

Enhancing Cooperation Between the OSCE and the Council of Europe

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Abstract

The Council of Europe (CoE) and the OSCE both work to ensure human rights, the rule of law, democracy, and stability in Europe. Both organizations struggle with deteriorating multilateralism and the erosion of compliance with shared norms in Europe. This contribution discusses the cooperation between the CoE and the OSCE and how it can be deepened. Governments should provide more political support, personnel, and funding to the two organizations. Specifically, we recommend: 1) enhancing communication at the political level by energizing the CoE–OSCE Coordination Group and reviving the idea of holding “2+2” senior officials’ meetings; and 2) promoting and funding more interaction between the two organizations in countries where both have field presences, while ensuring that they are giving compatible political and legal advice.

Keywords

OSCE, Council of Europe, European Union, international organizations, field operations

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Introduction¹

The Council of Europe (CoE) and the OSCE are both regional international organizations working to ensure stability in Europe. As such, they are natural partners with a well-established and long-standing

relationship. Both promote human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law.

In Europe and elsewhere, we are seeing eroding compliance with the norms that enabled dialogue, security building, and trust among states and societies after

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the end of the East–West conflict. Public trust in democratic institutions is decreasing and political radicalization growing. Given this situation, one would expect governments to ensure close cooperation between the CoE and the OSCE. However, while improving cooperation has repeatedly been a topic of discussion between the CoE and the OSCE over the past two decades, it is not currently a priority for member/participating States.

The paper has a twofold purpose: to analyse the current state of cooperation between the CoE and the OSCE and to suggest ways of deepening it. The paper starts from the premise that enhanced interaction between the CoE and the OSCE could mitigate some of the challenges facing Europe.

We argue that cooperation between the organizations at the expert level needs to be enhanced and complemented by more substantial interaction at the level of leadership and senior management, particularly in the CoE–OSCE Coordination Group, where communication is overly ritualized. Moreover, we suggest reviving the idea of holding “2+2” senior officials’ meetings. We also recommend greater interaction in countries where both organizations run field presences. European Union (EU) capitals, in particular, should better utilize the OSCE and the CoE as two central actors for ensuring stability in Europe.

The paper is based on interviews conducted with representatives of the two organizations in Strasbourg, The Hague, Vienna, and Warsaw between September and December 2017 and a series of follow-up interviews in 2020. It also draws

on an analysis of documents adopted to regulate and formalize relations between both organizations.

The first section describes existing cooperation between the OSCE and the CoE. The second outlines political and structural obstacles to closer cooperation. The third and final section offers recommendations to governments and the executive structures of the two organizations on how cooperation could be deepened.

OSCE–CoE interaction

The CoE and the OSCE each work to promote security and stability in Europe in their own specific ways. The OSCE, the world’s largest regional security organization under Chapter VIII of the United Nations (UN) Charter, is an inclusive forum for negotiations. Its 57 participating States regularly discuss security matters in the Permanent Council and the Forum for Security Cooperation in Vienna. The OSCE also has an extensive network of field operations and is the continent’s largest conflict manager.

With 47 member states, the CoE, in turn, contributes to stability in Europe by advocating human rights, democracy, and the rule of law, in particular through adopting and supporting the implementation of international agreements and conventions. The European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (1950) and the more than 220 other conventions and international legal provisions (along with the extensive apparatus for their imple-

mentation) help to protect the rights of those who reside within their jurisdiction. The CoE's legal instruments and the OSCE's norm-setting political commitments and strong field presence complement one another well.²

The two organizations have a well-established and longstanding relationship. They have on various occasions emphasized “the flexible and pragmatic character”³ of their cooperation and their fundamental intention to “complement and reinforce each other”.⁴ At the expert and operational level, the organizations work together closely in a relationship based on complementarity, transparency, democratic accountability, and mutual respect for each other's mandates, membership, and autonomy.

However, deepening or expanding this cooperation is hampered at the level of high-ranking officials and political leaders, where communication is sparse or overly ritualized. The situation is similar in the field, where there is room for improvement when it comes to interaction and coordination.

Established modalities

Flexibility and pragmatism are the guiding principles of the four key documents that formally regulate cooperation between the CoE and the OSCE, with the intention of avoiding duplication and making best use of their comparative advantages (see text box).

Documents regulating cooperation between the Council of Europe and the OSCE

1. CoE/OSCE, Relations Between the Council of Europe and the OSCE: Common Catalogue of Cooperation Modalities, SEC.GAL/30/00, 4 April 2000 [OSCE], and CM(2000)52, 25 April 2000 [CoE].
2. OSCE, Enhanced Cooperation Between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE), Permanent Council Decision PC.DEC/637, 2 December 2004.
3. OSCE, Cooperation Between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe, Permanent Council Decision PC.DEC/670, 28 April 2005.
4. CoE/OSCE, Declaration on Cooperation Between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, 17 May 2005.

These documents provide a set of working modalities that include:

- mutual representation at meetings of the decision-making bodies and the parliamentary assemblies, and mutual liaison;
- the Coordination Group, established in 2004⁵ as a regular top-level meeting format to discuss cooperation within four formally agreed thematic areas (the Group's potential is discussed below);

- high-level “2+2” meetings of the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and CoE President, the two Secretaries General, and heads of institutions and senior officials;
- “2+2” meetings at the level of senior officials, parliamentary meetings, joint meetings with the participation of experts from capitals, and representatives of the secretariats (both “2+2” formats are not in use but could be activated – see recommendations below);
- high-level tripartite meetings between the Chairpersons and Secretaries General of the OSCE and the CoE, as well as the Director General of the United Nations Office in Geneva, and others (held annually from 1993 until 2011);⁶
- cooperation between CoE and OSCE institutions based on the above-mentioned agreed areas of cooperation;
- secretarial cooperation and information exchange;
- ad-hoc contacts and consultations, including desk-to-desk meetings.⁷

A number of working arrangements, memoranda of understanding, and exchanges of letters between the two organizations have aimed to additionally facilitate interaction over the years. The exchange of letters between the Director of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the CoE Secretary General on areas of cooperation (2019) is a recent example.

The framework of cooperation is applied with varying degrees of effectiveness at the different organizational levels:

rather sparsely and inflexibly at the higher political level (namely in the Coordination Group), intensively in interactions between the organizations’ institutions at the working level, and unevenly in the field.

Fixed modalities of high-level communication

Communication between the CoE and the OSCE at the political level is challenging. The Coordination Group, established in 2004, is the official format for high-level meetings between the two organizations. The Group convenes twice a year, the venue alternating between Strasbourg and Vienna. (On 13 November 2020, the group met for the thirty-second time, for the second time online due to COVID-19 restrictions.) Some view the original agreement to “meet as necessary and at least every six months”⁸ as a commitment to more frequent communication. Depending on the thematic focus, the list of CoE participants includes the Chairperson and Bureau of the Ministers’ Deputies, the Chair of the Rapporteur Group on External Relations, and Secretariat representatives. The list of OSCE participants includes representatives of the Troika (previous, current and incoming Chair), the Secretariat, including the Office of the Special Representative and Co-ordinator for Combating Trafficking in Human Beings, and the institutions, in particular the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) and ODIHR.

The formal agenda of the Group's meetings is highly ritualized, limited to four fixed areas of cooperation, namely (a) the fight against terrorism, (b) the fight against trafficking in human beings, (c) the promotion of tolerance and non-discrimination, and (d) the protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities.⁹ This leaves little room for quickly responding to events and trends. The four areas were initially conceived as a starting point for discussions, but the list was never expanded. This is mainly due to lack of consensus among the participating States, for some of which potential further subject areas are controversial. Even within the four thematic areas, sharp disagreements exist on addressing matters such as minority issues, tolerance and non-discrimination, and gender mainstreaming.

Flexible interaction at the working level

Cooperation at the working level between the CoE and the OSCE is less structured but much more developed than the Coordination Group's activities. Senior officials of both organizations appreciate the excellent ties at the expert level. There is a high level of mutual awareness of activities, particularly between ODIHR and the European Commission for Democracy through Law, better known as the Venice Commission. Joint work often follows established procedures. Several OSCE field operations exchange information with the CoE and organize joint events and projects pertaining to their respective mandates.

However, these are rarely reflected in the Coordination Group meetings or in reports to the member/participating States.

ODIHR leads joint election observation missions with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. The two assemblies hold frequent meetings, and cooperation between them (as well as with the European Parliament and, from time to time, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe) is assessed as excellent. Election observation is the flagship joint activity, visible to the broad public in many countries.

There are thematic consultations between ODIHR and the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights, who is a regular guest at OSCE forums. Ties also exist between OSCE institutions and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations, and the European Court of Human Rights. CoE officials underline best practices of cooperation such as mutual invitations of senior OSCE representatives to high-level meetings, the OSCE's participation in the CoE Steering Committees and their subordinate bodies, and interaction with OSCE field operations.¹⁰

The institutions of both organizations systematically make use of each other's decisions, judgements, guidelines, and other publications as legal and political reference points. The Venice Commission and ODIHR have a long tradition, based on a cooperation agreement, of jointly producing opinions and guide-

lines, e.g. on freedom of religion, freedom of peaceful assembly, and freedom of association.¹¹ Cooperation is particularly intensive in those areas where guidelines have been drawn up.

ODIHR works not only with the Venice Commission on legislation reviews and opinions and with PACE on elections, but also with the CoE Secretariat on topics of mutual concern. These include promoting tolerance and non-discrimination and protecting human rights (including of minorities such as Roma and Sinti), supporting the work of human rights defenders, and action against hate crime. Experts from the institutions meet regularly, exchange information, share reports, and engage in common endeavours. ODIHR systematically uses the country reports and policy recommendations of the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) in its capacity-building work, while ECRI uses ODIHR's hate crime data in its country reports. The Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities (FCNM) frequently refers to ODIHR hate crime data in its country reports and to the HCNM's thematic recommendations and guidelines. In turn, the HCNM uses the opinions of the Advisory Committee on the FCNM and the reports of the Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages. Visits by the HCNM to Strasbourg and Venice to discuss country-related minority matters with high-level representatives is established practice.

An exchange of letters between ODIHR Director Ingibjörg Sólrún

Gísladóttir and CoE Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić in November 2019 underscored and served to alert expert teams to the areas of cooperation between ODIHR and the CoE.¹² A similar correspondence between the CoE and the HCNM or the Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) could be considered.

Uneven cooperation in the field

Interaction in the field is the cornerstone of OSCE–CoE cooperation. Both organizations have numerous field presences. The CoE runs 17 external offices with different profiles in different regions, along with four liaison offices and an office in Paris. Among them are countries where the OSCE does not have a presence or is not permanently stationed, such as Turkey and the three South Caucasus states. As of 2020, the OSCE runs 16 field operations, including five in Central Asia, where the CoE is not present, and has three institutions that also conduct work in the field. There is considerable overlap between the two organizations' field presences in South-Eastern and Eastern Europe.

Cooperation between the OSCE field operations and the CoE external offices has developed unevenly. In Ukraine, where both organizations enlarged their presences after 2013–2014, cooperation is relatively advanced. Based on a memorandum of cooperation, the organizations hold biannual meetings and have integrated their activities in an EU/CoE/OSCE action plan. Excellent synergies

exist here, for example with respect to justice sector reforms, where the CoE and the OSCE Project Co-ordinator in Ukraine are working together to support reforming the prosecutor general's office, with the OSCE relying, *inter alia*, on European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judges in its training activities. In other countries, there is a need for more systematic interaction. This is the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina, for example, where both organizations have almost identical priorities (as laid down in the CoE Action Plan and the mandate of the OSCE Mission) and work with the same partners and donors. In general, cooperation in the field is difficult where the political context is sensitive, EU integration dynamics are slowing down, or host states are distancing themselves from the OSCE presence and activities. This is often due to the alleged stigma of field presences being deployed in countries with democratic deficits or internal conflict.

Obstacles to closer interaction

For over a decade, there have been occasional efforts to bring the CoE and the OSCE closer together. Specific proposals were made in the CoE paper entitled "Relations Between the Council of Europe and the OSCE: The Way Forward" (2012),¹³ the last major exchange on the matter. The organizations have not been able to take steps based on these proposals, however. This is partly due to reticence at the political level and partly due

to structural differences between the organizations.

High-level reluctance

In the 2012 paper,¹⁴ the CoE proposed measures for regular joint decision-making and re-establishing the practice of reciprocal invitations. After a year of discussion, the OSCE responded with caution, referring to its preference for "pragmatic, effective, goal-oriented, results-driven and experts-based cooperation" based on expert-to-expert action and case-by-case interaction in the field.¹⁵ The Belgian Chair of the CoE Committee of Ministers' subsequent suggestion to start another consultation process between the organizations was insufficiently coordinated within the CoE and eventually not brought forward for discussion with the OSCE.¹⁶ The Belgian Chair did host an extraordinary CoE–OSCE High-Level Meeting on the margins of the 125th Session of the Committee of Ministers in Brussels. Since then, however, no further CoE–OSCE high-level meetings have taken place.

Giving each other the right to speak at the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings and the CoE Committee of Ministers' meetings has been politically controversial. Generally, international organizations are given the floor after the representatives of the member/participating States in the respective meetings have spoken. At the OSCE Ministerial Council, the speaking right of the CoE Secretary General depends on the participating States' consensus-based agreement on the annual meeting's modalities. Due to lack

of agreement on the modalities of the OSCE Ministerial Council meetings in Belgrade in 2015 and Hamburg in 2016, the floor was not given to the CoE and other international organizations. In Belgrade, the Serbian Chairperson-in-Office gave CoE Secretary General Thorbjørn Jagland the floor at the Ministerial lunch. Since 2016, the Head of the CoE Liaison Office in Vienna has represented the CoE at the OSCE Ministerial Council.

Conversely, OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger participated in the commemorative ceremony of the 70th Anniversary of the CoE and addressed the 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers of the CoE in 2019 – following four years without the participation of an OSCE Secretary General in the annual event. An official of the Office of the Secretary General represented the OSCE at the CoE Ministerial Sessions in 2018 and 2020.

At the same time, mutual representation at the OSCE Permanent Council and the meetings of the CoE Ministers' Deputies functions well. However, repeated inquiries on the part of the CoE as to the possibility of permanent access to the Permanent Council have remained unanswered, the OSCE participating States having been unable to reach consensus on the matter. In 2014, the Swiss OSCE Chair consequently initiated the practice of announcing representatives of the CoE and other international organizations accredited to the OSCE as guests of the Chair at the beginning of each meeting of this and other decision-making bodies. Since then, every OSCE Chair has continued the practice.

Efforts to launch frequent bilateral meetings of the Secretaries General bore fruit only after the change of incumbents in 2017 (OSCE) and 2019 (CoE). Secretaries General Greminger and Pejčinović Burić paid increased attention to the relations between their organizations and started to make use of different meeting formats. CoE Secretary General Pejčinović Burić addressed the OSCE Permanent Council in December 2019 and again in December 2020. However, the increased interaction between the two Secretaries General was cut short following the non-extension of OSCE Secretary General Greminger's mandate in July 2020.

Regular senior officials' meetings were discontinued in 2010 as they were no longer considered useful. From the OSCE's perspective, they were basically made redundant by the OSCE–CoE Coordination Group meetings. The heads of external cooperation/relations still meet on a case-by-case basis to discuss substantial agenda points and to prepare high-level meetings.

Providing more substance to the dialogue in the Coordination Group has been repeatedly considered, particularly with a view to expanding the four-areas agenda. From Strasbourg's perspective, it is the OSCE that opposes its expansion. In Vienna, it is commonly remarked that the participating States generally want control and do not want the structures to act on their own. On the other hand, a number of previous OSCE Permanent Council Chairs and CoE Chairs of the Ministers' Deputies seized the opportunity during their tenures to add informal

communication on additional subjects to the Coordination Group meetings, thereby turning them into “extremely fruitful events”, as meeting attendees noted. This suggests that adding informal exchange rather than expanding the standardized exchange is the way forward (see our recommendation below).

All in all, the reluctance (among OSCE participating States in particular) to give the CoE speaking rights at OSCE Ministerial Councils and to consider relaxing the rigid framework for formal interaction in the Coordination Group makes more systematic communication at the higher political level difficult. On many topics, communication and substantial collaboration between the organizations take place at a lower level. The closer to the working level, the more constructive for the experts involved.

Structural differences

Efforts for more systematic cooperation between the OSCE and the CoE are hampered not only by political reluctance but also by structural differences. The OSCE is a non-career organization with a weak bureaucratic apparatus that is kept under close scrutiny by the delegations in Vienna. Political direction is exercised by the Chairperson-in-Office, who, however, is only *primus inter pares* among fellow ministers. The Secretary General merely has a mandate as a representative of the Chairperson-in-Office and the organization’s chief administrative officer. He/she has no direct authority over the three institutions – ODIHR, the HCNM, and the

RFOM – or the field operations, which answer directly to the decision-making bodies of the organization (and in this way to the delegations). The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is not even an integrated element of the organization, and its deputies do not enjoy the powers exercised by their colleagues at PACE.

By contrast, in the CoE (which is a career organization), the Secretary General and the bureaucratic apparatus play a significant role, as do the deputies and delegations in PACE. The ECtHR enjoys judicial independence. The decisions of the bodies of the CoE and the rulings of the Court are legally enforceable throughout the CoE area.

Different decision-making procedures often lead to different positions taken by the organizations. The consensus rule makes the political dialogue in the OSCE more complex and often reduces decisions to lowest common denominators. Decisions in the OSCE are politically binding commitments, and their non-fulfilment cannot be penalized. The CoE and its bodies take their decisions, which are legally binding under international law, by majority vote. Member states can thus be overruled, as was frequently the case with Russia on matters regarding Ukraine, for example. The withdrawal of Russia’s voting rights in the Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE after the annexation of Crimea in 2014 was a disputed case in point – unthinkable in the inclusive, consensus-based OSCE.

Differences also exist in the organizations’ membership, although they are largely identical. Russia participates in both organizations, whereas the United

States (US), Belarus, Canada, the Holy See, the five Central Asian countries, and Mongolia are not members of the CoE.¹⁷ The US and Canada do have a permanent seat as observers, however, and closely monitor the CoE's internal discussions.

In combination, these organization-specific factors – differences with regard to type of commitment (legally binding and enforceable or political), voting modes, and the degree of the apparatuses' autonomy – hamper cooperation between the two organizations. Especially at the political level, arriving at common positions on sensitive matters can be complicated, despite cooperation at the working level.

Conclusions and recommendations

The CoE and the OSCE, each with its own instruments and comparative advantages, both seek to promote stability in Europe. Both are devoted to promoting human rights, fundamental freedoms, democracy, and the rule of law. Given the eroding compliance with shared norms and the political radicalization Europe is experiencing, improving cooperation between these two organizations is important.

This requires more than a verbal commitment from governments to make use of multilateral platforms. It also requires key states to take a more active role in practice. This applies not only, but in particular, to EU member countries and the institutions of the EU. For the EU, both the CoE (e.g. in accession processes) and the OSCE (e.g. in conflicts such as the one in and around Ukraine or in re-

gions where the EU has limited clout and instruments) are valuable partners. The challenge is to translate formal cooperation agreements into action. A 2012 CoE Rapporteur Group Report puts this idea succinctly: "There is probably not much need for more binding conventions. Most focus should be on implementation."¹⁸ Below, we offer suggestions for small, practical steps towards improved cooperation.

Improving high-level communication

Deepening or expanding cooperation between the OSCE and the CoE is largely hampered at the level of high-ranking officials and political leaders, where communication is sparse or overly ritualized. Governments should therefore aim to improve communication between the organizations at the political level and, in particular, to provide more substance to the discussions at the biannual meetings of the Coordination Group. Given that changing the formal modalities of the meetings is unrealistic, the possibility of expanding the scope of discussions by means of informal consultations should be considered. Along these lines, we suggest the following:

- *First*, the two organizations should consider adding more expert consultations to meetings of the Coordination Group. Representatives from both organizations have reported positive experiences in recent years with such informal consultations for streamlining joint work. These side meetings could

address topics not covered by the four formal agenda items, such as migration, non-discrimination, youth and security, media freedom, and the safety of journalists. They could also be an occasion for discussing topical issues such as responses to the COVID-19 pandemic and field operations' activities. Cybersecurity and artificial intelligence and their influence on democracy and human rights is another area of discussion that could be promising with a view to future cooperation.

- *Second*, under the agenda item "any other business", the Coordination Group could be tasked with elaborating common thematic priorities in preparation for high-level meetings and further consultations with member/participating States.
- *Third*, the ground should be prepared for reviving the "2+2" meetings at the level of senior officials, as foreseen in the 2000 Common Catalogue¹⁹ for specifying common working topics and practical ways to proceed further. In 2021, Sweden (as the OSCE Chair), supported by the Troika members Albania and Poland and the three Presidencies of the CoE (Germany, Hungary, and Italy), could take the initiative to relaunch these meetings.

Supporting interaction in the field

Although the CoE and the OSCE have a similar number of field presences, they carry different weight in the two organizations. The main operational focus of the CoE lies with its headquarters, while

the OSCE has more than three quarters of its staff stationed in the field. The CoE, with its conventions, legal expertise, monitoring bodies, and solid financial resources, is a valuable counterpart to the OSCE, with its rapid-reaction capacities and know-how and its activities in areas such as conflict management and democratization.

The complementary nature of the two organizations suggests possibilities for coordination and cooperation in their pursuit of similar political goals on the ground. More systematic interaction between the OSCE and the CoE in the field, on a case-by-case basis and tailored to the needs of individual host countries, is not a novel suggestion.²⁰ Interaction between the OSCE and the CoE in Ukraine is a good practice to build on. Along these lines, we suggest the following:

- *First*, governments should promote and fund greater interaction between the OSCE and the CoE in countries where both organizations have field presences. The OSCE has ample local expertise and personnel on the ground. Complementing this, the CoE has legal expertise and considerable financial resources.
- *Second*, the EU should leverage its prominent position in both organizations to systematically bolster OSCE–CoE interaction in the field. It has a special relationship with the CoE based on a broad "framework for enhanced cooperation and political dialogue" and an associated set of agreements and working plans.²¹ In addition, it has taken steps to work more

- closely with the OSCE.²² The Presidencies/Chairs of the EU, the CoE, and the OSCE could jointly launch a political initiative to discuss ways to strengthen joint field activities and include trilateral efforts in a strategic vision of European security.
- *Third*, both organizations should ensure that they are giving compatible political and legal advice. The OSCE should make more frequent use of the legal language of the Council of Europe, while the latter should make more systematic use of OSCE documents in the fields of democratic elections, protection of fundamental rights, the rule of law, and tolerance and non-discrimination. Ensuring the coherence of their advice will increase the legitimacy of both organizations and their political impact on the ground.

Notes

- 1 The authors would like to thank their many interlocutors and the reviewers for their valuable comments and advice.
- 2 The CoE has a total annual budget of about €496 million plus voluntary contributions and about 2,500 staff, while the OSCE has an annual budget of approximately €139 million plus extra-budgetary means and a regular staff of about 2,880. See: “The Council of Europe in brief: Budget”, Council of Europe, at: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/about-us/budget?desktop=true>; OSCE, Approval of the 2020 Unified Budget, PC.DEC/1369, 28 May 2020, at: <https://www.osce.org/permanent-council/453804>; “Who we are: Funding and budget”, OSCE, at: <https://www.osce.org/funding-and-budget>.

- 3 CoE/OSCE, Relations Between the Council of Europe and the OSCE: Common Catalogue of Cooperation Modalities, SEC.GAL/30/00, 4 April 2000 [OSCE] and CM(2000)52, 25 April 2000 [CoE], at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680599d8d>.
- 4 OSCE, Enhanced Cooperation Between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe (CoE), PC.DEC/637, 2 December 2004, at: <https://www.osce.org/pc/14732>.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 The last such meeting was held in New York on the margins of the UN General Assembly on 21 September 2011, hosted by the Lithuanian OSCE Chair. It was the CoE’s turn to organize the next meeting, but between 2012 and 2014 the respective Presidencies could not find a time/venue or agenda for a “2+2” meeting. A high-level meeting in a “2+3” format (including the incoming CoE Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina) eventually materialized under the Belgian Presidency in 2015 (see below) but has remained the last one for the time being.
- 7 CoE/OSCE, cited above (note 3).
- 8 OSCE, cited above (note 4).
- 9 CoE/OSCE, Declaration on Cooperation between the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Council of Europe, 17 May 2005, at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=090000168046a481>.
- 10 CoE Directorate of External Relations, OSCE: Background Information, 6 November 2017.
- 11 See “Fundamental rights”, Council of Europe, Venice Commission, at: https://www.venice.coe.int/WebForms/pages/?p=02_Rights&lang=EN.

- 12 These subject areas include tolerance and non-discrimination, migration, rule of law, democratic governance, Roma and Sinti issues, gender equality, and communicating on democratic values and human rights.
- 13 CoE Ministers' Deputies/Rapporteur Groups, Relations Between the Council of Europe and with the OSCE: The Way Forward, GR-EXT(2012)11-rev, 25 October 2012, at: https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectID=09000016805c9b83.
- 14 Ibid.
- 15 Igor Prokopchuk, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, Letter to the Permanent Representative of Austria to the Council of Europe/Chairperson of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers' Deputies, CIO.GAL/186/13, 30 December 2013.
- 16 Belgian Chair of the CoE's Committee of Ministers, Possibilities for enhanced cooperation between the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), January 2015.
- 17 The CoE maintains constructive working relations with the five Central Asian countries. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan were included in the CoE Policy for Neighbourhood Regions launched in 2011. In 2007, the Venice Commission and the Central Asian countries established cooperation, with project funding provided by the European Union and some CoE member states. A Joint Programme Agreement for the Central Asia Rule of Law Programme was concluded with the five states in January 2020. Kazakhstan joined the Council of Europe Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) that same month.
- 18 CoE Secretariat General Rapporteur Group on External Relations, The Council of Europe and the OSCE: Enhancing Cooperation and Complementarity Through Greater Coherence, DD(2012)40, 16, 19 January 2012. Cf. the related study by Professor Dr juris Geir Ulfstein, University of Oslo, published under the same title, DPP (2012)1, 23 March 2012, at: <https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680599dd7>.
- 19 CoE/OSCE, cited above (note 3).
- 20 See for example: Igor Prokopchuk, Chairperson of the OSCE Permanent Council, cited above (note 15).
- 21 See: Memorandum of Understanding between the Council of Europe and the European Union, 11 and 23 May 2007, at: <https://rm.coe.int/1680597b32>. The EU has thus far funded several hundred EU–CoE programmes.
- 22 This common understanding on strengthened EU–OSCE cooperation is reflected in the letters exchanged between EU High Representative Federica Mogherini and OSCE Secretary General Thomas Greminger on 22 June 2018.