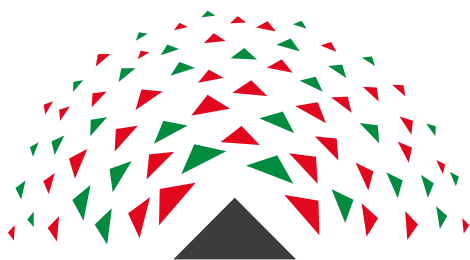


“70 YEARS IN EUROPE”

CONFERENCE ON THE OCCASION OF THE
70TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COUNCIL OF
EUROPE

Edited by Gergő Kocsis



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Foreword

Péter Sztáray

State Secretary for Security Policy

When the Statute of the Council of Europe was signed in London in May 1949, just a month after NATO was created, few would have thought that Hungary would join both organizations in the future. After the horrors of the Second World War, the people of Europe longed for peace and stability. What followed was half a century of division, physical and non-physical barriers that prevented Europe from uniting and achieving post-war prosperity together.

The importance of the Council of Europe cannot be overstated. It plays a unique role in fostering democracy, rule of law and protecting human rights, among these the rights of national minorities. So, when Hungary, the first country from behind the Iron Curtain joined the organization in 1990, it was a significant moment not only for the people of Hungary, but for the Council of Europe as well. Finally, after 40 years the re-unification of Europe was happening. Finally, Hungary, followed by other Central and Eastern European countries, could join the community to which they always belonged. Finally, the barriers were irreversibly coming down.

The past seventy years have proven that the best way to overcome our differences, to protect our common values and to co-exist peacefully is through dialogue and cooperation. The Council of Europe provides a unique forum for this. It has played a pivotal role in maintaining peace and stability in its 47 member states.

We, at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade wanted to celebrate the 70th anniversary of this unique organization with those who have played a significant role since Hungary's accession to the Council of Europe three decades ago. By organizing a commemorative conference with the participation of former and current ambassadors and diplomats

serving at the Hungarian Permanent Representation to the Council of Europe, we could look into the past, share personal stories, relive some of the historical moments, and at the same time take stock of the achievements and contemplate the future. A future that, hopefully, will bring continuous peace, stability and prosperity on our continent.

Programme of the Conference

on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe

*Greeting words by Margit Szűcs, Head of Security Policy Department,
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary*

Opening speech

János Martonyi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, former President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

I Panel discussion: The importance of Council of Europe in the geopolitical system in the past 70 years and today

Moderator: Gergő Kocsis, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe

Zsolt Németh, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly

Ferenc András Kalmár, Ministerial Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary

István Balogh, Deputy State Secretary for Security Policy, Political Director, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary

II Panel discussion: Permanent Representation of Hungary to the Council of Europe from 1990 until today: recollections of ambassadors and an outlook to the future

Moderator: Adrienn Tóth-Ferencsi, Head of Cabinet, Cabinet of the Ministerial Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary

András Rakovszky ambassador, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 1990-91

János Perényi ambassador, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 1992-1995 and 1998-2001

Zoltán Taubner ambassador, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 2002-2006

Judit József ambassador, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 2007-2011

Ferenc Robák ambassador, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 2011-2016

Ágnes Kertész ambassador, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 2016 – 2020

Concluding remarks

János Bóka, State Secretary for Cooperation in European and International Justice Affairs, Ministry of Justice of Hungary

Opening speech

János Martonyi

Former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary

Former President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe



There is an old debate about who was first in the age of discovery. What came first - the gun, the warship and the flag carried by the warship, or the merchant, carrying the glass beads, the firewater and exchanging these for various other goods? In other words, was the political and the military power, the state and its embodiment, the flag first, or was it trade, was it the economy? This debate has not been

decided to this day, because there were times when the merchant was there first, there were times when the warship, and there were times when both arrived at the same time, for the sake of security. But we usually speak less about the third player, although it is actually not at all impossible that the previously mentioned two were both preceded by someone. This was the missionary, who had no glass beads, no firewater and no cannon. He was carrying something. He was carrying the scripture. The Holy Scripture. We may say that he was carrying the „Bible”.

This triple interconnection is still a given in the world, in the history of mankind, in geopolitics, it is a given everywhere. The debate may continue in our times – not any longer about which appeared on that particular island first -, but about which is the more important one. Is it the economy - we know the philosophical stream, which considered the economy to be the key factor, determining all other areas -, or is it possibly the political power with the military might behind it, is it

the number of military divisions, the number of nuclear warheads and carriers? When it was raised to Stalin that the Vatican would not be pleased with his anti-church policy in Central- and Eastern Europe, he replied by asking how many tank divisions the Vatican had. And so with this the issue was settled. It is a different question that the Soviet Union ceased to exist long ago, while the Vatican is still around. Undoubtedly the Vatican also has its own challenges to address, but it is nevertheless a longer-term and deeper story.

We are in Europe after the Second World War, and all three key factors appear. There is an economic approach saying that the shattered European economies should be brought closer together and that at least the economic and trade barriers between them should be gradually removed. The story is well-known: we started with coal and steel, which were at that time the foundations of industry as a whole, not to mention the fact that it did no harm to subject the coal and steel industries of certain countries to more serious scrutiny before they manufactured too many tanks and airplanes. Therefore, an economic integration is launched, and the pursuit towards the unification of the flag also begins, to the extent of even elaborating the idea of a European defence community, together with that of a European political community. It is another story that these two communities are eventually rejected in the French National Assembly, even though they were originally French initiatives.

But something else also happened, which is in fact our subject today. The Council of Europe is established. It is immediately visible that the Council of Europe has not a single tank division. It doesn't make plans to enter this territory either. It also comes to light that the Council of Europe doesn't have a cohesion fund to enable it to subsidize the less developed economies with several billions of euros. Nor is it in the position to support the agricultural sector with enormous subsidies. This is something else, something deeper; it is a much more important matter. Its mission is to interpret that aforementioned scripture of the missionary and to enforce it, predominantly with the instruments of law.

The three main areas the Council of Europe has to look after are

democracy, rule of law, human rights. These three areas are prerequisites for one another, and none of them can exist in the absence of the other ones. As far as the interpretation and the implementation are concerned, this is not a simple matter. Interpreting and enforcing the scripture is a difficult and dangerous task, which requires a lot of responsibility. When interpreting the scripture and declaring it as law, one must pay attention to a lot of things, for example to keeping the external, the political aspects at a distance. It didn't always work out that way. Possibly it doesn't always work out that way nowadays either.

Now we are celebrating the 70th anniversary, and we were celebrating the 50th anniversary 20 years ago, which was a very special occasion for us: Hungary had been member of the Council for almost 10 years, so we also celebrated a 10th anniversary. Since joining the Council, Hungary has very intensively taken part in its work, and the Hungarian contributions are significant. We should never lose sight of the fact that for us at present and also in the future the rights of national minorities are the most important ones. We shall never give them up, and we can evaluate the Council and its various institutions primarily in the light of how they enforce the rights of national minorities. We don't only mean individual rights, but we also mean the rights of national communities, we mean collective rights. This is something we will never relinquish, and if we see that in any other country these rights, whether linguistic or educational, are not granted, we will voice this in the most decisive way.

This is the point in my speech when I return to its starting point. It is a fact that the warship exists, there is security and defence policy and there is economic policy. The various international organizations are entrusted with the task of looking after these separable fields. But we should not forget that the scripture applies to all of these. It applies to the European economic and political integration, it applies to the defence and security policy organizations, and it applies to NATO too. That specific Scripture, which created the Council of Europe, is the foundation, and the values, principles and norms included in it must manifest themselves in all the other organizations.

Panel discussion: The importance of Council of Europe in the geopolitical system in the past 70 years and today

Zsolt Németh

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Hungarian National Assembly



Is the council of Europe dead, lifeless, inanimate or is it still the conscience of Europe? Is the “European idea” still alive? Or is it already dead, lifeless or under lethal threat? Is the “European idea” still the conscience of the world? Or is it an institution that under the pretext of

the conscience of the world intervenes unscrupulously in national competences?

These questions submerge nowadays and these questions are legitimate in a time when a large member-state – criticized rightly or unfairly – gets hurt and leaves the Council of Europe, and the panicky reaction given by the rest of the member states is “What is going to happen to the conscience of Europe without the money of the bad state?!”. (The UN struggles with very similar problems just with a different large state asking the question “What are you going to do without my money?”).

The previous Hungarian presidency took place during the golden days of the Council when such questions did not emerge or did not emerge so dramatically. It is good to remember the good old days and take inspiration from them – even if you cannot step twice into the same river – because our goal is to take the Council back to the origin, to revive its golden age. The task of the coming next Hungarian presidency – which is coming soon enough to start preparations with concrete steps – is to facilitate this reformation by all means. We want the golden days of the Council back – this is our ambition and our standard by which we will measure the success of our presidency.

Of course, we are looking back on a longer period than the Hungarian presidency: 70 years' time and the beginnings. This is a time when Hungary could not be part of the Council yet. We were locked out, though we felt it ours, it was for us and we identified with it. The original objectives, like Europe's common security and the reunification of Europe through securing democracy and human rights were aims that we longed for in a dictatorial state. We find these original ideas still so important we believe they must be revived anyway regardless these anniversaries.

The doctrine of the founding fathers of the Council of Europe was essentially that security and human rights are inseparable. In the unfolding period of cold war this was an axiom that nobody questioned. When the cold war ended, the security dimension got out of the focus of thinking. A kind of comfort grew dominant in western democracies pretending and believing that with the end of the Soviet Union no other threats could emerge in this world. In such circumstances, in a kind of stealthy evolution security and human rights shifted somehow into contradictory positions.

In their new positions, it seemed like security and human rights were not complementary but contradictory phenomena. Security and human rights started to challenge each other instead of supporting each other. They started to compete. However, this is a twist in logic, it is distorted rationale. Human rights without security is a mere fiction. The security of western democracies is the security of human rights at the same time. One of the most important right of people and their communities, nations and ethnic minorities to enjoy their rights in security.

The original goal and potential of the Council must be restored in the present circumstances responding to present challenges. Adapting to the current situation, the original self of the Council must be re-established. The Europe of freedom must be reinforced: the freedom of the communities of the people of Europe, the freedom of the nations and ethnic minorities of Europe. These together give out the Europe of freedom. And the fundament of this freedom is the unchallengeable security of the people, countries and the continent.

Ferenc András Kalmár

Ministerial Commissioner for Hungary's Neighbourhood Policy

The 70-year-old Council of Europe and the national minorities



“The aim of our work is to make the borders of the European states disappear. Our aim is for Europe to become a common home, the home of freedom”. These words, pronounced by Konrad Adenauer in 1950, are the very foundations on which the Council of Europe is built.

Konrad Adenauer, Chancellor and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Federal Republic of Germany was not the only politician who started to build the foundations. Very important founding “fathers” were also eminent political personalities of that time: Winston Churchill Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Robert Schuman French Republic Minister for Foreign Affairs, Paul-Henri Spaak Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Belgium in the 40s and 50s, Alcide de Gasperi Prime Minister of the Republic of Italy, Ernest Bevin United Kingdom Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

These builders of Europe were the people who launched the process of European construction by founding the Council of Europe in 1949 and setting up the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in 1950 and the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957. These personalities, who had lived through two world wars and had first-hand experience of a number of European cultures, were the pioneers of a Europe of peace founded on the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Council of Europe from the time of its establishment advocates freedom of expression and of the media, freedom of assembly, equality, and the protection of minorities. It has launched campaigns on issues such as child protection, online hate speech, and the rights of the

Roma, Europe's largest minority. The Council of Europe helps member states fight corruption and terrorism and undertake necessary judicial reforms. Its group of constitutional experts, known as the Venice Commission, offers legal advice to countries throughout the world.

The Council of Europe promotes human rights through international conventions, such as the Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence and the Convention on Cybercrime. It monitors member states' progress in these areas and makes recommendations through independent expert monitoring bodies. The organization has 10 monitoring bodies. Regarding the national minorities of Europe there are two very important monitoring bodies, among the ten: Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and Committee of Experts of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.

The situation of minorities should be central to Council of Europe work, in the same way as it is central to the preservation of peace and stability. In the history of Europe, the inability to give a satisfactory response to minority issues has been a major cause of political tensions, conflicts and human rights violations. This is not only a feature of the past. It is an issue of current affairs and a lesson that should guide our political decisions now and in the future. European states and organisations, such as the Council of Europe, that are concerned with making Europe *'the home of freedom'* and *'a common home'* must have the courage to address the situation of minorities. It is well known that State borders in Europe have changed several times, not only along ethnic lines but also based on other considerations. As a result, traditional national minorities are today present in almost all Council of Europe member states. It is perhaps less known that people belonging to traditional national minorities represent 10.29%¹ of the total European population.² According to FUEN³ in the 47 states of Europe there are about 340 autochthonous minorities, totalizing about 100 million persons.

¹ This data is based upon the publication of Christoph Pan / Beate Sibylle Pfeil, "National Minorities in Europe. Handbook." Ethnos Vol. 63, Vienna: Braumueller, 2003.)

² Traditional Minorities, National Communities and Languages, The issues raised in the European Parliament's Intergroup, 2009/2011, Introduction, 11.

³ Federal Union of European Nationalities

Every seventh European citizen is part of an autochthonous minority/ethnic group. In the EU alone there are more than 60 regional or minority languages, next to the 23 official EU languages. The number of speakers of these languages is estimated at 40 million.

The ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity of Europe has been an essential element of its competitiveness and creativity. “Unity through diversity” is one of the European slogans, adopted by the Council of Europe, too. It is a principle that is valid not only at European level, but also within each single European country. This richness should be protected and preserved. Otherwise, it runs the risk of disappearing. I am seriously concerned about the continuous and accelerating deterioration of the situation and rights of traditional national minorities despite the manifold conventions, resolutions, recommendations adopted by international organisations, including the Council of Europe and more recently the European Union as well.

I am convinced that the modern idea of a state is one of an inclusive state in which the majority population and minorities live together, both as constituent parts and active pillars of the democratic system. According to Senator Francesco Palermo *“differences should be the rule and not the exception”*. The future of Europe also depends on the capacity of states to recognise and protect the rights of traditional national minorities and to involve them in the political process. The Council of Europe should have a leading role in this field, in the future, too. My opinion is that, regrettably and despite of its importance for stability and security, the protection of the rights of traditional national minorities has not yet become a political priority. Intolerance, ignorance, lack of trust, as well as globalisation has accelerated the assimilation process of the traditional national minorities into the majority. Human and European cultural values which represent the richness of Europe will be lost and the well-known European diversity might fade away.

The issue of traditional national minorities in Europe is of utmost importance and should be dealt with relentlessly within the framework provided by the Council of Europe and the European Union. This is the way to prevent conflicts and to ensure the accomplishment of the vision

of Europe as a home for all. Conflicts or peace, degradation or prosperity - that is at stake! The issue is European the risk is global! A ban on discrimination does not represent a complete solution to the problems arising from the situation of traditional national minorities. The real aim is to stop their assimilation, to make them feel entirely at home on the territory where they have been traditionally living, to have a say in decisions that will affect their lives, and to exercise autonomously their cultural, educational and linguistic rights. The principle of subsidiarity shall also prevail in this matter.

Besides the two most important documents of Council of Europe concerning the issue of national minorities (Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages), which are compulsory but not enforceable, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe has adopted along the last 30 years several resolutions related to crucial reports on the field of national minorities. These are the following: Gross report (2003), Frunda report (2006), Schuster report (2011), Kalmár report (2014), Hoffmann report (2018). The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has adopted in 2018 the Magyar report on language rights as well.

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is an institution of the Council of Europe, responsible for strengthening local and regional democracy in its 47 member states and assessing the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. As the voice of Europe's municipalities and regions, it works to foster consultation and political dialogue between national governments and local and regional authorities, through cooperation with the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

The Congress is made up of two chambers: the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It has 324 representatives and 324 substitutes, all appointed for four years, representing over 150,000 local and regional authorities in the Council of Europe's 47 member states. The Congress's work is organised with three committees: a Monitoring Committee, a Governance Committee and a Current Affairs Committee.

Our world is changing so the European organizations should adept to the new situations having in mind the original aims that should be achieved in the future, too. The Council of Europe is the only organization embracing the whole Europe, ensuring a platform for dialogue for all countries of the continent. This should be preserved in any case!

On the other hand, the relations between Council of Europe and the institutions of the European Union (EU) should be strengthened in the future. In this respect, the adopted documents of the Council of Europe could and should inspire more extensively the work of the EU, since there is a very serious workshop-type work there. Many issues are discussed in depth drawing very valuable conclusions.

Happy Birthday and Long Live Council of Europe!

Panel discussion: Permanent Representation of Hungary to the Council of Europe from 1990 until today: recollections of ambassadors and an outlook to the future

Ambassador András Rakovszky

Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 1990-91

I Was the First Ambassador of Hungary to the Council of Europe...

I was retired in 1990 when the democratically elected Hungarian Government under the premiership of József Antall recruited me to join the Foreign Ministry. After decades of dictatorship I was enthusiastic about this new opportunity to participate in the reorientation of the country's foreign policy. One of the priorities of this new foreign policy was Hungary's accession to European and Euro-Atlantic organizations.



Apparently, the first breakthrough in this huge endeavour was when in November 1990 Hungary as the first country from Central and Eastern Europe joined the Council of Europe. This organization had been a watchdog of human rights throughout the Cold War since 1949. With the democratization of the former Soviet Block countries and the collapse of the Soviet Union the Council of Europe started to reach out to the „new democracies” of our region. The Government of József Antall did everything it could to proceed quickly on the path of Euro-Atlantic integration and to anchor the country as soon and as deep as possible into Western organizations. That's why the accession to the Council of Europe was of historical significance:

it was one of the first great achievements in making our process of democratization and the reorientation of our foreign policy irreversible.

Parallelly with our accession I had the privilege and honour to be appointed as the first permanent representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe. So in early 1991 I moved to Strasbourg and took up my new position as ambassador on the Committee of Ministers, the main decision-making body of the organization. I will never forget the day when I first entered the main conference room and the enthusiastic mood of my ambassador colleagues in which they welcomed me as the representative of the first former communist country to join the Council. One cannot overemphasize the importance of this day: the return of Hungary to the free nations of Europe.

In 1991, under the able leadership of French socialist Secretary General Catherine Lalumière, the Council of Europe was the most important European inter-governmental organization dealing with democratization, rule of law and human rights, including the rights of national minority communities on the Continent. As a result of the Paris peace agreements after World War I two-third of the territory and population of the Kingdom of Hungary were disannexed and incorporated into the neighbouring countries. Thus, several millions of Hungarians became citizens of the newly created countries surrounding us.

Because of these circumstances the question of minority rights had become a priority of the Hungarian Government and the Council of Europe seemed and proved to be an ideal platform to foster the thinking and decision-making on the protection of these rights. The countries of Central and Eastern Europe, regaining their sovereignty and re-establishing the rule of law, had to be confronted with the expectation that the process of democratization had to be inclusive and had to take care of the legitimate interests of their respective national minorities. This work led later to the adoption of such important legal instruments as *inter alia* the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1992 and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1995.

Although we have made remarkable progress in codifying minimum standards in the area of the protection of minority rights, this work

will never be complete. Time and again we learn about measures and legislation by European countries that restrict the rights acquired by national minority communities. We have to work hard in order to convince all European majority nations that preserving the rights, culture and language of minority communities will always remain a cornerstone of peace and stability on our Continent. Flourishing national minority communities which are satisfied with their status can contribute to the well-being of their respective majority societies while the limitation of their rights can easily lead to instability and unrest. So it is our common interest to protect these communities and broaden their rights.

Today I am ninety years old. Almost thirty years after I first entered the Committee of Ministers and 70 years after the establishment of the Council of Europe, I am proud that I could personally contribute to the fulfilment of the very important mission of this organization. Long live the Europe of sovereign and democratic nations! Long live the Council of Europe!

Ambassador János Perényi

Permanent Representative of Hungary
to the CoE 1992-95 and 1998-2001

The Council of Europe, the European Union and the question of national minorities. The crucial years.

The violent disruption of Yugoslavia, the secession of Czechoslovakia and the dissolution of the Soviet Union confronted western leaders with a fundamental dilemma, how to deal with the „new democracies” in order to avoid a geopolitical vacuum and maintain political stability on the European continent. The decision was taken to open up the Council of Europe to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe to accompany their transition to democracies and market economies.



The first country from the region to join the Organisation was Hungary (November 1990). The 70th anniversary of the foundation of the Council of Europe and the forthcoming 30th anniversary of Hungarian membership in the Organisation offers an occasion to make a stock-taking of the experiences of Hungary after 3 decades of membership in the Council of Europe.

In doing so I partly rely on my experience as permanent representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe, first 1992-1994 and again 1998-2002. In the following I will focus on the issue of national minorities, a problem of particular concern to Hungary due to its 20th century history and the peace treaties of Trianon and Paris as a consequence of which Hungarian communities all of a sudden became subject to foreign state rule (Czechoslovakia, Romania, The Kingdom of Yugoslavia, and less importantly Austria).

The political upheavals in the aftermath of 1989 further complicated the

situation both for the Hungarian government and for the Hungarians living in the neighbouring countries, since with the formation of new states Hungarian communities were split up in 5 newly established states, 3 different countries in former Yugoslavia, Ukraine and Slovakia. The problem of national minorities had been frozen for decades, in the eastern part of Europe because of imposed „internationalism”, and the ideological notion that socialism would solve nationality problems, in the western part of Europe as a consequence of the collectivist racism and folly of nazi Germany. The protection of human rights became the core agenda of the Council of Europe at its foundation and there was an evident reluctance to deal with minority rights in terms of collective rights or community rights (hence the concept „persons belonging to national minorities” expressing this attitude).

However the national minority issue, ethnic tensions, was an integral part of the ongoing political upheaval at the time when Hungary joined the Council of Europe, therefore a response both political and legal to that problem was unavoidable.

As a first measure the Council of Europe in 1992 adopted the European Charter of Regional or Minority Languages to protect and promote languages used by traditional minorities. This happened in June that year. Only a few weeks later Klaus and Mečiar agreed to dissolve Czechoslovakia at a meeting in Bratislava.

In Strasbourg an intense debate started immediately on how to deal with the approaching dissolution of Czechoslovakia, which had joined the Council of Europe in January 1991. Hungary advocated the view becoming prevalent that the successor states should be obliged to apply for membership and undergo an accession procedure, and not becoming members automatically.

To manage the accession process to the CoE was the role of the parliamentary body of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly, but the final decision on the basis of recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly was in the hand of the governments represented in the Committee of Ministers.

The accession of Slovakia (and the Czech Republic) was a milestone in the eastward enlargement of the Council of Europe. Prior to this, conditions for joining the organisation were rather general: to hold free elections, to subscribe to the Statute of the Council of Europe and to sign the European Convention on Human Rights. Now for the first time more specific conditionality was set.

The Parliamentary Assembly trusted three of its committees to examine the situation in the candidate states; the Political Affairs Committee, the Legal Affairs Committee and the Committee for Non-member States. The reports by the respective committees dealt in detail with the situation of the Hungarian minorities in Slovakia assisted in a very active manner by the Hungarian delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly.

The outcome was a Recommendation of the Parliamentary Assembly which for the first time introduced a new element of conditionality: „It expects the Slovak authorities to base their policy regarding the protection of minorities on the principles laid down in Recommendation 1201 (1993) on an additional protocol on the rights of minorities to the European Convention on Human Rights.”. In principle the Hungarian government was favorable to the integration of Slovakia into the Council of Europe but had a profound distrust of the Meciar government and insisted on the abolition of Slovakian legislation detrimental to the Hungarian minority as a condition for supporting Slovak membership. A Hungarian veto in the Committee of Ministers was floating in the air. The way out of a deadlock situation was the invention of the monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe. Order 488 of the Parliamentary Assembly adopted in June 1993 (becoming famous under the name the „Hallonen Order”, states: „The Assembly therefore instructs its Political Affairs Committee and Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights to monitor closely the honouring of commitments entered into by the authorities of new member states and to report to the Bureau at regular six monthly intervals until all undertakings have been honoured”.

The pressure exercised by the Parliamentary Assembly yielded concrete results. As a consequence improvement in the use of personal names and the use of bilingual signs for settlement names where the proportion

of the minority population reached 20% was achieved in Slovakia. Later on, starting with the accession of Romania, the conditionality for membership became more elaborate and as the enlargement went on, it became more and more detailed.

The same year, in October 1993 the first summit at the level of heads of state and government of the Council of Europe was held in Vienna. The Declaration states: „We express our awareness that the protection of national minorities is an essential element of stability and democratic security in our continent”. This Declaration entrusted the Committee of Ministers to draft a framework convention for the protection of national minorities which was in fact adopted in 1994 and opened for signature 1998.

This convention however, the bearing of its obligations was softened by many limitation clauses. This made it evident that the key to making the Framework Convention a truly fruitful step would no doubt consist of a satisfactory monitoring of its implementation. Another weakness of the Convention is that the word minority is not defined. The same is true about the European Union following the Lisbon Treaty, notwithstanding the fact that minority protection is one of the fundamental values of the Union a definition of „minority” is clearly missing.

The very same year the European Council adopted the „Copenhagen criteria” in view of a possible future enlargement of the European Union towards the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. After all the Council of Europe and the European Union are but facets, albeit very different institutions reacting to a political challenge in a given historical context. The Copenhagen criteria were adopted the same month that Slovakia became a member of the Council of Europe (June 1993). These criteria, among them the protection of national minorities, lay down the rules that define whether a country is eligible to join the European Union.

The political decisions taken by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe were in reality taken by the European Union, that is by the member states of the Union also being member states of the

Council of Europe. Informally there was a constant flow of information between the European Commission and the Secretariat of the Council of Europe long before a MoU formalised the cooperation between the two.

It is significant that the European Commission's 'Agenda 2000' (1997), not only referred to the Framework Convention but also to the Council of Europe's Recommendation 1201 (1993) on minorities as guidelines for prospective members. at a moment when the Committee of Ministers already had rejected the basic idea of Recommendation 1201, to elaborate an additional protocol to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights.

With the holding of the final conference of the Stability Pact in Paris (march 1995, including the basic treaty between Hungary and Slovakia) and the signature of the Dayton agreement (december 1995) western leaders tended to consider that Central and Eastern Europe had been stabilised and therefore the question of national minorities was losing in imminency.

As long as the unsolved problem of national minorities in Central and Eastern Europe was conceived as a potential threat to European stability the question remained on the European political agenda. At the time of the adoption of the Stability Pact the Roma question was not an issue for international organisations, but as from the end of the 1990s a clear shift occurred and the Roma question rose to prominence whilst national minority issues were more and more neglected. It is not a coincidence that the European Court of Justice in a judgement has given an interpretation of EU law regarding minorities in favor of the Roma community in Bulgaria (2015). Politically speaking the question of the situation of the Roma is neutral because it doesn't effect relations between states as national minorities would do.

The issue of national minorities in the sense of „traditional” minorities is further neglected because the Council of Europe, European Union are more and more concerned with the issues of integrating migrants („new minorities”), whereas issues of preservation of their own culture and

identity (important for traditional minorities) are left to the discretion of the Member States.

Following subsequent developments in the Council of Europe it is to be noted that the monitoring procedure layed out in Order 488 very soon became dilluted. In its Order 508 (1995) the Parliamentary Assembly introduced an important change when blurring the word „new” in the expression „commitments entered into by new member states”. This was the approach adopted by the Committee of Ministers as well when this organ of the Council of Europe availed itself with a monitoing mechanism of its own (1994).

These developments took place in the name of non-discrimination and the principle of the equality of member states. In the years to come a cumbersome bureaucratic procedure was developed with endless periodic country reports, produced by governments, expert committees, etc. Thus the Council of Europe deprived itself of an effective mechanism of monitoring as far as minority protection is concerned given the fact that most member states were against such a monitoring.

The same development is to be observed in the European Union with the difference that it occured later. A good example is the discriminative legislation introduced relating to national minorities in the mid-1990s, by the Slovak government headed by Vladimír Mečiar. The reaction of the EU at that time was determinate: it excluded the country from the first round of accession negotiations in 1997. For the same reason Slovakia couldn't join the NATO in 1999.

In its Opinion (february 2005) on the applications for accession to the European Union by the Republic of Bulgaria and Romania the European Commission demanded the countries to „guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and the respect for and protection of minorities” (Par.3) and committed itself to „continue to closely monitor the implementation of the commitments and obligations taken” by Romania and Bulgaria (par.9). These ambitions were however not pursued.

Conclusions

It is clear that a fundamental tension or contradiction in dealing with national minorities was present from the outset. On the one hand national minorities were viewed as vulnerable in majoritarian nation-state structure and in need of protection for the sake of stability but on the other hand was looked on with suspicion as potentially threatening the stability of states and European security.

The examination of the treatment of the issue of national minorities in the Council of Europe and the European Union - where the protection of minorities was included in the political criteria for membership - clearly demonstrates that conditionality, compliance with demands, adoption of legislation in candidate states were effective as long as a strong incentive was at work and this was the perspective to become a member of the organisations. When membership as the main reward was granted and conditionality was not replaced by an internal sanctioning system, conditionality-induced rules in new member states were revoked. The monitoring mechanism of both the Council of Europe and the European Union have developed into a time consuming bureaucratic exercise without sanctions.

Ambassador Zoltán Taubner

Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 2002-2006

Writing about the Council of Europe is not a banal act of intellectual craftsmanship for me: it is writing about more than half of my life. And also about my conviction that the values that this 70-year old Organisation represents have indeed been the very cornerstones of modern Europe, and Hungary within it.

I belong to the generation which had just started its professional career in the new, democratic political system, in 1990. In this year, Hungary joined the Council of Europe as the first “former Soviet-block country”. Ever since then, I have practically not left this “universe”: my professional career and my life in a wider sense revolve around this Organisation.



I have seen it from the outside: as a diplomat, as an ambassador, from the Foreign Ministry’s hierarchy, from the desk, up to the Minister’s cabinet. And I have seen it from the inside: as its Director of External Relations and also, currently, as its representative to the European Union.

The history of the Council of Europe had started well before the accession of Hungary in 1990. This Organisation is the first international, institutional incarnation of Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy in Europe. This constitutes its past, its present and its future.

A few (personal) examples demonstrate better than any lengthy explanations what the Council of Europe stands for.

I remember back in 1990 in the Ministry of Justice, we translated the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights, one by one, seeking guidance for new legislation in the fields of criminal, civil, administrative and international law. A new universe had opened up to

us with a new way of thinking - the empowerment of the individual. The Council of Europe and the European Convention on Human Rights are not only fundamental components of a “peace project” originating from the “Never Again!” principle after World War II. Rooted in the Christian and humanist heritage of Europe, they are also the institutional conclusions of the post-war fears of a disproportionate majority rule and the relativisation of the checks-and-balances. In fact, all major political philosophical tendencies contributed to the creation of the Council of Europe’s human rights protection system. All. It is something worth keeping in mind.

Later on, we Hungarians played a pioneering role in building up Council of Europe capacities in the field of the protection of national minorities. The first diplomatic and drafting attempts of a practical application of “collective rights” took place within the walls of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. There was “blood, toil, tears and sweat” (after all, the Council of Europe is the brainchild of Churchill), but we did not give up and we made our way through.

In more recent times, Hungary and the Council of Europe are most frequently mentioned together in the context of the “Budapest Convention”. Its official name is “ETS 185 - European Convention on Cybercrime”, and it was signed in Budapest on 23 November 2001 - hence the name. It is a golden standard in this very modern field and its subject matter is more relevant than ever, shown by the everyday practice of international co-operation.

As to the future, let me refer to the forthcoming work in the Council of Europe on artificial intelligence, more precisely concerning “a legal framework for the development, design and application of artificial intelligence, based on the Council of Europe’s standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law”. It would be difficult to present anything more contemporary and future-oriented than this engagement, undertaken recently by the 47 member states of the Organisation.

My modest contribution to the above?

I hope I could add the “human factor”, which is an indispensable element (at least so far) of even the best-designed machinery. Should I point out some exciting and inspiring moments or periods? I would certainly refer to the early years (1990-1992) when we figured out how to adjust the working methods of the Hungarian public administration to the exigencies of a European organisation, followed by the “minority protection period” (1993-1996) referred to above, and the first Hungarian chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers (1998-1999). My mandate as Permanent Representative, ambassador, between 2002-2007 was marked by Hungary’s accession to the EU which focused Budapest’s attention on our “big brother”, but also by the second Summit, which put the Organisation on the path of “democratic security”. And now, as the Council of Europe’s ambassador to the European Union, I am fully locked into the dichotomy of the two organisations, which offers me a unique - sometimes fascinating, sometimes disappointing - view on the “cuisine interne” of international co-operation.

Ambassador Judit József

Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 2007-2011

The first two decades of my professional life were linked to the Council of Europe. From 1992 to 2011, I served three times at the Permanent Mission of Hungary in three different functions. I joined the MFA in 1990. There was a single Department for European Cooperation with a single person working for each of the main international fora (NATO, European Communities, Council of Europe, Western European Union and Central European Cooperation). Altogether, we were five persons in the Department. In 2011, when I came to the



end of my term as Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe, Hungary had just accomplished its first Presidency of the Council of the European Union. This huge task was carried out by a dedicated group of several hundreds of officials and diplomats in Budapest and in Brussels. These figures show the magnitude of developments in European cooperation over those 20 years.

This period showed a complete change in the Council of Europe. Hungary was the first of the states of the former Eastern bloc to join the organisation on sixth of November 1990. It was followed by Czechoslovakia (February 1991) and Poland (November 1991). In 1999, we welcomed Georgia as the 41st member state in a ministerial meeting held in Budapest. A few years later the Council of Europe embodied de Gaulle's vision of Europe extending from the Atlantic to the Urals and including 47 member states. Indeed, both professionally and spiritually, the eastern enlargement process of the Council of Europe marked our life. The organisation was enlargement-friendly and while some doubts were raised on the maturity of newcomers, the overwhelming idea was that the historic momentum had to be kept.

As the Heads of State and Government declared at their first Summit Meeting in Vienna in October 1993, „The Council of Europe is the pre-eminent European political institution capable of welcoming, on an equal footing and its permanent structures, the democracies of Europe freed from communist oppression.”

Everything seemed to be subjected to this noble task. To help candidate countries make their transition to democracy, a series of co-operation and assistance programmes was carried out in key areas of reform. The European Convention of Human Rights was reformed to ensure its effectiveness and enable it to cope with individual complaints arriving from potentially 800 million citizens. The importance of the protection of minorities was recognised. Two minority related instruments were elaborated and adopted, the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in 1992 and the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in 1994. The Hungarian input to the codification of these minority-related legal instruments was valuable, solid and based on expertise. Several member states joined the organisation without complying with the accession criteria at the moment of accession. Hope that membership of the Organisation would have a positive impact on the democratic transition processes was strong and candidate states made serious commitments in the field of democracy and respect for human rights.

Professionally, it was highly interesting to notice that often the new member states committed themselves to respect more rights than the old member states did. Such a phenomenon was linked also to the development of the human rights corpus of the organisation. Acceding states made commitments in connection with the prevention of torture or inhuman and degrading punishment, protection of national minorities, peaceful settlement of disputes, certain social rights, or competences of local government, something that those that joined earlier would have never been requested to do.

Besides assistance, procedures for monitoring were also introduced in both the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers to ensure that a high level of democracy was attained and respect for human

rights was guaranteed to all citizens. For Hungary, the establishment of the monitoring procedure was a kind of guarantee that the rights of Hungarian minorities living in neighbouring states will be observed.

By 1996, when Russia joined, the Council of Europe had its pan-European role confirmed, but Ukraine was still waiting and almost the whole Western Balkan region was still in a post-war state of trauma. The task was so huge that the Council of Europe had to unite forces with other organisations, in particular the European Union and the OSCE. An impressive cooperation scheme started to develop between the partner institutions in which the Council of Europe offered its expertise and the European Union offered valuable financial support in order to better protect and promote human rights, democracy and rule of law in Europe. Hungary was supportive of strengthening co-operation among the different institutions. The deepening of co-operation based on coherence and complementarity between the EU and the Council of Europe was a key priority for the Permanent Representation of Hungary during my term of office.

The pace of enlargement was such that the Council of Europe found itself suddenly obliged to adapt itself to its new functions and its enlarged membership base. This was done by initiating a structural reform process, through which every aspect of the work of the organisation was scrutinized (decision-making process, financing, structure of intergovernmental activities, honouring of commitments, inter-institutional relations and visibility of the work). The task was entrusted to a Committee of Wise Persons, of whom the then Minister for Foreign Affairs of Hungary was also a member. The Committee - under Hungarian guidance - also examined the question of co-operation between the European „interlocking institutions” and suggested - among other things - the conclusion of a framework agreement between the EU and the Council of Europe, or the insurance of their permanent presence in each other's headquarters. These proposals were all implemented later. A Memorandum of Understanding was concluded in 2007 between the Council of Europe and EU. This instrument continues to guide cooperation between the Council of Europe and EU. Likewise,

the Council of Europe Liaison Office in Brussels and the EU Delegation in Strasbourg continue to play a key role in reinforcing the dynamics of political dialogue and practical cooperation. In my view, the developments in co-operation between the two organisations reflect a clear common commitment to an effective multilateralism. To illustrate the magnitude of such a cooperation; the global financial volume of the three-year joint programs under implementation is around 150 million Euro, with the EU and the Council of Europe contributing around 85% and 15%, respectively.

On the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, it is unavoidable for a Hungarian diplomat to think about a previous anniversary. In 1999 under the Hungarian Presidency of the Council of Europe, the 104th Session of the Committee of Ministers was convened to Budapest to celebrate the semi-centennial anniversary of the organisation. The Ministers adopted the „Budapest Declaration for a Greater Europe without dividing lines” by which they committed themselves to use the potential of the Council of Europe to achieve unification of Europe based on the common standards on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In spite of the unquestionable achievements in these fields, further efforts are needed for the unity of Europe since European societies face new challenges related to the core values of the Organisation. Therefore, the threefold mission remains an everyday and permanent task for the Council of Europe and its partner institutions in the future. The forthcoming Hungarian Presidency will be suited to focus on how the organisation could most efficiently carry out this task.

Ambassador Ferenc Robák

Permanent Representative of Hungary to the CoE 2011-2016



The Founding fathers intended to establish the Council of Europe as the main framework for cooperation of the European democratic states. This seems to be confirmed by the fact that beyond the accession to the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (hereinafter referred to as the European Convention of Human Rights or ECHR), as an integral membership condition and the institution of the European Court of Human Rights ruling on applications alleging violations of the rights set out in the ECHR, the

organisation has such instruments as the Council of Europe Development Bank financing social projects, the European Pharmacopoeia, the single reference work for the quality control of medicines or the European Support Fund for the Co-Production and Distribution of Creative Cinematographic and Audiovisual Works corresponding to the spirit of the Organisation, referred to as “Eurimages”.

The Western European heavy-industry community set up following the lessons emerging in the World War II to hinder the revival of the German defence industry was slowly transforming into a successful commercial-economic cooperation, a common market. Although it initially relied on the organisation and infrastructure of the Council of Europe, later it took over its anthem and flag and as the community converted into the European Union it overshadowed the Strasbourg-based Organisation. The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) set up in the period of the détente also became a potential competitor to the Council of Europe in many fields, however it could not get rid of the spirit of the conflict between the USA and the Soviet Union, always focused on the prevention of conflicts, distribution of democratic rights

meant only a tool in its activity to achieve the major goal.

The second Golden Age for the Council of Europe dawned following the end of the Cold War: The Organisation became the scene of European democratic cooperation for the states just getting rid of the Soviet influence. Hungary as a leading country in democratic transition could relatively easily pass the entrance test, but the states applying later for the membership could only be invited with the condition of a serious screening after the accession. The Council of Europe became a pan-European organisation, the only scene for resolving all disputes of the continent, referred to the land from the Atlantic Ocean to the Ural by De Gaulle, among the Europeans, with the participation of all stakeholders.

When preparing for the position of Ambassador at the Permanent Representation of Hungary to the Council of Europe after concluding the Hungarian Presidency of the European Union in 2011, it was obvious to me that for Hungary the role of the Organisation is the protection of national minorities, since the Council of Europe disposed of particular, legally binding international conventions obliging the State Parties to respect the rights of national minorities. It is true, of course that this is not an automatic process. There is a long way from the objective expert findings to the recommendations adopted, allies are needed even among the States not being so interested in the question. The latter one is feasible only in those cases when the position of the Permanent Representation is principle based: irrespective of whether we speak about the Hungarians in the Carpathian Basin, the Albanians in North-Macedonia or the Russians in the Transnistrian region, the same principles should be voiced. In addition, compromise-based solutions reflecting the opinion of the local minority representatives are needed in the host countries. Maximalist approaches lead only to resolutions obliging no one, attached to the records of meetings without results, while the partial solution reached by humble and detailed work could be considered as immediate improvements in the eye of national minorities. I am proud of the fact that together with my team we could improve the conditions of the co-existence through several compromises, even if these solutions were backed by good general bilateral relations in

some cases. Our firm stance on the issue of national minorities was strengthened by the principle based Hungarian position towards other minorities. Hungary was considered as a country belonging to the community of states where the rights of the LGBTI people are respected and promoted.

The constitutional, legislative process in Hungary after the elections held in 2010 provoked incomprehension and criticism in many of the cases and the issues were raised in the fora of the Council of Europe, as the guardian of human rights, rule of law and democracy.

The Hungarian diplomacy sought to follow an objective approach, endeavoured to separate the political prejudice from the critics and entrust the expert level with the clarification.

When concerns were raised regarding some pieces of legislation, it was the Hungarian side, who requested the opinion of the expert bodies, for instance the Venice Commission or we built on the consultation of the Private Office of the Secretary General with the experts of the competent Hungarian authorities. We respected the obligations undertaken in the ratified conventions and in the cases where contradictions were identified, the Hungarian side amended the national legislation. This attitude and approach were acknowledged by both the administrative apparatus of the Council of Europe and the Members States, essentially all main concerns were satisfactory addressed. However, in the Parliamentary Assembly giving the floor for political debates, procedures not free of political emotions were conducted, but in 2013 the Assembly partially, in 2015 finally rejected the opportunity to open a monitoring procedure in respect of Hungary. The Permanent Representation of Hungary to the Council of Europe gave objective information and assistance on the context of different developments to all members of the Hungarian parliamentary delegation of the Council of Europe irrespective of their party affiliation in order that the Hungarian interest could be better represented.

In the question of migration, it was the Hungarian delegation after the Maltese one, who urged to place the issue of the Mediterranean and Balkan routes of migration on the agenda of the Session of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs, before the migration crisis in the summer of 2015. However, the

Members States did not understand at that time the importance of the matter, the issue of the Ukrainian crisis put aside the topic of migration (see the agenda of the Session of the Committee of Ministers in 2015). The firm Hungarian measures in connection with migration (building a fence) did not provoke criticism in the intergovernmental forum. These steps were considered as justified measures, only the PR activity was regarded problematic. As to the transit zone, not the establishment but its living conditions were of concern to the Council of Europe, therefore several fact-finding visits were organised to assess the circumstances.

Since all EU members are also the State Parties of the 47-member Council of Europe, the EU statements are of relevance within the Council of Europe, as the European Union is relying more and more on the acquis of the Council of Europe. The Permanent Representation of Hungary was considered as a recognised partner in this EU consultation, the Hungarian delegation was the chef-de-file of the monitoring procedure at intergovernmental level. Substantial efforts were made to reach consensus, as a result of intensive consultation the common position of the European Union was never broken. When some elements of the original version of the draft EU statement were contrary to our interest, the text could be refined in close cooperation with those delegations who partly agreed with us. Hungary was rarely on the agenda of the Human Rights Meeting of the Ministers' Deputies responsible for the supervision of the execution of the Court's judgments. Not only the exceptional benefit that the small number staff of the delegation came from the best qualified diplomats of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (currently the number of colleagues is nearly the double in Strasbourg) or the expert help of the Hungarian members of the apparatus of the Council of Europe contributed to the efficient and successful activity of the Hungarian delegation but the Hungarian „white table” was also legendary. It was an honour to be invited to a Hungarian program and the promotion of the Hungarian arguments was simpler in this positive mood.

We could finish the period between 2011-2016 by preserving the European rank and reputation of Hungary acquired during democratic transition.

Concluding remarks

János Bóka

State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice responsible
for international and European Union judicial cooperation

Council of Europe – New Challenges for the “Gentle Civilizer of Nations”



For two personal reasons, the Council of Europe has a special importance for me: it's a reminder of my political coming of age and a symbol of Hungary's European vocation. I was twelve years old in 1990 when the Hungarian Constitutional Court declared the death penalty unconstitutional. I didn't fully understand the legal niceties of the situation, but I had a vague impression that the decision had a definitive impact on the process of Hungary's accession to the Council of Europe

as first Member State from the East Central European region. In 1992, a few years later, I already saw clearly the exceptional significance of Hungary's ratification of the European Convention on Human Rights. At that time, it seemed to me that the Council of Europe was, to borrow the description of public international law by Finnish international lawyer Martti Koskenniemi, a “gentle civilizer of nations”.

I followed with great interest and enthusiasm the promising initiatives that intended to equip the Council of Europe with more effective tools to protect the rights of national minorities by setting standards and developing institutions. My interest was motivated not only by a responsibility for Hungarian communities abroad but also by a deep European conviction.

I was convinced, as I am convinced still today that the reunion of Hungary and the community of European nations as well as the flux of European ideas is not a unilateral or one-way process. I was convinced,

as I am convinced still today that the mission for us, Hungarians is not simply to receive European standards presented to us but to shape and develop these standards in partnership with those who value the protection of national minority rights. While recognizing the useful and diverse activities of the Council of Europe in this area, I must admit to a sense of lack that persists. I hope that this sense of lack, instead of despair, will lead to a reinforced will of the like-minded.

As State Secretary of the Ministry of Justice responsible for international and European Union judicial cooperation I follow only a very limited array of activities by the Council of Europe. However, in these areas one can already identify with some certainty the challenges that the Council of Europe as a whole must face if it wants to remain a cornerstone of European integration and cooperation. It must avoid its institutional functioning becoming self-serving or self-driven because it might diminish political ownership and support of its activities by Member States. As a grave reminder of this risk, reference can be made to some European conventions that have been signed by only a few States and ratified by even less. At the same time, the Council of Europe must avoid being pushed in the direction of insignificant or insubstantial initiatives due to a desperate search for political consensus.

The Council of Europe also faces the challenge of internal coordination among the ever increasing number of organs and monitoring mechanisms. From the perspective of Member States, it is crucial that the scope of the activities of these organs and mechanisms is well defined and in case of overlapping the coherence of standards or obligations is well ensured.

In addition, the Council of Europe must find its place in the new geopolitical reality: in a geographic and political area determined by the quadrangle of the European Union, the United Kingdom, Russia and Turkey. The Council of Europe must cope with and adapt to the fact that out of 47 Member States 28, soon 27, conduct internal coordination on a number of issues as Member States of the European Union. The sustainability of some initiatives within the Council of Europe is provided to a large extent by European Union funding, and the institutional

presence of the European Union in the Council of Europe is also slowly but surely increasing. It is not a completely baseless concern that in the absence of a proper strategy the Council of Europe could become a forum where the European Union conducts its relations with Eastern neighbourhood countries or a pool of experts that provide contributions to European Union institutions for their internal procedures.

Hungary has the privilege to hold the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in a crucial period, from May to November 2021. I am convinced that we will meet the related challenges of strategic planning, preparation, coordination, implementation and follow-up that requires intensive domestic coordination and international cooperation. The Hungarian Presidency will contribute not only to the diversity of European unity but will also lay the foundations for another 70 years of success by the Council of Europe.

Photos of the Conference



János Martonyi, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, former President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe delivering his opening speech



Panel discussion I (from left to right): Ferenc András Kalmár, Ministerial Commissioner for Neighbourhood Policy; Zsolt Németh, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee; István Balogh, Deputy State Secretary for Security Policy, Political Director; Gergő Kocsis, Deputy to the Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe



(from left to right) Amb. Zoltán Taubner, Zsolt Németh, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Amb. Judit József, János Martonyi, fmr. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Amb. András Rakovszky, Amb. Ferenc Robák, Margit Szűcs, Head of Security Policy Department



(from left to right) Amb. Zoltán Taubner, Zsolt Németh, Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Amb. Judit József, János Martonyi, fmr. Minister of Foreign Affairs of Hungary, Amb. András Rakovszky, Amb. Ferenc Robák