

Open call for input for the 4th Council of Europe Summit (Reykjavik 16-17 May 2023)



The Council of Europe has decided to hold a **4th Summit of Heads of State and Government on 16-17 May 2023 in Reykjavik, Iceland**. The Council of Europe – the continent’s oldest and leading pan-European organisation – has a critical role to play as the region’s guardian of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. The Summit strives to ensure that the Council of Europe is fit for purpose to meet current and future challenges as well as the expectations of future generations.

In this context, the Council of Europe seeks the input of all stakeholders (including international organisations, national human rights institutions, civil society organisations, research centres, policy makers, academia, lawyers, human rights defenders) to the questions below.

Please feel free to respond to all or selected questions as per expertise, relevance or focus of work. Responses should be submitted in English or French. Responses received will inform the Summit outcome documents.

Deadline for submissions: 20 February 2023.

EUROPA NOSTRA, the European Voice of Cultural Heritage committed to Cultural Heritage submitted its input on 20 February 2023.

The text of its input figures below.

A common vision

How can the Council of Europe become a more strategic and political organisation fit to promote and protect the organisation's core values?

As a civil society organisation which was born almost 60 years ago (on 29/11/1963) at the Council of Europe office premises in Paris, we strongly believe that the Council of Europe should revive its focus on culture and cultural heritage as strategic resources for strengthening the sense of togetherness and the sense of belonging to our pan-European family of countries, regions, cities, communities AND civil society.

As the oldest and largest organisation in Europe, which is value-based, the Council of Europe should give a renewed impetus to a concerted action by states, regions, cities and civil society with the aim to further strengthen cultural cooperation in Europe (especially as the Council of Europe prepares to mark the 70th anniversary of the European Cultural Convention in 2024) and also to safeguard and enhance our shared cultural heritage. Over the last decades of its existence, the Council of Europe has developed a considerable *acquis* in the field of culture and cultural heritage. This "*acquis*" ought to be celebrated, shared with other European partners, such as the European Union, OECD and OSCE, and also put to good use in response to so many challenges which Europe faces today.

The Council of Europe should also further deepen and enlarge its dialogue with civil society, which has always been one of its strengths, and it should promote the capacity building of civil society across Europe and its due participation in policy and decision-making which are prerequisites for a healthy democracy and full respect of the rule of law.

Last but not least, the Council of Europe should become a true champion of "cultural rights" as key components of the corpus of human rights of which the Council of Europe is such a vital guardian.

Meeting the challenges of today and tomorrow

What role can the Council of Europe play in ensuring accountability for Russia's aggression against Ukraine?

With its strong attachment to the full respect of the European Convention of Human Rights and the European Cultural Convention, the Council of Europe should give due importance to the safeguard of cultural rights in Ukraine, including the access to and protection of cultural heritage in Ukraine, which forms part of Europe's shared cultural heritage. Given the fact that a large number of cultural heritage sites and cultural institutions in Ukraine have become victim of Russia's war in Ukraine, and given the Council of Europe's strong focus - as part of its original mandate - both on the rule of law and on the value of culture, we urge the Council of Europe to contribute to the strong condemnation of any deliberate act of destruction/damage to cultural heritage and cultural and educational institutions, which

should be considered as war crimes as well as to the identification and collection of evidence of such acts, the perpetrators of which should be brought to justice.

The Council of Europe should also contribute to the current Europe-wide mobilisation in solidarity and in support of cultural heritage defenders in Ukraine, with the view of saving as much heritage from war destruction/damage and of restoring/reconstructing heritage sites which have suffered due to the war.

Last but not least, the Council of Europe should raise its voice against any attempts of revisionism of history, in Ukraine or elsewhere in Europe.

How can the Council of Europe create a framework for efficient action on current and future challenges (for example on issues such as environment and human rights, inequality and digital)?

The Council of Europe should use its various institutions - especially its Parliamentary Assembly and its Congress of Regional and Local Authorities - for reviving and giving much bigger importance to the vital dialogue with civil society. In the past, the PACE used to have a standing position of the "Rapporteur for Cultural Heritage" and used to have very fruitful exchanges with Europa Nostra and other organisations of civil society of cultural heritage-related issues, including concrete cases of endangered heritage. Such exchanges should be revived and made strong again since they will help the Council of Europe to undertake a more efficient action in response to so many emergencies and challenges.

Given the fact that the Council of Europe has 46 Member States, it constitutes an invaluable framework for dialogue and action with the largest number of European countries, including the countries which are not (yet) members of the European Union, with a strong focus on the indispensable dialogue with civil society which is currently confronted with many challenges, even threats, in some of the member states of the Council of Europe.

An organisation fit for purpose

What should the role of the Council of Europe be in the evolving European multilateral architecture and global governance?

The "Unique Selling Point" (USP) of the Council of Europe should be its strong emphasis on the core values of the European project, including the full respect of human rights (including cultural rights and the rights to cultural heritage), the defence and promotion of democracy and the rule of law.

Another USP of the Council of Europe should be its dedication to promoting excellence related to culture and cultural heritage as vital vectors of mutual respect and understanding, of intercultural dialogue, of peace and reconciliation as well as of climate action, social inclusion, and sustainable urban and rural development.

Last but not least, the Council of Europe should give an ever-growing importance to the vital role of education, including history education, with an indispensable European dimension.

How can the Council of Europe become a more modern organisation with an adapted framework for better supporting member states and better responding to current and future challenges?

In pursuit of its traditional attachment and openness to dialogue with civil society, the Council of Europe should adapt its functioning to embrace the creativity and dynamism of civil society organisations operating at European level which are key allies and “relays” of the Council of Europe's core values and key strategic priorities. By opening its organisational and decision-making structures to representative voices of civil society, the Council of Europe can only gain in its relevance and outreach, thus becoming an organisation "fit for purpose" and responding better to so many current and future challenges for Europe's society, environment and economy.