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| **MINISTERS’ DEPUTIES** | Information documents | **CM/Inf(2021)21-rev** | 23 February 2022 |

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| **Priorities of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (17 November 2021 – 20 May 2022)** |

Italy is about to take over the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe for the eighth time. It is preparing to take on this commitment with sense of responsibility, spirit of service and full awareness of the opportunities and challenges it presents.

In the current international context, member States are urged to further engage in dialogue and co-operation, and to rediscover the very essence of their commitment to protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, in accordance with the principles and values they willingly accepted in joining the pan-European "common home".

Our Presidency will be inclusive and participatory, committed to a result-oriented approach and to preserving the Organisation's credibility and importance. The protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms lies at the very root of European common values. It is crucial that the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) are executed, thereby ensuring the effectiveness of the supervision system, which is one of the Council of Europe's unique features. For the European human rights protection system to be more coherent and comprehensive, Italy sees the accession of the **European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights** as a matter of primary importance.

Italy is convinced that the Council of Europe is an example of effective multilateralism and an essential reference point on account of its recognised added value and expertise.

During our six-month Presidency, we will aim at further familiarising member States' citizens with the values and work of the Council of Europe. We will strengthen awareness raising activities targeted to children and students, with a view to turning them into informed citizens about the tools the Council of Europe offers to them, first and foremost the European Convention on Human Rights.

The Strategic Framework of the Secretary General and the decision to adopt a four year programming period, including a mid-term review, provide the Council of Europe with a sense of direction and tools to work more effectively. We now look forward to a swift and consensual approval of budget for the next two years in order to allow the Organisation to concentrate on priorities. Italy is also willing to pursue a constructive inter-institutional dialogue, in particular with the Parliamentary Assembly, in order to better answer to common challenges.

Aiming at building a future based on the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, the Italian Presidency will focus on three main themes, paying particular attention to the links between principles, objectives, tools and results.

1. **RECOMMITTING TO OUR SHARED PRINCIPLES AND VALUES**

Our original common objectives have been revitalised over the years through summit conferences and meetings. Italy is determined to pursue this path, focusing on fostering co-operation and dialogue within the membership and beyond, in areas whose relevance has been highlighted once again by the changing international context.

1. The Council of Europe has been capable of reacting to the consequences of the pandemic by providing members States with the tools to respond and find solutions in line with our shared principles and values. Paying continued attention to the **impact of pandemics** on national systems, patients' rights and ethical aspects is in the interest of all member States. Although the health emergency has accentuated disparities within and among countries, it has also provided an unprecedented opportunity to take decisive action to finally place equal access to healthcare at the heart of governments' concerns. This idea will be the main theme of our **"Social Resilience and Health Equality"** event.
2. Social rights are a key aspect of the European construction and of Europe's founding principles, albeit with due regard for national traditions. Italy is willing to contribute to the joint efforts to strengthen the **Social Charter** by simplifying its monitoring procedures and fostering a more regular dialogue with governments. It expects the recently appointed Ad Hoc working party to deliver tangible results for the Ministerial session in May 2022.
3. **Cultural heritage** is an outstanding tool for dialogue and social inclusion: it therefore must be protected. Because of its importance in daily life and its link with the environment and landscape, it makes a tangible contribution to the quality of life in Europe. Furthermore, digitalisation has opened up new horizons and eased connections among different cultures. The potential of **new technologies** can also be put at the service of knowledge, art and beauty. In this context, we will be holding a major event focusing on culture, landscape and our common heritage.

Our Presidency will also highlight and promote, through dedicated events, the **Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes**, the latter being crucial to foster dialogue between the countries and peoples they cross.

1. **Sport** is another key tool for dialogue. It is important to uphold its founding values and to ensure that it is fairly and honestly governed. For this reason, Italy will hold a specific event related to integrity in sport.
2. The Council of Europe should cultivate synergies with other regional bodies to give a **global dimension** to its treaty instruments, as far as possible. Co-operation activities with third countries will only benefit from enhanced outreach. Accordingly, Italy will encourage an effective neighbourhood policy. Continued **intercultural dialogue and, where it applies, interreligious dialogue**, will be part of this approach.
3. **ENHANCING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT AND THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS, PROMOTING YOUTH POLICIES WHILE FIGHTING DISCRIMINATION**

Throughout the world some categories of people have been particularly affected by the coronavirus crisis. Among them, **women and children**. At the same time, their participation and contribution are crucial to ensure a **sustainable and inclusive recovery**.

1. During lockdowns and restricted movement measures, cases of domestic violence and gender abuse have risen dramatically, while the participation of women in the labour market declined more rapidly than that of men. This is why **the protection and promotion of women's fundamental rights** must be at the heart of our joint efforts. Women's participation in the labour market, family support services and the promotion of leadership roles for women in the economy and society must be priority themes in recovery programs, which must be devised with the full involvement of women in the decision-making process. Women’s empowerment is also directly linked to the **prevention of violence against women**, including "economic violence”. We consider the **Istanbul Convention** as the most advanced instrument at multilateral level to fight violence against women and domestic violence and that is why we want to encourage additional signatures and ratifications. It is also essential to continue to work on **reconciling professional and private life** to ensure that women are not obliged to choose between family and work, giving up, in many cases, their own financial independence.

This will be the theme of a high-level event to be organised by Italy, paving the way to a broader discussion at the Council of Europe. Violence against women will also be the focus of a meeting of the Pompidou Group's Permanent Correspondents, to be held in Italy, which will partly cover **sexual violence and the use of date-rape drugs**.

1. **Young people** are a key component of our societies and must be supported with specific policies. Promoting and protecting the **rights of children and adolescents** is a fundamental pillar of the international human rights system and a key priority of Italy’s foreign policy, which draws heavily on the principles set out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter and other international treaties. The Italian Presidency aims at raising the level of protection of minors in the pan-European and international framework. To this end, we will co-operate with member States to ensure the mainstreaming of minors' rights in all multilateral co‑operation activities with the priority to eliminate all forms of violence and abuse against children and adolescents and ensure the enjoyment of their fundamental rights. Italy is proud to host in Rome the launch of the **new Council of Europe strategy on the rights of children and adolescents**.

The Italian Presidency will focus on the crucial role of **education** in supporting peace, the protection of human rights and the rule of law and in revitalising pluralist democracy. During the Presidency, we will invite young people from all the Council of Europe member States to attend a **Forum on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights**, both in person and virtually. The focus of this event will be the five-yearly review of the implementation of the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education.

1. Italy is committed to fighting all forms of discrimination. In this framework, it will host in Rome the **plenary meeting of the Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination**, **diversity and inclusion** and the meeting of the LGBT focal points.
2. **BUILDING A PEOPLE–CENTERED FUTURE**

The Italian Presidency will engage in revitalizing the grounding principles of the Council of Europe with a forward–looking attitude, aimed at building **a people-centered future** in which technologies and science are put at the service of people’s needs in full respect of their dignity and inalienable rights.

a) The Council of Europe has often been at the forefront of tackling the challenges posed to our societies by new technologies. Treaties such as the **Budapest Convention on Cybercrime** are now benchmarks at global level. Italy welcomes the forthcoming opening for signature of the **Second Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention** during its Presidency.

b) The Council is now faced with one of the most crucial issues in today's society, namely the risks posed **to human rights, democracy and the rule of law by the development and use of the artificial intelligence (AI)**. AI is an opportunity and a challenge for our societies. Building on the work carried out by the Ad Hoc Committee on Artificial Intelligence (CAHAI), we will hopefully decide in May the **tangible actions** that the Council of Europe will undertake to help build a future in which the enormous potential of artificial intelligence will be at the service of human needs.

c) The crisis caused by the pandemic has clearly shown the crucial importance for government policies and decisions to rely on data and evidence based on science, to balance the need to preserve public health while protecting fundamental freedoms. Focusing on the new generations, we will hold **an event on strengthening democracy through science**.

1. In strengthening the "people-centered” vision of the future of the countries of the Council of Europe, Italy considers as a priority to reaffirm the function of **punishment** both as a moment of **rehabilitation** of the offender and of **restoration** for the victim. It also supports the importance of the rule of law and of the independence of the judiciary as the basis for an effective democracy and for the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

For this reason, we will draw attention to these issues by holding two high-level events in the justice sector: the **Conference of** **Ministers of Justice** on **restorative justice and its role in European criminal justice** and the meeting of the **General State Prosecutors of the Supreme Courts of the Council of Europe member States,** focused on **the independence of prosecution offices.**

**ITALIAN PRESIDENCY OF THE COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

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|  | **2021** |  |  |
| **17** | **November** | Strasbourg | Committee of Ministers - handover and beginning of the Italian Presidency, in the presence of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Mr. Luigi Di Maio |
| **18** | **November** | online | Celebration of the European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse |
| **25** | **November** | Strasbourg | Participation of the Minister for Equal Opportunities Ms Elena Bonetti in the High-level Segment of the Gender Equality Commission and celebration of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women |
| **25-26** | **November** | Rome | Bureau and Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) |
| **6-7** | **December** | Rome | Conference on integrity and sport |
| **10** | **December** | Rome | CIDU Human rights award |
| **13-14** | **December** | Venice | Conference of the Ministers of Justice on “Crime and Criminal Justice – The role of restorative justice in Europe” |
|  | **2022** |  |  |
| **24-28** | **January** | Strasbourg | First-Part Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) |
| **3** | **February** | Vienna | Presentation of Presidency's priorities to the OSCE Permanent Council |
| **22** | **February** | online | Conference on Health Equity and Social Resilience |
| **23** | **February** | Rome | Award ceremony of the students’ contest “The Semester of the Italian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe” |
| **15-18** | **March** | Rome | CDADI (Steering Committee on Anti-Discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion) plenary meeting, preceded by a high-level institutional segment |
| **15** | **March** | New York | Side Event on the occasion of the Commission on Status of Women (CSW) of the United Nations |
| **16-18** | **March** | Florence / online | Ethical justice course |
| **17-18** | **March** | Pisa | Meeting on the “quality of justice” (CEPEJ-GT-QUAL) and “cyber justice” (CEPEJ-GT-CYBERJUST) of the European Commission for the Efficiency of Justice of the Council of Europe |
| **18** | **March** | Rome | LGBTIQ+ focal points meeting |
| **21-22** | **March** | Rome | International Round Table “Shaping judicial councils to meet contemporary challenges” |
| **23** | **March** | Rome | “School ReGeneration" event on education for environmental sustainability at schools |
| **22-24** | **March** | Strasbourg | Participation in the 42nd session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities by the Minister of Regional Affairs and Autonomy Maria Stella Gelmini |
| **28** | **March** | Rome | Event on "Business and human rights" |
| **30** | **March** | Rome | Event on a multidisciplinary approach for the age assessment of unaccompanied migrant children |
| **1** | **April** | Strasbourg | Ministerial meeting on the role of culture, heritage and landscape for sustainable development and democracy |
| **4-6** | **April** | Rome | High level event on the impact of artificial intelligence on human rights and CAI (Committee on Artificial Intelligence) meeting |
| **6** | **April** | Rome | Event “Citizens and science as a tool to strengthen democracy” |
| **7-8** | **April** | Rome | Launch conference of the new strategy of the Council of Europe on the rights of children and adolescents |
| **10-14** | **April** | Turin | Youth Forum "Education for human rights and democratic citizenship of the Council of Europe in the post-pandemic" |
| **11** | **April** | Venice | National Conference for the promotion of the ELoGE Project (European Label of Governance Excellence) Italy |
| **12** | **April** | Rome | High level event on work-life balance in the perspective of women empowerment |
| **22** | **April** | online | The Lanzarote Convention: a Pan European instrument to protect our children against exploitation and sexual abuse (co-organized with the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union) |
| **22** | **April** | Rome | *Lectio Magistralis* of the President of the European Court of Human Rights Robert Spano |
| **25-29** | **April** | Strasbourg | Second-Part Session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) |
| **2** | **May** | Strasbourg | Inter-religious dialogue on religion and peace, religion and human rights |
| **5-6** | **May** | Palermo | Meeting of the Prosecutors General of the Council of Europe "Prosecutors between independence and accountability" |
| **12-13** | **May** | Strasbourg | Octopus-format conference on cybercrime and opening for signature of the Second Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention |
| **17-18** | **May** | Rome | Permanent Correspondents of the Pompidou Group meeting with a special segment on "rape drugs" and sexual violence against women |
| **20** | **May** | Turin | Committee of Ministers at ministerial level |