

**Intersessional panel discussion on the human rights of migrants  
16 February 2026, Palais des Nations, Room XII**

**First Session: Preventing and addressing harmful narratives about migrants and migration.**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Council of Europe, let me express our thanks for convening this session and this important discussion on the human rights of migrants.

As this part of the session is dedicated to “preventing and addressing harmful narratives about migrants and migration”, I would like to reiterate that the Council of Europe has placed increasing emphasis on disinformation and hate-fuelled response, towards migrants and migration, recognising the threat they pose to the enjoyment of human rights, democratic security and social cohesion across Europe. Fear-framed narratives manipulating race, ethnic origin and religion, instrumentalise concepts of national unity or identity for political purposes.

The Council of Europe perceives these harmful anti-migrant narratives not as isolated instances, but as part of broader dynamics of information disorder, which rely on processes of securitisation and dehumanisation, portraying migrants as threats linked to crime, terrorism, disease or social breakdown. Conspiracy theories have in recent years moved into mainstream political and media discourse, capitalising on uncertainty and anxiety to erode trust in democratic institutions.

The Council of Europe has responded to these challenges by facilitating a high-level expert dialogue, such as the Roundtable *on Fact-based Communication on Migration*, held in November 2025 which brought together international experts in migration communication, independent institutions and civil society actors to examine the escalating impact of disinformation, hate speech and related hate crimes targeting migrants and refugees. Participants drew attention to the risk of distorted narratives, fuelling social fragmentation, discrimination, and violence. This Roundtable highlighted that factual information is rarely sufficient to counter harmful narratives, shaped early in life and activated by media salience.

To address these challenges the Council of Europe promotes diversified approaches to counter disinformation and harmful narratives, as monitoring

trends in traditional and social media. Initiatives such as the *Intercultural Cities Programme* address information disorder and foster trust-based dialogue, while promoting inclusive local narratives and equipping community actors to recognise and respond to disinformation without escalating polarisation.

The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers recommendations highlighted the links between disinformation, hate speech and hate crime, and have called for coordinated, multi-stakeholder responses.

In particular, under the CM *Recommendation on multilevel policies and governance for intercultural integration*, member States are called on to take legislative and other measures to apply and implement the intercultural integration approach to multilevel policies for integrating diverse societies to prevent discrimination. In this context measures should be taken to prevent and combat prejudice and hate speech while respecting the right to freedom of expression, and to build resistance to all forms of radicalisation and extremism leading to violence.

Taken together, these initiatives illustrate the Council of Europe's evolving commitment to prevent and address harmful narratives about migrants and migration.

The Council of Europe remains determined to further pursue its action in this domain, trusting that the human rights framework can guide all societies through the challenges ahead.

Thank you.

## **Second Session: Strengthening human rights monitoring and complaint mechanisms in the context of migration.**

Mr. President,

On behalf of the Council of Europe, I would like to thank you for convening this session and for holding this important discussion on the human rights of migrants.

As this session is dedicated to strengthening human rights monitoring and complaint mechanisms in the context of migration, I would like to reiterate that the Council of Europe has developed important standards and mechanisms providing valuable guidance to member States. Our approach is based on respect for the universality of human rights and on the understanding that any hierarchy of rights holders, according to whether they are considered more or less deserving, is out of the question. These principles are reflected in the European Convention on Human Rights, which, as noted by Secretary General Alain Berset, is the final safeguard of individual rights and freedoms across our continent and a pillar of democratic security.

As migrants constitute an integral part of Europe's population, the Council of Europe is committed to supporting its member States' migration and asylum law and practice, paying particular attention to vulnerable groups such as migrant children, elderly persons and people with disabilities. This has been especially visible in the context of displaced persons from Ukraine due to war of aggression by Russia. More than five million Ukrainians are currently hosted by European countries. Together with its member States, the Council of Europe's monitoring mechanisms have helped develop migration laws and policies grounded in human rights and rule of law standards emanating from its treaties and soft law.

Notable monitoring bodies include the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, which focuses on foreign nationals held in immigration detention and reception centres and on removals by air, devoting particular attention to the treatment of vulnerable individuals; the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, which issues country-specific recommendations concerning non-discrimination, integration and inclusion of migrants; and the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, created under the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, which constitutes the Council of Europe's primary legal instrument to combat trafficking.

The Council of Europe Action Plan on vulnerable migrants and refugees for the period 2021–2025 has further enhanced the Organisation’s guidance and assistance to member States, particularly in relation to migrant children, refugee women and girls, victims of trafficking, and the fight against hate speech and hate crime. In addition, through the HELP Programme, the Organisation offers valuable training tools for legal professionals working in the field of migration and asylum.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe engages in intercultural inclusion and migrant integration, the recognition of professional qualifications of refugees, and guidance for practitioners in the area of administrative detention of migrants.

A new Division on Migration and Refugees, created in 2025, aims to coordinate the Council of Europe’s migration-related activities and to serve as a forum where national authorities of member States can exchange information on challenges related to migration, in line with the European Court of Human Rights’ conviction of the need for a balanced approach to human rights and migration.

In December 2025, Council of Europe member States called on the Organisation to prepare a political declaration reaffirming the obligation to ensure the effective enjoyment of the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Convention to everyone within their jurisdiction, recognising that dialogue, cooperation and shared solutions are essential to enable equal engagement by all member States within the framework and legal standards of the Council of Europe.

The Council of Europe will continue its collective multilateral efforts to enhance the protection of human rights in the context of migration.

Thank you.