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|  75th anniversary website | Permanent Delegation of the Council of Europe to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in GenevaAvenue de France, 23 1202 GenevaTel : +41 22 7332441Cel: +41 78 3201411 |

The Council of Europe acted promptly to respond to the challenges posed to human rights, rule of law and democracy by the Covid-19 pandemics crisis. To this end, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe issued an information document “Respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights in the framework of the COVID-19 sanitary crisis – A toolkit for member States” ([SG/Inf(2020)11](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Frm.coe.int%2F09000016809e2d99&data=05%7C02%7Cohchr-sdgs%40un.org%7C5c2072314d2d474b06a108dc7f250094%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638525044118931433%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=Ur9Fndt%2BzM1JMoGkceRJBFKMf2mGW02IfcQa3p0bHkc%3D&reserved=0) of 7 April 2020). It provided a toolkit for dealing with unprecedented challenges faced within the context of the Covid-19 pandemics. Among other issues, it dealt with the derogation of human rights safeguarded by the European Convention on Human Rights (“Convention”) in time of emergency, such as pandemics, and the principle of legality underpinning the rule that the regime of the state of emergency and of the emergency measures should be introduced for limited duration only.  The toolkit highlighted the standards to be observed with respect to the right to life and prohibition of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment guaranteed by Convention and the right of access to health care guaranteed by the revised European Social Charter; as well as those with respect to the right to liberty and security, right to a fair trial, right to private life, freedom of conscience, freedom of expression, freedom of association; freedom of expression and information, media freedom, access to official information and prohibition of discrimination.

Given that the sanitary crisis during Covid-19 had an important impact on the freedom of expression, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe also issued an information document “The impact of the sanitary crisis on freedom of expression and media freedom” ([SG/Inf(2020)19](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=http%3A%2F%2Frm.coe.int%2F09000016809ef1c7&data=05%7C02%7Cohchr-sdgs%40un.org%7C5c2072314d2d474b06a108dc7f250094%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638525044118939573%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=QllgZpjZ1JYbEyg2YvZQ7iu5LggX2z2gpAzpfloN5bg%3D&reserved=0) of 7 July 2020). It identified areas where freedom of expression may be put under stress within the context of Covid-19 pandemics and recalled the applicable standards the member States should abide by in this field.

In the context of the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Council of Europe has also continued its work in the field of criminal law by shifting from using remote formats for inter-governmental work to a gradual, incremental use of face-to-face or hybrid formats.

Regarding initiatives to protect disadvantaged groups, the work of the Council of Europe Council for Penological Co-operation ([PC-CP](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.coe.int%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fprison%2Fcouncil-for-penological-co-operation&data=05%7C02%7Cohchr-sdgs%40un.org%7C5c2072314d2d474b06a108dc7f250094%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638525044118947598%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=%2FP098g%2FNnaYUTbBv73WLv4kXgaVfWQR9mpv%2FL8UXG%2Bk%3D&reserved=0)) is of special relevance, notably the preparation of a draft Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers regarding the Promotion of Mental Health and the Management of Persons with Mental Disorders by Prison Services and Probation Agencies, and an update of the [Recommendation (89)12 on Education in Prison](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Frm.coe.int%2F09000016804c858f&data=05%7C02%7Cohchr-sdgs%40un.org%7C5c2072314d2d474b06a108dc7f250094%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638525044118954136%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=VFYeZcMBG%2FNAxRbVd9H77KkvHW7aOJAp3DPI4glszb8%3D&reserved=0). Furthermore, the Council of Europe continued implementing its [Action Plan on Fostering International Co-operation and Investigative Strategies in Fighting the Smuggling of Migrants](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.coe.int%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fcdpc%2Fsmuggling-of-migrants%23%3A~%3Atext%3DAction%2520Plan%2520on%2520Fostering%2520International%2520Co-operation%2520and%2520Investigative%2520Strategies%2520in%2520Fighting%2520the%2520Smuggling%2520of%2520Migrants%252C%2520which%2520was%2520adopted%2520by%2520the%2520CDPC%2520in%25202020.&data=05%7C02%7Cohchr-sdgs%40un.org%7C5c2072314d2d474b06a108dc7f250094%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638525044118959805%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=4XcjO9737FROdPRgt0TXW6XTpq7ONveMukRoztvpCy4%3D&reserved=0), which was adopted by the European Committee on Crime Problems ([CDPC](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.coe.int%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fcdpc%2Fsmuggling-of-migrants&data=05%7C02%7Cohchr-sdgs%40un.org%7C5c2072314d2d474b06a108dc7f250094%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638525044118965857%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=r5m%2FOf5K4ldqhQeo2vDxjSoRCvnsrZaUapcPQUh0Tp8%3D&reserved=0)) in 2020. A [Council of Europe Network of Prosecutors on Migrant Smuggling](https://eur02.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.coe.int%2Fen%2Fweb%2Fcdpc%2Fnetwork-of-prosecutors-on-migrant-smuggling&data=05%7C02%7Cohchr-sdgs%40un.org%7C5c2072314d2d474b06a108dc7f250094%7C0f9e35db544f4f60bdcc5ea416e6dc70%7C0%7C0%7C638525044118971758%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C0%7C%7C%7C&sdata=0s8RHLmqIUaaQqAvbgc4ytX0auM20By0jFDB9pZHLVY%3D&reserved=0) (SoM) was set up -to facilitate the transnational exchange of information and good practices, as well as the gathering of evidence on relevant cases- and met in 2022 and 2023; it will reconvene in 2024 during the 2nd International Conference on SoM organised by the Council of Europe in September 2024. The CDPC was mandated to prepare a report assessing the need for and feasibility of an instrument in the area of SoM, to be finalised by the end of 2024. Synergies with the most relevant UN entities are ensured.