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| **MINISTERS’ DEPUTIES** | CM Documents | **CM(2024)75-final** | 14 May 2024[[1]](#footnote-1) |

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| **133rd Session of the Committee of Ministers (Strasbourg, 16-17 May 2024)**  **Report on follow-up to the Reykjavík Declaration – “Reykjavík – one year on”** |

**United for Ukraine and accountability**

1. The Council of Europe remains resolute in its commitment to supporting Ukraine and its people.
2. One of the key achievements of the Council of Europe’s 4th Summit was the creation of the Register of Damage for Ukraine[[2]](#footnote-2), through an Enlarged Partial Agreement, with its headquarters in The Hague, as the first component of a future comprehensive international compensation mechanism, noting that the exact form of such a mechanism is to be determined but may include a claims commission and compensation fund. A satellite office of the Register was opened in Kyiv in March 2024. To date, 43 States and the EU have joined the Register. The Conference of Participants of the Register has elected its Board which has already held two meetings. The rules and regulations for the operation of the Register have been agreed taking into account the “Riga Principles” agreed at the informal meeting of the Ministers of Justice on 11 September 2023 held in Riga (Latvia), and the submission of claims for damages by individuals, legal entities and the State of Ukraine against the Russian Federation was launched on 2 April 2024 and over 2000 claims have been received.
3. The Council of Europe supports international efforts to hold to account in particular the political and military leadership of the Russian Federation under individual criminal responsibility for any crimes committed under international law, including the crime of aggression, committed in the context of the war of aggression against Ukraine. The Secretary General has been authorised to prepare any necessary documents to contribute to the consultations within the Core Group**[[3]](#footnote-3)** on a possible draft Agreement between the Council of Europe and the Government of Ukraine on the Establishment of a Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine, including its Statute, and on a possible draft enlarged partial agreement governing the modalities of support to such a Tribunal, its financing and other administrative matters.
4. In close consultation with the Ukrainian authorities, the Council of Europe Action Plan for Ukraine - “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction” 2023-2026 - has successfully been adapted to support rebuilding and recovery in the face of the Russian Federation’s war of aggression and immense destruction. With a budget of €33.5 million, it has launched a total of 30 projects in 16 priority areas, including children’s rights, displaced persons, returnees and victims of war, enabling the most pressing needs of war-affected populations to be met. An additional €200 million support from the Council of Europe Development Bank has been put into urgent social and health infrastructure and housing.
5. The Reykjavík Summit’s *Declaration on the situation of the children of Ukraine* led to the launch of a Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine in November 2023 to co-ordinate actions concerning children having fled Ukraine to Council of Europe member States. The Group follows issues related to the reception, registration and care of unaccompanied and separated children from Ukraine, including transnational procedures and co-operation, psychological support and trauma-informed care and guardianship, as well as the reform of the Ukrainian child protection and care system, to identify gaps and share best practices, resulting in pragmatictools for all stakeholders involved. The Committee of Ministers has urged the Russian Federation to ensure the immediate return of children who have been forcibly transferred or unlawfully deported to its territory or to areas it temporarily controls or occupies. In this context, it is noted that 32 Council of Europe member States have now joined the International Coalition for the Return of Ukrainian Children.

**United around our values**

*System of the European Convention on Human Rights*

1. The Reykjavík Declaration’s unwavering recommitment to the Convention system has translated into increased funding for the European Court of Human Rights (the Court) in the 2024-2025 budget, and more ambitious co-operation activities concerning execution of judgments. The Committee of Ministers has recently adopted enhanced tools for use in its supervision of the execution of judgments. Other initiatives are underway, including the launch of a network of national co-ordinators aiming to enhance capacity to execute the Court’s judgments. A reinforced dialogue between the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress and their respective interlocutors on the judgments should facilitate the implementation process. The process of EU accession to the Convention remains among the highest political priorities and is of central importance for the coherence of the European human rights protection system.

*Democracy*

7. To support member States’ implementation of the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy, the Committee of Ministers has established the Steering Committee for Democracy. This new committee will work on enhancing meaningful participation in democratic life of all members of our societies, including through guidelines on electoral participation of young persons, women and girls, and vulnerable groups. It will also work towards implementation of the recently adopted Recommendations [CM/Rec(2023)5](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Rec(2023)5" \o "Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the principles of good democratic governance (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 September 2023 at the 1473rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)) on the principles of good democratic governance and [CM/Rec(2023)6](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Rec(2023)6" \o "Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on deliberative democracy (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 September 2023 at the 1473rd meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)) on deliberative democracy and continue the work on multilevel governance. In November 2023, the 11th edition of the World Forum for Democracy (WFD) addressed relevant topics including deliberative processes, freedom of expression, education and democratic culture. The 12th WFD in Strasbourg on 6-8 November 2024 will address “Democracy and Diversity: Can we transcend the divides?”. The Venice Commission, in an international conference on “Money and democracy – an uneasy relationship” organised together with the Parliamentary Assembly in December 2023, explored ways in which undue influence of money on democratic decision-making may be exposed, monitored, contained or even prevented. The Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) also continues to work on the prevention of and fight against corruption among public authorities and in democratic life.

*Death penalty*

8. The Council of Europe is a death penalty-free zone and global abolition remains a matter of collective concern and a priority of the Organisation. The Deputies held exchanges, including with persons formerly sentenced to death, and issued ad hoc statements. Initiatives have been launched to promote the global abolition of capital punishment and the fight against pro-death penalty narratives in Europe and beyond, aimed notably at youth, through the new multilateral co-operation programme “Death is not Justice: Abolition of the Death Penalty in Europe and Beyond”. The Council of Europe will contribute to the next World Congress against the Death Penalty in 2026.

*Social rights and social justice*

9. Council of Europe action on social rights plays a crucial role for democratic stability. The reform of the Social Charter system created strong foundations for strengthening social rights and making monitoring, dialogue and co-operation more effective. In response to the Reykjavík Declaration’s proposal for a High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter, the upcoming Lithuanian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers will host the conference in Vilnius on 3-4 July 2024. Some States Parties to the Charter have indicated their intention to accept additional commitments under the Charter on that occasion, for example by accepting new provisions of the Charter or by adhering to the collective complaints procedure.

*Rights of the child and**education*

10. The Summit gave new impetus to the Council of Europe strategies on youth, education and the rights of the child, which contribute to promoting democratic values among children and young people. The 26th Session of the Council of Europe's Standing Conference of Ministers of Education in September 2023 adopted resolutions reaffirming the crucial role of education in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. A new Council of Europe Education Strategy 2030 “Learners first: Education for today's and tomorrow's democratic societies” aims at improving the quality and accessibility of education for all learners as citizens in democratic societies.

*Culture*

11. Following the Reykjavík Declaration’s commitment to cultural diversity and heritage, policies focusing on the relevance of culture for democracy and on the sustainable management of culture and cultural heritage, and the impact of artificial intelligence on them, are currently being developed.

*Civil society*

12. Recognising the essential role of civil society in promoting our values, the Committee of Ministers and its rapporteur groups hold frequent exchanges with their representatives. The Secretary General’s roadmap on civil society engagement with the Council of Europe 2024-2027 introduces tools to improve civil society’s meaningful and effective participation in all aspects of the Council of Europe’s intergovernmental standard-setting, monitoring and co-operation activities. An implementation plan will be presented to the Committee of Ministers by the end of 2024. The Steering Committee for Democracy (CDDEM), as the competent intergovernmental committee regarding the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy, will play a central role in enhancing Council of Europe cooperation with civil society. The role of national human rights institutions (NHRIs) is part of these endeavors, as is the protection of human rights defenders. An updated recommendation on the legal status of non-governmental organisations should contribute to supporting a safe and enabling civic space.

13. Co-operation with representatives of Belarusian democratic forces and civil society takes place through the Council of Europe Contact Group, set up in September 2022. It convenes regularly, ensuring a pioneering framework for expert co-operation in unprecedented conditions where such forces and civil society operate in exile against the background of ongoing political repressions in Belarus. 15 activities were implemented in 2023 and the Contact Group has agreed a new plan of activities for 2024-2025, aiming at raising awareness of human rights standards, promoting the abolition of the death penalty and strengthening political dialogue, including on aspects related to political prisoners.

14. Co-operation with Russian civil society has increasingly been disrupted by Russia’s ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine as well as by its continuing crack-down on civil society, illustrated by wide-ranging reprisals targeting Russian independent activists, human rights defenders and media. In this challenging context, contacts are pursued with those civil society members abroad and in Russia who respect the principles and values of the Council of Europe, including full respect for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and can co-operate without risk to their personal safety. Recent and ongoing co-operation includes regular exchanges of views at the Deputies’ and rapporteur group levels with representatives of Russian civil society, bilateral meetings on the execution of Court judgments to facilitate submissions under Rule 9 of the Rules of the Committee of Ministers for the supervision of the execution of judgments and of the terms of friendly settlements, and facilitation of the participation of young people from the Russian Federation in European Youth Foundation projects, as well as in the activities held in the European Youth Centres.

*Rule of law*

15. Human rights and democracy cannot flourish without a solid rule of law framework. Acknowledging this, demand for opinions of the Venice Commission has risen sharply over the last years (around 50 per year).   
To react to this challenge, the Venice Commission has created a new type of “follow-up” opinion and has led activities relating to core areas of reforms. The recent increase in its human resources will enable it to further address the needs of States. More frequent exchanges with the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress in 2023 have contributed to the promotion of Venice Commission documents and tools, and will be continued in the coming years. Its Rule of Law Checklist, adopted in 2016 and used as the reference for rule of law standards across member States and the EU, will be subject to review.

16. The activities of other well-established Council of Europe bodies, such as the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL), the Consultative Councils of European Prosecutors (CCPE) and Judges (CCJE) and the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ), also contribute to upholding and reinforcing the rule of law. The preparation of a draft legal instrument on the protection of the profession of lawyer should be completed by the end of 2024.

**United to meet current and future challenges**

*Human rights in the digital era*

17. The Council of Europe has maintained its leading role in developing standards in the digital era to safeguard human rights both online and offline and in numerous contexts. Artificial intelligence being the most compelling technology of our times, the finalisation of the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, based on Council of Europe and other relevant international standards, with a potential global application, is a major achievement of our Organisation. The draft Framework Convention will be adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 17 May 2024. Additional work related to AI has been carried out in the area of justice, and is on-going regarding equality and discrimination, combating technology-based violence against women and girls, and implications of generative artificial intelligence for freedom of expression.

*Challenges of migration, human trafficking and smuggling of migrants*

18. In the face of the increasing challenges of migration and the necessity to fight against trafficking and smuggling of migrants and to intensify efforts to foster and improve international co-operation in this regard, while continuing to protect the victims of trafficking and respect the human rights of migrants and refugees, taking into account the relevant legal frameworks, as well as supporting frontline States, within the existing Council of Europe frameworks, a report assessing the need for and feasibility of a possible instrument on the smuggling of migrants by the end of 2024 is under preparation. In relation to human trafficking, in March 2024, the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) marked 15 years of monitoring of the implementation of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings. GRETA has stressed that multiple crises, armed conflicts, climate and humanitarian emergencies and the related growing migration flows increase vulnerabilities to human trafficking and diversify human trafficking risks.

*Protection of journalists*

19. The promotion of freedom of expression and the protection of journalists remain priorities for the Council of Europe. A five-year Council of Europe Campaign for the safety of journalists - “Journalists matter” - was launched in October 2023 in Riga (Latvia) during the Latvian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.   
A recommendation on strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) was recently adopted. The Committee of Ministers continues to hold regular exchanges with representatives of the Platform to promote the protection of journalism and safety of journalists on how to respond to numerous challenges.

*Addressing mis- and disinformation*

20. Recent achievements also include a Guidance Note on countering the spread of online mis- and disinformation through fact-checking and platform design solutions in a human rights compliant manner, Good practices for sustainable news media financing, and Guidelines on the responsible implementation of artificial intelligence systems in journalism.

*Anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion*

21. The Reykjavík Declaration’s commitment to strengthening work towards inclusive societies without marginalisation, exclusion, racism and intolerance is reflected in recent recommendations on combating hate crime, on equality for Roma and Traveller women and girls and on the active political participation of national minority youth. The protection of persons belonging to national minorities was strengthened by allocating additional resources to the relevant monitoring mechanisms. A new committee of experts on sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and sex characteristics was set up and has started work on a recommendation on the equality of rights of intersex persons. Another tool for the capacity building programme on migration integration, which serves to implement Recommendation [CM/Rec(2022)10](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Rec(2022)10" \o "Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers to member States on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration (Adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 April 2022 at the 1431st meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)) on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration, was adopted. The findings and recommendations of the specialised monitoring bodies – the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), the Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the Committee of Experts of the of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages – feed into work in these areas. On 6 December 2023 an exchange of views on antisemitism and other forms of intolerance and hatred based on religion was organised at intergovernmental level. A Co-ordination Meeting on Combating Anti-Muslim Hatred and Discrimination, co-hosted by the Council of Europe and the European Commission, was held on 14-15 March 2024. ECRI’s revised General Policy Recommendations No. 5 on preventing and combating anti-Muslim racism and discrimination and No. 9 on preventing and combating Antisemitism are valuable tools to combat discrimination based on religion or belief.

*Gender equality and the Istanbul Convention*

22. In June 2023, the Committee of Ministers adopted Guidelines on the place of men and boys in gender equality policies and in policies to combat violence against women. A side event on these Guidelines was organised at the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York in March 2024 under the Liechtenstein Presidency of the Committee of Ministers. The new Gender Equality Strategy for the years 2024-2029, building on previous strategies, adopts an intersectional approach and mainstreams the role of men and boys in gender equality policies. An awareness-raising campaign deflecting anti-gender rhetoric and creating a new narrative will be developed. The recent accession of the EU to the Istanbul Convention, as well as its ratification by Latvia, represent an important step in the fight against violence against women and domestic violence. The [Council of Europe Human Rights Education for Legal professionals (HELP) Programme](https://www.coe.int/en/web/help) has contributed to successful access to information and knowledge-sharing in this field.

**United in our vision for the Council of Europe - The Europe we want**

*The Council of Europe and the environment*

23. The Reykjavík Declaration committed to making a clean, healthy and sustainable environment for present and future generations a visible priority for the Organisation, and work has accelerated in this direction. The Bern Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats translated its Vision towards 2030 into a concrete Strategic Plan aiming at halting the decline of biodiversity, recovering wildlife and habitats, improving the lives of people and contributing to the health of the planet. Activities under the Council of Europe Landscape Convention were able to restart at the beginning of 2024. A study on the need for and feasibility of a further instrument or instruments to address human rights and the environment is expected to be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers in 2024. Work is progressing on the preparation of a Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law, which should be completed by the end of 2024. A 24-month pilot regional project “Human Rights and Sustainable Environment in south-East Europe” started in March 2024. The Secretary General has set up a new directorate on social rights, health and environment and a new Council of Europe Department “Reykjavík process and environment” has been created, along with an Intersecretariat Task Force on the Environment. The latter has prepared elements for a Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment and related action plan, which could be developed by an intergovernmental multidisciplinary group on environment.

*Youth participation*

24. The importance of youth participation in decision-making processes was highlighted in the Reykjavík Declaration. In October 2023, the Joint Council on Youth adopted elements for a reference framework for a “youth perspective” in the Organisation’s intergovernmental and other deliberations, providing both a political vision for the entire Organisation and its member States and substantive guidance for all sectors and bodies of the Organisation on how to take this perspective forward. Preparations are in progress to finalise the reference framework for adoption by the Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, which will be organised by Malta during its Presidency of the Committee of Ministers next year. Efforts are also underway to simultaneously modernise the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life. On 14‑16 May 2024, in the framework of the celebrations of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe and under the Presidency of Liechtenstein, the youth event “Confidence in tomorrow”, seeking to further renew and

strengthen the close relationship between the mission of the Council of Europe and the young people, is being organised.

25. The Council of Europe is committed to promoting and fostering youth participation not just across Europe but also beyond through a range of programmes, events, and initiatives. This is particularly showcased through the annual World Forum for Democracy, and the numerous activities prioritising youth empowerment by the North-South Centre, further reinforced through its new 2024-2027 Strategy.

*Programme, budget and reform*

26. The 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe that is celebrated this year reiterates that we remain “united around our values”. The increased budget for 2024-2025 reflects the forward-looking agenda of the Organisation and the direction given by the Summit. Implementation of the Reykjavík Declaration has been mainstreamed in the terms of reference of all Council of Europe steering committees, which have been instructed to take due account of it in their activities and to submit proposals for its implementation. The Deputies welcomed the commitment of the Secretary General to continue the reform process to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness and invited her to seek further budgetary efficiency in order to reinvest in priority sectors. Co-operation programmes and activities continue to support member States in fulfilling their commitments and this dimension is being strengthened through continued fostering of its decentralisation and adjusted funding on the Ordinary Budget. The forthcoming People Strategy 2024-2027 will include a strong mobility component, including to and from the field offices.

*Transparency*

27. Recalling the Reykjavík Declaration’s aim of achieving greater transparency within the Council of Europe, work is in progress to evaluate possible avenues for improving the transparency of the activities of the Committee of Ministers and its documentation. Further steps will be taken in the course of 2024 to increase the transparency of the Committee of Ministers, also in view of a meaningful engagement with civil society.

*The Council of Europe’s external dimension*

28. The Reykjavík Declaration gave a new impetus to the Council of Europe external dimension, in particular to political dialogue and co-operation with the EU, the UN and the OSCE. The co-operation between the Council of Europe and the EU increased considerably, reflecting the prominence of the strategic partnership between the two organisations. The continued co-operation within the framework of EU-CoE Joint Programmes constitutes one of the pillars of the strategic partnership. Taking account of recent developments in the EU enlargement process, the Council of Europe remains committed to providing full support to raise the level of preparedness of candidate countries.

29. Dialogue with the observer States which share a set of fundamental values and common principles with the Council of Europe has also been strengthened. Their active participation and engagement in numerous activities provide a global echo of the main instruments of the Council of Europe. Furthermore, the Organisation intensified its outreach efforts towards non-European States and other international organisations, including through the implementation of the North-South Centre’s new Strategy. These efforts focused on support to Ukraine, in particular the Register, as well as the promotion of relevant open instruments led to heightened interest by non-European States in the Organisation’s work and a growing number of accessions to its conventions and enlarged partial agreements.

1. Türkiye reserves its right to interpret the Report adopted at the 133rd Session of the Committee of Ministers in accordance with its national legislation and international agreements to which it is a party. Türkiye’s stance on this Report should be understood in line with its reservations to the Reykjavík Declaration and should not be interpreted as assuming any commitments with regard to the international agreements and/or mechanisms to which it is not a party. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Hungary’s support for this report should be understood in conjunction with its national reservation to the Reykjavík Declaration and in light of the fact that Hungary is not a Participant of the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation Against Ukraine as an Enlarged Partial Agreement of the Council of Europe. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hungary’s support for this report should be understood in conjunction with Hungary’s view that perpetrators of the most serious international crimes should be held accountable in a way that is consistent with international law, discussions within the Council of Europe should be transparent (especially as some member States, including Hungary, are not participating in the work of the Core Group) and that any involvement of the Council of Europe beyond its current mandate in the process leading to the possible establishment of a Special Tribunal should be based on a unanimous decision. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)