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## **EUROPEAN COMMITTEE ON DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE (CDDG)**

### **CHAIRMANSHIP OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS**

**Activities implemented under the Chairmanship  
of Croatia**

**and**

**Priorities of the Chairmanship of Finland**

**For information**

Secretariat Memorandum  
prepared by the  
Directorate General of Democracy  
Democratic Governance Department

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## Introduction

This document provides the CDDG with a brief summary of activities and events held in the field of democracy under the Chairmanship of Croatia of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from 18 May 2018 to 21 November 2018.

It further aims to provide the CDDG with information on the priorities as well as events scheduled under the Chairmanship of Finland of the Committee of Ministers from 21 November 2018 to 17 May 2019.

On 21 November 2018 in Strasbourg, at the 1329<sup>th</sup> bis meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, the outgoing Chair of the Committee of Ministers, Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign and European Affairs of Croatia, gave an overview of her country's [achievements during the Chairmanship of Croatia](#) in relation to the following four priority areas:

1. The fight against corruption;
2. Efficient protection of rights of national minorities and vulnerable groups;
3. Decentralisation in the context of strengthening of local government and self-government, including the issue of absorption capacities of regions; and
4. The protection of cultural heritage and cultural routes.

Events held under the Chairmanship of Croatia included the Conference on Cross-Border Cooperation on 25 May 2018 in Dubrovnik which discussed legal instruments and frameworks, existing capacity-building tools and methodologies in cross-border cooperation in Europe. The Conference, hosted by the City of Dubrovnik and the Ministry of Public Administration, was organised by the Government of Croatia in cooperation with the Centre of Expertise for Local Government reform.

Also at the 1329<sup>th</sup> bis meeting of the Ministers' Deputies, the new Chair of the Committee of Ministers, Mr Timo Soini, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland, presented the [priorities of the Chairmanship of Finland](#).

Under the theme "*The Essence of Europe — Advancing Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law for All*", the main goal of the Finnish Presidency will be "*to further strengthen the crucial work of the Council of Europe in advancing human rights, democracy and the rule of law*". The priorities of the Finnish Presidency are the following:

1. Strengthening the system of human rights and the rule of law in Europe;
2. Support for equality and women's rights; and
3. Openness and inclusion—as well as a focus on young people and the prevention of radicalisation.

The Finnish Chairmanship, in setting out its priorities, points out that: *“Finland regards the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Council of Europe as an excellent opportunity to communicate to the public the importance of human rights and the rule of law in responding to both current and future problems in Europe. European crises, the contemporary and future human rights challenges and the political and financial problems faced by the Council of Europe all underline the need to focus on the essence of the work of the Council of Europe.*

*During its Presidency, Finland will therefore emphasise the fundamental strengths of the Council of Europe: the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, other legally binding treaties and their monitoring mechanisms, such as the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights, as well as instruments and mechanisms that support the implementation of human rights in our member States. All of these activities are essential and irreplaceable. Their impact on the lives of individuals is invaluable and they advance the protection of human rights.”*

An overview of scheduled activities and events scheduled during the upcoming Chairmanship of Finland is presented in Appendix.

### **Action required**

The members of the CDDG are invited to take note of the achievements under the Chairmanship of Croatia as well as the priorities and activities under the Finnish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers and, in particular, to consider how to support and reflect those priorities and events most relevant to its work.

## APPENDIX

### CALENDAR OF MAIN EVENTS DURING THE FINNISH PRESIDENCY

1. **Handing over the Presidency from Croatia to Finland**  
21 November 2018, Strasbourg  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry for Foreign Affairs
2. **Roundtable of the European Governmental LGBTI Focal Points Network**  
21–22 November 2018, Tallinn, Helsinki  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry of Justice together with the Government of Estonia
3. **PACE Standing Committee**  
22–23 November 2018, Helsinki  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Parliament of Finland
4. **The 20 years of the Single Court of the European Court of Human Rights**  
26 November 2018, Strasbourg  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry for Foreign Affairs
5. **CDDH Workshop on the Protection and Promotion of the Civil Society Space in Europe**  
29 November 2018, Strasbourg  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry for Foreign Affairs
6. **Human Rights Defenders in Council of Europe area – current challenges and possible solutions, Round table organised by Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights**  
13–14 December 2018, Helsinki
7. **First 2019 Session of the Parliamentary Assembly**  
21–25 January 2019, Strasbourg  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Parliament of Finland  
**+ event to mark the 20th anniversary of the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights**  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry for Foreign Affairs
8. **Conference Protecting Common European Standards on the Rule of Law**  
5 February 2019, Tampere  
Responsible Finnish Authority: University of Tampere, Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, Prime Minister's Office
9. **Education and Training Pathways of Youth Workers**  
20–22 February 2019, Helsinki  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry of Education and Culture
10. **High Level Expert Conference on Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights and the Rule of Law**  
**26–27 February 2019, Helsinki**  
Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, (advisory role: Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment)

**11. Meeting of the Bureau of the Congress**

1 March 2019, Helsinki

Responsible Finnish Authority: Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, Ministry of Finance

**12. Expert Meeting on the Implementation of Roma Integration Strategies and the International Roma Women's Conference**

20–22 March 2019, Helsinki

Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Ministry for Foreign Affairs

**13. Expert Conference on Tackling Gender Stereotypes and Sexism**

28–29 March 2019, Helsinki

Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

**14. First 2019 Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**

2–4 April 2019, Strasbourg

Responsible Finnish Authority: Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities

**15. Second 2019 Session of the Parliamentary Assembly**

8–12 April 2019, Strasbourg

Responsible Finnish Authority: Parliament of Finland

**+ a side event on 10<sup>th</sup> April to launch a study on sign language, with a music performance by rap artist Signmark**

Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry for Foreign Affairs

**16. Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights, Plenary Meeting of EPAN**

16–17 April 2019, Helsinki

Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry of Education and Culture, Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland, Ministry of Justice

**17. Expert Conference on Sexual Violence against Children in Sports**

April/May 2019, Helsinki

Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry of Education and Culture

**18. High Level Conference on Responses to Prison Overcrowding**

24–25 April 2019, Strasbourg

Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry of Justice

**19. 129th Session of the Committee of Ministers**

16–17 May 2019, Helsinki

Responsible Finnish Authority: Ministry for Foreign Affairs