



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

STANDING COMMITTEE CONF/SC(2015)SYN6

Strasbourg, 1 October 2015

MEETING HELD ON MONDAY 28 SEPTEMBER 2015

LIST OF DECISIONS

Present: Michel AGUILAR, Jean-Michel CAUDRON, Jessica CHAMBA, Anne-Marie CHAVANON, Antonina DASHKINA, Karl DONERT, Claude-Laurent GENTY, Gérard GRENERON, Oren GOSTIAUX, Salomon LEVY, Israël MENSAH, Roseline MOREAU, Anne NEGRE, Maritchu RALL, Sabine ROHMANN, Anna RURKA, Didier SCHRETTTER, and lamvi TOTSI.

Apologised for absence:

Laura FRATI-GUCCI, Jean-Marie HEYDT, Thierry MATHIEU, Annelise OESCHGER, and Daniel ZIELINSKI

Joined the meeting as members of the Expert Council: Cyril RITCHIE (Chair), Serkan CENGIZ, Beatrice COLLANTES SANCHEZ, Dragan GOLUBOVIC, Katerina HADZI-MICEVA EVANS, Mechthild LAUTH, Simon MATTHIJSEN, Jeremy MCBRIDE, Frederico MOYANO MARQUES, Maria POMAZKOVA, Mihaela PRES LAVSKA, Alessandra RICCI ASCOLI, and Eric SVANIDZE

1. **Opening of the meeting by the President of the Conference of INGOs:**
 - Jean-Michel CAUDRON was appointed rapporteur for the meeting.
2. **Agenda [\[CONF/SC\(2015\)OJ6\]](#):**
 - Unanimously adopted.
3. **Decisions from the meetings held on 22 and 24 June [\[CONF/SC\(2015\)SYN4\]](#) and [\[CONF/SC\(2015\)SYN5\]](#):**
 - • Unanimously adopted.
4. **Recap on activities in preparation and those carried out since the June session:**
 - On Friday 25 September 2015 the President of the Conference sent in the report on her activities since the previous meeting of the Standing Committee, including her meetings in Brussels:

- Meeting with Conny REUTER, Co-Chair of the Liaison Group of NGOs of the European Economic and Social Committee and Secretary General of SOLIDAR;
 - Meeting with the NGOs based in Brussels on “The situation of irregular migrants: between human tragedy, economic rationality and human rights”, at the Council of Europe Liaison Office with the European Union
 - Training seminar held in conjunction with the Social Platform on how to make best use of the European Social Charter collective complaints procedure, at the premises of the European Economic and Social Committee ;
 - Meeting with Luca JAHIER, Chair of Group III of the European Economic and Social Committee ;
 - Meeting with the representatives of the European Commission External Action Service;
- At the President’s request, on 19 July, Maritchu RALL and Jane CROZIER received a delegation of Romanian students, to whom they explained the activities of the Conference and the work done by INGOs at the Council of Europe;
 - The Gender Equality Expert had done her utmost to get the possibility of conducting lobbying activities included in the rules of procedure of the Group of Experts on action against violence against women and domestic violence (GREVIO);
 - A short discussion took place within the informal group acting in support of women’s rights with the participation of the Gender Equality Expert. A “Women and Religions” Day was being prepared by the Gender Equality Expert and the Human Rights Committee.
 - Sabine ROHMANN received a delegation of Columbian women from the REINICIAR association, who are involved in civil society in their country at risk of their lives. This meeting took place at the request of the French Permanent Delegation;
 - Didier SCHRETTTER had taken part in the event organised on 19 August 2015 by the Secours Populaire français, which had brought 70 000 children from all over the world together on the Champ de March, under the Eiffel Tower;
 - Anne-Marie CHAVANON mentioned the importance of local democracy week. She had also taken part in the colloquy on inclusive and intelligent towns and cities;
 - Roseline MOREAU reminded participants of the seminar “Towards an inclusive Europe: learning to live better together with our different convictions”, that would be held by the Conference (Education and Culture and Human Rights committees) in Strasbourg from 8 to 11 October 2015;
 - The 2015 theme of the European Local Democracy Week 2015 was “Living together in multicultural societies: respect, dialogue and interaction”;
 - The President, together with Marie-José SCHMITT, the head of the disability working group, would be taking part in Council of Europe Conference to be held in co-operation with Ireland’s Department of Justice and Equality, in Dublin, on 5 and 6 November 2015, on “Promoting Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Ambitions, Impact and Challenges Ahead”. The Conference is designed to take stock of the implementation of the Council of Europe Action Plan for people with disabilities between 2006-2015;
 - World Day for the Eradication of Poverty 2015 will take place in Strasbourg on 16 October. The 17 October 2017 would be celebrated in Poland.

5. Conclusions of the work carried out by the ad hoc group on youth (end of its mandate):

- The Conference of INGOs wishes to be close to the grassroots and to represent the general interests of the whole of organised civil society, including young people. With this in mind, it was proposed that:
 - the Conference of INGOs increase their involvement with young people of different sensitivities and thus develop its own approach by addressing different types of young people and not ruling out those who are not already represented in representative institutions and youth organisations (“*non-institutionalised young people*”);

- without reproducing what others are already doing, it should create an area of dialogue, thus establishing bridges between young people of different sensitivities (“*communication nodes*”);
- include young people in the sessions of the Conference so as to secure an intergenerational structure, and an open, innovative and modern forum for debate and expressing opinions
- on behalf of the Bureau, Anne KRAUS took on the responsibility of making progress in this area. She had led the ad hoc working group (see appendix: road map on the Youth dimension)

6. Recap on the seminar and proposed decisions to be taken:

The proposals made at the seminar held on 27 September 2015, which had been to a large extent moderated in a brilliant and professional manner by Jessica CHAMBA, and put forward for decision at the Standing Committee’s official meeting, were validated. These included:

- making a firm commitment to the indivisibility of human rights:
 - consider giving the committee another name in French (Commission des droits humains) (*proposal made by the Gender Equality Experts and the Human Rights Committee*), with a proposal to be put forward at the January 2016 session;
 - appoint a member of the Bureau (*Antonina DASHKINA*) to be responsible for co-ordinating the following points, in liaison with all of the stakeholders:
 - continue promoting and implementing the Social Charter and collective complaints;
 - ensure co-ordination (*by the Chair of the Human Rights Committee*):
 - follow up and make the INGOs aware of the committee’s work;
 - create links with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency in Vienna;
- promoting democratic governance:
 - appoint a member of the Bureau (*Jean Michel CAUDRON*) to take responsibility for:
 - taking stock of the “inspiring practices” of the INGOs belonging to the Conference so as to give visibility to these activities;
 - present some of these practices during “living-together cafés” and co-ordinate the organisation of a 1st living-together café (*January 2015 session*);
- combatting discrimination and violence:
 - ensure co-ordination:
 - act as “whistle-blowers” when new groups of vulnerable persons emerge (*by the Chair of the Human Rights Committee*);
 - promote the Istanbul Convention and take part in the GREVIO, in liaison with the corresponding working groups (*by the Gender Equality Expert*);
- to be actively involved in addressing the challenges and consequences of migration:
 - appoint two Bureau members (*Israel MENSAH, in liaison with Jean-Michel CAUDRON*), to:
 - strengthen the North-South axis within the Conference and monitor the work of the European Centre for Interdependence and Global Solidarity (*the North-South Centre*), in collaboration with Jean Marie HEYDT, the current president of the centre;
 - act as a link between the three committees so as to be aware of what is being done on the subject of migration, publicise what is being done and remind committee chairs of what is expected in relation to this issue;
- developing communication:

- present the work of each committee by means of an information forum and organise debates so as to have feedback from local actors;
- choose a slogan, a motto (*cf. young people "all different, all equal", the hate speech campaign, etc.*) => a single message for the Conference;
- see what message/image of the Conference we could use on the Council of Europe video presentation.

The Bureau members in charge of cross-sectoral issues should monitor the texts and activities of the Conference's working groups and committees; BUT ABOVE ALL follow the work being done by the different Council of Europe bodies – the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the North-South Centre and the European Youth Centre.

The Conference's communication charter, the first elements of which were presented at the seminar by Didier SCHRETTTER, will be submitted by e-mail to see people's reactions with the aim of validating it and adopting it prior to the Conference's winter session.

All of the material produced at the seminar will be forwarded to the members of the Standing Committee as *working documents*.

The idea of reviewing the Conference's rules of procedure (*among other things to remove any inconsistencies*) was also approved. The Verification and Dispute Committee, chaired by Salomon LEVY, was tasked with making proposals, which would be examined and amended as necessary by two independent legal experts (*one French-speaking and one English-speaking so that there are no contentious interpretations in terms of translation*). *The proposed changes will be submitted to the Standing Committee in January 2016*

7. Key items to keep in mind for the organisation of the January session:

- an initial "living together café" will be organised to strengthen dialogue between the four pillars of the Quadrilogue;
- under the leadership of Antonina DASHKINA, a working group, is preparing a new meeting to welcome the new representatives of INGOs with participatory status. This was suggested to help subsequently integrate them into the activities of the Conference and its committees.

8. Joint meeting with the Expert Council on NGO Law (11.15 a.m. to 1 p.m.):

8.1 Mutual presentation

During the mutual presentation of members, Cyril RITCHIE, Chair of the Expert committee, explained why there was a photo of Intigam ALIYEV, member of the Expert Committee and human rights defender who was being held in prison in Azerbaijan, on one of the seats in the meeting room.

8.2 Discussion on the Conference's forthcoming priorities

Claudia LUCIANI, Director of Democratic Governance, Directorate General II (DG II) of the Council of Europe, opened the discussion and restated the Secretary General's expectations with regard to the Conference's activities.

The Secretary General had proposed reinforcing:

- freedom of assembly and association and creating a favourable environment for NGOs in Council of Europe member states;
- democratic governance by strengthening civil society's participation in the decision-making process at local, national and European levels .

In order to do so it was necessary to ensure that member states complied with the democratic standards identified by the dialogue between the four pillars of the Council of Europe, with

regard to democratic security, freedom of expression, freedom of association, citizen participation, free and fair elections, etc. (*democracy being an evolving concept...*).

This was where the Conference of INGOs and its Expert Council on NGO Law were expected to provide a grassroots (*and non academic*) analysis of the way in which civil society viewed what INGOs were experiencing in member states, particularly if there were discrepancies between the international commitments of these states and the actual situation on the ground. It wished to see the Expert Council raise its profile and strengthen its links with other Council of Europe bodies, which were working to create a positive environment for ONGs.

In order to play its role effectively, the Conference must take account of its environment, including all international (*Europe, UN*) human rights bodies, such as the European Fundamental Rights Agency.

Council of Europe DGII Democracy wishes, by organising the World Forum for Democracy, to assist the forms of democracy that are emerging as a result, inter alia, of the digital revolution. "Freedom vs control: For a democratic response" is the theme of the 2015 World Forum for Democracy.

Claudia LUCIANI described the steps being taken (*in conjunction with the Conference*) to clarify Resolution Res(2003)8, which explains the criteria and the procedure for granting participatory status.

This year, out of a total of 35 requests, 5 new INGOs had been granted participatory status in September.

Anna RURKA considered the Conference to be the gateway to organised civil society. She thought that the aim of the Conference should be action rather than analysis so as to counter the threats facing associations. The Conference was an exception and there was no equivalent in other international bodies.

Cyril RITCHIE approved Claudia LUCIANI's remark that the INGOs should play their full part in defending human rights by keeping an active eye on binding texts at international level. For example, this meeting between the Standing Committee and the Expert Committee would have increased awareness of exactly what was being done by the Conference and the member INGOs to establish greater synergy within the Conference.

Cyril RITCHIE suggested that other exchanges be organised between the Standing Committee and the Expert Committee.

8.3 Fact-finding visits by the Conference of INGOs to Bulgaria and the Republic of Moldova and to other Council of European member states

There had been a very good response from INGOs following the letter sent by the President asking the INGOs to take part in fact-finding visits.

The members of the Expert Committee provided advice on how to approach these countries and the contact details of relevant interlocutors.

8.4 Lab "Protecting civic space in intergovernmental settings" to be held on 19 November in the context of the World Forum for Democracy

It was now possible to register for the World Forum for Democracy: <http://a.cs.coe.int/team81/wfd-fmd/inscription/spontaneous.aspx>.

The Conference would be holding a *Lab* on the theme "Protecting civic space in intergovernmental settings": <http://www.coe.int/fr/web/world-forum-democracy/programme-2015>.

The President pointed out that the fact-finding visits and the Lab were in line with the priorities of the Conference of INGOs, i.e. promoting freedom of association, protecting civil society actors and strengthening democratic governance through the active participation of civil society.

9. Other business

The President of the Conference reminded the committee chairs that they should send her feedback on how the INGOs which had responded to the first questionnaire had been integrated into the working groups and the activities of the thematic committees.

The Chair of the INGOs-Service association asked the members of the Standing Committee:

- to send her bills supporting the costs they had incurred;
- to send her expenditure projections for projects and activities that were being prepared so that a provisional budget could be drawn up for 2016, stating the subject, link and date of the activity.

Ad hoc discussion group on the “youth dimension”
Proposed “road map” for validation by the Standing Committee in September 2015
 (2nd background note following the SC and the meeting of the ad hoc committee in June 2015)

1. Background/Context

With a view to making the “youth” dimension more operational in the Conference, the Standing Committee meeting on 20 April 2015 set up an ad hoc discussion group.

An initial interim report was approved by the Standing Committee in June 2015. Set out below are the ideas developed within the group (further to a meeting held during the June 2015 session) in preparation for the Standing Committee meeting on 28 September 2015, the deadline set. The Conference will be able to implement the validated proposals from the January 2016 session.

2. General considerations

The Conference of INGOs, as the collective expression of organised civil society and a Council of Europe body, must be close to the grassroots and represent the general interests of civil society *as a whole*, including young people. The strategic objectives adopted by the Conference in June 2015 provide for us “to increase the complementarity of our activities with those of the other Council of Europe bodies, to lend an ear to young people’s concerns and strengthen their participation in the work of the thematic committees and working groups, and to foster the participation of young members of our INGOs in the Conference sessions.”

Some of the priority areas of action adopted by the Conference in June 2015 concern young people directly:

- Combating discrimination against vulnerable groups;
- Active citizenship in an inclusive society;
- Migration and territorial aspects of democracy;
- Young people involved in combating radicalisation and the types of extremism that lead to terrorism

3. Definition of objectives

3.1 Main objective

Develop a new *Youth* approach with Conference of INGOs added value, “Make a difference!”

Step up the Conference of INGOs’ engagement with young people *of different sensibilities* and thereby develop an approach specific to the Conference of INGOs aimed at different types of young people, taking care not to exclude those who are not already represented in representative institutions and youth organisations (“non-institutionalised young people”).

Without copying what others already do and while publicising the Conference of INGOs and its added value, create a space for dialogue and make it possible to build bridges between young people of different sensibilities. Encourage the presence of young people during the Conference’s sessions so as to build an intergenerational body and an open, innovative and modern forum for debate and stance-taking.

Define and communicate the value added by the Conference of INGOs in terms of incorporating the Council of Europe’s objectives in the dialogue with young people – “MAKE A DIFFERENCE!”

3.2 Intermediate objectives

- a) Inform young people about the Conference’s role and work and the topics it discusses and enable them to understand the benefit of expressing their concerns and opinions through:

- the creation of communication nodes;
 - new operating methods;
 - discussion methods suited to current needs;
- b) Obtain information which will enable us to address the activities of the committees more effectively (cross-cutting approach);
- c) Develop the interest of member INGOs in the cause of young people by listening to their ideas and concerns (discrimination, access to social rights, access to employment, data protection and migration, etc.).
- d) Encourage and facilitate the role of young people of different sensitivities as democratic players within civil society in general and enable young people to contribute to the work of the Conference of INGOs. Enable them to express their views/present their cause in our plenary (“Step aside”) and be heard.
- (Young people expend their energy in places where they feel useful and recognised, wherever they believe that the “action” corresponds to their interests!)*
- e) Promote co-operation between young people of different sensitivities through formal and informal exchanges, in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding.
- f) Gather opinions and proposals for action concerning the priority issues agreed by the committees and the Standing Committee (Action Plan 2015-2018).

4. Main lines of action proposed

The various objectives can be pursued simultaneously and gradually:

- Maintain and step up the links with the Council of Europe’s youth sector, with the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ);
- Take part in the activities and projects which are of major interest for the Conference, for instance, the World Forum for Democracy and the training courses run by the Council of Europe’s youth sector at the European Youth Centre, etc;
- Cross-cutting co-ordination of projects with each of the Conference’s committees:
 - Human Rights:
 - survey on under-35s’ perception of human rights
 - participation by the Conference in the No Hate Speech Movement
 - Education and Culture:
 - education and the digital era (young people, teachers and parents)
 - Democracy and Social Challenges:
 - to be determined
- Participation in existing youth projects;
- Discussion of the profile of young people receiving support from social workers and those who are in institutional care, excluded, have disabilities, are exceptionally gifted or are activists, etc. (gradual establishment of contact with the NGOs/associations concerned);
- Step up ties with youth INGOs, the European Youth Forum and any associations sharing the Conference of INGOs’ values;
- Holding of formal and informal exchanges and events (during and outside sessions) to enable young people (“institutionalised” and “non-institutionalised”) to meet the members of the Conference of INGOs.

Ongoing assessment of progress and adjustment of the steps to be taken.

5. Proposed organisational arrangements

Anne Kraus (Bureau) will be responsible for overseeing the progress of the work. She will develop the project in accordance with the objectives and lines of action approved by the September Standing Committee meeting.

She will initiate new “communication nodes” and propose methods of action and discussion/reflection methods suited to needs.

If necessary, she may be assisted by representatives of member INGOs which wish to take part in the process of making the youth dimension more operational and in teamwork.

6. Next stages

- Validation of this roadmap at the Standing Committee meeting on 28 September 2015
- Implementation of activities (autumn-winter 2015 and 2016-2017)
- Ongoing assessment and reporting on progress at the Standing Committee meetings
- Adjustment/agreement of objectives for 2018

Luxembourg, 13 September 2015

Anne Kraus (CISV International)

Co-ordinator of the ad hoc discussion group on the youth dimension

Rapporteur/Member of the Bureau