

Council of Europe

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The **Council of Europe (CoE)**; French: *Conseil de l'Europe*) is an international organisation promoting co-operation between European countries in the areas of legal standards, human rights, democratic development, the rule of law and cultural co-operation. It was founded in 1949 and has 47 member states with 820 million citizens. The organisation is an independent body, and is not controlled by the European Union, which is a separate organisation it is sometimes confused with. Unlike European Union and Eurasian Economic Union, the Council of Europe cannot make binding laws.

The best known bodies of the Council of Europe are the European Court of Human Rights, which enforces the European Convention on Human Rights, and the European Pharmacopoeia Commission, which sets the quality standards for pharmaceutical products in Europe. The Council of Europe's work has resulted in standards, charters and conventions to facilitate cooperation between European countries as an advisory body.

Its statutory institutions are the Committee of Ministers comprising the foreign ministers of each member state, the Parliamentary Assembly composed of MPs from the parliament of each member state, and the Secretary General heading the secretariat of the Council of Europe. The Commissioner for Human Rights is an independent institution within the Council of Europe, mandated to promote awareness of and respect for human rights in the member states.

The headquarters of the Council of Europe are in Strasbourg, France, with English and French as its two official languages. The Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress also use German, Italian, and Russian for some of their work.

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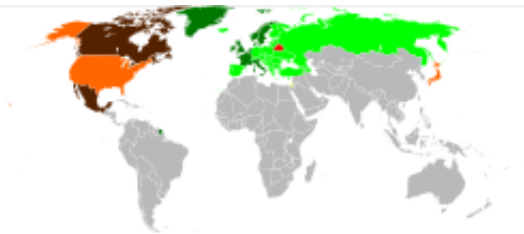
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- 3 Criticism

Council of Europe

Conseil de l'Europe



Logo^[1]



- ☐ Ten founding members
- ☐ Joined subsequently
- ☐ Official candidates
- ☐ Observer at the Parliamentary Assembly
- ☐ Observer at the Committee of Ministers
- ☐ Observer at the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly

Abbreviation	CoE
Formation	Treaty of London 1949
Type	Advisory international organisation
Headquarters	 Strasbourg
Membership	47 member states 5 Council observers 3 Assembly observers
Official language	English, French
Secretary General	Thorbjørn Jagland
President of the Parliamentary Assembly	Anne Brasseur
President of the Committee of	Edmond Panariti

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Ministers

President of the Congress	Herwig van Staa
Website	www.coe.int (http://www.coe.int/)

History



Plaque commemorating the first session of the Council of Europe Assembly at Strasbourg University

In a speech at the University of Zurich on 19 September 1946, Sir Winston Churchill called for a "kind of United States of Europe" and the creation of a Council of Europe.^{[2][3]} He had spoken of a Council of Europe as early as 1943 in a radio broadcast.^[2]

The future structure of the Council of Europe was discussed at a specific congress of several hundred leading politicians, government representatives and civil society in The Hague, Netherlands, in 1948. There were two schools of thought competing: some favoured a classical international organisation with representatives of governments, while others preferred a political forum with parliamentarians. Both approaches were finally combined through the creation of the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly under the Statute of the Council of Europe. This dual intergovernmental and inter-parliamentary structure was later copied for the European Communities, North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The Council of Europe was founded on 5 May 1949 by the Treaty of London. The Treaty of London or the Statute of the Council of

Europe was signed in London on that day by ten states: Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Many other states followed, especially after the democratic transitions in central and eastern Europe during the early 1990s, and the Council of Europe now includes all European states except Belarus,^[4] Kazakhstan,^[4] Vatican City^[5] and the European states with limited recognition.^[a]

Aims and achievements

Article 1(a) of the Statute states that "The aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and facilitating their economic and social progress." [6] Therefore, membership is open to all European states which seek European integration, accept the principle of the rule of law and are able and willing to guarantee democracy, fundamental human rights and freedoms.

While the member states of the European Union transfer national legislative and executive powers to the European Commission and the European Parliament in specific areas under European Community law, Council of Europe member states maintain their sovereignty but commit themselves through conventions (i.e., public international law) and co-operate on the basis of common values and common political decisions. Those conventions and decisions are developed by the member states working together at the Council of Europe, whereas secondary European Community law is set by the organs of the European Union. Both organisations function as concentric circles around the common foundations for European integration, with the Council of Europe being the geographically wider circle. The European Union could be seen as the smaller circle with a much higher level of integration through the transfer of powers from the national to the EU level. Being part of public international law, Council of Europe conventions could also be opened for signature to non-member states thus facilitating equal co-operation with countries outside Europe (see chapter below).

The Council of Europe's most famous achievement is the European Convention on Human Rights, which was adopted in 1950 following a report by the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly. The Convention created the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg. The Court supervises compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights and thus functions as the highest European court for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It is to this court that Europeans can bring cases if they believe that a member country has violated their fundamental rights.

The various activities and achievements of the Council of Europe can be found in detail on its official website. In a nutshell, the Council of Europe works in the following areas:

- Protection of the rule of law and fostering legal co-operation through some 200 conventions and other treaties, including such leading instruments as the Convention on Cybercrime, the Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism, the Conventions against Corruption and Organised Crime, the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, and the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine.^[7]
- CODEXTER, designed to co-ordinate counter-terrorism measures



Session of the Council of Europe's Assembly in the former House of Europe in Strasbourg in 1967



Japanese flag in front of Council of Europe following the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami

- The European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ)
- Protection of human rights, notably through:
 - the European Convention on Human Rights
 - the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture
 - the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
 - the Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings^[8]
 - the Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse^[9]
 - social rights under the European Social Charter
 - linguistic rights under the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
 - minority rights under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
 - Media freedom under Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Convention on Transfrontier Television
- Protection of democracy through parliamentary scrutiny and election monitoring by its Parliamentary Assembly as well as assistance in democratic reforms, in particular by the Venice Commission.
- Promotion of cultural co-operation and diversity under the Council of Europe's Cultural Convention of 1954 and several conventions on the protection of cultural heritage as well as through its Centre for Modern Languages in Graz, Austria, and its North-South Centre in Lisbon, Portugal.
- Promotion of the right to education under Article 2 of the first Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and several conventions on the recognition of university studies and diplomas (see also Bologna Process and Lisbon Recognition Convention).
- Promotion of fair sport through the Anti-Doping Convention^[10] and the Convention against Spectator Violence.^[11]
- Promotion of European youth exchanges and co-operation through European Youth Centres in Strasbourg and Budapest, Hungary.
- Promotion of the quality of medicines throughout Europe by the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and its European Pharmacopoeia.

Criticism

In recent years, the Council of Europe has been criticized for doing too little to stand up to the transgressions of some of its members. Human Rights Watch, for example, argued in September 2014 that Azerbaijan's "systematic crackdown on human rights defenders and other perceived government critics shows sheer contempt for its commitments to the Council of Europe".^[12] Similarly, the European Stability Initiative has documented how the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in January 2013 voted down a resolution on political prisoners in Azerbaijan, providing a result largely favorable to the authoritarian government of Ilham Aliyev.^[13] In 2013 *The Economist* agreed, saying that the "Council of Europe's credibility is on the line".^[14]

Both the Human Rights Watch and the European Stability Initiative have called on the Council of Europe to undertake concrete actions to show that it is willing and able to return to its "original mission to protect and ensure human rights".^[15]

Institutions

The institutions of the Council of Europe are:

- The Secretary General, who is elected for a term of five years by the Parliamentary Assembly and heads the Secretariat of the Council of Europe. The current Secretary General is the former Prime Minister of Norway, Thorbjørn Jagland, who took office on 1 October 2009.^[16] He was reelected for five new years on 24 June 2014.
- The Committee of Ministers, comprising the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of all 47 member states who are represented by their Permanent Representatives and Ambassadors accredited to the Council of Europe. Committee of Ministers' presidencies are held in alphabetical order for six months following the English alphabet: Turkey 11/2010-05/2011, Ukraine 05/2011-11/2011, the United Kingdom 11/2011-05/2012, Albania 05/2012-11/2012, Andorra 11/2012-05/2013, Armenia 05/2013-11/2013, Austria 11/2013-05/2014, and so on.
- The Parliamentary Assembly (PACE), which comprises national parliamentarians from all member states and elects its President for a year with the possibility of being re-elected for another year. In January 2010, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu from Turkey was elected President of the Parliamentary Assembly. National parliamentary delegations to the Assembly must reflect the political spectrum of their national parliament, i.e., comprise government and opposition parties. The Assembly appoints members as rapporteurs with the mandate to prepare parliamentary reports on specific subjects. The British MP Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe was rapporteur for the drafting of the European Convention on Human Rights. Dick Marty's reports on secret CIA detentions and rendition flights in Europe became quite famous in 2007. Other Assembly rapporteurs were instrumental in, for example, the abolition of the death penalty in Europe, the political and human rights situation in Chechnya, disappeared persons in Belarus, freedom of expression in the media and many other subjects.
- The Congress of the Council of Europe (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe), which was created in 1994 and comprises political representatives from local and regional authorities in all member states. The most influential instruments of the Council of Europe in this field are the European Charter of Local Self-Government of 1985 and the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities of 1980.
- The European Court of Human Rights, created under the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950, is composed of a judge from each member state elected for a renewable term of six years by



The parliamentary hemicycle

the Parliamentary Assembly and is headed by the elected President of the Court. Since 2007, Jean-Paul Costa from France is the President of the Court. Under the new Protocol No. 14 to the European Convention on Human Rights, the terms of office of judges shall be nine years but non-renewable. Ratification of Protocol No. 14 was delayed by Russia for a number of years, but won support to be passed in January 2010.

- The Commissioner for Human Rights, who is elected by the Parliamentary Assembly for a non-renewable term of six years since the creation of this position in 1999. Since April 2012, this position has been held by Nils Muižnieks from Latvia.
- The Conference of INGOs. (http://www.coe.int/T/NGO/default_en.asp) NGOs can participate in the INGOs Conference of the Council of Europe. Since the [Resolution (2003)8] adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 19 November 2003, they are given a "participatory status".
- Information Offices of the Council of Europe in many member states.

The CoE system also includes a number of semi-autonomous structures known as "Partial Agreements", some of which are also open to non-member states:

- The Council of Europe Development Bank in Paris
- The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines with its European Pharmacopoeia
- The European Audiovisual Observatory
- The European Support Fund *Eurimages* for the co-production and distribution of films
- The Pompidou Group – Cooperation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking in Drugs
- The European Commission for Democracy through Law, better known as the Venice Commission
- The Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO)
- The European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) which is a platform for co-operation between European and Southern Mediterranean countries in the field of major natural and technological disasters.
- The Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport, which is open to accession by states and sport associations.^[17]
- The North-South Centre of the Council of Europe in Lisbon (Portugal)
- The Centre for Modern Languages is in Graz (Austria)



European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines.

Headquarters and buildings

The seat of the Council of Europe is in Strasbourg, France. First meetings were held in Strasbourg's University Palace in 1949, but the Council of Europe soon moved into its own buildings. The Council of Europe's eight main buildings are situated in the *Quartier européen*, an area in the northeast of Strasbourg spread over the three districts of Le Wacken, La Robertsau and Quartier de l'Orangerie, where are also located the four buildings of the seat of the European Parliament in Strasbourg, the Arte headquarters and the seat of the International Institute of Human Rights.

Building in the area started in 1949 with the predecessor of the Palais de l'Europe, the House of Europe (demolished in 1977), and came to a provisional end in 2007 with the opening of the New General Office Building, later named "Agora", in 2008.^[18] The Palais de l'Europe (Palace of Europe) and the Art Nouveau Villa Schutzenberger (seat of the European Audiovisual Observatory) are in the Orangerie district, and the European Court of Human Rights, the European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines and the Agora Building are in the Robertsau district. The Agora building has been voted "best international business center real estate project of 2007" on 13 March 2008, at the MIPIM 2008.^[19] The European Youth Centre is located in the Wacken district.

Besides its headquarters in Strasbourg, the Council of Europe is also present in other cities and countries. The Council of Europe Development Bank has its seat in Paris, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe is established in Lisbon, Portugal, and the Centre for Modern Languages is in Graz, Austria. There are European Youth Centres in Budapest, Hungary, and in Strasbourg. The European Wergeland Centre, a new Resource Centre on education for intercultural dialogue, human rights and democratic citizenship, operated in cooperation with the Norwegian Government, opened in Oslo, Norway, in February 2009.^[20]

The Council of Europe has offices in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, and Ukraine; information offices in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Georgia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, the Republic of Macedonia, and Ukraine; and a projects office in Turkey. All these offices are establishments of the Council of Europe and they share its juridical personality with privileges and immunities.

Due to persistent budgetary shortages, the Council of Europe is expected to cut down significantly the number of its activities, and thus the number of its employees, from 2011 on. This will notably affect the economy of the city of Strasbourg, where a total of 2,321 people (on 1 January 2010) are doing salaried work for the CoE. Most offices in foreign countries are expected to be closed as well.^[21]

Symbols



Aerial shot of the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg



Council of Europe's Agora building

The Council of Europe created and uses as its official symbols the famous European Flag with 12 golden stars arranged in a circle on a blue background since 1955, and the European Anthem based on the Ode to Joy in the final movement of Ludwig van Beethoven's Ninth symphony since 1972.

On 5 May 1964, the 15th anniversary of its founding, the Council of Europe established 5 May as Europe Day.^[22]

Although protected by copyright, the wide private and public use of the European Flag is encouraged to symbolise a European dimension. To avoid confusion with the European Union which subsequently adopted the same flag in the 1980s, as well as other European institutions, the Council of Europe often uses a modified version with a lower-case "e" in the centre of the stars which is referred to as the "Council of Europe Logo".^{[22][23]}



Membership, observers, partners

The Council of Europe was founded on 5 May 1949 by Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Greece and Turkey joined three months later, and Iceland and Germany the next year. It now has 47 member states, with Montenegro being the latest to join.

Article 4 of the Council of Europe Statute specifies that membership is open to any "European" State. This has been interpreted liberally from the beginning (when Turkey was admitted) to include any Eurasian state with a toe-hold in Europe.

As a result, nearly all European states have acceded to the Council of Europe, with the exception of Belarus (human rights concerns), Kazakhstan (human rights concerns), Vatican City (a theocracy) and some of the states with limited recognition.

Besides the status as a full member, the Council of Europe has established other instruments for cooperation and participation of non-member states: observer, applicant, special guest, partner for democracy.

Co-operation

Non-member states

The Council of Europe works mainly through conventions. By drafting conventions or international treaties, common legal standards are set for its member states. However, several conventions have also been opened for signature to non-member states. Important examples are the Convention on Cybercrime (signed for example, by Canada, Japan, South Africa and the United States), the Lisbon Recognition Convention on the recognition of study periods and degrees (signed for example, by Australia, Belarus, Canada, the Holy See, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, New Zealand and the United States), the Anti-doping Convention (signed, for example, by Australia, Belarus, Canada and Tunisia) and the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (signed for example, by Burkina Faso, Morocco, Tunisia and Senegal as well as the European Community). Non-member states also participate in several partial

agreements, such as the Venice Commission, the Group of States Against Corruption GRECO, the European Pharmacopoeia Commission and the North-South Centre.

Invitations to sign and ratify relevant conventions of the Council of Europe on a case-by-case basis are sent to three groups of non-member entities:^[24]

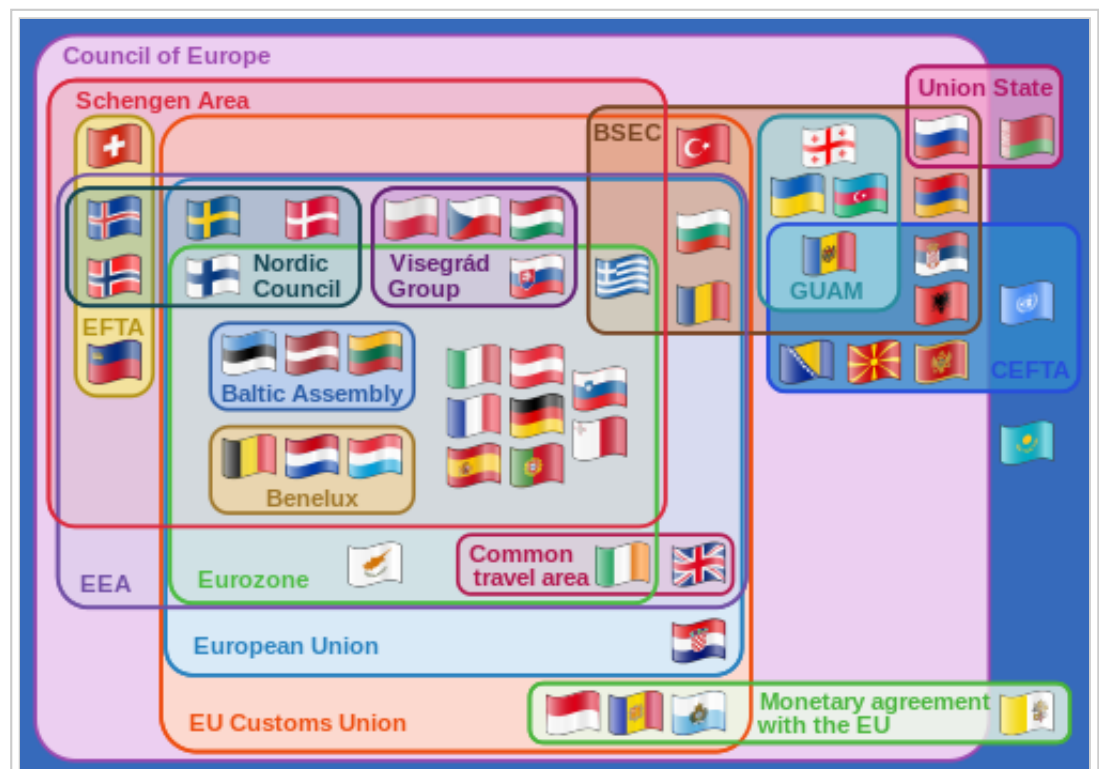
- Non-European states: Algeria, Argentina, Australia, Bahamas, Bolivia, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Chile, China, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Honduras, South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mauritius, Morocco, New Zealand, Panama, Peru, Philippines, Senegal, South Africa, Syria, Tajikistan, Tonga, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Uruguay, Venezuela and the observers Canada, Israel, Japan, Mexico, United States.
- European states: Kazakhstan, Belarus and the observer Vatican City.
- the European Community and later the European Union after its legal personality was established by the ratification of the EU's Lisbon Treaty.



European Union

The Council of Europe is not to be confused with the Council of the European Union (the "Council of Ministers") or the European Council. These belong to the European Union, which is separate from the Council of Europe, although they have shared the same European flag and anthem since the 1980s because they both work for European integration. The Council of Europe is not to be confused with the European Union itself.

The Council of Europe is an entirely separate body^[25] from the European Union. It is not controlled by it.



A clickable Euler diagram showing the relationships between various multinational European organisations and agreements.

Cooperation between the European Union and the Council of Europe has recently been reinforced, notably on culture and education as well as on the international enforcement of justice and Human Rights.^[26]

The European Union is expected to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights (the Convention). There are also concerns about consistency in case law – the European Court of Justice (the EU's court in Luxembourg) is treating the Convention as part of the legal system of all EU member states in order to prevent conflict between its judgements and those of the European Court of Human Rights (the court in Strasbourg interpreting the Convention). Protocol No. 14 of the Convention is designed to allow the EU to accede to it and the EU Treaty of Lisbon contains a protocol binding the EU to join. The EU would thus be subject to its human rights law and external monitoring as its member states currently are.^{[27][28]}

United Nations

The Council of Europe holds observer status with the United Nations and is regularly represented in the UN General Assembly. It has organised the regional UN conferences against racism and on women and co-operates with the United Nations at many levels, in particular in the areas of human rights, minorities, migration and counter-terrorism.

Non-governmental organisations

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) can participate in the INGOs Conference of the Council of Europe and become observers to inter-governmental committees of experts. The Council of Europe drafted the European Convention on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International Non-Governmental Organizations in 1986, which sets the legal basis for the existence and work of NGOs in Europe. Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights protects the right to freedom of association, which is also a fundamental norm for NGOs. The rules for Consultative Status for INGOs appended to the resolution (93)38 "On relation between the Council of Europe and non-governmental organisations", adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 October 1993 at the 500th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. On 19 November 2003 the Committee of Ministers changed the consultative status into a participatory status (Resolution Res (2003)8) (<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?Ref=Res%282003%298&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=CM&BackColorInternet=C3C3C3&BackColorIntranet=EDB021&BackColorLogged=F5D383>)“considering that it is indispensable that the rules governing the relations between the Council of Europe and NGOs evolve to reflect the active participation of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) in the Organisation's policy and work programme”.

Privileges and immunities

The General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe grants the European Council certain privileges and immunities.^[29]

The working conditions of staff are governed by the Council's staff regulations, which are public.^[30] Salaries and emoluments paid by the Council of Europe to its officials are tax-exempt on the basis of Article 18 of the General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe.^[29]

See also

- CAHDI
- CODEXTER
- Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
- Conference of Specialised Ministers
- Council of Europe Archives
- European Anti-fraud Office
- European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
- European Court of Human Rights
- European Social Charter
- European Union
- Film Award of the Council of Europe
- Group of States Against Corruption
- International organisations in Europe, and Co-ordinated organisations
- List of Linguistic Rights in Constitutions (Europe)
- North–South Centre of the Council of Europe
- Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
- Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- Venice Commission
- World Anti-Doping Agency

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External links

- Official website (<http://www.coe.int>)
- General Agreement on Privileges and Immunities of the Council of Europe (<http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/002.htm>), Paris, 2 September 1949



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