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INFORMATION NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Council
Subject:	Culture and media related conferences during Latvia's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe <i>- Information from the Latvian delegation</i>

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Latvian delegation on the above subject, which has been put on the agenda under 'Any other business' of the next Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting on 15-16 May 2023.

Culture and media related conferences during Latvia's Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe

Information from Latvia

Latvia will chair the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe from 17 May to 15 November 2023. In this context, Latvia will host two international conferences that will definitely be of interest to Member States.

The first is **“The Nicosia Convention: a criminal justice response to offences relating to cultural property”** (15-16 June 2023, National Library of Latvia). The aim of this conference is to advance the fight against offences related to cultural property by promoting the Nicosia Convention¹. Given the links between cultural property offences and organised crime and terrorism, dealing with this issue is a matter of urgency. Policing the illicit flow of cultural heritage across national boundaries requires a high level of co-operation between all relevant states and actors. This topic is also relevant to the Council, which is currently preparing Conclusions on the fight against trafficking in cultural goods and which, among other things, invites the Member States to accede to the Nicosia Convention. Consequently, joint efforts must be made to set up the mechanisms by which countries can share information, learn from each other's best practices, and achieve better law-enforcement co-ordination to prevent and combat these offences.

The second conference is **“The Pen is Mightier than the Sword? Meeting today's challenges to freedom of expression and the safety of journalists”** (5-6 October 2023, National Library of Latvia). “The Pen is Mightier than the Sword?” is not a statement, but a question. The event will be introduced on 5 October by the launch of the forthcoming Council of Europe 5-year Campaign for the Safety of Journalists. The campaign will set the path for a safer, independent, pluralistic media environment, by encouraging states to put in place national plans and mechanisms for ensuring the safety of journalists, and consequently the protection of journalism and information. Both the conference and campaign have a common goal - to turn the spotlight on the issue of the protection of public watchdogs - the journalists.

The event will provide a forum for the exchange of views, experience and best practice with a wide range of experts in the field, including high-level national and international representatives, journalists' and civil society organisations, academia and legal professionals.

¹ The Nicosia Convention entered into force on 1 April 2022 and today has six countries that have ratified it and seven countries that have signed it.