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Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe
The voice of European Lawyers

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CCBE Statement calling for the swift signature and ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer

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Lawyers are fundamental to the rule of law and the protection of citizen's rights. They play a critical role in upholding justice, ensuring access to justice, and defending the rights of everyone. However, their independence and safety have increasingly come under threat across Europe and beyond.

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), representing the Bars and Law Societies of 46 countries and, through them, more than 1 million European lawyers, calls upon the European Union (EU) and all Council of Europe member States to urgently sign and ratify the landmark Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer. The CCBE calls on all States to accede to it as soon as it enters into force.

This Convention is a landmark binding legal instrument that establishes a strong and effective framework to safeguard the independence, autonomy, and professional rights of lawyers. It protects lawyers from unlawful actions and improper interference, guarantees confidentiality of lawyer-client communications, and ensures fair access to the profession and disciplinary procedures.

Protecting lawyers means protecting the rule of law, strengthening justice, and preserving the fundamental rights of citizens. When lawyers can perform their duties free from harassment, retaliation, or improper interference, they can effectively defend individuals' rights, ensure fair trials, and uphold justice.

The European Commission's annual Rule of Law Report has consistently highlighted the vital importance of safeguarding the independence of the legal profession as a core pillar of democratic governance and justice systems. In this context, the latest Rule of Law Report[1] mentioned the Convention as an important step towards ensuring that lawyers can carry out the fundamental role they are assigned in a democratic society. Furthermore, the CCBE welcomes the recent address from the Commissioner for Democracy, Justice, the Rule of Law and Consumer Protection, Michael McGrath, who

[1] See page 16: https://commission.europa.eu/document/download/0f7b852b-6b8a-4e21-8579-69db5386c6a2_en?filename=1_1_63910_communication_rol_en.pdf

underlined that the Convention responds to a real need to protect the legal profession, hoping that all Member States would accede to it.[2]

In view of the above, the swift signature and ratification of the Convention by the EU and all Council of Europe Member States is a crucial and necessary step to strengthen the independence of the legal profession. This Convention will play a key role in protecting and upholding the foundation of the rule of law, ensuring that justice systems remain fair, transparent, and able to withstand challenges. Its implementation is essential to safeguard lawyers, who are vital defenders of democratic values and fundamental rights, thereby supporting the rule of law first across Europe and then worldwide with the accession of non-member States of the Council of Europe.

Therefore, the CCBE calls on the EU and all States to act promptly in endorsing and implementing this important Convention. Protecting lawyers is essential — not only for the legal profession but also for the integrity of justice and the rule of law.

[2] https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/speech_25_433