



Human Rights Defenders Protection Community of Practice for Europe

The Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) Protection Community of Practice (CoP) for Europe aims to support efforts to respond to the growing and increasingly complex challenges faced by HRDs in Europe by strengthening synergies and collaboration among protection actors across the region.

As outlined in the CoP's [Terms of Reference](#), the initiative provides a space for engagement and collaboration among actors invested in the protection of HRDs in its different forms at national and regional level. It allows them to regularly connect in order to better support and complement each other's efforts, develop shared strategies and initiatives and leverage commitment, responses and support by institutional actors as well as donors.

By bringing together diverse expertise and perspectives and fostering stronger connections between national, regional and international protection actors, the HRDs Protection CoP for Europe ultimately aims at strengthening the protection ecosystem and enable more strategic, timely and context-sensitive support for HRDs across Europe.

This way, the CoP supports policy initiatives to enhance the protection of HRDs in Europe, including the implementation of the [EU Strategy for Civil Society](#).

Already more than 100 actors joined the HRDs Protection CoP for Europe, including civil society and non-governmental organizations, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and their European network (ENNHRI), international, multilateral and regional organizations and donor entities operating in EU Member States, EU candidate and potential candidate countries, European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and the UK.

How does the HRDs Protection CoP for Europe work?

The HRDs Protection CoP for Europe holds quarterly plenary meetings, including at least one annual in-person meeting, to exchange updates and experiences, share practical tools and approaches, identify emerging risks and develop joint and collaborative responses to HRDs protection in Europe.

The plenary meetings are complemented by focus discussions, expert meetings and other targeted initiatives on key issues of common interest to CoP members, with some thematic workstreams being supported by dedicated sub-groups.

The initiative is coordinated by the UN Human Rights (OHCHR) Representation Office to the EU jointly with a Facilitators Group, selected on a voluntary basis, which is currently composed by the following organisations:

- the Civil Liberties Union for Europe (Liberties)
- the European Centre for Not-for-Profit Law (ECNL)
- the European Civic Forum (ECF)
- the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA)
- Front Line Defenders
- ProtectDefenders.eu

What does the HRDs Protection CoP for Europe focus on?

CoP members identified five areas where particular gaps and opportunities for joint and collaborative efforts exist, to be carried out in synergy and complementarity with existing mechanisms, expertise and initiatives.

Permanent coordination to enhance protection interventions: strengthening timely, coordinated and holistic protection responses to individual cases, country situations and emerging threats, including through better referral and follow-up between actors with different expertise and mandates, and informing a longer-term effort to strengthen the regional protection ecosystem.

Expanding mobility pathways and strengthening protection after relocation: further encouraging synergies among relocation initiatives and efforts, supporting the expansion of mobility pathways and enhancing collaboration among protection actors to ensure better support and protection of relocated HRDs and HRDs in exile.

Better understanding and addressing transnational repression: improving documentation, protection and accountability responses to transnational repression, including through cross-sectoral cooperation, strategic litigation and advocacy.

Addressing criminalization and other legal threats: sharing expertise and encouraging collaborations in litigation and advocacy efforts to address criminalization and other legal restrictions on civic space and civil society actors.

Improving responses and resilience to digital threats: enhancing awareness, capacity and collaboration to better prevent and respond to digital threats, including by connecting digital security expertise with broader legal, physical, psychosocial and financial protection efforts.

If you want to know more about the CoP and/or would like to express interest in joining, please reach out to hrd-cop-europe@un.org