



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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:

SUMMER SESSION

Committee on Democracy, Social cohesion and Global Challenges CONF/DEM(2017)SYN2

DRAFT SYNOPSIS

TO THE ATTENTION OF THE MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRACY COMMITTEE SOCIAL COHESION AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES

The Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Issues Committee met on June 28, 2017 under the chairmanship of **Anne-Marie CHAVANON**.

The president underlined her willingness and that of the two vice-presidents of the Committee, **Karl DONERT** and **Thierry MATHIEU**, to hand over the baton.

Anne Marie CHAVANON also expressed the Committee's gratitude to **Eladio FERNANDEZ-GALIANO**, Former Head of the Department of Democratic Initiatives of the Council of Europe, for his presence and the support provided throughout the mandate to the Committee. Mr. GALIANO also mentioned his good relations with the Committee and praised the quality of their work done during the term of office.

The commission then

1. **Adopted** the draft agenda of the session
2. **Approved** the draft synopsis of the meeting of 25 January 2017 without any changes
3. **Debated** around four of the main themes addressed during the mandate, as the President mentioned the life of the Member States marked by terrorism, the shock wave of conflicts and the migratory chaos that followed, by the Paris Agreements on climate, the Brexit and the hesitant development of many democracies.

It was about :

3.1. The reconstruction of European societies facing violence,
with the participation of

Alexandra-Luminita PETRESCU (FITRAM) Former State Secretary at the Romanian Ministry of Public Consultation and Civil Dialogue, President of the Romanian NGO Foundation for Pluralism.

Abdel BELMOKADEM, founding President of the NGO Nés & Cités, former deputy mayor of Vaulx en Velin (France), author of the book "Tendez-nous la main", had intervened before the commission in January 2015, at the beginning of the mandate in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks in Paris

The key competence of **Abdel BELMOKADEM**, former professional boxer, who had acted as an intermediary during the events of 1990 in Vaulx en Velin, France, is the mediation: how to go towards the other, how to create conditions of dialogue between distant actors such as no-skill neighborhood youth and business companies. He is also interested in how to create positive dynamics in challenging social environments.

For Abdel BELMOKADEM, the most important element to fight violence is employment, "essential to access housing and social inclusion".

To promote this approach, the organization "Nés & Cités" created "Jobs & Cités" program which features innovative concepts to break down barriers (eg meeting in lodges of prestigious football stadiums, in restaurants after the second service, in trucks transformed into recruiting space, gyms, apartments where youth live, etc.). Immediate positive effects have been seen on decreasing unemployment and increasing employment, but also on decreasing delinquency. The leverage effect of this strategy is clear on decreasing of radicalization. "Where slow-speed institutional actors see problems, we see solutions", says Abdel BELMOKADEM. "Our office is the street," says Abdel. The strategy is to set up a network on the territory", "go towards the people", "create together", day and night, between 10 pm until 1 am, in the stairwells, in the halls of buildings, in the squares, our teams go closer to meet isolated candidates, particularly vulnerable. Then, they are then put in a positive dynamics of job search, so that the meetings take place, little by little, during the day in a place in the open. It is a matter of not detecting the "know-how" linked to classical training but the "knowing how to be" and the "will to accomplish something". Moreover, successful recruitment saves us time up to several months in the approach of complex neighborhoods. Of the 20,000 people detected by the association, 7,000 found a job. The others remained in a virtuous dynamic and many of them found a job on their own. "All have an objective, all have a life project and all are our ambassadors".

The strength of Nes & Cites is to accept people as they are and to pick them up where they are. Hence the success encountered where other employment forums fail: '80% of people who come to us have never been to a job forum, mostly because of psychological barriers, says Abdel BELMOKADEM.

He invites the members of the Committee to engage not in "living together" but in "building together", the only way to commitment. Sport is a strong element of integration and insertion.

= >> The President urged the members of the Committee to make known the skills of Nés & Cités wherever the actors in the field are in search of good

practices

Alexandra Luminita PETRESCU presented examples of reconstruction through dialogue of a Romanian society fractured by the course of political events.

After the 1989 revolution, political antagonisms, pro and anticommunist, threatened irreversible fracture of the entire Romanian society, from families to parliamentary assemblies where clashes were sometimes physical. A group led by Mrs. PETRESCU has created a training center for young political party members, open to all, regardless of their political affiliation. After a difficult beginning, the dialogue finally started, leading these young people to create themselves a trans-partisan club of young political leaders aware that the ideological differences must be transcended to manage a common territory. The goal was achieved.

In 1996, as an Advisor to the newly elected President of Romania, Professor Emil CONSTANTINESCU, Mrs. PETRESCU continued this action by creating at the highest level of the State a department in charge of civil society. Romania has become the first country in Central and Eastern Europe to set up such a structure and the Romanian Government created a partnership between civil society and local and central public administration. "It was necessary to work together", said Mrs, Petrescu, "because the civil society and the administrations pursue the same goal, to serve citizens!" Working together with NGOs allows public administration representatives to remain in contact with citizens, which represents a duty for every government!"

"My office was the street" she said, echoing Abdel BELMOKADEM. "We organized a round trip program and went around the country to meet citizens to discuss with them the country's situation and the development of public policies."

For Alexandra Luminita PETRESCU, women are an asset and incomparable actors to build peace. She cites, from her professional experience, the example of the Caucasus region, where Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani women work together to build peace on territories on the borders perpetually threatened by war.

3.2. The migratory cycle

- **Florence KIM**, Spokesperson of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), recalled the lack of a universally accepted definition of migration and therefore the term "migrant". "On one hand, we speak of refugees, clandestine, economic migrants, and on another hand, we speak about expatriates, diaspora, brain drain. IOM's mission is to protect those who found themselves in their migration process and who are in a situation of extreme vulnerability and to protect their rights, regardless of their legal status", she says.

She recalls figures: " 15 000 deaths in the Mediterranean in 3 years, the equivalent of 65 crashes of Malaysia Airlines, 90% of arrivals in Italy are made through Libya from West Africa, after they have crossed deserts and "highways of death". 700 000 of them would be stuck in Libya in conditions of life that make them prefer the dangers of sea-crossing, but upon their arrival, they face unexpectedly racism, fact that motivated IOM 2015 campaign: "I am a migrant". The need for the campaign started from the observation that figures were not enough (300 000 annual arrivals on 500 million inhabitants, etc.) to rise awareness and we had to give a face to migration (there are 250 million migrants in the world). We collected more than 1400 personal testimonies in 1.5 years".

Ms. KIM ended her presentation with these words addressed to the Committee members: "You are the key relays of the voice of migrants, the mouthpiece of solidarity. Support our campaign, follow us! "

- After thanking IOM for the data provided on a daily basis, **Jean-Claude GONON (AEDE)**, Coordinator of the Europe-Mediterranean Working Group identified two critical situations:
 - That of asylum seekers who receive in most countries compensation pending on the decision of governments but only 30 to 40% are accepted by the government. The others are, according to Jean-Claude GONON, condemned to a clandestine life and sometimes to delinquency. He warns that our societies are producing undocumented migrants which number increases and hide the real statistics of arrivals in the Mediterranean area.
 - That of migrants from the Middle East condemned to wander the Balkans, without rights and without hope, as a result of agreements with Turkey and the closure of the Balkan route.

=> Committee members noted the need for further work on migration and its causes involving in the process migrants themselves, in its complex administrative, human and legal dimension, in order to take into account health needs and resilience.

3.3. The Paris Climate Agreements and COP22

Karl DONERT (EUROGEO), Vice-Chair of the Commission and Coordinator of the Climate and Human Rights Working Group, recalled that climate change was one of the major causes of migration, and that the Commission's actions during COP21 were continuing with United Nations bodies. He outlined the main themes of the COP23 to be held in Bonn in November 2017 and urged the NGOs present to commit themselves by all means.

Edith WENGER (European Environment Office), founder member of the Climate and Human Rights Working Group, recalled the impacts of climate change on agriculture, health, energy consumption, natural resources, peace, security and maintenance of populations on their territory.

She stated that the answer to the acceleration of climate change is a global movement and the mobilization of the public and the private actors, giving as examples the Davos Forum, different stakeholders in the United States and the action of municipalities of Alsace.

=> The Committee expressed the wish that the action of the commission recognized on this more and more crucial and hard-won theme, to be continued during the next mandate, due to its inclusive power and vulnerability's prevention.

3.4. Territory governance

had an exchange of views with

Annick de MONTGOLFIER, vice-president of the Regional Economic and Social Council of the Great East who presented the process of institutional reform initiated by France during the transition from 26 to 18 regions. Public consultation with local elected representatives, elected managers of pre-existing regions and the inhabitants concerned was largely absent from the process.

In their soul and conscience, the parliamentarians decided alone the perimeters, then the competences of the regions in the name of the necessary research of a critical size to exist at the European level. Only the name of the region has been submitted to the citizens for approval. This is a severe disruption from the previous rules which led to decentralization and openness to citizen participation in the political decision.

Gerhard ERMISCHER, Vice-President of CIVILCAPE and coordinator of the Social Cohesion and Shared Territories Working Group presented the example of an action carried out with the population on its living environment: 8000 volunteers were mobilized during the last twenty years, but there was a lack of communication related to three problems: the language used (the terminology), the knowledge which in this case was synonymous with expertise and the experience that can lead to negative outcomes in the absence of consultation.

Another example was the creation of a regional park in Bavaria which was done without consultation and as a result led to strong opposition on behalf of citizens.

In both cases, Gerhard ERMISCHER believes in the positive action of NGOs as mediators, trainers and spokespersons and he ended his presentation

saying: "The keywords are: trust between rulers and ruled, trust that can be established by NGOs".

= >> *The debate revealed the need to give civil society the tools to control and participate in the governance of the territory.*

4. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

The committee heard

Anne Marie Chavanon give the progress report on:

Guidelines for citizen participation in political decision, finalized by the CDDG before being submitted to the Committee of Ministers.
the European Week of Local Democracy

5. CONCLUSION OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Heard

The report of the working groups such as that of Anje Wiersinga on "*Gender Perspectives in Political and Democratic Processes*", Jean-Claude GONON on "*Europe-Mediterranean*", Gerhard ERMISCHER on "*Social cohesion and shared territories*" and Thierry MATHIEU on the working group in charge of the health theme.

= >> *The Chair recalled that all the actions and debates conducted during the past term were carried by one of the working groups of the Committee, allowing it to finalize its work. The President considered their mission has therefore been perfectly fulfilled.*

6. END OF MANDATE MESSAGE

For the President and the Vice-Presidents, it was a hand over of the baton.

The President paid tribute to the two vice-chairmen of the committee, Karl DONERT and Thierry MATHIEU, thanking them for their unwavering support and their great expertise and rejoicing that both of them remain engaged in the activities of the committees. "To free our societies from their fears, to raise awareness of our common humanity, that's what we want," she said "but if we want to help our societies transform, we need to set up the example, by doing so in our Committee. May this be a place of open and harmonious dialogue! "

"We had a goal: that each NGO each of its representatives finds its place. When a subject was sponsored by an NGO, the Committee showed a genuine interest, because any NGO and any NGO representative should be listened to, regardless of their culture, race, religion and way of expressing themselves."

"We were happy in our committee," she continued, "never to silence anyone and sometimes we accepted to be challenged, considering that this was an enrichment." The President wished their successors, on her behalf and on behalf of the Vice-Presidents, to do even better in this area. "Soughing solidarity for our societies must prevail here! ".

"Stimulate encourage, support, these were our priorities! "

TM/AMC