

Statement by the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe for the first anniversary of the opening for signature of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Legal Profession

13 May 2026

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE) represents the bars and law societies of 46 countries, and through them more than 1 million European lawyers. The CCBE responds regularly on behalf of its members on policy issues which affect European citizens and lawyers.

On 13 May 2025, the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Legal Profession opened for signature in Luxembourg – a text that is a decisive step in recognising the essential role that lawyers, bar associations and professional associations play in the preservation of democracy, the rule of law and the protection of fundamental rights.

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), which represents more than one million lawyers across 46 European countries, appreciates the significance of this Convention: this unprecedented international instrument reflects the political will to respond to the growing threats to the profession today - such as violence, harassment, arbitrary restrictions, illegal surveillance, smear campaigns - all of which are in fact aimed at the right of every citizen to a free and independent defence.

The Convention strongly affirms that lawyers, as essential actors in justice, must be able to carry out their duties without fear or hindrance, in compliance with the principles of independence, confidentiality and free access to the client.

The independence of lawyers is an essential democratic guarantee. Where lawyers are silenced, the rule of law falters, justice is weakened, freedom is restricted and citizens' trust in the state is extinguished.

The CCBE welcomes the commitment of the 29 States that have already signed the Convention, and expresses its gratitude to the Council of Europe for having carried out this project with determination and consistency.

But there is still a long way to go for this text to become fully effective, even though the situation of lawyers in many countries requires immediate protection.

This is why the CCBE calls on all Council of Europe Member States to join this Convention without delay and to ensure its practical implementation by ratifying it as soon as possible. Ratification is a decisive step in ensuring the effectiveness of the Convention and guaranteeing the protection of our colleagues in the many countries where the practice of the legal profession remains seriously threatened.

Beyond the Council of Europe, the CCBE calls on the European Union – a central player in the promotion of the rule of law and democracy – to sign and conclude this Convention, in order to equip itself with a binding international instrument to complement the Charter of Fundamental Rights and consolidate its own mechanisms for guaranteeing the rule of law.

This step would pave the way for the early entry into force of the Convention and thus ensure that its essential protections are put in place in a timely manner.

The CCBE will continue to advocate for the widest possible ratification, a condition for effective and uniform protection for lawyers and reaffirms its deep attachment to the values on which the legal profession is founded: independence, dignity, loyalty, respect for the rights of the defence.

There can be no justice without independent lawyers who are free to represent their clients without fear or interference.