

Key facts on the Council of Europe (CoE)



- The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organization.
- The CoE has 47 member states, including 28 members of the European Union.
- The CoE represents 820 million citizens, hereunder more than 400 million women and girls.
- The CoE is an **intergovernmental organization**. It was set up on 5 May 1949, **to promote democracy and to protect human rights and the rule of law in Europe**. In 2019 the organization celebrated its 70th anniversary.
- The Treaty was signed in London by Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom, founding the Council of Europe.
- All 47 CoE member states have ratified the European Convention on Human Rights and are therefore legally bound by this treaty, a precondition for the membership at the CoE. The ECHR was signed in Rome 1950, went into force 1953.
- The CoE advocates for freedom of expression and the media, freedom of assembly, equality, and the protection of minorities.
- The CoE's work has resulted in a solid legal and policy framework in the fields of human rights and gender equality which has contributed to advancing women's rights and to bringing member states closer to de facto equality through international conventions.
- **Groundbreaking conventions on women's rights are The Istanbul Convention** (The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, in force since 2014, CETS n° 210) **and the Anti-Trafficking Convention** (The Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, in force since 2008, CETS n° 197).
- The CoE monitors member states' progress in these areas and makes recommendations through independent expert **monitoring** bodies.
- The structure of the CoE is based on four pillars: The Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and **the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations**.
- Zonta International is represented in the CoE since 1983, **enjoying participatory status since 2003**.
- Zonta is a **member of the Conference of INGOs**, the chief body representing INGOs with participatory status, the official voice of Europe's civil society. Through its official representative, Zonta International contributes to the work of the Conference and participates actively in the Committee's work to raise civil society's voice. Specifically, in issues pertaining to women's rights and gender equality. The Conference meets twice per year for a whole week in Strasbourg/France.
- Zonta International is entitled to lodge a collective complaint with the Revised Social Charter (CETS n°163).



The Conference of INGOs meets twice per year for a week at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg/France.