

PROTECTING LAWYERS, PRESERVING ACCESS TO JUSTICE

CONFERENCE TO MARK THE ADOPTION AND OPENING FOR SIGNATURE OF
THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONVENTION FOR THE PROTECTION OF
THE PROFESSION OF LAWYER

16 June 2025, Palais de l'Europe, Room 7
Zoom Link¹

PROGRAMME



¹ A Zoom link will be available to other participants to follow the event.

The Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer is the first international legally binding instrument to place the protection of the profession of lawyer at the heart of respect for the rule of law. Lawyers play an instrumental role in ensuring effective access to justice for all. The action of professional associations is also crucial to protect the individual and collective rights and interests of the lawyers so that they can practise free from hinderance. The convention is here to respond to increasing reports of attacks on lawyers that prevent them from fulfilling their necessary role in fully functioning justice systems that constitute an essential feature of any democracy.

For more than two years, the Committee of Experts on the Protection of Lawyers (CJ-AV), under the responsibility and guidance of the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ), worked on a balanced and forward-looking text. This was made possible by the constructive contributions of representatives of ministries of justice, the legal profession, international professional associations, and international organisations.

The convention was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 12 March 2025 and opened for signature on 13 May 2025 during the Committee of Ministers' session that closed the Presidency of Luxembourg. The convention can not only be signed and ratified by the member states of the Council of Europe but also be acceded to by non-member states, giving it a global reach.

To mark this significant step forward in the protection of the rights and safety of lawyers, and thus in the protection of the very foundation of the rule of law, the CDCJ is organising a conference that will bring together distinguished speakers and stakeholders who have played a role in the elaboration of the convention.

10:00 Opening words

Gianluca Esposito, Director general, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law

10:05 Keynote addresses

- Bjørn Berge, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe
- Ambassador Gabriel Revel, Permanent representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe and Chair of the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Legal Co-operation (GR-J)
- Michael O'Flaherty, Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights
- Vladimir Vardanyan, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)
- Eral Knight, Chair of the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ)

10:40 Coffee break

11:00 Panel discussion: Why lawyers and their professional associations deserve protection

- Topics: The key role of lawyers in states governed by the rule of law to make access to justice effective; how the convention addresses challenges faced by lawyers worldwide; the importance of the role, independence and protection of their professional associations

Moderator:

Daniele Cangemi, Head of Human Rights, Justice and Legal Co-operation Standard Setting activities Department, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law

Panellists:

- Margaret Satterthwaite, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers
- Christoph Henrichs, member of the CDCJ and former Chair of the Committee of Experts on the Protection of Lawyers (CJ-AV)
- Laurent Pettiti, Chair of the Working Group "European Convention", Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE)
- Judith Lichtenberg, Board member, "Lawyers for lawyers" Foundation

Question and answers

11:45 Closing remarks: The next steps for the Convention

Ambassador Patrick Engelberg, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the Council of Europe

12:00 Family photo followed by reception hosted by the Ambassador of Luxembourg