



Doc. 16404
13 May 2026

Election of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Communication
Committee of Ministers

Contents:

I.	Letter from the President of the Ministers' Deputies to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly dated 29 April 2026	2
II.	Resolution CM/Res(2026)4 on the appointment of the Deputy Secretary General	2
III.	Candidatures	
	- Candidature of Ms Tanja Gonggrijp	3
	- Candidature of Ms Marja Ruotanen-Bourdages	7

I. Letter from the President of the Ministers' Deputies to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly dated 29 April 2026

I have the honour to forward to you herewith Resolution CM/Res(2026)4 on the appointment to the post of Deputy Secretary General, which the Committee of Ministers adopted on 29 April 2026.

Signed: Daniela Cujbă, President of the Ministers' Deputies

**II. Resolution CM/Res(2026)4
on the appointment of the Deputy Secretary General**
(adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 29 April 2026 at the 1558th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies)

The Committee of Ministers, under the terms of Article 36.b of the Statute of the Council of Europe,

Having regard to the Regulations relating to the appointment of the Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General and Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly having the rank of Deputy Secretary General;

Having regard to the Competence framework agreed with the Parliamentary Assembly in 2012;

Having examined the five candidatures presented by the Governments of Finland, Netherlands / Belgium / Luxembourg, Romania, Spain and France;

Having interviewed the candidates at the 1555th meeting (25 March 2026);

Having consulted the representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly through the medium of the Joint Committee on 20 April 2026;

Decides to submit to the Parliamentary Assembly, for appointment to the post of Deputy Secretary General, the following candidatures, listed in alphabetical order, with the names of the sponsoring governments in brackets:

- Ms Tanja Gonggrijp (Netherlands/Belgium/Luxembourg);
- Ms Marja Ruotanen-Bourdages (Finland).

III. Candidature of Ms Tanja Gonggrijp



MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

His Excellency Mr Alain Berset
Secretary-General of the Council of Europe

The Hague,
20 January 2026

Your Excellency,

I am writing to you with regard to the ongoing procedure for the nomination of candidates to the position of Deputy Secretary-General of the Council of Europe.

On behalf of the governments of the Kingdom of Belgium, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, I am pleased to submit the Benelux candidate for this position: Ambassador Tanja Gonggrijp. I would be most grateful if this information could be conveyed to the Committee of Ministers.

Since 2022, Ambassador Gonggrijp has served as the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe. In this role, she has demonstrated a strong commitment to the organisation's work. Her mandate started with the preparation of the Fourth Summit of Heads of States and Governments in Reykjavik, and since then she has assumed various key responsibilities, notably with regard to accountability for Ukraine and the prevention of violence against women.

Ambassador Gonggrijp started her distinguished career at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in 2004, serving as ambassador to Sri Lanka and Maldives, a member of the management team of the Sustainable Economic Development Department and an adviser to the Director-General for International Cooperation, among other roles, prior to her appointment in Strasbourg. She also co-led an ambitious reform of the Ministry's human resources management framework, which included the design of a new human resources policy and support for organisational change, with lasting results.



MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

I am firmly convinced that her comprehensive diplomatic experience and deep commitment to the values of the Council of Europe make her uniquely well qualified to support the Secretary-General and the organisation in addressing current challenges and delivering on their priorities. Her demonstrated leadership, together with her expertise in programmatic, administrative and human resources management, not to mention her unwavering integrity, will ensure strategic and effective direction of the Secretariat.

Enclosed please find Ambassador Gonggrijp's curriculum vitae and cover letter. Thank you for your careful consideration of her candidacy.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'D' followed by a horizontal line.

D.M. van Weel
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Copy: Mr Mihai Popsoi, President of the Committee of Ministers
of the Council of Europe

Letter of candidacy from Tanja Gonggrijp for the position of
Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Dear reader,

This is a defining moment for Europe. The geopolitical landscape is changing rapidly. The last 75 years the Council of Europe has played a vitally important role in promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. This has led to unprecedented levels of stability and development. These values and institutions that have stood the test of time are now being increasingly challenged. If Europe remains dedicated to free and fair elections, free and independent media, rule of law with separation of powers and respect for human rights, including the rights of minorities, a vibrant civil society and a strong convention system, Europe needs to step up. I am deeply convinced that the mission of the Council of Europe is needed more than ever. The organisation must continue to guide, inspire and **protect the very basis of our prosperity and security; our core values.**

Driven by this conviction, I wish to **commit myself fully to the service of the organisation.** I am determined to support the Secretary General and the organisation with the implementation of the vision and the priorities of the Council of Europe: resolute support for Ukraine, the development of a new Democratic Pact and a strengthened role for the organisation in the evolving geopolitical landscape. I am confident in my ability to add value to the existing strong team and, through the responsibilities entrusted to me, to **translate today's vision and strategy into tomorrow's action.**

In order to continue delivering its vital role in these turbulent times, **the Council of Europe must be more impactful, more innovative and more effective.** If I am honoured with election, my ambition will be to pursue the reforms initiated by the Secretary General and the current Deputy Secretary General. I wish to contribute to a more resilient and agile organisation focussing on the political priorities and needs in areas the Council of Europe has a comparative advantage. As the organisation's greatest strength lies in the people who shape it, my intention is to work closely together with the staff and with the Committee of Ministers. Processes around prioritisation, budgeting, human resources, digitalisation and security can be further developed and streamlined. Effective coordination with the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and other bodies including the Congress, together with strong cooperation with external partners, strengthens the Council of Europe's capacity to deliver.

My career is closely intertwined with the Council of Europe and its core values. In 1998 I had the opportunity to intern at the Council of Europe. I was impressed by the colleagues' dedication and the value of their work. Almost 25 years after my study visit I returned as Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe. During these 25 years my work continued to evolve around democracy, human rights and rule of law. As Permanent Representative, Ambassador in Sri Lanka and the Maldives, and in other management positions I acquired **solid leadership experience in complex political and multicultural environments as well as an in-depth understanding of the challenges related to programme and project management, administration, human resources and change management.**

I wish to **contribute to an organisation fit for its purpose, an organisation that - in all its diversity - continues to unite around our values, with strong political relevance and more visibility,** for those people we all serve: the citizens of the 46 member states and beyond. I would be honoured to have the opportunity the coming weeks to engage, listen and further elaborate on the contribution I could bring to the organisation.

Tanja Gonggrijp

Candidate for the position of Deputy Secretary General



TANJA GONGGRIJP

Current position: Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Council of Europe

PROFILE

Experienced high-ranking official with a strong diplomatic background, including with the Council of Europe and its core values, Tanja Gonggrijp is well positioned to support the Secretary General and the organisation in addressing current challenges and delivering on their priorities. Solid track record in strategic management, covering programmatic, administrative, human resources and change management experience.

LANGUAGES

English: C2
French: C1
German: B1
Swedish: B2
Dutch: Native

EDUCATION

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION DEGREE
School of Management Groningen
Human Resources Strategy
2014-2015

MASTER'S DEGREE
University of Twente
Public Policy and Public Administration,
International relations
1995-2000

QUALIFICATIONS

- Leadership and high management
- Project management
- Development cooperation

PERSONAL DETAILS

4 February 1976
Married and two children

EXPERIENCES

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS TO THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

Strasbourg, France | since 2022

AMBASSADOR OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS TO SRI LANKA AND THE MALDIVES

Colombo, Sri Lanka | 2019-2022

HEAD OF SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND TRADE AT THE SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

The Hague, Netherlands | 2015-2019

PROGRAM COORDINATOR FOR HUMAN RESSOURCES POLICY RENEWAL

The Hague, Netherlands | 2014-2015

SENIOR ADVISOR AND HEAD OF COORDINATION UNIT DIRECTOR-GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

The Hague, Netherlands | 2010-2014

DIPLOMAT AT THE EMBASSY OF THE KINGDOM OF THE NETHERLANDS IN SENEGAL

Dakar, Senegal | 2007-2010

POLICY OFFICER AT THE WESTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE DEPARTMENT

The Hague, Netherlands | 2004-2007

Clingendael Institute for International Relations
PROGRAMME COORDINATOR

The Hague, Netherlands | 2000-2004

III. Candidature of Ms Marja Ruotanen-Bourdages



Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland

Helsinki, 18 December 2025

H.E. Alain Berset
Secretary General
Council of Europe

Dear Secretary General,

In accordance with the Regulations relating to the appointment of Secretary General, Deputy Secretary General and Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly and following the Committee of Ministers' Deputies decision at their 1546th meeting (10 December 2025) on the procedure for the election of the Deputy Secretary General, I have the honour to submit the candidature of Ms Marja Ruotanen-Bourdages for this post.

Ms Ruotanen-Bourdages is a staff member of the Council of Europe having served Europe's leading human rights body for 35 years, including 20 years holding senior leadership positions in the intergovernmental sector, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Private Office of the Secretary General. In her various capacities, she has contributed to major achievements in the key Council of Europe functions, such as standard setting, monitoring and cooperation activities. Through her work, she has gained a unique insight and experience that she has used to initiate and lead reforms with tangible results in line with the Organisation's priorities and the member States' decisions.

Ms Ruotanen-Bourdages has an exceptional profile to serve as Deputy Secretary General. Her values, integrity, strategic vision, strong leadership and management skills together with a drive for excellence and results constitute valuable assets for the Council of Europe to rise to today's challenges and thrive through change and reform. Therefore, I strongly support her candidacy.

Please accept the assurance of my highest consideration.

Elina Valtonen
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Finland



MARJA RUOTANEN-BOURDAGES

Director General of Democracy and
Human Dignity

Council of Europe

Over **35 years of comprehensive professional experience** in the Council of Europe, including 20 years as senior manager leading major intergovernmental and cooperation programmes (DG1 and DG2), supporting the Parliamentary Assembly Committees' work and facilitating high level political negotiations as Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General. Participated in the **development of standards**, supported the establishment and supervision of **intergovernmental and monitoring bodies**, and increased the relevance, efficiency and impact of **cooperation projects**. Determined to maximise the potential of **team work** at the level of the Organisation, developed and implemented transversal multi-annual strategies, adapting working methods and identifying priorities to increase impact. Led **change management**, initiating, designing and managing reforms resulting in efficiency gains, increased coherence and better outcomes. Steered and engaged staff in a constructive way to achieve positive change. Command and strict respect of Council of Europe's administrative and financial rules, regulations and processes.

Values driven, firm, fair and respected leader with strong negotiation skills and proven ability to make different views converge in the Organisation's best interest.

Recognitions: Knight, First Class of the Order of the Lion of Finland, by the President of the Republic of Finland (6 December 2025).

McGill University and Université du Québec Master of Arts degree (economics, international relations, law, political science).

Finnish nationality (from Rovaniemi). Fluent in Finnish, English and French; intermediate German and Swedish.

Marja RUOTANEN-BOURDAGES
Director General Democracy and Human Dignity, Council of Europe

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

► Leading flagship programs and large teams

Several leadership positions in flagship programs, notably efficiency of justice, prosecutors, police, children's rights, gender equality, youth, sport integrity and combating violence against women, trafficking in human beings, discrimination, racism and intolerance. Developing standards and policies, monitoring the implementation of conventions and recommendations, and supporting member states through co-operation programs in these areas. Currently leading a team of 600 staff members with 38 nationalities (permanent, temporary, seconded), and managing budgets over 120 million euros (Ordinary Budget, extra-budgetary resources).

Examples of achievements

- Setting up of the Consultation Group on the Children of Ukraine to efficiently follow up on the Reykjavik Summit's call to support children of Ukraine and focus on most pressing aspects and Council of Europe's added value. Support to the Special Envoy of the Secretary General on the situation of children of Ukraine.
- Strategic direction to work in the area of violence against women, focusing on promoting the entry into force and wide ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention) and on the setting up of its monitoring mechanism. Global visibility and impact; avoidance of double standards.

► Steering reforms and leading through change

As Director of Co-operation (former DG Human Rights and Justice, DG1), used opportunities to maximise the Council of Europe's capacity to respond to States' requests for assistance, resulting in legislative and policy changes required to align with key human rights treaties. Initiated first phase of cooperation with the EEA/Norway Grants, leading to multi-million multi-annual contracts. As Director of Human Dignity and Equality (DG Democracy and Human Dignity DG2), triggered reforms to increase the performance of several sectors, promoting transversal work and synergies and multiplying impact through strategic partnerships. Most recently (2024), as Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity, designed and led negotiations of a major restructuring of the Directorate General by streamlining activities and structures to increase impact. Redesigned work to enhance interaction with civil society and consolidate youth participation in the work of the Organisation.

Examples of achievements

- Creation of a new intergovernmental committee on democracy in a budget neutral manner (discontinuing other less relevant committees and structures) through open dialogue with member States and other stakeholders. Streamlined DG2 work and creation of structures within existing budgetary allocations, to ensure results addressing evolving needs and priorities in this field, including within the process towards a New Democratic Pact for Europe.
- Transformation of the former Steering Committee on Gender Equality (CDEG) into a new and innovative transversal program on gender equality resulting in a broad mobilisation of key stakeholders, effective mainstreaming in virtually all Council of Europe policies and work, increased impact and visibility of results.
- Conditions for transversal teamwork across the Organisation and the preparation of an Action Plan to integrate the youth perspective in the Council of Europe intergovernmental work and other deliberations
- Reform to increase synergy and efficiency in the work of the anti-discrimination mechanisms (ECRI, Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages).
- Use of sport as a leverage for the promotion of Council of Europe values and the development of new strategic partnerships resulting in the signature of MoU with UEFA and FIFA with strong commitments for sport integrity and human rights.

► Strengthening the links with other Organisations: Positioning the Council of Europe in the international scene

Led work towards the interconnection of global and regional agendas, initiated systematic reference to the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in areas under her responsibility, notably gender equality and children's rights and introduced the concept in the work of the Parliamentary Assembly. Ensured complementarities with the EU on several topics and strategies; initiated and participated in discussions on the EU accession to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence.

Examples of achievements

- Cross-regional meetings of international and regional mechanisms (7 at present) on violence against women institutionalised (Platform of Independent Expert Mechanisms on Discrimination and Violence against Women; GREVIO to chair in 2026).

Marja RUOTANEN-BOURDAGES
Director General Democracy and Human Dignity, Council of Europe

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (CHRONOLOGICAL OVERVIEW)

- September 2022 – present: **Director General of Democracy and Human Dignity**. Areas of responsibility: anti-discrimination, diversity and inclusion, gender equality, violence against women, trafficking in human beings, children's rights, education, youth, freedom of expression, civil society, culture and heritage, audiovisual and cinematographic cultural support; manages budget of 120 million € and staff of 600, 38 nationalities.
- June 2018 – August 2022: **Director of the Committees, Parliamentary Assembly** of the Council of Europe. Prioritisation, supervision, and coordination work of parliamentary committees.
- January 2014 – May 2018: **Director of Human Dignity and Equality** (DG Democracy). Areas of responsibility: children's rights and sexual violence against children (Lanzarote Convention), trafficking in human beings (Anti-trafficking Convention, GRETA), gender equality, violence against women (Istanbul Convention, GREVIO), rights of persons with disability, LGBTI rights, minority rights (FCNM, ECRML), Roma, racism and intolerance (ECRI), sport and ethics.
- January 2012 - December 2013: **Director of Justice and Human Dignity** (DG Human Rights and Rule of Law). Areas of responsibility: Legal co-operation (CDCJ), Efficiency of Justice (CEPEJ, CCJE, CCPE), gender equality trafficking in human beings, children's rights.
- September 2009 – December 2011: **Director of Cooperation** (DG Human Rights and Rule of Law). Areas of responsibility: judicial reform, efficiency of justice, police and prosecutors, prison reform, cybercrime.
- *September 2005 – August 2009: Director of the Private Office of the Secretary General* (Terry Davis). Areas of responsibility: management and co-ordination of Private Office, relations with the Committee of Ministers and national governments and delegations. Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, senior recruitment/staff matters, Directorate of Political Affairs (DPA), Secretary to the Senior Management Group, co-ordination of the Secretary General's agenda and communication, official visits and high-level contacts; development of reforms, implementation and follow-up.
- *September 2004 – August 2005: Deputy Director of the Private Office* (Terry Davis). Areas of responsibility: Directorate General of Administration (DGA), staff committee, Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), Third Summit (16-17 May 2005, Warsaw, Poland), Private Office Budget (CCM), development of reforms, implementation and follow-up.
- July 2003 - August 2004: **Secretary to the Political Affairs Committee**, Parliamentary Assembly.
- January 2003–June 2003: **Adviser, Private Office of the Secretary General** (Walter Schwimmer). Areas of responsibility: Directorate General of Administration (DGA), Staff Committee, Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB).
- March 1999–December 2002: **Secretary to the Political Affairs Committee**, Parliamentary Assembly.
- April 1996 – February 1999: **Adviser, Private Office of the Secretary General** (Daniel Tarchys). Areas of responsibility: culture, education, youth, Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), social cohesion, Social Charter, social policies, health, Pharmacopoeia.
- April 1990 – March 1996: **Secretary to various Parliamentary Assembly Committees** (Migration and Refugees, Economic Affairs and Development, Equality between Women and Men) and Executive Assistant to the Clerk of the Parliamentary Assembly.