

January 2025



News roundup



Dear reader,

I am pleased to send you the first edition of my monthly newsletter, in which you will find my reflections from the work I carried out in January.

I began my term as Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights last April. Since then, I have refined a set of strategic priorities that will shape my agenda for the next five years. My four priorities are:

1. Defending the human rights of the people of Ukraine, which is why my first [official visit](#) was to Kyiv.
2. Embedding human rights at the heart of our engagement with the great issues of our time, including oversight of Artificial Intelligence, facing migration challenges, promoting equality and tackling the climate crisis.
3. Promoting the rights of the most marginalised people in our societies, with special initial attention to [Roma and Traveller](#) communities
4. Ensuring the protection of [human rights defenders](#) and standing up for civil society.

In delivering my priorities I will use the full toolbox at my disposal, including ongoing engagement with States and civil society, extensive visits in the field, issuing of reports and recommendations, interventions at the European Court of Human Rights (the Court), and close cooperation within the Council of Europe and across the international, regional, and national human rights systems. My work will be based on human rights law and standards, and I will actively support implementation of [judgements of the Court](#).

Reflections from January

A highlight of the month was my visit to [Georgia](#), where I met with state authorities and human rights defenders. I raised concerns over shortcomings in the protection of freedom of assembly and freedom of expression. I also

stressed the need to ensure accountability for human rights violations and end stigmatisation of NGOs and LGBTI people.

One concerning issue I addressed was the case of Mzia Amaghlobeli, a well-known journalist whom I visited in prison. At the time of my visit, Ms. Amaghlobeli had been on a hunger strike since her arrest on 12 January 2025 for allegedly assaulting a police officer. I believe that the continuation of her pre-trial detention is unjustified.

Earlier in the month, reacting to META's and X's changes to their fact-checking policies, I urged Council of Europe Member States to uphold standards in combating [online disinformation](#) while safeguarding human rights. I warned that these decisions could have serious implications for human rights.

At the First World Congress on Enforced Disappearances, I [reaffirmed](#) my commitment to intensifying efforts to end this grave human rights violation, which remain a serious human rights issue in Europe.

More recently, I addressed the National Forum on the Implementation of the Roma Strategy in Kyiv, via a [video message](#) in which I emphasised the need to combat antigypsyism, address inequalities, celebrate the cultural diversity of Roma communities and empower Roma women to be leaders of change.

In Strasbourg, I spoke at an event on [interreligious and interconvictional dialogue](#), which focused on the importance of co-operating with faith and non-faith actors in our efforts to change our societies for the better. This event took place a day after the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau camp. As we pay tribute to the victims of the Holocaust and stand with survivors, the imperative of "Never Again" calls us to keep the truth alive, never look the other way, and never be silent.

Finally, at the end of January, I delivered a speech on the importance of [ensuring human rights oversight of AI](#). While AI has the potential to transform society, it also presents risks, such as bias, error magnification, and the erosion of social bonds.

Before concluding, I invite you to watch a [short video](#) published on the event marking the 25th anniversary of the Commissioner's Office, which took place in November.

Michael O'Flaherty

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights

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