

# Foreword

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The Council of Europe's primary goal is to achieve a greater unity between its 43 member states in safeguarding individual freedom, political liberty and the rule of law, principles which form the basis of all genuine democracy and which touch the lives of all Europeans in many different ways. All its member states are under an obligation to make freedom, human dignity and the well-being of the individual the firm principles of government action. Today, the Organisation embodies the shared commitment of some 800 million Europeans to human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Since its creation in 1949 the Council has been a force for peace and co-operation, anchored in our common heritage, in human rights and democracy. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the spread of democratic values throughout Europe, the Organisation gained a new political dimension. Indeed, the Council of Europe's enlargement is now almost complete.

This booklet gives an insight into the Council of Europe, what it is and how it works. It describes the role played by the key institutional bodies of our Organisation which work together to promote and consolidate security and democracy in the new Greater Europe. This is a challenge for an Organisation whose central goal is unity in diversity for Europeans with a common heritage and equal rights. Now we must concentrate our efforts on putting democratic values into practice throughout the continent.

