
1555th meeting, 25 mars 2026

1 General questions

1.6 Deputy Secretary General – Interviews with candidates

The Secretariat recalls that, on 10 December 2025 (1546th meeting, item 1.6), the Deputies adopted the timetable for the election procedure of the Deputy Secretary General. The closing date for the submission of candidates was fixed at 12 March 2026.

By letter dated 28 January 2026, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands informed the Secretary General that the Dutch government proposed the candidature of Ms Tanja Gonggrijp for the post of Deputy Secretary General (cf Appendix).

On 18 March 2026, the Secretary General forwarded this candidature to the President of the Ministers' Deputies.



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