



Council of Europe
Conseil de l'Europe

Council of Europe experience from the pandemic

**Human rights at stake –
Human rights as a resource**

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«...like many other national and international organisations ...[we were] neither prepared nor fully equipped for a global crisis of this nature... »

Evaluation of the CoE support to MS in addressing challenges related to the Covid-19 Pandemic

COVID-19 Pandemic

Existing weaknesses,
discrepancies and human
rights challenges

- revealed and exacerbated

Fast, difficult and
controversial policy choices

- important impact on some of the
individual rights and freedoms

Levels of trust in policies and
programmes issued by the
authorities

- substantial decrease

Post-infectious symptoms,
also known as “long COVID”

- impact on healthcare

Challenges to Europe's founding values of democracy, rule of law and human rights



Council of Europe to support member states

to respond effectively to the crisis

to do so while safeguarding Europe's founding values of democracy, rule of law and human rights

→ Respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights in the framework of the COVID-19 sanitary crisis - A toolkit for member states, issued by the Secretary General of the CoE, Marija Pejčinović Burić (7 April 2020)

Specific challenges highlighted in biomedical field

- Vulnerable persons and groups



- A “new” trust crisis

TRUST

The word "TRUST" is written in large, bold, blue capital letters. Below the word is a blue arrow pointing downwards and to the right.

- Challenges to health care systems



Protecting human rights in biomedicine and health



Setting priorities in the light of the pandemic

Strategic Action Plan on Human Rights and Technologies in Biomedicine (2020 – 2025)

- Human rights challenges identified reinforced by the COVID-19 pandemic

- **Equity** in access to healthcare
- **Empowerment**



Protecting human rights in biomedicine and health - Objectives



- **Guaranteeing equitable access to healthcare for every person**

- **Combating health disparities created by social and demographic changes in Council of Europe member states**

Article 3 of the Oviedo Convention requires States to *“take appropriate measures to ensure equitable access to healthcare of appropriate quality”*

Protecting human rights in biomedicine and health – Results (1)

- Statement on human rights considerations relevant to COVID-19 pandemic
« Human rights – responsibility – Solidarity »



- Statement on equitable access to vaccination



- Statement on « vaccination pass »



- Webinars: Covid- 19 and testing – Health literacy – Covid-19 and Public dialogue

Protecting human rights in biomedicine and health – Results (2)

- (draft) Recommendation on equitable access to medicinal products and medical equipment in a shortage situation
 - Products and equipment necessary for severe or life threatening health conditions
 - Measures to safeguards rights of persons concerned
 - Recognising and strengthening value of solidarity
 - Prioritisation based on medical criteria
 - Appropriate support and removal of barriers
- Guide to health literacy - Contributing to trust building and equitable access to healthcare
 - Health literacy important determinant of health – Contributes to equity and trust in in health systems

Conclusions

- Importance of democracy, rule of law and human rights
 - Need for intergovernmental cooperation and solidarity
 - Could we be better prepared for next time?
 - Need to review actions taken during the pandemic
 - To learn lessons and share them
 - Importance of value-based approach for decisions at collective and individual level
 - Public dialogue to identify priority values
 - Transparency and accountability
 - To help rebuild the trust in governments and scientific institutions
- **Council of Europe**: cooperation platform and support provider

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