The Council of Europe works with other organisations to accomplish its goals, even organisations reaching outside Europe, particularly on topics dealing with **human rights**, **democracy** and the **rule of law**.

**European Bodies: Which is Which?**

Many people get the Council of Europe mixed up with the European Union (EU)! This is understandable, as they use the same symbols, but they are in fact completely distinct and separate institutions.

**The Council of Europe** has 47 member states, and works to protect and promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law for its 800 million citizens.

[www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

**The European Union (EU)**, on the other hand, has 27 member states and is a unique economic and political partnership between its member states, which work together to build a richer and safer Europe for its 495 million citizens.

[www.europa.eu](http://www.europa.eu)

No country has ever joined the EU without first belonging to the Council of Europe.

**The Council of Europe and the European Union: Separate institutions sharing symbols!**

One of the main reasons the two institutions get muddled up in people’s minds is that they share the same symbols. The design of the now familiar European flag was approved by the Council of Europe’s Parliamentary Assembly in 1955. It was not until 1986 that it was adopted by the European Union. There are 12 stars because this number is seen as a symbol of perfection and unity. The circle represents the union of the peoples of Europe.

**Who Else Does the Council of Europe Work With?**

The Council of Europe also co-operates with a number of other international organisations, particularly:

- **OSCE** the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) on issues such as the fight against terrorism, the protection of national minorities and the fight against trafficking in human beings;

[www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org)

- **UN** the United Nations on a wide range of issues including the promotion and protection of children’s rights, stopping violence against women and the prevention of torture;

[www.un.org](http://www.un.org)

Co-operation with the Council of Europe’s five observer states (Canada, the Holy See, Japan, Mexico and the United States of America) provides a unique opportunity to widen its scope of action in many key fields – so you can see, it’s definitely an international player!

> “We are convinced that what they need is one Europe peaceful and democratic, ... that extends its hand to the rest of the world.”

Mikhail Gorbachev
EXPLORE THE DIFFERENT INTERNATIONAL BODIES!

Different bodies have very similar names, which makes it even more confusing!

Council of Europe: An international organisation based in Strasbourg which is made up of 47 democratic countries of Europe.

Council of the European Union (EU): The Council of the European Union is the EU’s main decision-making body. It regularly brings together ministers from the member states.

European Commission (EU): The executive branch of the European Union, based in Brussels, which makes sure that EU treaties and the decisions of the EU institutions are put into place properly. It does a lot of the day-to-day work in the European Union.

Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: This is where the Council of Europe’s 318 representatives (and the same number of substitutes) discuss important topics and make recommendations to member states. They are appointed by the member states’ national parliaments.

European Parliament (EU): The parliamentary body of the European Union which comprises 785 members (MEPs) from the 27 EU countries, elected by universal suffrage.

The European Court of Human Rights: which sits in Strasbourg, is the permanent judicial body of the Council of Europe responsible for ensuring compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Court of Justice of the European Communities sits in Luxembourg and ensures that European Union law is observed when EU treaties are interpreted and applied.


European Convention on Human Rights: The treaty by which the Council of Europe member states have undertaken to respect fundamental rights and freedoms.

Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UN): Text adopted by the United Nations in 1948 in order to strengthen human rights protection at international level.


The European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA): is a Vienna-based agency of the European Union established in 2007.

HUMAN RIGHTS describe the things that each of us should have in order to lead a dignified life: for example, the right to life, the right to a fair trial, or the right to be free from torture. These rights are for each individual on the planet, regardless of gender, race, religion or cultural background.

For DEMOCRACY to exist, all members of society must have equal access to power and there must be respect for everyone’s human rights. That is why it is important to have free and fair elections and to protect the human rights of all individuals.

In very simple terms, the RULE OF LAW means that no one is above the law and that the law is the same for everyone. It refers to the principle of the separation of powers, the existence of and access to an efficient and independent judiciary, legal certainty as opposed to arbitrariness, equality before the law as opposed to discrimination, and the right to a fair trial, including effective execution of court decisions, as opposed to court decisions which remain on paper.

UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE gives the right to vote to all adult citizens, without distinction on the basis of race, sex, belief, intelligence, economic or social status.
Understanding the different institutions in Europe and the rest of the world is important as they play a big role in our lives, even though we might not realise it.

Which other international organisations do they know in Europe (for example, the European Union (see sheet 10), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) or the United Nations (UN))? Use a different colour to identify them on the map. Compare the memberships and their aims.

How many of the Council of Europe member states can your pupils name, without looking at the list? Can they find them on the map? A bonus point if they know the capital!

On what other topics does the Council of Europe co-operate with other organisations?

The United Nations also works to defend human rights.

What difference does it make having an organisation that works mainly on a European level, as the Council of Europe does? In what ways are these two organisations different?


Divide your pupils into six groups, one group per continent, and get them to find out about daily life and important issues for young people in different countries.

Get your pupils to organise a conference on a particular subject which they feel is important to all Europeans. Divide your pupils into groups to defend the chosen topic.

**SPOT THE DIFFERENCE!**

Do your pupils know what the difference is between these European organisations?

**COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

An international organisation in Strasbourg which comprises 47 democratic countries of Europe.

**COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The Council is the main decision-making body of the European Union. It regularly brings together ministers from the 27 member states.

**PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

The deliberative body of the Council of Europe, composed of 318 representatives (and the same number of substitutes) appointed by the member states’ national parliaments.

**EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT**

The parliamentary body of the European Union which comprises 785 members (MEPs) from the 27 European Union countries, elected by universal suffrage.

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**WHICH FIGURE IS BEHIND THIS QUOTE?**

“We are convinced that what they need is one Europe peaceful and democratic, ... that extends its hand to the rest of the world.”

Answer on the back
# UNDERSTANDING THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND OTHER INSTITUTIONS

## ACTIVITIES SHEET

### THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE 47 MEMBER STATES

What other international organisations do they belong to?

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<th>EU</th>
<th>OSCE</th>
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### OBSERVERS:
Canada, Holy See, Japan, Mexico and the USA

### CANDIDATE STATE:
Belarus (12.03.1993)

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### MORE TO DISCOVER!


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