

**“France at the Council of Europe:
The Permanent Representation celebrates its 60th anniversary”
exhibition**

Strasbourg, 23 June 2026

**Opening speech by Ms Petra Bayr
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**

Dear Deputy Permanent Representative,

Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

It is a pleasure to join you today for the opening of this exhibition marking the 60th anniversary of the Permanent Representation of France to the Council of Europe.

This exhibition tells a story of continuity. For sixty years, the Permanent Representation has served as a bridge between Paris and Strasbourg, accompanying the work of an Organisation whose mission remains as relevant today as when it was founded: defending human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

France has been part of this story from the very beginning. As a founding member and host country, it has helped shape the Council of Europe and its institutions. Generations of French politicians, judges, diplomats and public servants have contributed to this common endeavour. Names such as Robert Schuman, Pierre-Henri Teitgen, René Cassin, Simone Veil and Catherine Lalumière , just to mention a few, remind us of the depth of this commitment.

I was particularly honoured to meet Jean-Noël Barrot, Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, during the last part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly. Our exchange once again reflected France's strong attachment to the Council of Europe and to the values that unite us.

What I particularly appreciate about this exhibition is that it goes beyond dates and events. It also invites us to reflect on symbols. As it recalls, the twelve stars of the European flag represent harmony and perfection and can also be associated with the twelve labours of Hercules.

Perhaps this symbolism speaks to our times. Europe, too, faces difficult tasks: war on our continent, threats to democracy, growing polarisation and challenges to the international rules-based order. Like those who came before us, we are called upon to show perseverance, unity and confidence in our common values.

As we open this exhibition, we pay tribute not only to sixty years of the Permanent Representation, but also to all those who, often behind the scenes, have helped strengthen the bond between France and the Council of Europe.

I wish the Permanent Representation a very happy anniversary and thank our French friends for their unwavering commitment to our common European home.

Thank you.