

Press Release

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47 member States

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia and Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

60th Anniversary of the Council of Europe

Joint statement by Secretary General Terry Davis, PACE President Lluís Maria de Puig and Committee of Ministers Chairman Miguel Angel Moratinos

Strasbourg, 4 May 2009 - In the first sixty years of its existence, the Council of Europe has helped to reconcile a continent after decades of ideological divide, created a Europe-wide court in which individuals can seek protection of their human rights, outlawed the death penalty in Europe, and produced an arsenal of more than 200 international treaties to defend and extend the Council of Europe values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Political stimulus is provided through a Parliamentary Assembly which also elects the organisation's most important officials through an open and competitive vote. Grassroot democracy is cultivated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

From the ten founding members in 1949, the Council of Europe today has 47 member states - all the European countries with one exception. The last remaining State will hopefully soon embrace the Council of Europe values and join the all-European family.

The mandate of the Council of Europe has not changed, but the circumstances in which we operate have changed dramatically. Technological, scientific, political, social and economic developments have brought about new opportunities, but also new threats to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The mark of the Council of Europe is a combination of robust and practical legal cooperation with strict respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms combined with positive measures to promote tolerance, dialogue and understanding between people. That is how the Council of Europe has responded to threats such as terrorism, organised crime, trafficking in human being, sexual exploitation of children, cybercrime, violence against women and other threats to individuals and societies as a whole. The new generation of Council of Europe conventions is open to countries from other continents, and we are determined to improve our cooperation with the European Union, the OSCE, the United Nations and other partners in Europe and beyond.

In a week's time, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe will meet in Madrid to commemorate the important Anniversary which takes place this year and to chart the priorities for our future work. We have no doubt that the Council of Europe will be up to the task.

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A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.