

# Council of Europe

February 28, 2022

**In news-** For its invasion of Ukraine, Russia was suspended from the Council of Europe recently.

## **About Council of Europe (CoE)-**

- It is an **international organization founded in 1949 in the wake of World War II** to uphold human rights, democracy, and the rule of law in Europe.
- **The ten founding members of the CoE are Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.**
- It has **46 member states** (including all 27 EU members) and operates with an annual budget of approximately 500 million euros.
- The organization is **distinct from the 27-nation European Union (EU)**, although it is sometimes confused with it, partly because the **EU has adopted the original European Flag which was created by the Council of Europe** in 1955, as well as the European Anthem.
- No country has ever joined the EU without first belonging to the Council of Europe.
- The **headquarters** of the Council of Europe is in **Strasbourg, France.**
- **English and French are its two official languages.**
  - The Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the Congress of the Council of Europe also use German, Italian, and Russian for some of their work.
- **This council is an official United Nations Observer.**
- The **CoE cannot make binding laws, but it does have the power to enforce select international agreements** reached by European states on various topics.

- **It is composed of four principal bodies:** the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, and the Secretariat.
- The **Committee of Ministers, which meets twice a year, is composed of the foreign ministers** of all council members.
- It **decides the council's budget and its program of activities** based on recommendations made to it by the Parliamentary Assembly and various expert committees.
- The **Parliamentary Assembly, which meets four times a year, is a deliberative body** consisting of representatives from national parliaments.
- The **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe is a consultative body** that represents local and regional (subnational) governments within the council.
- The Secretariat, with a staff of about 1,000, serves the other three main organizations within the council.
- The CoE has established a number of **special bodies and expert committees** over the years, such as
  - The **European Committee on Crime Problems.**
  - **The European Commission of Human Rights.**
  - **The European Court of Human Rights.**
  - The Cultural Heritage Committee.
  - The Council of Europe Social Development Fund (formerly the Council of Europe Resettlement Fund).
  - The European Committee on Legal Cooperation.
  - The Steering Committee on Local and Regional Authorities.