

and building on the potential of the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement, leading to the publication of the first country report on Ukraine as part of the Enlargement Package.

4. EU financial engagement: The Thematic Programme for Human Rights and Democracy continued to support civil society actions on documentation and accountability of war crimes.

In addition, at the beginning of 2023 grant support was awarded to human rights defenders for EUR 720,000 and at the end of the year two new grants were launched (EUR 2.4 million) to promote internationally the principle of universal jurisdiction, awareness raising about the war crimes and advocate for the implementation of EU acquis on fundamental rights. The grant support for protection of freedom of expression and media pluralism continued for a total of EUR 3.2 million. Grant support to civil society organisations for their survival and coping with threats posed by the military operations was provided for a total of EUR 1.6 million.

These actions were complemented by a grant under the Technical Cooperation Facility 2019 (EUR 840,000) launched in June 2022 to document war crimes and a contribution agreement (EUR 3 million) launched in November 2020 under the Technical Cooperation Facility 2020 to support activities of the OHCHR Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine.

Three grants under the Country-Based Support Scheme for Civil Society continued to support persons belonging to minorities, women, and protection economic and social rights (EUR 1 million).

5. Multilateral context: Ukraine continued to actively cooperate with international organisations, including the Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and Council of Europe promoting condemnation of the Human Rights violation committed in the context of the Russia's full scale of invasion and war of aggression against Ukraine through all the available international instruments and aligning with the EU in this process. On 23 February 2023, The UN General Assembly called for ending the war in Ukraine and demanded Russia's immediate withdrawal from the country, in line with the UN Charter. On 17 May 2023, the Council of Europe Summit in Reykjavik announced the establishment of the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine through an Enlarged Partial Agreement. The Riga Principles established the guiding rules for the Register's functioning, among them a victim-centred approach.

EEA/EFTA Countries and non EU Western European Countries

Swiss Confederation

1. Overview of the human rights and democracy situation: Switzerland has a very high standard of human rights internally, and an active human rights policy abroad, with no issues

of major concern. During the 2022 fall session, the Swiss parliament approved a law to establish the country's first National Human Rights Institution.

With regards to gender equality, Switzerland continues face persistent wage differences between the sexes, the underrepresentation of women in managerial positions, the difficulties in balancing work and private life, domestic violence and violence against women in general. In August 2023, the Federal Office of Gender Equality (FOGE) reported that women in Switzerland earn 18% less than men – despite the fact that the principle of “equal pay for work of equal value” has been enshrined in the Federal Constitution since 1981, and being set out in greater detail in the Gender Equality Act since 1996. To tackle this, the FOGE has notably explored the possibility to include to expand Logib to include a functionality enabling the creation of a simple, gender-neutral salary system.

Starting in 2024, the FOGE is also taking the lead on matters relating to the issue of equality for LGBTI people. One of its major tasks will be to draw up a “national action plan against LGBTQ-hostile hate crimes”.

On 22 June 2022, the Swiss Federal Council adopted a national action plan 2022-2026 for the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. The plan is centred on three topics: public information and awareness raising, providing basic and further training for professionals and volunteers, and sexualised violence.

On the matter of racism, in December 2021, the UN Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) expressed concern over ethnic, religious, and racial hate speech in Switzerland, including on the Internet and social media. CERD was also concerned about persistent racial profiling by the police in Switzerland.

The UN Committee against Torture issued in July 2023 its main concerns and recommendations on Switzerland's implementation of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Committee welcomed the establishment of the Swiss Institution for Human Rights and called on Switzerland to ensure all necessary resources to enable it to effectively fulfil its existing mandate. On the other hand, the Committee reiterated its concern that torture has not yet been included as a specific crime in Swiss domestic legislation. It was also concerned about claims of ill-treatment and barriers to justice by individuals detained in federal asylum centres, call for the establishment of independent, confidential and effective complaints mechanisms.

2. EU action - key focus areas: The EU and Switzerland enjoy close and frequent cooperation within the international institutions and multilateral arena as regards human rights and democracy promotion (such as the UN, the Council of Europe, the OSCE). The EU and Switzerland often support each other's resolutions/statements in the UN Human Rights Council. The EU and Switzerland are also like-minded partners in the context of the UN General Assembly Third Committee.

3. EU bilateral political engagement: In general, Switzerland has good mechanisms in place to assure the protection of human rights within its territory. Possible issues are best addressed in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in the UN Human Rights Council. The EU and Switzerland hold human rights consultations, most recently in Brussels on 12

December 2022. A range of matters, including EU-Switzerland cooperation in multilateral fora, are addressed as part of these consultations.

4. EU financial engagement: Switzerland is not included in any operational projects or programmes funded by the EIDHR or other EU instruments.

5. Multilateral: Under its Federal Constitution, the promotion of respect for human rights and democracy is a stated goal of the foreign policy of Switzerland. At the political level, the Foreign Policy Strategy 2024-2027 sets out how Switzerland aims to reinforce the universality of human rights in the global context.

As a follow-up to the Foreign Policy Strategy 2020-23, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (FDFA) has released Human Rights Guidelines 2021–24. These guidelines are meant to ensure coherent and effective Swiss human rights diplomacy, including in the fields of peace and security, business, and sustainability. Human rights are also an important topic in follow-up strategies, notably the International Cooperation Strategy 2021–24 (IC Strategy 2021–24), which also establishes goals and instruments for promoting human rights, and the Digital Foreign Policy Strategy 2021–24.

The FDFA's Peace and Human Rights Division (PHRD) is responsible for the promotion of peace and human rights as set out in the Federal Council's foreign policy strategy, notably in multilateral settings. For instance, the FDFA's PHRD provides experts for bilateral and multilateral projects, international peace missions and election observation missions, a case in point being the OSCE Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine. In addition, Switzerland also holds a human rights dialogue with China. The latest (17th) iteration took place in Bern in July 2023, after a four-year hiatus.

Switzerland is currently a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council (UNSC), with a two-year mandate that started on 1 January 2023. In the context of the UNSC, Switzerland has four thematic priorities, which are closely linked to human rights: building sustainable peace, protecting civilians, enhancing effectiveness in the work of the UNSC, and addressing climate security. Switzerland is also a member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) during the period 2020-2024.

Switzerland was subject to the fourth cycle of the Universal Periodic Review in January 2023. It received 317 recommendations and supported 209.

Kingdom of Norway

1. Overall human rights situation: Norway is a strong supporter and promoter of human rights. Norway has ratified all the main UN conventions on human rights, and the protection of civil and political and economic, social and cultural rights is strong domestically. Norway is