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**AD HOC COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION  
OF NATIONAL MINORITIES**

**(CAHMIN)**

- Possible activities regarding the framework Convention

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Secretariat document prepared by the  
Directorate of Human Rights

## **Introduction:**

The aim of this note is to inform the members of the CAHMIN of the possibilities which exist within the Council of Europe for activities regarding the framework Convention. The activities are discussed under two headings:

- I. Information on the framework Convention
- II. Providing technical assistance upon request

### **I. Information on the framework Convention**

#### **A. Written information**

The Council of Europe has available copies of the text of the **framework Convention and explanatory report** in French and English (doc H(94)10). Translations will hopefully be available in many other languages in the foreseeable future (see below). These documents can be made available in large numbers upon request and free of charge. There is also a **briefing document** in French and English which outlines the main features of the framework Convention. This document can also be made available in large numbers upon request and free of charge.

The Secretariat has already received translations of the framework Convention in a number of languages as well as, in some cases, translations of the explanatory report. These official translations are being made available in the same format as the French and English versions (doc H (94)10). Governments are being encouraged to produce an official translation of the framework Convention and of the explanatory report in their official language(s). As far as the languages of the countries of Central and Eastern Europe are concerned, the Human Rights Information and Documentation Centres on the Council of Europe (see list which appears at appendix I) have already been asked to prepare for the translation and publication of the framework Convention and its explanatory report.

Of course it is also conceivable that within the member States themselves written information on the framework Convention has been or will be produced. The Secretariat would be very grateful to receive copies of any such documentation.

The Secretariat is undertaking a targeted distribution of the framework Convention in English and French to make it as widely known as possible. In this process, the assistance of NGO's and human rights institutes is being sought and appropriate occasions used - e.g., the UN Commission on Human Rights' discussions on the rights of minorities.

#### **B. Information meetings**

Activities under this heading would mainly take the form of meetings, seminars or conferences. The possibilities can be itemized under the relevant programme headings:

1. - Information meetings on human rights
2. - Programmes for the assistance and consolidation of democratic security (in Central and Eastern Europe)[Vote 9].
3. - Confidence building measures

#### **1. Information meetings on human rights**

The Directorate of Human Rights annually organises, as a part of the programme of intergovernmental activities, a number of information meetings on human rights. Within the Directorate it is envisaged that this year a number of meetings could, in whole or in part, be devoted to the protection of national minorities and the framework Convention. These meetings could be organised in member States not covered by Vote 9. The information meetings are usually organised by an organization within a member State and last for one day. The audience for an information meeting on the framework Convention would probably consist of those who will assist in the implementation of the framework Convention as well as of representatives of minorities and NGO's. Speakers at such an information meeting would be from the Council of Europe/Secretariat and other experts, for example one might think of the members of the CAHMIN or persons from the member State, such as academics. The Secretariat is approaching national human rights institutes to engage their interest in convening similar meetings.

As far as available resources for the organization of such a meeting are concerned, the Council of Europe can provide for the expense of sending two persons, at least one of which would be from the Council itself, as well as provide a sum of FF 10.000,= to cover the expense a renting a venue and sending invitations. The practical arrangements for the information meeting would have to be made by the host organization.

#### **2. Programmes for the assistance and consolidation of democratic security (in Central and Eastern Europe)[Vote 9]**

Under Vote 9<sup>1</sup> of the Council of Europe there is also scope for organizing information meetings through the Council of Europe Documentation Centres which have been set up in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (for a list of the documentation centers see Appendix I). The meetings could have participants from just one member State as under 1. above, there would also be the possibility of organising bilateral or multilateral meetings, bringing together government officials, experts and representatives of minorities.

These meetings could be organised at a relatively low cost; they could benefit from the logistical assistance of the Information and Documentation Centres.

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<sup>1</sup> The member States covered by Vote 9 are: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia. Non member States beneficiary of Vote 9 programmes are: Albania, Belarus, Croatia, Moldova, Russian Federation, The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Ukraine.

It may also be worthwhile mentioning here that under the Vote IX activities in 1993 a Seminar on "National Minorities and the use of regional and minority languages" was organised in Vilnius by the Department of Nationalities of the Government of Lithuania with the participation of Council of Europe experts. In 1994 a seminar entitled "Governments for Minorities in Eastern and Central Europe" was organized by the Hungarian Government (National and Ethnic Minority Office) and the Council of Europe with participants from many Central and Eastern European States. Possibly such a meeting may be held again in 1995.

The budget for 1995 has of course been settled and funding for these activities in 1995 will have to be sought under the existing budget items. The members of the CAHMIN from the Vote 9 countries may wish to indicate their needs and formulate requests for 1996 with a view to the 1996 budget. A programming meeting devoted to cooperation activities to be undertaken in 1996 could be organised during the week of the meeting of the CAHMIN in September 1995.

### **3. Confidence building measures**

At the Vienna summit the Heads of State and Government decided concerning the protection of national minorities, inter alia, to instruct the Committee of Ministers to draw-up confidence building measures aimed at increasing tolerance and understanding between peoples. The projects undertaken by the Council of Europe are designed to accompany the standardsetting process by changing people's mentalities and their approaches to "others". The projects are carried out at grass-root level, in situations for specific reasons, with the participation of those concerned and on the basis of a precise request.

Projects currently being undertaken or being considered include:

- intercultural institute of Timosoara;
- language of peace seminar (Klagenfurt network);
- freedom school in Gorski Kotar, Croatia (Klagenfurt network);
- school on civil society in Osijek;
- interregional television in Maribor;
- local TV station in North-East Estonia.

It is conceivable that under the heading of confidence building measures assistance could be provided in organizing meetings at a local or regional level between communities or between the local authorities and minorities which aim to improve the knowledge and trust between minority and majority groups. In such meetings the principles elaborated in the framework Convention could serve as a basis for discussing concrete measures. Such projects would have to be devised by those who will be directly involved in them and be submitted for approval to the Council of Europe.

## **II. Providing technical assistance upon request**

A number of States have indicated informally that they might wish to have some input from experts on questions of national legislation and governmental policy regarding the

protection of national minorities. The Secretariat is willing in principle to assist in the arranging for such expertise and/or to provide some input itself, where appropriate. Of course such assistance could only be given following the approval of a specific formal request.