

**United Nations Human Rights Council, 63rd Session
(7 September 2026 - 9 October 2026)
Item 4 - General Debate
Speaker: Humanists UK representative: Archie Longrigg¹**

We are deeply concerned by the implications of the Chişinău Declaration², adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe; not only for the human rights protections of migrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers, but for the principle of universality. Weakening the rights of some risks undermining the rights of everyone.

As a non-binding political declaration, it reflects a broader climate that is increasingly hostile to migrants. Countries such as Denmark³, and the UK⁴ have recently introduced legislation that purports to limit the application of Convention Rights, amid misrepresentations in reporting that the European Court of Human Rights obstructs the deportation of foreign national offenders.⁵ This is despite the Court already having an extremely limited impact on national migration and asylum decisions. Over the last ten years, just 2% of the just under half a million applications submitted to the Court concerned immigration⁶. Of those, the Court ruled against states in just 6% of cases⁷.

We are unclear about the purpose of the declaration. The Court already provides a mechanism for dialogue: Protocol 16⁸ allows high courts of state parties to obtain advisory opinions from the Court. Yet, despite the Chişinău Declaration itself encouraging states to consider ratifying Protocol 16, some countries that supported the process leading to the Declaration, such as the UK and Denmark have not done so⁹.

We call on European states to ratify Protocol 16, and to utilise its advisory function as means of engaging in open, informed and constructive dialogue that the Chişinău Declaration calls for.

¹ Humanists UK is the trading name of the British Humanists Association

² Council of Europe, Chişinău Declaration, 15 May 2026: [09125948802bc2cc](#)

³ Reuters, 'Denmark plans tougher deportation laws, challenging European human rights framework', 30 January 2026, [Denmark plans tougher deportation laws, challenging European human rights framework | Reuters](#)

⁴ UK Parliament, Parliamentary Bills, *Immigration and Asylum Bill*, 20 July 2026, [Immigration and Asylum Bill - Parliamentary Bills - UK Parliament](#)

⁵ University of Oxford, 'Misrepresentations around human rights and immigration fuelling calls to quit ECHR, Oxford report finds, 4 September 2025, [Misrepresentations around human rights and immigration fuelling calls to quit ECHR, Oxford report finds | Oxford University](#)

⁶ European Court of Human Rights (Press Unit), Factsheet: Focus on: Immigration, Page 3, 1 July 2026, [Focus On: Immigration](#)

⁷ Ibid

⁸ Council of Europe, Protocol No. 16 to the Convention on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, 2 October 2013, [Protocol No. 16 to the Convention](#)

⁹ Council of Europe, Chart of Signatures and Ratifications of Treaty 214, 11 September 2026, [Full list - Treaty Office](#)