

134th Session of the Committee of Ministers (Luxembourg, 14 May 2025)

3. Implementation of the Reykjavík Declaration – follow up decisions

Reference documents

CM(2025)50-final, SG/Inf(2025)12, CM(2025)53-final

Decisions

When the Council of Europe was created in 1949, it was against the backdrop of war in Europe. It was created to unite European countries in the common belief that true democracies that uphold the rule of law and ensure respect for human rights were the best defence against authoritarianism, totalitarianism and war on our continent.

Today, European democracies are again under pressure. Russia's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine is not just a violation of international law, but an attack on the very democratic principles this Organisation was established to protect and promote. Democratic security is key for member States to halt democratic backsliding and address current and future challenges together, thereby ensuring peace, freedom and prosperity in Europe. The Council of Europe and its member States must vigorously defend the rule of law and build political momentum for decisive actions to safeguard, enhance and restore trust in Europe's democratic model, including through adherence to core commitments on the rule of law.

We reconfirm that the Council of Europe is uniquely placed to unite the nations of Europe, to protect democratic security in Europe and to counter the undermining of our shared values: human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

At the 4th Summit of the Council of Europe in Reykjavík, we resolved to unite around our values and standards, for the benefit of all citizens, for present and future generations.

As we gather here in Luxembourg to take stock of the situation in Europe and the implementation of our commitments undertaken in Reykjavík, we are committed to continue to promote and defend the unity of us Europeans whose strength is firmly founded in the principles enshrined in the European Convention on Human Rights.

Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are intrinsically linked and mutually reinforcing. We remain firmly committed to preserving, strengthening and restoring these fundamental values, which are essential to Europe's democratic security, hence,

The Committee of Ministers

1. welcomed the annual report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe "Towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe";
2. also welcomed the Secretary General's availability to pursue enhanced high-level dialogues, in co-operation with the Committee of Ministers, in order to support member States in meeting their commitments as members of the Council of Europe;

3. endorsed the report “Reykjavík – Two years after”, as it appears in document CM(2025)50-final, and, with a view to the continued implementation of the Reykjavík Declaration, adopted the following decisions:

United around our values

Support for sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity of member States

4. in addition to its decisions adopted with respect to the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, the Committee of Ministers took note of the position of national delegations and of the work conducted by the Council of Europe with respect to other conflicts and crises in Europe. The Committee of Ministers recalled the set of decisions adopted in relation to the conflict in Georgia at the 1527th meeting of the Deputies (CM/Del/Dec(2025)1527/2.1) and took note of the 31st consolidated report of the Secretary General on the conflict in Georgia (October 2024-March 2025) (SG/Inf(2025)12), as well as statements of member States on this matter;

5. concerning the normalisation of relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan, welcomed the respective announcements made by the two countries on the finalisation of their negotiations on the draft Agreement on Peace and Establishment of Interstate Relations and called for a rapid signature and ratification of the Agreement that would pave the way for good neighbourly relations, with full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of both countries;

System of the European Convention on Human Rights

6. reiterating its unwavering commitment to the system of the European Convention on Human Rights, welcomed the co-ordinated efforts undertaken by Council of Europe bodies and institutions to assist member States with the implementation of the Convention at national level, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity;

7. reaffirmed the unconditional obligation of High Contracting Parties to abide by the final judgments of the European Court of Human Rights in any case to which they are a party and underlined the importance it attaches to the execution of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and to the supervision by the Committee of Ministers; called on member States to increase their efforts in this respect; and reiterated the Russian Federation’s ongoing legal obligation to implement judgments and decisions of the Court, including the payment of just satisfaction, also in interstate and interstate related cases;

Commitments on the rule of law

8. reaffirmed its, and member States’, commitment to protect, strengthen and promote the rule of law at all levels, building upon the Reykjavík Principles on Democracy and the ongoing processes establishing a New Democratic Pact for Europe;

9. recalled that compliance with national and international law is crucial to the rule of law and is central to ensuring the prosperity, freedom and security of all;

10. welcomed the work of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) over the past 35 years to develop and uphold common rule of law standards and principles, including through its Rule of Law checklist, and recommitted to strengthening its efforts and promoting the tools and activities of the Venice Commission and other Council of Europe bodies, as well as to jointly exploring ways the Organisation and member States can better support the implementation of their recommendations, in order to address new and growing challenges to the rule of law;

11. underlined the importance of guaranteeing and protecting the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and ensuring respect for courts and their judgments;

12. emphasised the need to ensure effective access to justice by ensuring that legal disputes are resolved fairly, quickly, with sufficient legal support, without prohibitive cost, and with respect for the rights of all involved in proceedings, and recalled that early access to legal advice and mediation can serve as an effective means of dispute resolution;

13. welcomed efforts to combat disinformation and misinformation, including as regards law, the judiciary and lawyers, to ensure that legal professionals can exercise their functions free from threats, attacks or coercion, and undertook to safeguard media freedom and civil society as a cornerstone of a healthy democracy;
14. acknowledged the shared responsibility of the executive and legislative branch in upholding the rule of law, in particular, by improving legislative standards and ensuring that legal texts are properly scrutinised, clear, accessible, predictable, compatible with human rights and that law-making procedures are transparent and inclusive;
15. affirmed the importance of ensuring that the executive branch of government and public officers exercise the powers conferred on them diligently, in good faith, fairly, with integrity, and for the purpose for which the powers were conferred, without exceeding the limits of such powers; and of strengthening accountability through transparency and oversight;
16. recommitted, alongside member States, to strengthen trust in democratic institutions at all levels of governance through the promotion of a rule of law culture among the public, especially young people, as well as politicians and government employees, and to ensure that national institutions and practices are inclusive and non-discriminatory and actively promote equality;
17. invited member States to share best practices and updates on their efforts to give effect to the above decisions and welcomed co-operation with States and international organisations, including the EU, the UN and the OSCE, to further the achievement of greater unity and better global governance;

Social rights and social justice

18. underlining the importance of the European Social Charter and its monitoring procedures for the protection of social and economic rights of citizens across Europe and reaffirming the collective duty to respect, promote and further develop social rights, welcomed the Vilnius Declaration, adopted at the High-level Conference on the European Social Charter organised in the framework of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers; also welcomed the organisation of the next high-level conference on the European Social Charter to take place in March 2026 in Chişinău under the auspices of the Moldovan Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, and encouraged member States, as appropriate, to consider accepting additional provisions on that occasion, and for those who have not yet done so to consider ratifying the Additional Protocol providing for a system of collective complaints and ratifying the revised European Social Charter;

Rights of the child and education

19. reaffirmed the value of formal and informal education to strengthening democracy and acknowledged the Council of Europe's contribution to develop a democratic culture through the European Space for Citizenship Education, the 2030 Education Strategy "Learners First", and the European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025, as well as the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027);
20. welcomed the development of a road map 2027-2031 for strengthening digital citizenship education across Europe, aimed at supporting member States to advance European citizens enabling them to master competences for democratic culture and digital competences, as well as the preparation of an instrument on education and artificial intelligence;
21. further reaffirmed the importance of strategic engagement to protect children both online and offline, including at the highest political levels, through continued commitment to Council of Europe instruments such as the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention), and of taking the best interest of the child as the primary consideration;

Civil society

22. recalled its commitment to the full implementation of the "Road map on the Civil society engagement with the Council of Europe 2024-2027", including in relation to the development of a calendar with participation and consultation opportunities for civil society, with a view to ensure a meaningful and mutually beneficial engagement with civil society, including human rights defenders;

23. reaffirmed its engagement for the work of the Contact Group on co-operation with Belarusian democratic forces and civil society, which has continued to provide an efficient and innovative framework for co-operation, and reiterated the need to find ways to enhance co-operation with Russian and Belarusian human rights defenders, democratic forces, free media and independent civil society who are fully committed to the Organisation's values, principles and goals, and welcomed the initiatives undertaken in this respect by the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, as well as the agreement signed between the Council of Europe and Lithuania on the establishment of a Council of Europe Information Point for Belarusian people in Vilnius (Lithuania);

United to meet current and future challenges

Standards in the digital area/AI

24. encouraged States to sign and ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (Vilnius Convention) so that it comes into force as soon as possible; welcomed the progress made towards the development of tools for risk assessment and further instruments providing guidance in specific areas, including equality and artificial intelligence, criminal liability related to the use of artificial intelligence, and teaching and learning about artificial intelligence;

Migrants/Smuggling of migrants

25. welcomed the progress towards the preparation of a comprehensive Committee of Ministers' recommendation on deterring and fighting the smuggling of migrants through legal means and other actions, and on international co operation, taking into account the Report on the need for and feasibility of a possible new Council of Europe instrument on smuggling of migrants;

Freedom of expression and safety of journalists

26. reaffirmed the Council of Europe's leading role in setting standards on freedom of expression, including in the digital sphere, and welcomed progress in developing guidelines on online safety, the empowerment of content creators and users, and the implications of generative artificial intelligence for freedom of expression; encouraged member States to implement Council of Europe standards in this field, including through co-operation activities, capacity building and awareness-raising;

27. acknowledged the achievements of the first year of the Journalists Matter campaign and called on member States to strengthen efforts to develop and implement national action plans for the safety of journalists in close co-operation with civil society organisations, media representatives and professional associations; underscored the need for sustained action to address structural challenges, including disinformation, and to respond effectively to threats and attacks against media professionals, including those identified through the Platform for the Protection of Journalism and the Safety of Journalists;

28. called for reinforcing the importance of freedom of expression, media freedom and the safety of journalists for human rights, the rule of law and democracy, by inviting the member States chairing the Committee of Ministers to address these issues at least once during their presidency, at a formal or informal meeting of the Deputies;

Inclusive societies/discrimination

29. reaffirmed the importance of the enjoyment of human rights and individual freedoms without discrimination on any ground, including in respect of sexual orientation and gender identity, and committed to continue strengthening work to achieve equal rights as well as dignity for all, and promoting equal opportunities and participation in a democratic society characterised by pluralism, tolerance and broadmindedness;

30. reiterated its commitment to the Council of Europe's unique legally-binding instruments and monitoring mechanisms on protecting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities, which are a key aspect of human rights protection and democratic participation;

31. noted with satisfaction the preparation of instruments on equality and artificial intelligence, equality of rights of intersex persons, and desegregation and inclusion policies and practices in the education of Roma and Traveller children;

32. in this context, welcomed the emphasis placed by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights of Roma and Travellers¹ in his work and his engagement with the Roma and Traveller communities and the member States with a view to addressing the pressing human rights concerns faced by these communities, including discrimination in all areas of life;

33. reaffirming its commitment to combat racism, xenophobia, anti-Muslim hatred, antisemitism and all forms of intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief, welcomed the organisation of a Council of Europe No Hate Speech Week as a recurrent annual event to advance implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)16 on combating hate speech; welcomed also the second co-ordination meeting on combatting anti-Muslim hatred and racism, co-organised by the Council of Europe and the European Commission on 13 and 14 March 2025, and called for such meetings to be organised annually;

Gender equality/Istanbul Convention

34. strongly encouraged member States to actively contribute to the implementation of the new Gender Equality Strategy 2024-2029 and uphold the Council of Europe's long-standing commitment to gender equality;

35. encouraged member States to continue to adopt and implement comprehensive measures harnessing the positive potential of digital technologies to advance gender equality and prevent technology-facilitated violence against women and girls, while ensuring that these technologies do not perpetuate or amplify gender-based violence, online sexual exploitation and sexism;

36. strongly encouraged member States to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention) and welcomed the launching of the first thematic evaluation procedure focusing on measures that build trust by providing support, protection and justice in order to further strengthen the rights of women and girls;

37. welcomed the setting up of the Council of Europe Network of specialised lawyers and NGOs assisting women victims of violence to facilitate regular exchanges between lawyers from all member States and serve as a knowledge-sharing platform;

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

Youth participation

38. welcomed the renewed high-level momentum to the youth agenda and the Reference Framework on a youth perspective as a key tool to strengthen European youth policy and youth participation in policy-making across the Organisation and in member States, which is expected to be adopted at the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, in Malta on 8 and 9 October 2025, and encouraged member States to swiftly operationalise it once adopted;

39. encouraged member States to promote young people's democratic engagement and facilitate youth participation through the reform of the European Youth Foundation that aims to strengthen meaningful support to youth civil society, and welcomed the revision of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, aimed at revitalising the youth dimension of the Council of Europe at the local and regional levels;

Programme, budget and reform

40. reaffirmed the importance of ongoing reforms to strengthen the Council of Europe's agility, resilience and efficiency, ensuring budgetary and programmatic reprioritisation and reallocation of existing resources during the 2025-2027 budget discussions to effectively strengthen the role of the Organisation in the current, unprecedented geopolitical context and implement priorities identified in the Reykjavík Summit;

¹ The term "Roma and Travellers" is used at the Council of Europe to encompass the wide diversity of the groups covered by the work of the Council of Europe in this field: on the one hand a) Roma, Sinti/Manush, Calé, Kaale, Romanichals, Boyash/Rudari; b) Balkan Egyptians (Egyptians and Ashkali); c) Eastern groups (Dom, Lom and Abdal); and, on the other hand, groups such as Travellers, Yenish, and the populations designated under the administrative term "*Gens du voyage*", as well as persons who identify themselves as Gypsies. The present is an explanatory footnote, not a definition of Roma and/or Travellers.

Transparency

41. adopted the Transparency Framework of the Council of Europe, as it appears in document CM(2025)53-final, and invited its Deputies to ensure its implementation;
42. invited the Secretary General to make proposals for making public a register or registers of Council of Europe documents;
43. invited the Directorate of Internal Oversight (DIO) to conduct an audit of the implementation by the Organisation of Resolution Res(2000)2 on the Council of Europe's Information Strategy and Resolution Res(2001)6 on access to Council of Europe documents;

The Council of Europe's external dimension

44. in a rapidly changing international order, reaffirmed its commitment to multilateralism and international law; agreed to strive to maintain their effectiveness and to continue reinforcing the role of the Council of Europe as a reliable and credible partner by strengthening existing partnerships, notably with the European Union, the UN and the OSCE; encouraged intensified efforts to develop further the external dimension of the Organisation, including with the European Political Community, with observer States, and with the Neighbourhood Partnerships, through dialogue with other international organisations and the promotion of Council of Europe's instruments and bodies, in particular the North-South Centre.