
Council of Europe: democracy and human rights, “clear and worrying backsliding. Situation compounded by pandemic”

We are witnessing a “clear and worrying degree of democratic backsliding” and “there is no doubt that legitimate actions taken by national authorities in response to Covid-19 have compounded the situation”. Council of Europe Secretary General Marija Pejčinović Burić made these remarks following today’s publication of the annual report on the state of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in the 47 CoE member states. If it is true that “in many cases, the problems we are seeing predate the coronavirus pandemic”, the danger is “that our democratic culture will not fully recover”. It is thus clear that “our member states now face a choice. They can continue to permit or facilitate this democratic backsliding or they can work together to reverse this trend, to reinforce and renew European democracy and to create an environment in which human rights and the rule of law flourish”. The annual report takes into account the findings of different Council of Europe bodies, including the European Court of Human Rights. In its 160 pages, it assesses recent developments in areas such as political institutions and judicial independence, freedom of expression and association, human dignity, anti-discrimination and democratic participation. For each area, the report also encourages member states to take action under existing and future “Council of Europe mechanisms”.

Valentina Bombelli