

# **COMMISSION ON SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY FOR DEVELOPMENT (CSTD)**

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## **Submissions from entities in the United Nations system, international organizations and other stakeholders on their efforts in 2025 to implement the outcomes of the WSIS**

**Submission by**

**Council of Europe**

This submission was prepared as an input to the report of the UN Secretary-General on "Progress made in the implementation of and follow-up to the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society at the regional and international levels" (to the 29<sup>th</sup> session of the CSTD), in response to the request by the Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 2006/46, to the UN Secretary-General to inform the Commission on Science and Technology for Development on the implementation of the outcomes of the WSIS as part of his annual reporting to the Commission.

**DISCLAIMER:** The views presented here are the contributors' and do not necessarily reflect the views and position of the United Nations or the UN Trade and Development.

## Council of Europe progress made in 2025 in the implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on the Information Society

29/10/2025

### WSIS Action Lines (for information)

- C1. The **role of public governance authorities** and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development
- C2. Information and communication infrastructure
- C3. **Access to information** and knowledge
- C4. Capacity building
- C5. Building **confidence and security** in the use of ICTs
- C6. **Enabling environment**
- C7. ICT Applications
- C8. Cultural **diversity** and identity, linguistic diversity and local content
- C9. **Media**
- C10. **Ethical dimensions** of the Information Society
- C11. International and regional **cooperation**

### Executive summary

Part One: An executive summary (half a page) of activities undertaken by all stakeholders, progress made, and any obstacles encountered.

The Council of Europe, has continued the implementation of its [Digital Agenda 2022-2025](#) focused on consolidating the existing digital regulation, responding to new challenges while taking advantage of the opportunities provided by new and emerging digital technologies, and accompanying governments for a digital transition with European values.

A large body of public policies and laws as well as numerous capacity building programmes in the area of information society and digital governance, freedom of expression and media freedom, AI and privacy, cyber safety and cybersecurity, digital literacy and non-discrimination, diversity and justice, have been promoted among the 46 member states of the Council of Europe and towards the global community. These efforts were supported by multi-stakeholder collaboration among governments, tech platforms, and civil society, fostering advancements in digital governance and e-democracy.

The extension of the global reach of the [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#) (81 Parties) and the [Data Protection Convention 108](#) (55 Parties) has bolstered international cooperation on cyber issues and privacy. The opening for signature in September 2024 of the Council of Europe [Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law](#), as well as the adoption of the supporting HUADERIA risk-assessment methodology has opened a global and inclusive regulatory pathway for this new technology. The Framework Convention counts already 17 signatories (including the European Union which signed on behalf of its 27 member states). The [Declaration of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on the World Summit on the Information Society \(WSIS\) +20 review and the extension of the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum \(IGF\)](#) has underscored

continuous support for a transparent multi-stakeholder governance of a free and safe internet for all.

## Analytical overview

Part Two: A brief (1–2 pages) analytical overview of trends and experiences in implementation at the national, regional and international levels and by all stakeholders, highlighting achievements and obstacles since WSIS and taking into account the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This could include information on the facilitation process of implementation, monitoring and cooperation among stakeholders.

### Achievements in WSIS Implementation

**At the national level**, governments have taken on active roles in regulating and facilitating digital access and governance. The proliferation of e-governance systems has enabled more accessible public services and strengthened democratic participation. Countries have embraced digital platforms to provide essential services, from healthcare to education, while the adoption of national laws on privacy, cybersecurity, and freedom of expression have been pivotal in safeguarding digital rights.

The implementation of the Council of Europe's [Digital Agenda](#) has been instrumental in encouraging member states to align their national policies with international digital rights standards. The proliferation of frameworks such as the [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#) has also facilitated the development of national cybercrime laws, improving the capacity of criminal justice systems to handle cybercrimes and electronic evidence. The Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law has received broad recognition as the first global instrument to manage AI-related risks to human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

**Regional cooperation** has been a cornerstone of progress in WSIS implementation. The Council of Europe, through its national and regional programs, has promoted multi-stakeholder engagement to ensure digital inclusivity and the safeguarding of human rights online. Cooperation on data protection in Europe and beyond, as exemplified by [Convention 108 \(and its modernised version, "Convention 108+"\)](#), and the collaborative efforts in promoting [media freedom](#), have strengthened legal frameworks and institutional capacities across Europe and neighbouring regions.

Hosting the European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EURODIG) in Strasbourg (June 2025) and supporting the South Eastern European Dialogue on Internet Governance (SEEDIG) in Athens (October 2025) have contributed to strengthening digital governance on the continent.

Capacity-building projects, such as those implemented by the Council of Europe [Cybercrime Programme Office \(C-PROC\)](#), have enabled significant training and legislative improvement efforts in Europe, the Balkans, the South Mediterranean and other regions of the world. These global efforts ensure that countries with varying levels of digital development can benefit from shared knowledge, support, and resources, contributing to a more harmonised and effective digital governance structure. This included support aimed at harmonising legislation on cybercrime and electronic evidence in line with international standards on human rights and data protection; training of judges, prosecutors and law enforcement officers; the establishment of specialised cybercrime and digital forensic units; as well as the improvement of interagency and public–private cooperation, including through training exercises. Efforts have also focused on protecting children against sexual violence online and enhancing the effectiveness of international cooperation. The response of countries to ransomware, election interference and cyberviolence was enhanced through dedicated activities and practical exercises.

**Internationally**, the Council of Europe's involvement in forums such as the [EuroDIG](#) and the Internet Governance Forum ([IGF](#)) has strengthened the global dialogue on internet governance, privacy, cybersecurity, and AI. The rise of international standards and cooperation in areas such as freedom of expression, protection of personal data, and combating cybercrime reflects the sustained international collaboration towards building an inclusive information society.

The Council of Europe's initiatives on [digital citizenship education](#) and media literacy further demonstrate the growing global commitment to ensuring that all individuals have the skills and knowledge necessary to engage in the digital economy and society. Multiple events dedicated to the Council of Europe Year of Digital Citizenship 2025 have raised awareness and disseminated best practices throughout the continent. Moreover, international campaigns such as "[Journalists Matter](#)" have raised awareness of the critical role media freedom plays in democratic governance.

## Emerging Trends and Challenges

One of the most significant trends shaping the implementation of WSIS outcomes is the **widespread adoption of AI** and other emerging technologies. AI is now integral to public services, education, and cybersecurity, presenting both opportunities and risks. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law, opened for signature in September 2024, underscores the need to ensure that human rights, democracy, and the rule of law are protected in the era of AI-driven services.

As digital technologies have proliferated, so have the risks associated with their misuse. **Privacy concerns, online safety, and the threat of cybercrime** have prompted governments and international organisations to enact new laws and frameworks. The [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#) and its additional protocols have been crucial in harmonising efforts to combat cyber threats across borders. Nevertheless, balancing the fight against cybercrime with human rights, such as freedom of expression and the right to privacy, remains essential.

The digital revolution has underscored the importance of **digital literacy** as a core competency for all citizens. The Council of Europe's [Digital Citizenship Education Programme](#) has made significant strides in preparing individuals to navigate the complexities of the digital world. However, the rapid pace of technological change, including the integration of [AI in education](#), continues to pose challenges for educators and learners alike. Ensuring that citizens are equipped to engage in digital economies and democracies is a key priority for the future. Digital literacy, combined with media literacy and information literacy, will be essential in addressing issues such as disinformation, online safety, and digital empowerment.

While notable progress has been made, several obstacles continue to impede the full realisation of WSIS outcomes:

**Digital Divide:** The lack of universal access to the internet and digital technologies remains a significant barrier to achieving a truly inclusive information society. Rural areas, marginalised communities, and less-developed economies are disproportionately affected by this divide, limiting their ability to benefit from digital services and opportunities.

**Governance Complexity:** The digital ecosystem's rapid evolution has outpaced regulatory frameworks at both national and international levels. Governments and stakeholders must

constantly adapt to new technologies and challenges, requiring ongoing dialogue, cooperation, and capacity-building efforts.

**Cyber Threats:** The growing sophistication of cyber threats and the misuse of surveillance technologies present serious risks to human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. International cooperation on matters related to cybercrime and electronic evidence remains critical. However, achieving the right balance between the interests of law enforcement and respect for human rights continues to be a matter of priority.

In **conclusion**, the implementation of WSIS outcomes at national, regional, and international levels has yielded significant achievements, particularly in digital governance, cybersecurity, and human rights protection. However, the challenges posed by digital inequality, evolving technologies, and cybersecurity threats require continued cooperation, innovation, and vigilance. The [Declaration of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers on the World Summit on the Information Society \(WSIS\) +20 review and the extension of the mandate of the Internet Governance Forum \(IGF\)](#) has underscored the necessity to shape digital transformation and standard setting with the public interest at the forefront. In addition to this, the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law represents an important opportunity for human-rights focused regulation of this revolutionary technology worldwide.

## **Innovative Policies, Programs, and Projects for WSIS Outcomes Implementation**

Part Three: A brief description (1–2 pages) of:

(a) Innovative policies, programmes and projects which have been undertaken by all stakeholders to implement the outcomes. Where specific targets or strategies have been set, progress in achieving those targets and strategies should be reported.

In 2025 the Council of Europe has continued the implementation of its [Digital Agenda 2022-2025](#) which focuses on consolidating the existing digital regulation, responding to new challenges and taking advantage of the opportunities provided by emerging digital technologies, and accompanying governments for a digital transition with European values. The strategy aims to ensure that digital governance supports democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

**C1. Enhancing the role of governments and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development**, progress was made to further extend the global reach of the [Budapest Convention on Cybercrime](#) (81 Parties) and the [Data Protection Convention 108](#) (55 Parties), bolstering international cooperation on cyber issues and privacy. The Council of Europe's [Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law](#) currently counts 17 signatories<sup>1</sup>. In addition, the following states joined the Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAI) as observers: Ghana, Cameroon and Ecuador.

In November 2024, the Council of Europe launched the HUDERIA Methodology for the risk and impact assessment of AI systems from the point of view of human rights, democracy and

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<sup>1</sup> Andorra, Georgia, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Montenegro, Norway, Republic of Moldova, San Marino, Switzerland, United Kingdom, Ukraine, Uruguay, Canada, European Union, Israel, Japan and the United States (as of 31 October 2025).

the rule of law. Several supporting initiatives have followed: the HUSERIA Model, containing materials and resources to support implementation; capacity building via the HUSERIA Academy; and dialogue with the private sector via the HUSERIA Platform. This was also complemented by the publication of the updated “The administration and you”-handbook to take into account the increasing use of AI, the Resource Centre on Cyberjustice and AI, as well as a conference on “IT and better election governance”.

**C3. Access to information and knowledge** was promoted through further implementation of the [Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents](#) (Tromsø Convention), the only binding international legal instrument to recognise to everyone the right to access official documents. The Convention currently has 17 Parties, with Spain becoming a Party in 2024 as well as North Macedonia and Latvia becoming Parties in 2025. The Council of Europe Access Info Group, responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Convention, examined the legislation of 11 of the Parties to the Convention in the [Baseline Evaluation Reports](#) and provided [recommendations and conclusions](#) in respect of these states.

In 2024, the Council of Europe’s European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice ([CEPEJ](#)) has issued guidelines for the online publication of court decisions and access to legal knowledge, advocating for a comprehensive, non-discriminatory and accessible publication strategy.

**C4. Capacity building** is one of the priorities of the Council of Europe, which continuously implements projects in the fields of media and freedom of expression, privacy and action against cybercrime, digital literacy and strengthening of the judiciary. For example, the [Cybercrime Programme Office \(C-PROC\)](#) implements annually over 400 capacity building activities on cybercrime and electronic evidence. Multiple [cooperation programmes on the new digital media environment](#) continue in the Western Balkans, Eastern Europe, the South Mediterranean region (MENA) and other regions of the world.

The online Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals ([HELP](#)) training-platform has extended its reach and depth, reaching 60 course in 2025 (including new national versions), and has seen a continued augmentation of the number of users of these courses, as a prime example of how to make full use of digital technologies to reinforce access to information and knowledge-sharing about the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). HELP users went from 85,000 in January 2022 to 153,000 in mid-2025.

## **C5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs**

Providing efficient tools backed up by safeguards is of great importance. As of 31 October 2025, 51 States had signed the [Second Additional Protocol to the Convention on Cybercrime \(on enhanced cooperation and disclosure of electronic evidence\)](#), two of which have already ratified it. This instrument provides efficient tools for enhanced international cooperation, backed by strong safeguards to ensure the protection of human rights (including the protection of personal data) and the rule of law. As of 31 October 2025, the first [Additional Protocol concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature](#) had 38 Parties (and a further 9 had signed the Protocol). The [Octopus Cybercrime Community](#) online platform continued to function as an important tool for information-sharing and cooperation on cybercrime and electronic evidence.

In accordance with the [2022 – 2025 Action plan: “Digitalisation for a better justice”](#), two new instruments were released: the [Information note on the Use of Generative AI by judicial professionals](#) and the [CEPEJ evaluation report](#) on the functioning of the judicial systems and the status of the digital transformation of the judiciary.

Capacity building programmes on the impact of AI on equality and non-discrimination, in partnership with equality bodies and other public institutions, have been ongoing since 2021.

#### **C6. Action line C6 Enabling environment**

As part of a [TSI project](#), the Council of Europe, in collaboration with the European Union, conducted research activities to identify solutions to improve strategic and regulatory responses to the risks of online gambling and video gaming addictions among children and youth. The research also mapped prevention and treatment programmes available in the nine EU member states participating in this joint project. Building on this preliminary work, tailored support will be provided in 2026 to enhance national strategies, pilot interventions and implement awareness-raising activities. Addressing these risks will help identify measures to tackle other Internet use-related risks particularly affecting younger generation and promote a coordinated European approach to ensuring a safe and healthy digital environment for children and young people.

#### **C7. ICT Applications**

The organisation also participates actively in the digitalisation of justice and deployment of AI systems, e.g. in the 2024 Human Rights Council Side Event on the human rights implications of digital technologies in the administration of justice, and the Spanish Forum on Digital Transformation of Justice. A constant regional dialogue is maintained through its [European Cyberjustice Network](#) (ECN). In addition, the Council of Europe European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ) is member of the World Bank's "[Digital Justice Working Group](#)".

#### **C8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content**

The 2025 Conference "Ensuring quality education in the AI era – Introducing the Council of Europe Compass for AI and Education" promoted the principle of empowering learners for the Age of AI. The "No Hate Speech Week 2025" was held in June in Strasbourg. The [European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025](#) has provided a platform for member states to set common goals, exchange good practices, measure achievements and define together a roadmap for the future.

The HISTOLAB joint project with the EU has created multiple ICT teaching tools and resources to promote the teaching of history based on inclusivity and multi-perspectivity. The [Digital Hub](#) is an online platform for exchange between experts and institutions. The [Tutorial Series](#) showcases innovative methods for teaching more diverse topics such as gender history and Roma history and culture. The [Toolkit for History Classes: Debunking Fake News and Fostering Critical Thinking](#) is a guide for teachers to show their students how to recognise the manipulation of history that is often used to target minority communities, also in the context of disinformation they encounter online today.

### **C9. Media**

A Recommendation [on strategic lawsuits against public participation](#) (SLAPPs) was issued in 2024. The Council of Europe [Campaign for the Safety of Journalists](#) (2023-2027) has continued, aiming at improving the safety of journalists, offline and online, and protecting media freedom across the continent, and several [ongoing cooperation projects](#) have provided support to Council of Europe member states.

### **C10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society**

The Council of Europe advocates for an ethical use of digital tools and AI through the CEPEJ's "[Ethical Charter on the use of artificial intelligence \(AI\) in judicial systems and their environment](#)". An "[Assessment Tool](#)" was launched in 2024 to ensure that the Ethical Charter's principles are better implemented in practice.

In the framework of the [Digital Partnership with technology companies](#), a study on the [Impact of the Metaverse on Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy](#) was published jointly with the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE) and a report on [Risks and opportunities of the Metaverse](#) was issued by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

### **C11. International and regional cooperation**

The Council of Europe actively participated and supported internet and digital governance forums including the global [IGF](#), [ICANN](#), [RightsCon](#), and the regional [EuroDIG](#) and [SEEDIG](#) forums as well as the intergovernmental co-operation initiative [GlobalPolicy.AI](#) to promote global co-operation on AI. It hosted the 2025 edition of EuroDIG. In September 2025, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Secretary General of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to bring the benefits of tech to people everywhere in an efficient, safe, easy and affordable manner, in line with human rights-based approaches.

## Future actions

(b) Future actions or initiatives to be taken, regionally and/or internationally, and by all stakeholders, to improve the facilitation and ensure full implementation in each of the action lines and themes, especially with regard to overcoming those obstacles identified in Part Two above. You are encouraged to indicate any new commitments made to further implement the outcomes.

### **C1. The role of public governance authorities and all stakeholders in the promotion of ICTs for development**

Council of Europe digital governance-related conventions addressing [privacy](#), [cybercrime](#), [AI](#), and other areas will be further promoted globally to ensure safety, security and inclusion of users worldwide. New standards are being developed on enhancing data protection, including biometrics, within the framework of vote and elections; on developing a “digital identity” in the context of migration; on addressing neuroscience-related data protection issues; along with a risk assessment tool for AI systems.

### **C4. Capacity building**

The Council of Europe will continue supporting member states in implementing multiple projects in fields such as [media freedom and freedom of expression](#), [privacy](#), [action against cybercrime](#), [digital transformation](#) and the [strengthening of the judiciary](#).

The online Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals ([HELP](#)) training-platform will extend its reach and depth, providing new courses and adding new-national languages.

### **C5. Building confidence and security in the use of ICTs**

A Committee of Experts on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls ([GEC/PC-eVIO](#)), has prepared a draft Recommendation on combating technology-facilitated violence against women and girls.

It also prepares a recommendation on equality and non-discrimination, with the aim of supporting member states, as well as public and private actors, in promoting equality, including gender equality, and preventing and combating discrimination, throughout the lifecycle of AI systems.

Capacity building programmes on the impact of AI on equality and non-discrimination, in partnership with equality bodies and other public institutions, will continue into 2026.

### **C8. Cultural diversity and identity, linguistic diversity and local content**

The “No Hate Speech Week 2026” will continue awareness raising for a safe online space. The capacity building programmes on constructing effective counter-narrative strategies to push back against online hate with human rights-based messaging will be extended with new European and national level training courses, additional training materials and networking events.

The follow-up to the [European Year of Digital Citizenship Education 2025](#) will continue the exchange of good practices in accordance with its road map for the future.

### **C9. Media**

New standards and policy documents are in preparation by the Steering Committee on Media and Internet Society ([CDMSI](#)), notably on the implications of generative AI for freedom of expression; on online safety and empowerment of content creators and users; on countering disinformation; on immersive reality applications and their implications for freedom of expression; and on Indicators for media and information literacy strategies at national level.

[Several reports](#) are in preparation by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, notably on public regulation of the freedom of expression on digital platforms, on media concentration and threats to media pluralism and independence, on eliminating gender stereotypes in the media, and on AI and gender equality.

### **C10. Ethical dimensions of the Information Society**

The Council of Europe International Cooperation Group on Drugs and Addiction (Pompidou Group) is implementing from October 2024 to September 2026 a [co-operation project](#) co-funded by the European Union to support 9 EU public authorities in enhancing their responses to the challenges relating to the use of online gambling and gaming among children and youth. Addressing these risks will contribute to identifying actions regarding other Internet use-related risks particularly prevalent among the younger generation and to promoting a coordinated approach in a digital Europe for ensuring a safe internet environment for children and young people.

### **C11. International and regional cooperation**

The Council of Europe will continue to actively participate and support internet and digital governance forums including the [IGF](#) and the global AI governance initiatives, as well as the regional [SEEDIG](#) and [EuroDIG](#) forums.