

PRESS RELEASE

The Council of Europe appoints a rapporteur for the drafting of a European Convention on the Profession of Lawyer

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The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Council of Europe has appointed **Mrs Sabien Lahaye-Battheu** as Rapporteur for the Case for drafting a European Convention on the profession of lawyer. Mrs Lahaye-Battheu is a Belgian member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and has been a lawyer since 1990.

On October 13th 2016, 22 members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe signed a Motion inviting the Committee of Ministers to initiate work on the drafting of a European Convention on the profession of lawyer.

The authors of the Motion found that "Lawyers contribute to respect for the rule of law by defending individual freedoms, and in particular by ensuring that the right to a fair trial, guaranteed by Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) is upheld. **Unfortunately, when the rule of law is threatened, the rights associated with the exercise of this profession are often also restricted.**"

Even though the right of defence in criminal matters is enshrined in Article 6.3c of the ECHR, there is no international convention on the profession of lawyer, and the rules on the exercise of this profession vary from one State to another. Existing texts, such as "*Recommendation No. R(2000)21* of the Committee of Ministers *on the freedom of exercise of the profession of lawyer*" and the *United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers* of 1990, have served as benchmarks in this field, but are nevertheless "soft law" instruments, and as such have no binding legal force.

"I congratulate Mrs Lahaye-Battheu for her appointment as rapporteur for the Convention", says Ruthven Gemmill WS, President of the Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, "and wish her a very fruitful mandate for this project which is of vital importance for the entire legal profession, for the Rule of Law and for the respect for Democratic institutions in Europe."

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, or CCBE, underlines the importance of the universal core principles associated with the exercise of the lawyer's profession and welcomes the initiative to enshrine these principles in a European Convention with legally binding force.

About the CCBE

The Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe (CCBE), founded in 1960, is an international non-profit association which has been, since its creation, at the forefront of advancing the views of European lawyers and defending the legal principles upon which democracy and the rule of law are based. The CCBE is recognised as the voice of the European legal profession representing, through its members, more than 1 million European lawyers. CCBE membership includes the bars and law societies of 45 countries from the European Union, the European Economic Area, and wider Europe.

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