

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

*Protecting people and the planet through
human rights, law, and cooperation*



IT IS ABOUT HUMAN RIGHTS

Since 1967, the Council of Europe has worked to conserve Europe's natural heritage. At the **2023 Reykjavik Summit**, European leaders committed to strengthening the work on the human rights aspects of the environment based on the political recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right. This commitment launched the **Reykjavik Process**, aligning conventions, policies, and initiatives under a common strategy to protect people and the planet.



JUSTICE AND HUMAN RIGHTS

► The **European Court of Human Rights** has ruled in **300+ environment-related cases**, linking environmental harm to fundamental rights such as life, health, and property.



► The **European Committee of Social Rights** ensures states protect health, housing, safe working conditions, and social rights in the face of environmental degradation.



WHY IT MATTERS

The environment is about more than nature – it's about our health, safety, and future.



ENVIRONMENT STRATEGY 2025–2030

► Adopted in May 2025, the **Council of Europe Environment Strategy** sets **five strategic objectives** to make environmental protection a **cross-cutting priority** across all activities, with a dedicated **Action Plan** for impact and accountability.



PROTECTING NATURE

► **Bern Convention** – Safeguards biodiversity and wildlife across Europe and beyond.



► **Emerald Network** – protects conservation areas across Europe.



► **European Diploma for Protected Areas** – Recognises exemplary nature sites.



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



FIGHTING ENVIRONMENTAL CRIME

In 2025, the Council of Europe adopted the **Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law**. It targets:

- Unlawful pollution
- Habitat destruction
- Unlawful mining
- Particularly serious offences

It also protects **victims, witnesses, and those who expose environmental crime**.



RESILIENCE AND DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

- The **EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement** strengthens resilience and finetunes disaster risk reduction policies and across Europe and the Mediterranean.



POLITICAL ACTION AND LOCAL LEADERSHIP

- The **Committee of Ministers** – Drives policies such as the 2022 Recommendation on **Human Rights and the Protection of the Environment** and the 2024 Recommendation on **Young People and Climate Change**.
- The **Parliamentary Assembly** – Advocates for climate action, rights of future generations, and recognition of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.
- The **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** – Helps cities and regions reduce pollution, manage biodiversity, and prepare for floods, heatwaves, and wildfires.



PROTECTION OF ANIMALS

- The Council of Europe Conventions on the protection of animals were the first international legal instruments laying down ethical principles for the transport, farming, and slaughter of animals, as well as for their use for experimental purposes and as pets.



NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE

- **Landscape Convention** – Promotes sustainable landscape management and awards outstanding projects.



OUR VISION: PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT MEANS PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights and the environment go hand in hand. We're building a future where people and nature thrive. The Council of Europe works with governments, parliaments, courts, and communities to ensure a sustainable future for all.

If you want to know more:



Follow us on Social media:



Council of Europe and the Environment



@CoE_Environment

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE