



Priorities of the German Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (18 November 2020 – 21 May 2021)

Germany will assume the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers at a time when we are commemorating the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe's Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. Building on this key document that sets the highest standards worldwide for the international protection of human rights, Germany is firmly committed to further strengthening the implementation of rights and obligations under the Convention and to consolidating the Council of Europe's instruments.

These principles have recently been challenged by the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on the valuable work of the Greek Presidency, including the Athens Declaration, Germany will further promote multilateral action against this threat to global health and strive to reduce the pandemic's effects, in particular on the most vulnerable groups. The German Presidency will also follow up on the work of the Secretary General with a view to securing the proportional and provisional character of COVID-19-related restrictive measures to fundamental rights and freedoms.

In May 2021, it will be 70 years since the Federal Republic of Germany became a full member of the Council of Europe. Building on this heritage, the German Presidency is guided by a firm belief in multilateral cooperation. It will promote the vision of a strong and effective Council of Europe which meets the present and future challenges posed by social and technological developments. Germany intends to strengthen the Council of Europe as an international standard-setter for human rights, democracy and the rule of law and to bring the Council of Europe closer to the people.

1. Upholding human rights, democracy and the rule of law

The German Presidency will promote the guiding principles of the Council of Europe, i.e. human rights, democracy and the rule of law, by highlighting Europe's common standards and in particular the European Convention on Human Rights, which reflects an unprecedented commitment by the member States to nourish and to respect our common values.

The German Presidency will follow up on the 70th anniversary of the Convention in Athens on 4 November with a special conference on Human Rights Protection in Europe on 9 December, which will examine Europe's human rights protection institutions and their complementary mechanisms. The German Presidency will also mark the 10th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women

and domestic violence, known as the Istanbul Convention, by hosting a conference in May 2021 to take stock of the achievements of the Convention and the challenges it faces. A mid-term review of the Council of Europe's Gender Equality Strategy 2018 – 2023 will highlight the progress made and the challenges in achieving gender equality.

The German Presidency wishes to highlight the special role of the European Court of Human Rights and to explore ways to further improve the Court's unique human rights protection mechanisms. Following up on the 2018 Copenhagen Declaration, a series of international expert conferences and seminars will be held on the implementation of the Court's judgments, its interaction with the member States' constitutional courts and the role of member States' authorised representatives at the Court, in particular with regard to the implementation of the Court's judgments and the more efficient handling of cases arising out of state conflicts.

For the remainder of 2020, Germany holds the Presidency of the Council of the European Union at the same time as the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Against this background, Germany aims to generate synergies between these two tracks, in particular with regard to the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights as a decisive step towards the coherent protection of human rights all over Europe. To this end, the German Presidency will also strive to enhance the equality of LGBTI people in Europe, *inter alia* with a multi-stakeholder conference on "*Intersectionality and LGBTI Policies in Europe*".

2. Shaping the future

On many occasions, the Council of Europe has proven its role as an international standard-setter for human rights protection. It is equally well placed to set standards on the regulation of artificial intelligence and human rights on the internet. Its human-rights-sensitive approach may contribute to global efforts to address the current environmental challenges.

Artificial intelligence bears a meaningful potential: to simplify everyday life, to enhance the efficiency of industries and to improve healthcare services all across Europe. At the same time, human rights must also be guaranteed in the context of these new technologies. The Council of Europe has a fundamental role in establishing a far-reaching set of rules which englobes the high European standards in terms of human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Germany will build on the work of previous Presidencies, also by supporting progress in the work of the Council of Europe's Ad hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence. A high-level expert conference in January 2021 will address these issues and foster further progress.

Being a predominant threat to human rights and democratic integrity, hate speech is a global phenomenon facing more or less all European countries. Germany will actively support and facilitate the work of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion in coherence with related activities of the Parliamentary Assembly and the No Hate Speech Movement. A multi-stakeholder conference "*Dealing with Hate Speech from a European Perspective – Impulses for the Council of Europe*" will compare existing national regulation, promote awareness of hate speech and look into anti-discrimination strategies for particularly affected groups.

3. Bringing Europe closer to the people

As a cross-cutting theme, Germany will involve the public and especially young people around Europe in a future-oriented debate on the above-mentioned topics.

Germany will support and promote the Council of Europe's outstanding and participative activities in youth policy and facilitate the exchange of ideas between young people and youth workers. The 3rd *European Youth Work Convention* in December 2020 will be a key event that will invite people active in youth policy and youth work in Europe – the so-called youth work community of practice – to exchange ideas on establishing and implementing the European Youth Work Agenda.

The quality of human rights protection can best be measured by asking how minorities are protected. The Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities sets a valuable standard. Nevertheless, many minorities in Europe still face adversity and prejudice, a situation that has recently been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to shed light on the concerns and expectations of minorities, Germany will focus on Roma and Travellers, including Sinti and others, as the largest minority in Europe, and will organise a series of seminars and cultural events in close collaboration with the *European Roma Institute for Arts and Culture* (ERAC), founded in 2017 on a Council of Europe initiative and based in Berlin.

List of the German Presidency's main events

(subject to developments in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic)

Date	Event	Location
2020		
16–18.11.	International conference on cultural heritage	Online
18.11.	Handover of the Presidency from Greece to Germany	Strasbourg
18–19.11.	Conference: <i>“Intersectionality and LGBTI Policies in Europe: Lived Realities of Lesbian* Women and the Recognition of Rainbow Families”</i>	Berlin
19.11.	Conference: <i>“Women in Focus: Coronavirus and Gender Equality in Europe”</i> (in cooperation with the European Institute for Gender Equality)	Online
24–27.11.	Workshop: <i>“Artificial Intelligence: How Can Youth Take Part?”</i>	Strasbourg, European Youth Centre
30.11.	Conference: <i>“The execution of judgments of the ECtHR seen through the lens of compliance research”</i>	Strasbourg
07–10.12.	<i>“3rd European Youth Work Convention”</i>	Online
08.12.	<i>“Women and Human Rights – Personal Stories”</i>	Online
09.12.	Conference <i>“Human Rights Protection in Europe – The ECHR at 70 Years”</i>	Berlin
2021		
20.01. (tbc)	Conference: <i>“Europe as an international standard-setter for the regulation of Artificial Intelligence”</i>	Berlin
27.01.	Exhibition Opening: <i>“Early Holocaust research”</i> and <i>“What happened to Holocaust survivors”</i>	Strasbourg
28.01.	40 th anniversary of the initial signing of the Council of Europe Convention on Data Protection	tbc
04.02.	Conference: <i>“The Rule of Law in Europe: Vision and Challenges”</i>	Strasbourg
04–05.02.	Conference: <i>“Safeguarding local and regional democracy in south-east Europe”</i>	tbc
17–18.02.	Conference: <i>“Dealing with Hate Speech from a European Perspective: Impulses for the Council of Europe”</i>	Berlin

22–26.02. (tbc)	European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR) – interview session and award ceremony	Berlin
01.03.	Policy Lab on inclusive integration	Erlangen
01.03.	Gender Equality Commission Side event during the annual meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women	New York
10.03.	5 th European Symposium on the Comprehensibility of Legal Provisions	Berlin
18–19.03.	3 rd meeting of the Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM)	Berlin
Mid-March	Exhibition: “Nuremberg as city of Human Rights”	Strasbourg
Early April	Local Democracy in South-East Europe	Budapest
07–10.04. (tbc)	Workshop: „ <i>The role of Roma history, including Roma Holocaust, in the participation and inclusion of young Roma today</i> “	Strasbourg, Youth Centre
12–13.04.	Conference on inter-State applications before the ECtHR	Berlin
15–16.04.	Education Policy Advisors Network (EPAN) meeting and meeting of senior officials on the implementation of the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture	Mainz (tbc)
23-24.04.	Conference of the member states’ constitutional courts	tbc
30.04. (tbc)	Conference: “ <i>Delayed Execution, Deficient Execution and Non-Execution of ECHR Judgments: Taking Stock and Thinking Forward</i> ”	Berlin
Early May	Practitioners’ Workshop on “ <i>(De-)Radicalisation in Prisons – European exchange of views</i> ”	Strasbourg
02.05.	70 th anniversary of full Council of Europe membership of the Federal Republic of Germany	Berlin
02.05.	Anniversary Concert, Stuttgart Philharmonic Orchestra	Strasbourg, PMC
04.05.	Conference: “ <i>Ending Trafficking in Children and Young Persons</i> ”	Straßburg, Palais de l’Europe
05.05	Conference: “ <i>Strengthening international cooperation in criminal law</i> ”	Strasbourg
11.05.	Conference on the occasion of the 10 th anniversary of the first signing of the Istanbul Convention	Berlin

11.05.	Gender Equality Commission – annual conference Focus: <i>“Achieve a balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making”</i>	Berlin
May	Webinar: <i>“Impact of Covid-19 on media freedom”</i>	Strasbourg
May	Workshop: <i>“Human Rights and Business as a framework for addressing environmental protection challenges”</i>	tbc
20.-21.05.	131 st Ministerial Session	tbc