



## Symposium

### 30th anniversary of Japan's observer status with the Council of Europe

**Date: 13 March 2026**

**venue: Room 6, *Palais de l'Europe*, Council of Europe  
Strasbourg, France**

In November 1996, Japan became the sole Asian country to join the Council of Europe as an Observer State. Japan and European countries both attach importance to fundamental values such as human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. This symposium is convened to mark the 30th anniversary of Japan's observer status with the Council of Europe, highlighting three decades of collaboration and shared commitment to the values of the organisation. The event will start with a keynote address by Professor Masahiro Sogabe, Substitute Observer in respect of Japan to the Venice Commission and Professor at the Graduate School of Law, Kyoto University, providing a perspective on the development of international human rights law in Japan and the significance of this longstanding partnership. Building on these foundations, the symposium will then engage with the contemporary challenges and opportunities presented by Artificial Intelligence (AI), a novel topic that impacts both European and Japanese societies and calls for strengthened cooperation built on top of our shared values: democracy, human rights, and the Rule of Law.

AI is transforming our society, profoundly affecting how we live, work, and interact. As AI technology advances, its impact on democratic processes, human rights, and the Rule of Law will continue to grow, offering both opportunities and challenges. AI systems have the potential to significantly enhance the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy, and the Rule of Law. However, they also pose serious risks, such as discrimination, gender inequality, threats to democratic processes, infringements on human dignity and autonomy, and the misuse of AI by States for repressive purposes. Recognising these dual aspects of AI, the Council of Europe has consistently addressed the ethical and legal implications of digital technologies and AI. The Organisation is dedicated to ensuring that AI development and application align with established human rights standards.

The symposium addresses the complex impacts of AI on democracy, human rights, and the Rule of Law within advanced democracies, recognising these three pillars as fundamentally interrelated yet deserving of distinct exploration. The symposium will examine how AI is utilised within key democratic processes, focusing in particular on its role in elections and law-making procedures. Relying on human rights as an overarching framework, the event will then explore concrete concerns such as threats to individual rights, algorithmic biases, and the principles of equality and non-discrimination. Lastly, special attention will be given to the responsible deployment of AI by public administrations and courts, with an emphasis on legal regulation, transparency, oversight, accessible remedies, and safeguarding both judicial independence and fair-trial guarantees.



## AGENDA

Time	Session
09:45 – 10:00	<p><b>Opening remarks: 30 years of Japan in the Council of Europe</b></p> <p>Mr OEDA Shigeta, Ambassador, Permanent Observer of Japan to the Council of Europe, Consul General</p> <p>Mr Péter PACZOLAY, Honorary President of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe; Judge at the European Court of Human Rights.</p>
10:00 – 11:00	<p><b>Keynote: International Human Rights Law in Japan</b></p> <p>Prof. Masahiro SOGABE, Substitute observer in respect of Japan to the Venice Commission; Professor, Graduate School of Law, Kyoto University</p>
<i>11:00-11:30   Coffee break</i>	
11:30 – 12:30	<p><b>AI and democracy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms Herdis KJERULF THORGEIRSDOTTIR, Member of the Venice Commission in respect of Iceland; Former Vice-President of the Venice Commission; Attorney at Law</li> <li>Prof. Masahiro SOGABE, Substitute observer in respect of Japan to the Venice Commission; Professor, Graduate School of Law, Kyoto University</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: Ambassador Caitríona DOYLE, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe; Chair of the Rapporteur Group on Democracy of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe</p>
<i>12:30-14:00   Lunch break</i>	
14:00 – 15:00	<p><b>AI and human rights</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ms Charlotte GILMARTIN, Secretary of the Gender Equality Commission, Directorate General of Democracy and Human Dignity of the Council of Europe</li> <li>Mr Mario HERNÁNDEZ RAMOS, Former Chair, Committee on AI (CAI); Professor of Constitutional Law, Complutense University of Madrid</li> <li>Mr Tim KOLK, former Vice-chairperson of the Steering Committee for Human Rights' Drafting Group on Human Rights and AI (CDDH-IA) and member of the Bureau of the CDDH; Agent of the Estonian Government before the European Court of Human Rights, Ministry of Foreign Affairs</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: Ms Anna AUSTIN, Jurisconsult, European Court of Human Rights</p>



<p>15:00 – 16:00</p>	<p><b>AI and the Rule of Law</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mr Rafael BUSTOS GISBERT, Member of the Venice Commission in respect of Spain; Professor of Constitutional Law, Complutense University of Madrid</li> <li>• Mr Matthieu QUINIOU, Member of the Advisory Board on Artificial Intelligence (AIAB) of the CEPEJ the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ); Associate Professor at Paris 8 University,</li> <li>• Ms Fernanda Teixeira SOUZA DOMINGOS, T-CY Bureau Member; Senior Federal Prosecutor, Coordinator of the Advisory Group on Cybercrime Federal Prosecution Service of Brazil</li> </ul> <p>Moderator: Ms Hanne JUNCHER, Director of Security, Integrity and Rule of Law, Council of Europe</p>
<p>16:00 – 16:15</p>	<p><b>Conclusions</b></p> <p>Mr Rafael BUSTOS GISBERT, Member of the Venice Commission in respect of Spain; Professor of Constitutional Law, Complutense University of Madrid</p>
<p>16:20 – 16:30</p>	<p><b>Closing of the symposium</b></p> <p>Mr OEDA Shigeta, Ambassador, Permanent Observer, Consul General</p>

*It will be possible to follow the event live [online](#)*

**Available languages: EN / FR**