

**THE STRASBOURG PRINCIPLES**  
**FOR**  
**INTER-RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE WITHIN**  
**THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

- In Europe and elsewhere, religions play an important role in people's life as a component of their identities as believers and citizens.
- Knowing more about other people's religions and cultures, and having a better understanding, have become decisive aspects of a modern and open European society, respectful for diversity.
- There can be no democratic society without respect for freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Freedom of religion or belief is one of the cornerstones of human rights. Appropriate laws and their effective implementation and respect are essential preconditions for peaceful living together, without discrimination against any individual, regardless of religion or belief.
- The freedom of thought, conscience and religion, set out in Article 9 of the European Convention on Human Rights, is a fundamental right not only for believers, but also for those without any religious belonging or concern for religion.
- In Europe, the religious landscape is rapidly evolving, thereby broadening the space of Inter-religious and intra-religious diversity. Therefore, Inter-religious and intercultural dialogue helps at strengthening mutual understanding, respect and collaboration in European society.
- Inter-religious dialogue between religious leaders and believers as well, based on the respect for human dignity, human rights and fundamental freedoms, democratic principles and the rule of law, is necessary for countering hate discourse and discrimination, and for promoting mutual respect, reconciliation and peace.
- Religious radicalism and extremism are contrary to a right understanding and practice of a religion. They instrumentalize religion for ulterior motives, provoking violence and conflicts. However, such violence affects all in a society. Therefore, while condemning and countering violence, including when committed in the name of religion, stigmatization of entire religious communities must be avoided.
- Freedom of thought and expression comprise the right to a critical approach to certain aspects of religions, always with respect for the other and for the public order as well. The European Court of Human Rights recognises the discretion of national authorities in dealing with such sensitive matters in ways that take into consideration the local cultural and historical backgrounds and complexities and are necessary in a democratic society.
- In exercising its regulatory power in its relations with the various religions, denominations and beliefs, the State has the duty to remain neutral and impartial, refraining from taking sides in disputes with religious or confessional features.
- When faced with religious conflicts, the role of political authorities is to look for solutions according to the law, calling on the religious communities to respect the law and one another. The solution in such circumstances cannot be found in discriminating or denying the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.