

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

International Conference on Training and Education on Human Rights of Members of the Armed Forces

28 October 2026

Paris, Council of Europe Office

Council of Europe Project “[Rights of veterans and personnel of armed forces in Ukraine](#)”

Background

The ongoing war has profoundly transformed the Ukrainian Armed Forces, bringing significant changes to their structure, composition and operational environment. The Armed Forces now bring together personnel with diverse backgrounds and life experiences, including mobilised civilians, women, and servicemembers of different ages, professional backgrounds and health conditions, creating both new challenges for human rights education and protection and an important opportunity to rethink established approaches and strengthen institutional safeguards. Alongside these developments, ensuring the effective protection of the human rights of members of the armed forces has become increasingly important. Recent institutional reforms, including the establishment of dedicated human rights functions within the Ministry of Defence of Ukraine and the creation of the Military Ombuds Institution, demonstrate Ukraine's commitment to strengthening safeguards for military personnel.

A key element of this effort is ensuring that members of the armed forces, commanders and military educators have a sound understanding of the rights and freedoms guaranteed under international and European human rights law. Human rights education and training contribute to a professional military culture, support informed decision-making, and help ensure that military personnel are aware of both their rights and the mechanisms available for their protection. Furthermore, this approach should extend beyond those already serving, ensuring that those entering military service are aware of their rights and guarantees, while those leaving the armed forces are informed about the rights and protections available to them after completing their service.

This is a common priority across Council of Europe member states. As armed forces continue to adapt to evolving security environments and changing forms of military service, there is growing recognition of the need to strengthen education and awareness on the human rights of military personnel before, during and after military service. Exchanging experiences and good practices on how these standards are incorporated into military education systems, pre-service training for conscripts, in-service training for military personnel, and broader professional development can contribute to more effective implementation of Council of Europe standards.

The Council of Europe provides a unique platform for such cooperation. Through its normative framework, capacity-building activities and support to member states, it promotes the effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter, PACE Recommendation 1742(2006) and Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)4 on the human rights of members of the armed forces. The Recommendation specifically calls for members of the armed forces to receive training to heighten their awareness of human rights, including their own rights.

The Council of Europe's HELP Course on Human Rights in the Armed Forces further supports these efforts by providing tailored educational resources on the human rights of members of the armed forces, drawing on the European Convention on Human Rights, the case law of the European Court of Human Rights and other relevant Council of Europe standards.

Aims and Rationale

While the initiative originates from a tailored cooperation project in Ukraine, it addresses challenges that are common across Council of Europe member states. The conference, thus, aims to facilitate the exchange of experience and good practices among Council of Europe

member states on promoting the human rights of members of the armed forces through education, training and awareness-raising. It will bring together representatives of defence institutions, military education establishments and human rights bodies to discuss practical approaches to integrating Council of Europe human rights standards into military education, pre-service training for conscripts, in-service training for military personnel, and broader professional development, while strengthening awareness of the rights of military personnel.

Thematic Focus

1. Human Rights Education and Training on the Rights of Members of the Armed Forces

This session will explore approaches to integrating the human rights of members of the armed forces into military education and professional development. Discussions will examine curriculum development, education at military academies, training for commanders and instructors, continuous professional learning, and the use of modern educational tools, including the Council of Europe's HELP Programme. Participants will exchange national experiences and good practices in promoting knowledge and application of Council of Europe human rights standards throughout military service.

2. Awareness Raising on the Human Rights of Members of the Armed Forces

This session will focus on strategies for enhancing awareness and understanding of the rights of military personnel. Discussions will examine initiatives aimed at informing members of the armed forces about their rights under Council of Europe standards, promoting awareness among military leadership, and encouraging institutional approaches that support the effective enjoyment of these rights including, but not limited to, the right to life; protection from torture and ill-treatment; equality and non-discrimination; fair disciplinary procedures and access to justice and effective remedies; protection through independent complaints, oversight and accountability mechanisms; social and labour rights; the rights of women and servicemembers with disabilities; the rights of members of national minorities and religious groups. Participants will share practical examples of communication, outreach and awareness-raising activities implemented across member states.

Participants

The conference will bring together representatives of relevant Ukrainian state institutions, military education and training institutions, together with representatives of other relevant structures, including independent oversight mechanisms.

Participation will also include representatives of ministries of defence, military academies and training institutions from other Council of Europe member states, alongside experts from the Council of Europe, the European Court of Human Rights, NATO, the European Union, DCAF and academia.

Representatives of national human rights institutions, ombuds institutions and civil society organisations working on the human rights of members of the armed forces will contribute practical experience and facilitate the exchange of good practices from across Europe.

Draft Programme

9.00-9.30 Welcome coffee and registration

9.30-10.00 Opening remarks

10:00–12:30 | Session I

Human Rights Education and Training on the Rights of Members of the Armed Forces

Integrating international human rights standards into military education and professional development

Discussion topics

- Integrating the human rights of members of the armed forces into military education
 - Training commanders and instructors on human rights standards
 - Professional development throughout military service
 - The HELP Course on Human Rights in the Armed Forces
 - Exchange of good practices among Council of Europe member states
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12:30–14:00 | Lunch

14:00–16:30 | Session II

Awareness Raising on the Human Rights of Members of the Armed Forces: Roles, Impact and Effective Strategies

Discussion topics

- Raising awareness of the rights of members of the armed forces as a holistic approach
 - Communicating available safeguards and support mechanisms
 - The role of relevant state bodies, human rights institutions, international organisations and non-governmental organisations in promoting awareness
 - Good practices from Council of Europe member states
 - The role of military leadership in promoting awareness
 - Building a culture of respect for the rights of military personnel
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16:30–17:00 | Closing Remarks