it took note of the final report on the implementation of the Programmatic Co-operation Document for **Albania** for 2015-2017. Concerning **Armenia**, the Committee noted with satisfaction the final report on the implementation of the Action Plan 2015-2018 and instructed the Secretariat to prepare a new action plan for 2019-2022. As regards **Azerbaijan**, it approved an action plan to provide assistance for the period 2018 to 2021.

■ The Committee took note of a final report on the implementation of the Action Plan 2015-2017 for **Bosnia and Herzegovina** and approved a new action plan for 2018-2021. In the light of a report on respect for the obligations and commitments undertaken by Bosnia and Herzegovina, it welcomed the improvement of that country's Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing (AML/CTF) regime, as well as its contribution to stability in the region, including its co-operation with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia. It called on the authorities of Bosnia and Herzegovina to implement all the specific recommendations on the outstanding commitments indicated in the above-mentioned report, in particular those related to electoral and judicial reforms.

■ In May and October, the Committee held discussions respectively on the Secretary General's 17th and 18th consolidated reports on the conflict in **Georgia**. In May it adopted a series of decisions on this matter. In particular, it reiterated the unequivocal support of the Council of Europe member states for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia within its internationally recognised borders. It expressed profound concern that the human rights situation in the Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia has been further deteriorating and called on the authorities exercising effective control to take a series of measures. It also called for the ceasing of arbitrary detention of persons; ensuring that residents of the Georgian regions concerned are not subject to discrimination and investigating allegations of human rights violations. The Committee also, inter alia, called on the Russian Federation to secure immediate and unrestricted access to the territories beyond the control of the Government of Georgia to the Council of Europe bodies. In October 2018, the Committee welcomed the progress made in implementing the Action Plan for **Georgia** 2016-2019, and encouraged the achievement of all the objectives contained therein.

■ In March, the Committee of Ministers approved an action plan to provide assistance to **Ukraine** for the period 2018-2021.



■ Co-operation with other international bodies remained a priority in 2018. At the Ministerial Session in May, the Committee of Ministers took note with satisfaction of the increase in co-operation between the Council of Europe and the **European Union**. With regard to the **Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)**, the Co-ordination Group between the two organisations held two meetings in 2018 to review co-operation. The Committee also held an exchange of views with the Coordinator for the Italian Presidency of the OSCE, Ambassador Vinicio Mati.

■ In June, in the context of the implementation of the Joint Declaration on the reinforcement of co-operation between the Council of Europe and the **International Organisation of La Francophonie**, the Committee of Ministers took note of the 2018-2019 co-operation programme. Finally, the Committee approved the text of a draft **United Nations** General Assembly resolution on co-operation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe and invited the delegations of all member states to co-sponsor and actively promote the draft resolution in the United Nations.

■ As regards relations with non-member states, 2018 saw positive developments. As far as co-operation with **Belarus** is concerned, the Committee of Ministers took note in January 2018 of a progress review report on the implementation of the Action Plan for Belarus 2016-2017 and agreed to extend the action plan until the end of 2018 to enable all the objectives set therein to be achieved. During the year, the Committee of Ministers approved Neighbourhood Partnerships for the period 2018-2021 with **Morocco and Tunisia**. It also took note of a final report on the implementation of the Neighbourhood Co-operation Priorities for **Kazakhstan** 2014-2015 (extended until 2018) and invited the Secretariat to continue the discussions with the authorities in Kazakhstan with regard to the preparation of a new document of co-operation. Finally, the Committee also took note of progress review reports on the priorities for co-operation with the **Kyrgyz Republic** for 2015-2017 (extended until 2019), as well as with **Palestine**<sup>2</sup> for the period 2016-2018 and instructed the Secretariat to pursue implementation of the co-operation priorities in 2019.

2. This designation shall not be construed as recognition of a State of Palestine and is without prejudice to the individual positions of Council of Europe member states on this issue.





Transfer of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers from Denmark to Croatia – **Miroslav Papa**, Permanent Representative of Croatia, new Chair of the Committee of Ministers, and **Arnold De Fine Skibsted**, Permanent Representative of Denmark and outgoing Chair (Strasbourg, 15 May 2018)



Croatia hands over the chairmanship to Finland – The new Chair of the Committee of Ministers, **Timo Soini**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, and **Marija Pejčinović Burić**, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, the outgoing Chair (Strasbourg, 21 November 2018)