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| **MINISTERS’ DEPUTIES** | CM Documents | **CM(2024)33-final** | 24 April 2024 |

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| **133rd Session of the Committee of Ministers****(Strasbourg, 16-17 May 2024)** **Summary Report on co-operation between the Council of Europe and****the European Union** |

**1. Introduction**

On 3 May 2023,[[1]](#footnote-1) the Ministers’ Deputies of the Council of Europe (CoE), *inter alia*, “called for the cooperation with the European Union to be **further enhanced**, in view of the many challenges currently facing democracies in Europe, in particular following the war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine”.[[2]](#footnote-2) Later, at their **Fourth Summit** held in Reykjavik on 16-17 May 2023, Heads of State and Government of the CoE recognised that the European Union (EU) “is the main institutional partner of the CoE in political, legal, and financial terms”. The Reykjavik Declaration marked the prominence of the CoE’s “**strategic partnership”** with the EU[[3]](#footnote-3) and highlighted the importance of EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and that of joint programmes:

*“The European Union is the main institutional partner of the CoE in political, legal, and financial terms. We underscore the importance of joint programmes between the European Union and the CoE as a key expression of this strategic partnership and mutual commitment to promoting common values. We welcome the unanimous provisional agreement on the revised draft accession instruments as an important accomplishment in the process of accession of the European Union to the Convention, and we express our commitment to its timely adoption. This will set the relations between the CoE and the European Union on a new path of reinforced co-operation.”*

The participation of leaders of the EU institutions at the 4th CoE Summit, namely the President of the European Commission (EC) von der Leyen and European Council President Michel, illustrated this prominence of the partnership.

The present reporting period, as from May 2023, has remained shaped by **deep challenges**, first and foremost, but not exclusively, by the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and its far‑reaching consequences. This period was also marked by the EU landmark decisions with respect to its enlargement process, which have opened a **momentum** for enhanced co-operation in the EU Enlargement Region area. These new opportunities are currently being assessed.

The co-operation has focused on relevant issues covered by the **Reykjavik Declaration**, in particular on support to **Ukraine and accountability** for crimes committed by the Russian Federation. It has further developed through the three pillars of the partnership, namely political dialogue, legal co-operation and programmatic co‑operation. The CoE Liaison Office and the EU Delegation in Strasbourg continued to play a key role in reinforcing the dynamics of co-operation and its visibility.

**2. Political and institutional dialogue**

The reporting period saw a **new intensity** of the political dialogue between the CoE and EU leaderships, focusing on the concrete follow up to the Reykjavik Declaration.

All relevant CoE institutions contributed to this reinforced political dialogue. The Secretary General held regular exchanges of views with EU representatives, in particular with the High Representative/Vice President (HR/VP) Borrell Fontelles, European Commission President von der Leyen, European Commission Vice-Presidents Jourová (“Values and Transparency”) and Šuica (“Democracy and Demography”), Commissioners Dalli (“Equality”), Reynders (“Justice”), European Council President Michel, EU Special Representative for the Belgrade-Pristina Dialogue and other Western Balkan regional issues Lajčák and the Spanish Presidency of the Council of the EU. The Deputy Secretary General had additional meetings with the Swedish Presidency of the Council of the EU in particular.

The Liechtenstein CM Presidency also had a meeting with the Political and Security Committee (PSC) in November 2023, and the GR-EXT held an exchange of views with the Director of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) O’Flaherty in October 2023. In addition, Commissioner Reynders (“Justice”) addressed the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) on 12 October 2023. He underscored, *inter alia*, the EU's dedication to working together with the CoE in safeguarding the rule of law, promoting accountability, and championing human rights within the continent (see also below). The Congress and the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) also held their annual High-Level Group Meeting on 12 February 2024.[[4]](#footnote-4)

The high‑level consultations **mainly addressed** **the consequences of the war of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine and related issues**, in particular accountability for crimes committed by the Russian Federation, and the situation of children of Ukraine. They also focused on the situation in other CoE member states, the functioning of the European human rights’ protection system, including the EU accession process to the ECHR, EU accession to the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, democracy related issues, and normative developments on Artificial Intelligence and the environment in particular.

This dialogue also increasingly addressed the already broadened co-operation in the **EU Enlargement and Neighbourhood regions,** as well as **opportunities of extended co-operation** in view of the growing number of candidate countries.

Against this background, CoE representatives reiterated that the CoE is **committed to providing full support to the EU’s candidate and neighbouring partners** in particular and to enhancing co‑operation in this context.

It should be recalled that on 3 May 2023,[[5]](#footnote-5) the CoE Ministers’ Deputies, *inter alia*, “noted with interest, in particular, the opportunity for continued co-operation in the **EU Enlargement Region area**, illustrating the **benchmarking role** of the CoE in the areas of human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Europe, based on the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding”. Concerning the **Western Balkans** in particular– where the CoE co-operates closely with the EU, notably through the Horizontal Facility (see below), the Committee of Ministers, on 6 September 2023, “recalled that the CoE, as a truly pan‑European organisation, is uniquely placed to protect democratic security in Europe and promote and uphold human rights, democracy and the rule of law. As such, the CoE should continue to play an important role in the European aspirations of its

member states which seek to become members of the EU”.[[6]](#footnote-6) On the EU side, the Council of the EU “Conclusions on EU Priorities for cooperation with the CoE in 2023-2024”, adopted in January 2023, stressed that “it is paramount to […] strengthen the role of the CoE as the reference for promoting and upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law in Europe” and recognised that the “CoE’s expertise and benchmarking role are crucially important in the context of the EU’s annual Enlargement package and the European rule of law” instruments.

High-level dialogue was accompanied by a **more structured institutional dialogue**, with the resumption of the “Senior Officials Meeting” (SOM), held on 19 October 2023, which focused on key issues of common interest, in the context of the strategic dimension of the EU-CoE partnership. The SOM was preceded by the 2023 Scoreboard meeting addressing programmatic co-operation. The institutional dialogue also included the consultation meetings between the EU[[7]](#footnote-7) and the CoE, (held on 12 June and 5 December) on legal standards and policies related to criminal matters (see below). These complementary sequences of institutional dialogue gave a more strategic approach to co-operation.

Regular exchanges were also held with EU Special Representative for Human Rights Gilmore and with the EU Working Party on the OSCE and the CoE (“COSCE”). Support to Ukraine, as well as to Russian and Belarusian civil societies and human rights defenders were*, inter alia,* at the core of this dialogue.

In addition, consultations have multiplied at a **more technical level**, both on thematic and country‑specific issues. In this context, the CoE and the EC have continued to hold their **joint annual consultations**, allowing the CoE to contribute to the EC annual Enlargement reports. Such consultations have become regular practice and continue to be appreciated by both strategic partners. The CoE also provides contributions to the EC annual Rule of Law Report (see below).

Co-operation to jointly address **global issues** has also continued. On 10 October 2023, the CoE and EU leaders reiterated their firm opposition to capital punishment, including any reintroduction thereof, in all cases and in all circumstances, through a traditional annual joint statement. Joint statements were also issued on the occasion of the International Day for Multilateralism and Diplomacy for Peace and the International Day Against Homophobia.

**3. Legal co-operation**

The CoE and the **EU’s shared responsibility** to enhance the **coherence and efficiency** of the European **human rights protection system** lies at the heart of their value-based strategic partnership.[[8]](#footnote-8) Legal co-operation has covered an ever-larger spectrum of CoE activities, with an increasing focus on support to Ukraine and accountability, on respective standard setting work, on rule of law-related issues and outreach efforts. Areas covered by legal co-operation highlighted overarching efforts to develop more sustainable and resilient democracies in Europe and beyond. Regular consultation meetings between the EU[[9]](#footnote-9) and the CoE continued twice a year in order to exchange information and discuss the development of legal standards and policies on issues mostly related to law enforcement and judicial co-operation in criminal matters. Early consultations on respective normative work in the areas of common interest and to follow up the implementation of the MoU have remained important.

**3.1. Ukraine and accountability**

In the context of the follow up to the Reykjavik Summit and joint efforts to support Ukraine and accountability, the EU joined the Register of Damage caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine (“Register”) - an Enlarged Partial Agreement - as a founding Associate Member on 16 May 2023 and supported the Register, inter alia, through a voluntary contribution of one million euros (see also below). The Register is a first step towards a compensation mechanism. The CoE would welcome the EU’s change of status from Associate Member to full-fledged Participant into the Register. Through high level and

institutional dialogue, in particular the SOM, CoE and EU representatives committed to continue their strong support for the Register and agreed on the importance of coordinated actions to promote outreach to selected non-European states (see below). CoE and EU representatives have also regularly held consultations in order to ensure the complementarity of their respective actions on accountability, including on support for a special tribunal on the crime of aggression and matters related to asset recovery and confiscation, as well as on initiatives regarding children of Ukraine. In this regard, the CoE welcomes the EU’s active participation in the CoE Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine (CGU), launched on 30 November 2023 as a direct outcome of the Reykjavik Summit.

**3.2. EU participation in or accession to CoE instruments**

The Committee of Ministers, at its 2022 Ministerial Session, *inter alia*, “encouraged EU participation in or accession to CoE instruments, as appropriate, as a way of achieving coherence and complementarity and promoting synergies”.[[10]](#footnote-10)

1. **EU Accession to the ECHR**

On 3 May 2023,[[11]](#footnote-11) the CoE Ministers’ Deputies “welcomed the provisional agreement at negotiators’ level on a revised package of draft instruments for the accession of the EU to the ECHR, and noted the EU’s intention to resolve the outstanding issue relating to EU acts in the area of the Common Foreign and Security Policy and its commitment to inform the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) at appropriate intervals about the status of its discussions on this issue. The Deputies also recalled that “EU accession to the ECHR is of central importance for the coherence of the European human rights protection system”. The unanimous provisional agreement on the revised draft accession instruments was welcomed by the CoE Reykjavik Summit. The timely agreement on the accession was encouraged in the Reykjavik Declaration as an important accomplishment in the process of accession of the EU to the ECHR. The Declaration highlighted that this would set the relations between the CoE and the EU on a new path of reinforced co-operation.

The EU has on various occasions reaffirmed its intention to resolve the outstanding issue as soon as possible, notably in light of the pending cases in front of the Court of Justice of the EU.[[12]](#footnote-12)

1. **Others**

On 28 June 2023, the EU acceded to the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (“**Istanbul Convention**”). This milestone development was facilitated by the leadership of the CoE Secretary General, the EC, and successive Presidencies of the EU Council. On 1 October 2023, the Istanbul Convention entered into force for the EU. With the accession, the EU is bound by ambitious and comprehensive standards to prevent and combat violence against women in the area of judicial cooperation in criminal matters, asylum and non-refoulement, and with regard to its public administration. This includes funding, policy and legislative measures. The practical modalities of the EU participation in the Convention mechanism are being defined. Moreover, the EC announced that it will propose the ratification, on behalf of the EU, of the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism. The EU also participates in a number of CoE **Partial and Enlarged Agreements**.[[13]](#footnote-13) The EU has been granted observer status to GRECO in July 2019. The Commission underlined that it will further step up its engagement with GRECO by establishing a more regular and formal dialogue. Moreover, the Commission will continue looking into the possibility of moving toward full participation of the EU in GRECO; the latter confirmed its availability to discuss modalities thereof. The EU’s full membership of GRECO would contribute to further strengthen the rule of law and fight against corruption across Europe. GRECO could also contribute to strengthening the integrity rules and oversight mechanisms within EU institutions, at their request.

In addition, discussions have continued in order to strengthen co‑operation in promoting social rights, based on the European Social Charter and in the implementation of the EU Pillar on Social Rights and its associated Action Plan.

EU participation in or accession to CoE instruments, as appropriate, shall be further encouraged.

**3.3. Close co-operation on normative developments, policies and democracy**

Close co-operation has also continued on normative developments, in particular the ethical and human rights aspects of **artificial intelligence** and digitalisation, aiming at ensuring the successful completion of the negotiations of the CoE Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence. The EU also informed the CoE about the progress in the EU’s legislative process on its Artificial Intelligence Act. Co-operation in the area of digitalisation with due consideration of human rights standards continued through several projects that provided technical assistance to EU member states in setting up technological tools, methodology and regulatory frameworks for digitalisation and open data. The CoE and EU have also continued to co-operate on the protection of the **environment**, in particular through Criminal Law and biodiversity conservation,[[14]](#footnote-14) with a view to preparing, *inter alia*, a new *Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law,[[15]](#footnote-15)*in the framework of the “Reykjavik process”. Close co-operation in criminal matters and, more specifically, in the **fight against human trafficking**, migrant smuggling, terrorism, any form of torture and ill-treatment, radicalisation and cybercrime has also continued. Regular exchanges were held between GRETA and the EU Anti-Trafficking Coordinator, as well as between GRETA and Frontex.

Furthermore, co-operation has intensified in the area of **democracy,** aiming at promoting and implementing the “Reykjavik Principles for Democracy”, in particular multilevel governance reforms promoting good democratic governance, supporting decentralisation, and strengthening the institutional capacity of local, regional, and central authorities through projects implemented by the CoE’s Centre of Expertise for Good Governance. Civil society and elections are other fields where exchanges and synergies among the two organisations have continued. For instance, the Commission worked in close cooperation with the CoE to prepare a Compendium of e-voting and other ICT practices, which was published in December 2023. Commitment to local democracy was also strengthened by the signing of the Call for Action by the Congress with the EU Committee of the Regions and major EU associations that represent local and regional authorities in May 2023 on the margins of the 4th Summit. In October 2023, the Congress also contributed to the CoR opinion on the establishment of a Ukraine Facility. As regards increased **migration-related challenges**, co-operation has further developed in the framework of the CoE “Action Plan on Protecting Vulnerable Persons in the Context of Migration and Asylum in Europe (2021-2025)”. The Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on Migration and Refugees has continued her exchanges and co-operation with relevant EU partners, notably in relation to the refugee influx resulting from aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. The SRSG and her Office further developed contacts with the EU and its competent agencies.[[16]](#footnote-16) High-level dialogue and co-operation with the EU were also pursued by other CoE bodies, including through project support and technical assistance to member states on the human rights protection of refugees, asylum-seekers, and migrants.

In addition, excellent co-operation has further developed in the area of gender equality, in the fields of **combating violence against women** and fostering women’s’ access to justice. Co-operation with the EC on the **fight against discrimination** has also been strengthened[[17]](#footnote-17) and the relevance of the work of ECRI highlighted. [[18]](#footnote-18)

Both organisations have maintained regular exchanges on their respective work on a number of other issues, for example support for the execution of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, justice reforms, prevention of ill-treatment and torture, personal data protection, judicial training, disinformation, interference in elections, media freedom and pluralism,[[19]](#footnote-19) hate speech, internet governance, children’s

rights, youth,[[20]](#footnote-20) sport, bioethics, culture[[21]](#footnote-21) and language learning.[[22]](#footnote-22) Moreover, close co-operation has continued in the field of education, for example on history education through the cooperation with the Observatory of History Teaching in Europe[[23]](#footnote-23) and on inclusive education policies for Roma children through the INSCHOOL project.[[24]](#footnote-24) The CoE also continues to maintain and develop the European National Preventive Mechanisms Forum, supported by the EU.

**3.4. Rule of law-related issues in Europe**[[25]](#footnote-25)

Addressing PACE in October 2023, Justice Commissioner Reynders underlined that “the CoE's expertise was crucial for the EU’s rule of law policy”. He stressed that “EU work with the CoE in promoting the rule of law is also essential in all co-operation with third countries, including those that seek to join the EU”.

Against this background, the CoE has continued to provide the EU with valuable **input into rule of law-related matters**,[[26]](#footnote-26) and contacts have intensified between CoE bodies and relevant EU institutions. More specifically, the CoE Secretariat, following an invitation from the EC, provided contributions to the (EC) 4th **annual Rule of Law Report**. A similar contribution and consultation process is ongoing in view of the EC’s 5th Rule of Law Report, to be published in the summer of 2024. Co-operation also continued through various CoE rule of law-related mechanisms, notably with the Venice Commission, GRECO (the EU being an observer), MONEYVAL[[27]](#footnote-27) and CEPEJ,[[28]](#footnote-28) to name but a few. At the EU’s request, specific rule of law-related HELP courses were also developed, including one on Judicial Ethics.[[29]](#footnote-29) In November 2023, the Congress also contributed to the CoR opinion on the EU Anti-Corruption Framework.

In September 2023, the EC President announced in her State of the Union address that the EC would “open the Rule of Law Reports to those **accession countries** who get up to speed even faster”. In such cases, CoE input would be crucial and will build on the existing cooperation in both the enlargement context and for the Rule of Law report.

As regards the EU Enlargement policy referred to above, the work of the CoE in the region, which goes beyond rule of law-related issues to cover human rights and democracy, has been **widely illustrated in the EC 2023 Enlargement package** in particular.

**3.5. Promotion of CoE instruments**

The “Conclusions on EU Priorities for cooperation with the CoE 2023-2024” provide that the EU will continue to promote the accession of non-European states to the most relevant CoE conventions, including in the field of international legal co-operation. Modalities of such promotion have been discussed in the framework of the CoE – EU institutional dialogue (i.e., “SOM” and meetings on co-operation in criminal matters).[[30]](#footnote-30) In practice, the EU has continued to promote accession of its member states/and or non-member states to relevant CoE conventions, such as the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data and its amending Protocol (commonly called “Convention 108+”), the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (“Lanzarote Convention”), the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (“Istanbul Convention”)[[31]](#footnote-31) and the Convention on the Manipulation of Sports Competitions (“Macolin Convention”), [[32]](#footnote-32) as well as to the “Medicrime” Convention, the Convention on Cybercrime (“Budapest Convention”) and its Additional Protocols[[33]](#footnote-33) and the Convention on Offences relating to Cultural Property (“Nicosia Convention”). In addition, the EU has offered its assistance in promoting the **Register of Damage**[[34]](#footnote-34) with a view of accession of selected non-European countries and achieving a truly global mechanism.

The CoE highly values the EU’s readiness to promote the accession of non-European states to the most relevant CoE instruments. It illustrates the CoE’s **growing standard-setting role and global impact**.

**4. Programmatic co-operation**

The EU – CoE Joint Programme co-operation is the **cornerstone** of the CoE technical co-operation dimension. The EU and the CoE collaborate through programmatic facilities, other structured frameworks and individual Joint Programmes implemented in South-East Europe and Türkiye, in Eastern Europe (Ukraine, and the Republic of Moldova), countries of the South Caucasus, EU member states, the Southern Mediterranean and Central Asia, as well as in the thematic areas. In 2023, the global volume of the EU - CoE active multi-annual co-operation agreements amounted to € 245.9 million, with an annualised envelope of € 54.7 million (prorated).[[35]](#footnote-35) The actual annual receipts generated by the implementation of these programmes amounted to € 37,3 million. With an additional € 1.6 million of receipts from the co-operation undertakings other than Joint Programmes, the EU’s share in the CoE’s revenue from all extra‑budgetary contributions for 2023 corresponded to 47.9 %,[[36]](#footnote-36) confirming that the EU is the largest single donor to the CoE technical co-operation activities.

Over the years, Joint Programme co-operation has **grown considerably** and has brought **tangible results.**

In particular, **three large-scale multiannual multi-country programmes** (known as “regional programmatic facilities”) have been implemented, in successive phases since 2015, in the Western Balkans and Türkiye and in the EU Eastern and Southern Neighbourhood. On 27 February 2023, the Secretary General and Commissioner Várhelyi launched two of these major co-operation programmes for the promotion of the rule of law and fundamental rights, namely the [Horizontal Facility](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/horizontal-facility/home) for the Western Balkans and Türkiye III (2023-2026) and the [Partnership for Good Governance](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/pgg2/home) III (2023-2027). The fifth phase of the South Programme started earlier, in September 2022.

Increasingly, the facilities are being **complemented** by country-specific and regional thematic interventions: new country - specific programmes in Ukraine [[37]](#footnote-37)and the Republic of Moldova[[38]](#footnote-38) and a regional programme on Roma integration for the Western Balkans and Türkiye were launched in 2023.

The consequences of the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine have continued to impact the CoE’s co-operation activities, including Joint Programmes. The developments have required a **flexibility** that the EU/CoE programmatic facilities were able to offer, and the joint co-operation was thus able to respond to emerging needs in an effective and efficient manner. In particular, the CoE responded to the needs of Ukraine by adjusting its ongoing support, including through Joint Programmes. The same flexibility allowed for the adjustment of co-operation to emerging needs relating to the consequences of the mass influx of refugees in the Republic of Moldova and more recently in Armenia.

The decision by the EU to grant **EU candidate status** to Georgia and to start negotiations with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova creates an **impetus for strengthening** the joint co-operation. The assistance that the CoE can provide to these countries through the Joint Programmes would make a significant contribution to the countries’ related reform agenda in the areas of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The countries’ EU accession perspective is instrumental in setting the priorities for co‑operation (including through the Partnership for Good Governance), based on the recommendations of CoE’s monitoring and advisory bodies, the case‑law of the European Court of Human rights, as well as the 2023 Communication on EU Enlargement policy and the respective country reports. The Partnership for Good Governance programme will also continue supporting Armenia and Azerbaijan and co-operation with Belarusian democratic forces and civil society.

The **experience** of working together in the South-East European region (in particular through the Horizontal Facility, which is the largest EU-CoE joint programme) is key for the joint co-operation for Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia. This co-operation has allowed for tangible results in bringing support to reform agendas related to human rights, the rule of law and democracy. The contribution and relevance of the joint activities to the EU enlargement process have been confirmed.

In the **Southern** **Mediterranean**, joint co-operation towards the objective of the progressive creation of a common legal space between Europe and the region, based on the CoE standards, has facilitated ratifications of a number of the CoE conventions by the partner countries in the region. Despite a challenging implementing environment, regional programme activities, as well as country-specific programmes in Morocco and Tunisia, continued to deliver results. Moreover, the increased number of requests from partner countries for specialised expertise and assistance offered in the framework of the Central Asia Rule of Law Programme illustrates the relevance of this joint co-operation to support reform efforts.

Importantly, co-operation and technical assistance programmes targeted at the EU **member states** were characterised by positive momentum in 2023. The EU-CoE structured co-operation framework funded under the EU Technical Support Instrument (DG REF) continued to support the EU member states capacity to sustain structural reforms, encompassing numerous projects in key areas of work such as human rights (including children’s rights), the rule of law (including reform of the judiciary and the fight against economic crime) and good governance. Additionally, several new programmes have seen their negotiation concluded under funding instruments managed by the respective EC services, notably DG JUST, DG EAC and DG HOME.[[39]](#footnote-39)

The CoE’s co-operation with the EU, in Europe and beyond, further illustrated the Organisation’s contribution to international order and global governance and to the achievement of the **SDGs.**

**5. Conclusion**

The CoE Reykjavik Summit has given a **new impetus** to the strategic partnership with the EU, which resulted in an **unprecedented intensity of dialogue and co-operation**, focusing on support to Ukraine, including by establishing the Register of Damage, and accountability and on other relevant challenges highlighted in the Reykjavik Declaration.

The new dynamic of the **EU** Enlargement process has opened a **momentum** for enhanced co-operation in the EU Enlargement Region area.

In this context, the **CoE** is committed to strengthening its role as “**benchmark for human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Europe**”, based on the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding. The CoE shall also continue to provide the EU with valuable input into **rule of law**-related matters in **EU member states and beyond** when relevant. The CoE is also committed to providing **full support** to raise the level of preparedness of **candidate countries and potential candidates for EU accession**, and to enhancing co‑operation in this context. As stressed in the CM Reply to PACE recommendation on *“Supporting a European perspective for the Western Balkans”,* “the CoE should continue to play an important role in the European aspirations of its member states which seek to become members of the EU”.[[40]](#footnote-40)

Further consultations will be necessary to further assess and address the **impact of the 2023 developments in the area of EU enlargement** (opening accession negotiations with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, granting candidate status to Georgia)on the EU-CoE co-operation. This mission identified by the Senior Officials shall be high on the CoE agenda.

In close co-ordination with the EU, the CoE will continue to address the needs expressed by the CoE member states within the EU **Enlargement** policy and will continue co-operation in the **Neighbourhood area**, including the Southern Neighbourhood.

Completion of the process of **the EU’s accession to the ECHR** shall remain on the list of highest political priorities. It is of central importance for the coherence of the European human rights protection system. EU participation in or accession to other CoE instruments, as appropriate, shall be further encouraged as a way of achieving coherence and complementarity and promoting synergies. EU accession to the Istanbul Convention in June 2023 is a major step in this respect.

The practical support to the EU in promoting relevant CoE Conventions in non-European states has to be enhanced in order to strengthen the CoE’s global standard-setting role and impact.

Against this ambitious background, **CoE-EU Joint Programme co-operation** is more important than ever and should be adjusted and enhanced as relevant. Flexible multi-country/thematic and multi-annual programmes will remain increasingly necessary to cover the diversity of the geographic/thematic areas concerned and challenges, in particular following the Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine.

1. [CM/Del/Dec(2023)1465](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Del/Dec(2023)1465" \o "1465th meeting, 3-4 May 2023 - Decisions adopted). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. A similar call to “upgrade the strategic partnership between the CoE and the EU” was also made by the Parliamentary Assembly in its Recommendation 2245 (2023) on the Reykjavik Summit- see [Rec. 2245 - Recommendation - Adopted text (coe.int)](https://pace.coe.int/en/files/31592/html). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. On the EU side, the Council of the EU adopted its “Conclusions on EU Priorities for cooperation with the CoE in 2023-2024” on
30 January 2023, document 5422/23. In this document, the EU qualifies its partnership with the CoE as a “strategic one, based on common values and shared priorities”. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. They mainly discussed priorities for co-operation and exchanged views on the support to be provided to cities and regions in Ukraine. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. [CM/Del/Dec(2023)1465](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Del/Dec(2023)1465" \o "1465th meeting, 3-4 May 2023 - Decisions adopted). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. [CM/AS(2023)Rec2237-final](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/AS(2023)Rec2237-final" \o "\“Supporting a European perspective for the Western Balkans\” - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2237 (2022) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 September 2023 at the 1473rd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies)). Reply to Recommendation 2237 “Supporting a European perspective for the Western Balkans”. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Chair of the Coordinating Committee in the area of police and judicial co-operation in criminal matters (CATS), the EC and the EEAS. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. In this context, it shall be recalled that the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding provides that the “the EU regards the CoE as the Europe-wide reference source for human rights” and that “the CoE will remain the benchmark for human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Europe”. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Chair of the Coordinating Committee in the area of police and judicial co-operation in criminal matters (CATS), the EC and the EEAS. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. See [CM/Del/Dec(2022)132/4](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Del/Dec(2022)132/4" \o "132nd Session of the Committee of Ministers (Turin, Italy, 20 May 2022) - 4. Co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union). [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. [CM/Del/Dec(2023)1465](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Del/Dec(2023)1465" \o "1465th meeting, 3-4 May 2023 - Decisions adopted). [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. In particular the KS and KD v. Council and Others (C - 29/22 P, often referred to as “Eulex” case). [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. As a member of the [European Pharmacopoeia](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/accessions-or-other-participations?module=partial-agreement-members&numeroAp=3&dateStatus=02-22-2022) since 1997 and the [European Audiovisual Observatory](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/accessions-or-other-participations?module=partial-agreement-members&numeroAp=11&dateStatus=02-22-2022), as an observer to the [Group of States against Corruption (GRECO)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/accessions-or-other-participations?module=partial-agreement-members&numeroAp=13&dateStatus=02-22-2022), as a participant in the International Co-operation Group on Drugs and Addictions [(Pompidou Group)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/accessions-or-other-participations?module=partial-agreement-members&numeroAp=5&dateStatus=02-22-2022) and the [Co-operation Group for the Prevention of, Protection Against, and Organisation of Relief in Major Natural and Technological Disasters](https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/accessions-or-other-participations?module=partial-agreement-members&numeroAp=6&dateStatus=02-22-2022) (EUR-OPA). The EU also plays a major role in the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre) of the CoE. The “Conclusions on EU Priorities for cooperation with the CoE 2023-2024” refer to the role of the CoE’s Southern Neighbourhood Policy and the North-South Centre in promoting democratic security in Europe and beyond. The EC takes part in the work of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). The EU joined the Register of Damage on 16 May 2023 as a founding associate member. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. The EU is a contracting party to the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Replacing the 1998 CoE Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. To note, the third visit to the CoE of FRONTEX Fundamental Rights Monitors took place in November 2023. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. Including with respect to LGBTIQ persons and hate speech and in the field of Roma women inclusion, in particular, through the joint project “Combating anti-LGBTIQ violence and hate speech and strengthening awareness-raising and fact-based narratives about LGBTIQ persons”. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The EU has observer status in ECRI. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Closer exchanges have taken place with the EC regarding the safety of journalists, media governance and SLAPPs, in view of the preparation of new standards and legislation by each organisation. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. The Youth Partnership, established in 1998 as one of the most successful co-operation programmes, will be geared during 2024-25 towards adding value and creating synergies - for the EC on implementing the aims of the EU Youth Strategy and the legacy of the European Year of Youth, and for the CoE on the four priorities of its Youth Strategy 2030 and the implementation of the Reykjavik Declaration and Principles of Democracy. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. The European Heritage Days (EHDs), a joint initiative of the CoE and the European Commission since 1999, are the most widely celebrated participatory cultural events shared by the citizens of Europe. The pan-European nature of the events contributes to bringing citizens together and highlighting the European dimension and the value of cultural heritage in the 50 signatory states of the European Cultural Convention. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. The EU is co-operating with the European Centre of Modern Languages (ECML) under two strands related to language teaching: the RELANG initiative, which trains EU member states’ stakeholders and the ECML in how to relate language tests and examinations to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR); and the Multilingual classrooms, which provide training workshops to help member states ensure access to quality education for migrant learners, employability and social cohesion. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Through the HISTOLAB project: <https://histolab.coe.int/>. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. [INSCHOOL Project - Inclusive schools Making a difference for Roma children (coe.int)](https://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/inclusive-education-for-roma-children#:~:text=INSCHOOL%20%E2%80%9CInclusive%20Schools%3A%20Making%20a%20Difference%20for%20Roma,education%20practices%20for%20all%20children%2C%20including%20Roma%20children.). [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. On 14 December 2022, the Committee of Ministers reaffirmed “the importance of co-operation on rule of law‑related issues to confirm the CoE’s role as benchmark for human rights, the rule of law and democracy in Europe” and to ensure “coherence and complementarity between the pan-European CoE and the EU, as provided for in the 2007 Memorandum of Understanding ([CM/AS(2022)Rec2226-final](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/AS(2022)Rec2226-final" \o "\“Beyond the Lisbon Treaty: strengthening the strategic partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Union\” - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2226 (2022) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 14 December 2022 at the 1452nd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies)), para 4). [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. In particular through the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights and the expertise provided by the VC, GRECO, CEPEJ, MONEYVAL and the Consultative Councils of European Judges (CCJE) and of European Prosecutors (CCPE), as well as directly through co‑operation projects. Specific mechanisms have been set up within the EU/CoE facilities to request VC Opinions: Quick Response Mechanism (QRM) under the Partnership for Good Governance (PGG) and the Expertise Co-ordination Mechanism (ECM) under the Horizontal Facility (HF). Valuable input was also provided with respect to the execution of judgments related to Rule of Law issues. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. The CoE directly supports 12 EU member states in order to strengthen their AML/CFT systems, as well as in applying a uniform approach to the implementation of the sanctions regime. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. CEPEJ provides data on the functioning of judicial systems in the EU member states for the EC annual “EU Justice Scoreboard”, as well as in the Western Balkans and Eastern Partnership countries for EU reporting purposes (the “Dashboard programmes”). [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. The impact of the CoE HELP online Programme on training legal professionals has been recognised. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Chair of the Coordinating Committee in the area of police and judicial co-operation in criminal matters (CATS) Council working group, Commission and EEAS. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. In the context of the CoE policy towards neighbouring regions, through regional joint programmes. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. See also [CM/AS(2021)Rec2178-final](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/AS(2021)Rec2178-final" \o "\“Time to act: Europe’s political response to fighting the manipulation of sports competitions\” - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2178 (2020) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 23 November 2021 at the 1418th (Budget) meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies)) “Time to act: Europe’s political response to fighting the manipulation of sports competitions”. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. On 14 February 2023, the EU Council authorised member states to ratify, in the interest of the EU, the 2nd Additional Protocol. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. For further examples of the promotion of CoE instruments, see GR-EXT document (2024)1 The CoE’s outreach beyond membership and the promotion of the Organisation’s instruments. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. For details, see Addendum [CM(2024)33-add](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM(2024)33-add" \o "[1493/2.]) “Joint Programmes between the CoE and the EU in 2023”. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Provisional figures as at 9 January 2024. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. “Support for implementing the European standards relating to anti-discrimination and rights of national minorities in Ukraine” (2023 -2026). [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. “Support to the justice reform in the Republic of Moldova” (2023-2026). [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. For details, see Addendum [CM(2024)33-add](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM(2024)33-add" \o "[1493/2.]) “Joint Programmes between the CoE and the EU in 2023”. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. [CM/AS(2023)Rec2237-final](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/AS(2023)Rec2237-final" \o "\“Supporting a European perspective for the Western Balkans\” - Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2237 (2022) (Reply adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 September 2023 at the 1473rd meeting of the Ministers’ Deputies)). Reply to Recommendation 2237 “Supporting a European perspective for the Western Balkans”. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)