

**Consell General**  
**4 July 2025, Andorra la Vella (Andorra)**

Speech by Theodoros Rousopoulos  
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

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Mr. President, Mr. Ensenyat,

Members of the Consell General,

Dear Friends,

As I crossed the high ridges to reach you, I thought of the myth behind these great mountains' name.

According to Greek mythology, the Pyrenees are named after Pyrene, a young woman whose name is coming from the word «πυρ»-fire and who was killed by Heracles—whether by violence or neglect. Heracles deeply regretted and in mourning, he buried her beneath a pile of stones that rose into mountains. These stones gave life to a new world. The crime buried under them—even if committed by a hero—must not be forgotten. But the new world is thriving. And while I had these thoughts, the connection with Europe and Andorra came easily to my mind.

Travelling to Andorra is an ascent, both literal and symbolic. I departed from the sea-level city of Athens. I boarded a plane and then continued through winding roads, climbing higher and higher until reaching this capital in the clouds. In this ascent, I saw a metaphor for Europe's own journey—from the depths of war and division to the heights of unity, rights, and shared purpose: From the trenches of history to the summits of hope.

And perhaps, no place captures this paradox better than Andorra: small in geography, high in ideals. A mountaintop Republic nestled between states, with a view that stretches far beyond its borders.

You are honoured to represent the idea of coexistence. You breathe in centuries of dialogue—not just between neighbours, but between traditions. Not just between institutions, but between people. I read that a historian characterizes your country as a land where history was shaped not by conquest, but by consensus. And that makes it all the more European.

So I stand here today not to speak about "small states"—a phrase often used—but about big ideas: Big contributions; big responsibilities.

Andorra's voice in the Council of Europe has always been strong and clear. It was your Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in 2013 that gave rise to one of our most vital tools today: the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture. In an age where lies travel faster than facts, this initiative teaches young Europeans to think critically, to distinguish between truth and manipulation, to build resilience—not just digitally, but democratically.

This is not a minor contribution. It is a legacy.

And your delegation to our Assembly—Ms. Bernadetta Coma, Mr. Cerni Escalé, Ms. Meritxell Alcobé, and Ms. Susanna Vela—honours that legacy. Through words and actions, they echo the voice of a people who have long chosen dialogue over division.

Recently, your Prime Minister, Mr. Xavier Espot Zamora, addressing the Assembly said: "In Andorra, our most powerful weapon is the spoken word." That is more than poetry—it is political maturity. And it is rare.

You, Mr. Ensenyat -during our recent speakers of the parliaments meeting in Strasbourg- have cited Václav Havel: "Democracy is not just a system of governance—it's an attitude toward life." And I agree. Democracy is not an institution—it's a daily decision, a practice, a discipline.

And speaking of democratic practice—let me congratulate you on achieving something truly exceptional. Today, your parliament is made up of 50% women—14 out of 28 members. Until now, I proudly believed that the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was leading the way in gender equality, with 46% of our members being women. But you, dear colleagues, have broken the best record. And I believe you have done so not just in numbers, but in spirit—by proving that equality is not an aspiration, but a fact of your democratic life.

As a fact of democratic life we need to work closely to the CoE and teach the youth about Democracy. That is why I will soon be writing to all Ministers of Education across the Council of Europe to propose a new tradition: a "Council of Europe Hour" in every school. A moment each year for students to learn not just what Democracy is, but why it matters. A moment for young Europeans to meet their continent—not through history books alone, but through values.

Dear friends,

We live in a time of proximity and paradox. Our economies, our news cycles, our devices bring us closer together than ever. But the suffering of others often feels distant.

Let us imagine for a moment: what if Andorra—peaceful, proud, and poised—was attacked by a foreign power? What if children here fled their schools, what if voices were silenced, what if mountains turned into battlefields?

Would Europe remain silent?

Of course not, because a death in Kyiv, in Gaza, or in a small Pyrenean village is not only a human death but a wound on democracy's body. Our interconnectedness is not just about trade and technology. It is about empathy, Solidarity, Justice.

That is why we expelled Russia immediately after the invasion in Ukraine and that is why our Assembly was the first to call for a special tribunal to prosecute the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

This year we mark the 75th anniversary of the European Convention on Human Rights. Not just a milestone—but a call to duty. Let us honour it not just with speeches, but with actions.

Andorra has done so. You have signed the new Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights—recognising that even in the digital age, humanity must remain at the centre.

And beyond institutions, I want to speak of individuals. Of those whose names we do not always know.

I think of the anonymous teacher in a small village school who explains to children the meaning of liberty. Of the journalist who resists pressure to write falsehoods. Of the judge who applies the law without fear. Of the local artist who makes truth speak by his or her paintings, or the civil servant who ensures fair elections. These people do not carry weapons, but they protect our freedom every single day.

I started my speech with a myth—and I will end with a myth, again from Greece. Sisyphus was condemned to roll a stone uphill for eternity. It seems the ancient Greeks were obsessed with stones. The giant Polyphemus hurled boulders at Odysseus, and when they weren't throwing stones or pushing them uphill—or burying someone under them—they were shaping them into temples, sculptures, and monuments of astonishing beauty. Sometimes, building a better world can feel just like that—endless, exhausting effort. Though, here in Andorra, you certainly don't need more stones on your beautiful mountains you fulfill Camus' approach: "One must imagine Sisyphus happy", because hope lives in effort.

And effort is the seed of progress.

So,

Let us keep pushing the stone.

Let us keep believing in hope.

Let us keep building our united Europe.

Because the Europe we dream of—just like this land of high peaks and higher principles—is worth the climb.

Thank you.