



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Bureau

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MEETING OF THE BUREAU DRAFT REPORT

Tuesday 11 December 2018

Present: Anne Rurka, Christoph Spreng, Robert Bergougnan, Anne Nègre, Richard Pirolt, Annelise Oeschger, Salomon Levy (invited) and Mary Ann Hennessey

Excused: Rares Craiut , Anne Kraus, Katarzszina Sokołowska

1. Opening of the meeting by Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs
2. Agenda for adoption - adopted
3. Report of the meeting of 7 October 2018 - adopted
4. Information about the agenda, past and forthcoming activities of the Bureau
 - Nord South Center (NSC)
 - Christoph Spreng gives feedback from North-South Forum organised by Nord South Center (NSC) in Lisbon, mentioned his numerous exchanges with CoE and government officials, and underlined the good work climate under the new presidency and executive direction of NSC.
 - Anna Rurka mentioned her exchange of views with the Ambassador of Spain (presidency of NSC), as well as new work process, dynamic and reflexion which started within NSC. **Conference of INGOs is requested to give its proposals on how to make the NSC more relevant for all CoE stakeholders as a common instrument.** Next year the NSC will celebrate its 30 anniversary.
 - Istanbul Convention & Gender Equality
 - Anne Negre mentioned her participation to the Istanbul Convention Information session organised by CoE.
 - A new CoE question / answer [brochure was published](#) aiming to counter all false narratives (disseminated by several religious and ultra-conservative groups, especially around the concept of “gender”).
 - DG 2 organised a consultative meeting with national NGOs from some countries and SG, Chair of the CM and the CM rapporteur’s groups, PACE, Commissioner for HR., with the aim to hear the ideas of the national NGOs on how the CoE can go forward regarding the ratification and implementation of the convention. Anna Rurka was invited to moderate this meeting

- **Considering the backlash in several member states, the Conference of INGOs should engage more to counter this narrative, support women rights NGOs in member states and encourage the ratification of the Convention which is a high priority of the SG.**

Anne N. also mentioned

- her participation at the High Level Conference on Policy For Progress: Ending FGM and Forced Marriage in London (15-16/11) and
- the moderation of [Lab 7](#) at the World Forum of Democracy, “Will close the gender gap in the economy lead to greater political equality?”, sponsored by the Conference of INGO.
- raised once again the problem of no access to the working documents of PACE Parliamentary Commission on gender and equality,

Migration

- Robert B. raises the **necessity to change the Conference’s approach to migration**. More direct and proactive contact is needed to link the Conference structures to the (I)NGOs. (Task force received little input from member INGOs). **Anna R. recommends the task force to realise its mission and, if needed, to do study visits to committed (I)NGOs as well as to camps (special authorisation)**
- In 2019, Task Force contributions will be needed (case studies), as the Expert Council on NGO Law plans a legal study on criminalisation of NGOs / help provided to migrants. Christoph Spreng mentions very good practice by Sigma, a French association.
- **The task force will propose a side event for the April session, the title could be “Duty or offence (crime) of solidarity”, focus on citizens and NGOs situation helping migrants (with translation). It is necessary to start with a short concept note / proposal of 3-4 speakers. It will also be necessary to make a link with PACE committees and rapporteurs preparing the report on the code of conduct for NGOs working with migrants. The autumn session which will take place at the same time that Congress session plenary should focus generally on migration. The link with WG “Intercultural Cities” should also be made.**

Youth

- A consultation meeting on “the shrinking civic space for youth organisations” was organised by the Youth Department (7/8 November) with the partnership of the COING and the European Youth Forum. Anna thanks Rares Craiut and Anne Kraus for all preparatory work. The Conference of INGOs contributed to this event sponsoring the venue of several INGO experts on the topic.
- Anne Kraus informed the Bureau by written about her and Rares Craiut collaboration with the CoE Youth Department :
 - exchange with AC and CDEJ on how to raise youth participation at sessions and how to cooperate on common CoE priority issues,
 - exchange with EU – CoE Youth Partnership on how to cooperate on common CoE priority issues
- Rares will organise a first of the series of meetings with Youth NGOs located in Brussels (13/12/18) to inform and motivate them to contribute to the Conference of INGO activities and come to COING sessions as actors. The meeting will be organised at the office of European Youth Forum

- Mary Anne Hennessey informs the Bureau that she asked ACCESS (NGOs which work with CoE) to prepare a specific handbook for INGOs on how to engage a collaboration with CoE.
- Code of good practice on civil participation - update - Cooperation COING & Congress
Very good first meeting, led by Gerhard Ermisher, with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. **Both organisations engaged to update our code of good practice on civil participation. It will be desirable to engage also the youth to this work – Katarzyna and Julianne are part of the drafting group.**

Anna Rurka had a very successful [exchange of views](#) with PACE Standing Committee. She will have a meeting with Mr Schwabe (German MPs) on the project of lobbying register within PACE. Jeremy Mc Bride will participate to this meeting.

Anna Rurka mentions her participation in the [event](#) on [indirect discrimination in access to justice](#) organised by European Woman Lawyers Association (EWLA) and UK Law Societies Brussels Office. EWLA association is ready to continue to collaborate with the Conference of INGOs, especially regarding Istanbul Convention, equal pay. Anna made a link between the President of this INGO, Anne Negre (VP in charge of equality) and Bettina Hanne (coordinator of the WG).

Anna Rurka informs a Bureau on the [Follow-up visit Romania](#) which took place from 3 to 5 December (Rares Craiut, Luminita Petrescu, Simona Constantinescu, Jane Crozier and Anna Rurka composed a delegation).

- Project on Freedom of Association
 - Mary Anne Hennessey informs that the project was approved by ODGP (CoE Office of Directorate General of Programmes) and will also be discussed during the exchange between Anna Rurka and Committee of Ministers. Mary Ann works to make this project operational as a specific CoE program with another project focused on civil participation: Civil Society Division led in Ukraine a pilot project focused on civil participation, funded by EU.
 - In order to prepare the discussion on the project on Freedom of Association, Anna and the Division organised an informal briefing for permanent representation; Gerhard Ermisher, who already was in Strasbourg for CDDG meeting participate to this meeting and after inform the CDDG about the project. Anna Rurka invited for this exchange Waltraud Heller, Programme Manager Civil Society Cooperation, European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. Waltraud raised the importance of this project and our important collaboration with FRA on civil society issues.
- Anna Rurka informs the Bureau on her [exchange of views](#) with the Delegates of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (12/12).
- Round table [“Human Rights in the Council of Europe Area: Current Challenges and Possible Solutions”](#)
Jeremy Mc Bride and Anna Rurka were invited to the organised on 13/12 by Commissioner for Human Rights, hosted by Finland.

- World NGO Day - 27 February 2019.

The Bureau and Mary Ann Hennessey suggest to organise a half a day event focused on NGOs and democracy. We can take advantage that the Expert Council on NGO Law will meet on 25 and 26 February and we can ask some members to stay one day more in Strasbourg. For this meeting of the Expert Council Anna Rurka will invite Intigam Aliyev and establish a dialogue with AZB authorities requesting a special authorisation for travel. The idea is to invite the NGO winning a CoE prize, NGOs under pressure or the persons who engage more specifically for freedom of association in Europe

Christop Spreng, Annelise Oeschger, Rares Craiut (tbc) and Mary Anne Hennessey will work on the first draft of the program. Katarzyna Sokolowska and Anne Kraus proposed also the idea to prepare a specific slogan for the digital media

- "Freedom of Religion/Belief and LGBTI Rights"

Invitation from the European Forum of LGBTI Christian Group to its side event, probably in October 2019. Anna R. will clarify the date and what is expected from the Conference of INGOs (support or co-organisation).

5. Results of the consultation on the "Draft Additional Protocol concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorder with regard to involuntary placement and involuntary treatment"

The draft proposal of answer presented by A. Rurka was accepted by the Bureau will small modifications. The proposed recommendation will be presented and discussed during Standing Committee meeting in January 2019

6. Code of conduct - progress and discussion on the draft.

Salomon Levy, Chair of the Verification and Dispute committee presented the work process and progress since the last meeting of the Bureau. The Bureau proposes some changes in the form of the French version of the draft. The annotated version will be sent to the Bureau members for final comments (deadline 2 January). This document will be sent to the drafting group for opinion (legal aspect) and sent to the Standing Committee on 7 or 8 January. Taking into account that such instrument will always be perfectible and should be tested in use, the Bureau expresses its wish to finalise the document and present it to the Standing Committee meeting in January (one person expressed its opposition underlining the uselessness of such instrument). It seems important to reach a constructive mutual agreement on such framework which constitutes a common commitment of such diverse INGOs as those which compose the Conference of INGOs and vis-à-vis its external partners. **The members of the Bureau stress that we are now suspiciously late with the adoption of the Code. This adoption should be our highest priority if we wish to affirm that the Conference of INGOs is ready to meet the expectations and standards of other bodies of the Council of Europe.** This is not about not having discussions and drafting opinions, being pluralistic or inclusive. This is about delivering and being a convincing organisation and future partner. **Richard Pirolt proposes to write a short introduction focused on the usefulness of this Code (Charte in French) regarding**

the requirement of accountability of the Conference of INGOs, in the context of the global reflexion on the accountability of the NGO sector.

7. Drafting Group on the revision of the Rules of procedures other statutory provisions of the Conference of INGO – progress report

Christoph Spreng informs the Bureau members about the progress made by the drafting group. He explains the working process led to the focus oriented questionnaire sent to the SC and accessible to any INGOs on the website. Subsequently, the answers made clearly showed the need for a reorganisation of the Conference of INGOs. Christoph also mentions an exchange of views between the drafting group and Claudia Luciani, Director of Democratic Governance and Anti-Discrimination (DG2) who clearly mentioned the urgent need to see the structure of the Conference more operational and functional and impact oriented. The impact expected is clearly defined as the timely provided information by the Conference of INGOs regarding the situation in the Member states and the specific expertise provided regarding the thematic priority of the CoE. Anne Rurka recalls the idea discussed in the past by the Standing Committee meeting to elaborate a questionnaire of satisfaction to the attention of our members.

8. Activity Report 2018

Some contributions are still missing. The Conference of INGOs will save 2000-3000 euros and provide its own translation in English and French. Regarding the Activity Report of INGO Service, the latter will translate itself.

9. Preparation for the Spring Session (April) 2019

The Bureau recalls its will to have one main general subject for each session. During its last meeting, the Bureau agreed on “Digital Environment”. No other proposal was received following the request sent by Anne Rurka in November to the Standing Committee. Some members of the Bureau started to work on the concept note and the key question was identified. Anna Rurka will contact Karl Donert (Coordinator of the related transversal WG). The engagement of his group for a related topic is a condition to allow the Conference to achieve one of its Action Plan priorities. If not ready, we should look for another topic. The interest was raised regarding the possible exchange with youth organisations regarding their concerns, worries in the context of crises of democracy.

Anne Kraus recalls (by written) **the Standing committee engagement for more interactivity and less “face to face” speeches during sessions.** Interactivity should facilitate the exchange of tools that the NGOs can use in their ordinary life. **The Bureau will ask the thematic committees to use their meeting to co-create something together (draft a resolution / recommendation / policy paper) and adopt positions on specific issues, in order to transmit and adopt during the plenary meeting**

10. OING Service – information point.

ONGO Service will devote 4000 to 6000 euros to support the venue of the national NGOs to the Conference of INGOs sessions and other relevant events in 2019. INGO Service would like to organise a General Assembly meeting during April Session in

order to present the financial report and insist on the importance of respecting the rules of reimbursement. the president of INGO service shall ask the committees' presidents to present a budget for the SC meeting of 21 january.

11. Other business

- Question regarding the possibility to have a business card in Braille – Secretariat will give information of such possibility.
- The VP in charge of equality asks to change the picture on the website which indicates only male sex persons.
- Expert database: Ascensio Garcia will help to answer a series of questions. We will focus on legal experts in different domains of the Action Plan of the Conference of INGOs.

12. Date of the next meeting: 20 January from 14h-18h