



EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS
COUR EUROPÉENNE DES DROITS DE L'HOMME

Public launch of the ECHR-KS

Speech by Robert Spano

Strasbourg, 18 October 2022

Dear Deputy Secretary General, Dear Bjørn,

Dear Judges,

Distinguished Ambassadors, Permanent Observers and Members of Permanent representations,

Dear Government agents,

Dear Director General,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good afternoon to everyone and a very warm welcome to all participants present in the room and to those who are following this event online. Please let me welcome you also on behalf of the President elect, Siofra O'Leary, who is here present on this momentous occasion.

I am very happy to see how many of you are here today because I truly consider this moment to be transformative for our system based on the fundamental principle of subsidiarity.

Much has been written, said and done about this principle, so I will not repeat the various conceptual, jurisprudential and practical issues involved.

As I recalled in my speech at the solemn hearing for the opening of the judicial year, back in June, dialogue between this Court and national courts is part of our DNA. In that speech, I mentioned two pillars of this dialogue: on the one hand, the Superior Courts Network, which now includes 102 superior Courts from 44 member States of the Council of Europe, as well as two observer international Courts (the Court of Justice of the European Union and the Inter American Court of Human Rights); on the other hand, the requests for advisory opinions under Protocol 16.

In both cases, the actors concerned at national level are the highest courts.

Today, by opening the Court's Knowledge Sharing platform to all legal practitioners, in particular the thousands of lower courts judges of the 46 member States, who are the frontline infantry of the Convention system, we are inaugurating a third pillar.

As the Registrar, Marialena Tsirli, will explain in detail in a few minutes, the genesis of Knowledge Sharing goes back almost four years, when we, judges of the Court and Registry lawyers, were finally able to access a one-stop platform on the vast body of case-law created during more than 60 years of applying and interpreting the Convention.

A couple of years ago, taking stock of the success of this tool both internally at the Court and within the Superior Courts Network, which was granted access to a version of the platform in June of 2019, the Registry of the Court and the Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law of the Council of Europe began work on a joint project on enhancing subsidiarity.

As far as Knowledge Sharing was concerned, the joint project has two strategic objectives. Firstly, to externalise the platform in both official languages by the end of 2022, which would revolutionize the Court's external output in terms of case-law analysis. Secondly to duplicate it in non-official languages, which would be the real game changer for the Convention system, since one of the main problems for a correct interpretation of the Court's case-law at domestic level remains the language barrier.

The first strategic objective of the project is being achieved here today. Work on the second objective, is underway, thanks also to very generous voluntary contributions received as of today by some member States, thanks also to the endorsement of the project by the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General and to the relentless work of my friend Christos Giakoumopoulos and his teams.

Allow me to finally thank the Registry, and in particular the department of the Jurisconsult, Anna Austin, working with her deputy Stefano Piedimonte Bodini and their amazing teams, for all the hard and creative work over the years, reinforced by the Registrar, Marialena Tsirli. As I have often said, courts must be visible and transparent participants in modern society, strategically optimising their resources.

Dear Bjørn, thank you for your support to the project and for co-hosting this event today. You have the floor.