

Fact sheet on the OSCE

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Fact sheet on the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe

Constituent instrument of the CSCE

Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Signed in Helsinki on 1 August 1975.

Nature: political commitment (code of conduct and negotiation programme).

Constituent instrument of the institutionalised CSCE (OSCE from 1 January 1995)

Charter of Paris for a New Europe.

Signed in Paris on 21 November 1990.

Nature: political commitment (code of conduct and action programme).

Participating States

Number: 56

Number of founding States: 35

Founding States: Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), Finland, France, German Democratic Republic (GDR), Greece, Holy See, Hungary, Ireland, Iceland, Italy, Liechtenstein, Luxembourg, Malta, Monaco, Norway, Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Romania, San Marino, Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), United Kingdom, United States of America.

[Note: 1990: German reunification; 1991: collapse of the USSR (1992: succeeded by the Russian Federation); 1991–1992: disintegration of Yugoslavia; 1992: suspension of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro); 1992: dissolution of the Czech and Slovak Federal Republic.]

States admitted subsequently: Albania, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania (1991); Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Croatia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Slovenia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan (1992); Czech Republic, Slovakia (1993); Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1995); Andorra (1996); Serbia and Montenegro (2000).

[Note: 2006: Montenegro gains independence.]

Conditions for admission

— All European States, the United States and Canada are entitled to take part (paragraph 54 of the Final Recommendations of the Helsinki Consultations), as well as all the former Soviet Republics (see Journal No 3 of the fifth CSO meeting (10 January 1992));

— acceptance of all CSCE/OSCE commitments and responsibilities (see Summary of Conclusions of the Berlin Meeting of the CSCE Council of 19–20 June 1991).

Objectives

Better relations between the participating States, guaranteeing conditions in which the people can live in true and lasting peace free from any threat to or attempt against their security, contribution to the strengthening of world peace and security and to the promotion of fundamental rights, economic and social progress and well-being for all peoples (Final Act of the Helsinki Conference).

Democracy based on human rights and fundamental freedoms, prosperity through economic liberty and social justice, equal security for all the countries (Charter of Paris for a New Europe).

Principles

1. Sovereign equality, respect for the rights inherent in sovereignty.
 2. Refraining from the threat or use of force.
 3. Inviolability of frontiers.
 4. Territorial integrity of States.
 5. Peaceful settlement of disputes.
 6. Non-intervention in internal affairs.
 7. Respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief.
 8. Equal rights and self-determination of peoples.
 9. Cooperation among States.
 10. Fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law.
- (Final Act of the Helsinki Conference.)

Activities

Peaceful settlement of disputes, confidence-building and security measures, disarmament, development of commercial exchanges, industrial, scientific and technical cooperation, protection of the environment, development of transports, promotion of tourism, resolution of problems linked with movements of migrant workers, training of professional staff and technicians, development of cooperation with non-participating Mediterranean States, contacts among persons, exchanges in the fields of information, culture and education.

(Final Act of the Helsinki Conference.)

Conflict prevention, early warning, management of crises, peace-keeping, peaceful settlement of disputes, arms control, disarmament, confidence-building and security measures, norms of behaviour on politico-military aspects of security, cooperation with other European and transatlantic organisations and institutions, fostering of democratic change and political pluralism, prevention of terrorism, fighting against illegal trafficking in drugs and other forms of international organised crime, cooperation in the field of economy, science and technology, facilitating means of transport and communication, protection of the environment, non-proliferation of nuclear weapons, export controls applicable to nuclear materials, conventional weapons and other sensitive goods and technologies, transfrontier cooperation, cooperation with non-participating Mediterranean States.

(Helsinki Document 1992: 'The Challenges of Change'.)

Bodies

Negotiating and decision-making bodies:

Summit, Ministerial Council, Permanent Council, Senior Council, Forum for Security Cooperation.

Operational structures and institutions:

Chairman-in-Office, Secretary General, Parliamentary Assembly.

Specialist institutions:

Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), High Commissioner on National Minorities, OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media.

OSCE related bodies:

Court of Conciliation and Arbitration, Joint Consultative Group (CFE Treaty), Open Skies Consultative Commission (Treaty on Open Skies).

Material resources

- Diplomats seconded from their national administrations;
- Financial contributions from the participating States.

Official languages

German, English, Spanish, French, Italian and Russian.

Seat

Vienna (Secretariat).

Legal personality

No.

Classification of the organisation

According to its composition: a regional organisation (pan-European: Euro-Asian-Atlantic).

According to its area of activity: a security organisation.

According to its functions: a consultation (harmonisation of the points of view of the participating States) and management (provision of services to the participating States) organisation.

According to its working method: intergovernmental cooperation.

According to the type of cooperation: operational cooperation (joint actions in connection with specific operations).