





MINISTERS' DEPUTIES

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Priorities of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (13 November 2024 – 14 May 2025)

As one of the Council of Europe's founding members, Luxembourg will soon be taking on the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers for the eighth time. It will do so at a crucial time for the Organisation, which celebrated its 75th Anniversary this year. Europe is currently subject to major tensions, marked by the return of war to the continent following Russia's military aggression against Ukraine and by armed conflicts on its borders, which have helped to fuel a deep crisis of multilateralism.

Aware of the risks posed to the respect for its fundamental values, the Council of Europe opened a new phase in its history, holding its fourth Summit of Heads of State and Government in Reykjavík in May 2023. The Summit was an opportunity to reframe the Organisation's strategic priorities to enable it to meet current challenges. One of its major achievements was the establishment of the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine. Since then, the Council of Europe has played a leading role in the international community's efforts to ensure that Russia is held to account for the crimes it has committed in Ukraine.

Undertakings in the areas of democracy, the environment and artificial intelligence are proof of the Council's ability to adapt and address contemporary issues. Luxembourg promises to continue along this path by aligning its presidency with the strategic priorities adopted at the Reykjavík Summit. Following the successive presidencies of Latvia, Liechtenstein, and Lithuania, which worked resolutely to implement the Reykjavík decisions, the Luxembourg Presidency will continue in this task, mustering all the Council of Europe's instruments and mechanisms to meet the challenges Europe faces.

The annual meeting of the Committee of Ministers in Luxembourg in May 2025 will be a good time to take stock of progress two years on from the Reykjavík Summit.

Luxembourg's steadfast commitment to Ukraine will be at the core of its presidency. It will ensure that the Council of Europe continues to place its expertise at the disposal of Ukraine and the millions of people affected by the conflict, focusing primarily on the rejection of impunity for crimes committed in Ukraine.

The Luxembourg Presidency will also provide an opportunity to raise the Council of Europe's profile in the member States and outside Europe. Particular emphasis will be placed on the improvement of the system of the European Convention on Human Rights, protecting vulnerable persons and promoting culture as a vector for the Organisation's fundamental values.

At a time when the fundamental values promoted by the Council of Europe over the last 75 years seem increasingly called into question, the Luxembourg Presidency will endeavour, in close dialogue with all the member States, statutory bodies, and senior representatives of the Council of Europe, to consolidate the three essential and intrinsically linked pillars of the Organisation, namely human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Website: www.coe.int/cm

Priorities of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Committee of Ministers

Rule of law and democracy – championing joint standards and policies as key levers against democratic backsliding and increasing threats in Europe

- Placing emphasis on the continued implementation of the decisions taken at the Reykjavík Summit, particularly as concerns the promotion of accountability for the crimes committed in the context of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine;
- Strengthening of the Convention system and of the European Court of Human Rights, particularly as concerns the execution of judgments and supervision of their implementation;
- Promoting a culture of democratic participation in Europe;
- Protecting key players representing and defending the rule of law and democracy, such as lawyers, ombudspersons, and journalists;
- Revitalising the commitment of young people to the democratic process at local, national, and international level.

Living together - fostering mutual respect and understanding in our diverse societies

- Raising awareness of the circumstances and rights of persons from so-called vulnerable groups;
- Promoting gender equality and combating violence against women and girls;
- Protecting and promoting the rights of children, including those of Ukrainian children;
- Enhancing the role of young people in intercultural, intergenerational, and intersectional co-existence;
- Supporting on-going work to adopt a human rights-based approach to environmental issues.

Culture, sport and heritage – vectors for promoting human rights

- Celebrating the 70th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention, highlighting the role of culture and artistic freedom as signs of societies' democratic vitality;
- Valuing culture and sport as factors of unity and togetherness in our European societies;
- Fostering a culture of respect for fundamental rights as a cornerstone of European cultural identity;
- Furthering the benefits of European cultural heritage, particularly through the Cultural Routes;
- Promoting sport and its practice as a means of championing and enhancing fundamental rights;
- Strengthening dialogue within the Council of Europe and with other international organisations to promote its heritage and increase its profile and impact on the life of European citizens.

Rule of law and democracy – championing joint standards and policies as key levers against democratic backsliding and increasing threats in Europe

The Luxembourg Presidency undertakes to actively support the implementation of decisions taken at the Reykjavík Summit. This includes steadfast support for Ukraine and promoting Council of Europe efforts to combat impunity for crimes committed by the Russian Federation in the context of its war of aggression against Ukraine. To this end, Luxembourg will continue to contribute to activities designed to encourage States to accede to the Register of Damages Caused by the War. It will support the work already under way to establish a claims commission, a damage compensation mechanism, and a special international criminal tribunal for the crime of aggression against Ukraine.

Through the European Convention on Human Rights and its over 200 reference texts and conventions, the Council of Europe acts as the "conscience of Europe". It is the Luxembourg Presidency's aim to protect this unique set of standards and to stress the importance of the European Court of Human Rights and the need for all member States to execute its judgments in full. It will encourage member States to take full advantage of the Organisation's instruments and policies to meet current challenges. Consequentially, a conference will be held in Strasbourg to promote the rule of law in Europe through the full and proper execution of the Court's judgments. The presidency will further stage an event marking the launch of the European Court of Human Rights' knowledge-sharing platform, which will be available in non-official languages and facilitate access for national courts to the Court's decisions.

In parallel, the Luxembourg Presidency will strengthen protection for key players in our democracies. In this connection, it will actively support work to finalise a Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer. It will also highlight the importance of national human rights institutions.

As a member of the Strasbourg Group of Friends for the Safety of Journalists, Luxembourg will attach particular importance to freedom of expression and the safety of journalists. As part of the Council of Europe's Journalists Matter campaign (2023-2027), a conference will be held in Luxembourg to discuss the prosecution of crimes against journalists, focusing on the efforts needed to combat impunity for such crimes.

The Luxembourg Presidency will actively promote young people's involvement in building sustainable democratic societies. It will hold a conference in partnership with the University of Luxembourg on democratic participation by young people in the digital era. The aim of this conference is to boost youth involvement in democratic life, while tackling the challenges of today's digital society. In co-operation with the Council of Europe's Youth Department and the National Youth Council of Belarus, the presidency will also support a strategic seminar on democracy and human rights in Belarus aimed at young political leaders and representatives of Belarusian civil society in exile.

Living together - fostering mutual respect and understanding in our diverse societies

Drawing on the recent **Law on Intercultural Living Together**, which came into force in Luxembourg on 1 January 2024, and on the Council of Europe's work in this area, the presidency will attach great importance to the concept of **living together** in diverse societies.

Given the upsurge in racism, intolerance, and various forms of discrimination in Europe, which are often amplified by digital tools, it is vital to combat the spread of intolerance and hate speech, which undermine the fundamental values of the Convention system and fan tension and division in our societies.

Luxembourg will place particular emphasis on combating discrimination based on real or perceived membership of a racial or ethnic group, including Travellers, on sex, sexual orientation, religion or belief, disability, age, or nationality. An **intersectional approach** will be adopted to take account of all individuals exposed to racism and intolerance because of their real or perceived membership of one or more groups, so as to comprehensively combat all forms of discrimination and to promote respect human rights.

This being so, the Luxembourg Presidency will support and encourage the efforts of the Council of Europe, in particular those of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), and the intergovernmental work of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) and the Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI). The overall goal is to promote equality for all and to build more inclusive societies, which provide effective protection against discrimination and hatred, while respecting individual diversity.

The Luxembourg Presidency will highlight an oft-neglected issue, namely the marginalisation of certain groups of people within our societies, in particular the elderly and people with disabilities. This subject will be discussed at an informal meeting of the Committee of Ministers aimed at further raising awareness at the Council of Europe of the challenges which these groups face in all our member States.

Luxembourg looks forward to playing an active part in the Mid-term Review Conference on the Strategy for the Rights of the Child (2022-2027) and in the meeting of the Platform of the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres.

In addition, in line with the mandate set out at the Reykjavík Summit, the presidency will firmly support the Council of Europe's work aimed at adopting a human rights approach to environmental issues. The presidency undertakes to work actively for the adoption of a Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law with a view to enhancing the criminal law response to harm to the environment.

What is more, Luxembourg will endeavour to defend the horizontal priorities it has pursued on a longstanding basis in all international bodies in which it is present, by guaranteeing the promotion of gender equality and efforts to combat violence against women and girls.

Culture, sport and heritage - vectors for promoting human rights

Culture, which has been central to the activities of the Council of Europe since its foundation, is much more than just an artistic tool: it is a valuable instrument for promoting the common values that unite the member States and their citizens. In all its forms, Europe's rich cultural inheritance and heritage play a key role in bringing its peoples together. European cultural diversity is an ideal vector for mutual understanding, helping European societies to unite around common values. As such, in December 2024, the Luxembourg Presidency will celebrate the 70th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention, highlighting its role as a significant step towards recognising the importance of culture as a pillar in the defence of human rights. To mark this event, the Luxembourg Minister of Culture will chair a high-level seminar in Strasbourg that will underline the importance of artistic freedom as an indicator of the vitality of democratic societies.

To complement these initiatives, the presidency will place particular emphasis upon the importance of cultural third places, access to culture by vulnerable groups, and young people's views of cultural heritage. In addition, as a committed member of the **Enlarged Partial Agreement (EPA) on Cultural Routes**, which is headquartered in Luxembourg city, the presidency will take the opportunity to promote those cultural routes which run through the country. Luxembourg will host the annual meeting of the Governing Board of the EPA on 6 and 7 May 2025.

Luxembourg will showcase the **unifying role of sport** in promoting the Council of Europe's fundamental values. The Luxembourg Presidency will support the organisation of the Annual Meeting of the Pool of International Experts on Safe Sport, which will be held in Strasbourg on 3 December 2024 and will be preceded by a seminar on *trauma-informed child safeguarding in sport*. In February 2025, the presidency will host the **closing conference of** *All-In-Plus*, a Council of Europe and European Union joint project which promotes gender equality in sport.

Being deeply committed to a culture of dialogue and openness, both towards its European neighbours and in multilateral forums, Luxembourg will take advantage of its presidency to strengthen co-operation and synergies between all member and observer States, and with the statutory organs and leaders of the Council of Europe. Furthermore, as a French-speaking country, Luxembourg will strive to promote the bilingual dimension of the Organisation. The Luxembourg Presidency aims to embody a willingness to listen and exchange views, with the aim of preserving and promoting the fundamental values of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

Programme for the Luxembourg Presidency of the Committee of Ministers 13 November 2024 – 14 May 2025

- 13 November 2024, Strasbourg **Handover between Lithuania and Luxembourg**, start of the Luxembourg Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe with the participation of Mr Xavier Bettel, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Foreign Affairs and new President of the Committee of Ministers
- 13 November 2024, Luxembourg International forum "Bridges of Solidarity Humanitarian and Social Initiatives from Cities to Cities" organised by the Luxembourg delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in the presence of Mr Max Hahn, Minister for Family Affairs, Solidarity, Living Together and Reception
- 20 November, Strasbourg **26**th plenary meeting of the Gender Equality Commission with the participation of Ms Yuriko Backes, Minister for Gender Equality and Diversity
- 21 November, Strasbourg **25**th anniversary of the office of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights "Facing the future with confidence, building on a quarter century of experience". Keynote speech by HRH Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg and participation by Ms Yuriko Backes, Minister for Gender Equality and Diversity
- 25 November, Strasbourg Lunch hosted by the Luxembourg Presidency on the occasion of the meeting between government agents before the European Court of Human Rights and the Registry of the Court
- 28 and 29 November, Luxembourg Session of the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- 3 December, Strasbourg Third annual meeting of the Pool of International Experts on Safe Sport with the participation of Mr Georges Mischo, Minister for Sport
- 5 and 6 December, Strasbourg 4th annual conference of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe (OHTE): "History in Crisi(e)s)?", with the participation of Mr Claude Meisch, Minister for Education. Children and Youth
- 12 December, Strasbourg **High-level seminar to mark 70 years of the European Cultural Convention:** "**No democracy** ⇔ **no culture** ⇔ **no democracy**", chaired by Mr Éric Thill, Minister for Culture
- 18 December, Struthof Visit by the Ministers' Deputies to Natzweiler-Struthof concentration camp
- 23 January 2025, Strasbourg Symposium on Jewish cultural heritage in Alsace, in partnership with the European Association for the Preservation and Promotion of Jewish Culture and Heritage
- January 2025, Strasbourg Informal meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on **youth participation in the digital age**
- 27 to 31 January, Strasbourg **2025 winter Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.** Statement by Mr Luc Frieden, Prime Minister, and communication by Mr Xavier Bettel, President of the Committee of Ministers
- 4 February, Strasbourg **Seminar on enhancing subsidiarity, promoting the knowledge-sharing platform of the European Court of Human Rights and superior courts dialogue**, chaired by Ms Elisabeth Margue, Minister of Justice
- 4 February, Strasbourg Conference: "Strengthening the rule of law in Europe while ensuring compliance with the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights: international and national perspectives" with the participation of Ms Elisabeth Margue, Minister of Justice
- 6 and 7 February, Vienna **Presentation of the Luxembourg Presidency's priorities to the OSCE Permanent Council,** by Mr Xavier Bettel, President of the Committee of Ministers
- 10 February, Luxembourg Meeting of the Bureau of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

- 13 February, Luxembourg Final conference of the joint EU-CoE project "All In Plus: promoting greater gender equality in sport" with the participation of Mr Georges Mischo, Minister for Sport
- 13 and 14 February, Luxembourg Conference held by the Chamber of Deputies on the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment
- 24 February, Strasbourg Commemoration by the Committee of Ministers of the start of the full-scale war of aggression by the Russian Federation against Ukraine
- March, New York Side event at the 69th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women with the participation of Ms Yuriko Backes, Minister for Gender Equality and Diversity
- 19 to 21 March, Luxembourg **High-level conference organised by the University of Luxembourg** "Democracy and youth in the digital age: evolving technologies and political participation"
- 25 to 27 March, Strasbourg **48th Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** with a statement by Mr Léon Gloden, Minister for Home Affairs
- 28 March, Sélestat Retreat with Permanent Representatives of member States to the Council of Europe
- End of March, Luxembourg **High-level Conference of National Human Rights Institutions and Ombudspersons**
- 3 and 4 April, Strasbourg Conference for the mid-term evaluation of the Strategy for the Rights of the Child 2022-2027 ("Children's rights in Action: from continuous implementation to joint innovation") with the participation of Mr Claude Meisch, Minister for Education, Children and Youth
- 7 to 11 April, Strasbourg **2025 spring session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe**. Statement by HRH Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg and communication by Mr Xavier Bettel, President of the Committee of Ministers
- 9 to 12 April, Strasbourg European Youth Centre: **strategic seminar** "A Belarusian Youth Agenda for **Democracy and Human Rights**"
- April, Strasbourg Informal meeting of the Ministers' Deputies on vulnerabilities
- 29 and 30 April, Luxembourg Conference on the prosecution of crimes against journalists: "Building the paradigm in the fight against impunity" with the participation of Ms Elisabeth Margue, Minister of Justice
- 6 and 7 May, Luxembourg Enlarged meeting of the Platform for the Council of Europe Quality Label for Youth Centres: "Youth spaces" with the participation of Mr Claude Meisch, Minister for Education Children and Youth
- 6 and 7 May, Luxembourg Annual meeting of the Governing Board of the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes
- 12 to 14 May, Strasbourg 2025 edition of the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) with the participation of a member of the Luxembourg Government
- 13 and 14 May, Luxembourg 134th annual Session of the Committee of Ministers

Cultural programme in Strasbourg

- 13 November 2024 Inauguration of the exhibition "75 years of history of the Council of Europe through its posters" by Mr Xavier Bettel, President of the Committee of Ministers. The exhibition will then move to the National University Library of Strasbourg (14 January 11 February 2025) and to the Lieu d'Europe (April and May 2025)
- 20 November 2024 **Concert to mark the start of the Luxembourg Presidency** with the pianist Jean Müller, in the presence of Their Royal Highnesses the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess (Assembly Chamber in the Palais de l'Europe)
- 25 November 2024 **Screening of the film "She's not crying, she's singing"** as part of the *Assises européennes de lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes* [European symposium on combating violence against women] (Cosmos cinema)
- 6 December **Screening of the animated film "Fox and Hare Save the Forest"** (Palais de l'Europe) in the presence of Saint Nicholas (Palais de l'Europe)
- 12 December 2024 Christmas concert by *Pueri Cantores*, Conservatoire de la Ville de Luxembourg, conducted by Pierre Nimax (Saint Paul's Church, Strasbourg)
- 27 February 2025 Literary round table and photo exhibition on "(Re)conversion. Cultural third places in Luxembourg" (Kaléidoscoop de Strasbourg)
- 3 to 19 March 2025 **Exhibition "D'Lëtzebuerger Sprooch(en)"**. Developed by the Zenter fir d'Lëtzebuerger Sprooch, it invites visitors to explore the language or languages of the country (Institute of International Relations, Strasbourg University). The exhibition will then be displayed in the Palais de l'Europe from 24 March to 4 April 2025.
- 10 to 22 March 2025 Exhibition on Council of Europe Cultural Routes in the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg (in the Rivetoile shopping mall)
- 13 March 2025 Reading and debate on the climate emergency with writer lan de Toffoli (Librairie Kléber)
- 24 March 2025 **Screening of the documentary "Schwaarze Mann un noir parmi nous"** [A black man among us] by Fränz Hausemer (Cosmos cinema)
- 9 April 2025 **Concert by the Luxembourg Philharmonic Orchestra**, conducted by Renaud Capuçon (Palais de la Musique et des Congrès)
- April 2025 Literary event and photo exhibition "Mateneen" on migration and intercultural living together (Médiathèque André Malraux)
- 9 April 2025 **Inauguration of the exhibition on stigmatisation, discrimination and persecution in our societies** by HRH Grand Duke Henri of Luxembourg (Palais de l'Europe). The exhibition will run from 9 to 18 April 2025 in the Palais. It will also be displayed in the Maison interuniversitaire des Sciences de l'Homme (MISHA) from 21 April to 5 May 2025