



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**WINTER SESSION
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE
CONF/HR(2018)SYN1**

**SYNOPSIS
of the meeting held on Tuesday 23 January 2018
First part – plenary meeting**

1. The Chair of the Committee warmly thanked his predecessor, Michel Aguilar, who had chaired the Committee for many years with great skill and dynamism.

He pointed out that the Committee had chosen to bring its work into line with the ambitious objectives of the Council of Europe on human rights. Unfortunately, it was necessary to deal with the scourge of xenophobia, nationalism and populism. This would be the main theme of the Committee over the coming period. The new Chair would communicate in English. He promised to be accessible and open to anyone who wanted to advance human rights.

As an introduction, the Chair welcomed the Ambassador of Ireland, who said he was pleased to take part in the work of the Committee. In his speech, the Ambassador highlighted the importance of co-operating with INGOs, which played an essential role and contributed to the decisions taken by the GR-H (the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Human Rights). He mentioned other themes such as the safety of journalists, online abuse, which had not been properly recognised in all member states, gender-based violence and the increase in the number of women suffering online harassment. The Council of Europe must produce policy responses in full knowledge of the facts. In this area, he asked the INGOs, which were crucial partners, to share their expertise.

In reply, the Chair of the Committee requested that the agendas of the GR-H meetings be transmitted to him. In memory of the late Ambassador, Guido Bellatti Ceccoli, a fervent champion of human rights who had passed away on 23 October 2017, a minute's silence was observed.¹

2. **The Committee adopted** the meeting agenda.

3. **The Committee adopted the synopsis of the meeting held on 28 June 2017** [[CONF/HR\(2017\)OJ2](#)].

4. **Activities of the Chair and Vice-Chairs since the June 2017 session**

- Meetings had been held between Simon Matthijssen, Iamvi Totsi and Miguel Cabral de Pinho to draft a roadmap had been presented to the Standing Committee. A second roadmap had been drawn up on immigration;
- Iamvi Totsi pointed out that she had participated in the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October and the World Human Rights Day on 10 December;
- Simon Matthijssen mentioned his activities since the last session:
 - September: speech at the 20th anniversary of the national Ombudsman in Romania, which had concerned the position and the instruments of the Ombudsman in the

Council of Europe's field of activity, in relation to the protection of human rights and more specifically the fight against discrimination;

- October: Professor Buyse of Utrecht University had raised the possibility of joint actions between his department and the Human Rights Committee;
- November: presented to the office of the Ombudsman in The Hague the work of the Conference of INGOs, the Committee, the impact of European Union norms on human rights and of the European Convention on Human Rights on the work of the Ombudsman;
- November: represented the Chair of the Conference of INGOs at a meeting with Ambassador Keith McBean, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe and Chair of the GR-H.

5. Progress report on the work of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), Jean-Bernard Marie

Jean-Bernard Marie, representative of the Conference of INGOs to the CDDH, presented the progress of the work of the various CDDH drafting groups.

Work completed in 2017:

- the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, on 13 September 2017, of a "[Declaration on the need to intensify the efforts to prevent and combat female genital mutilation and forced marriage in Europe](#)";
- a "[Guide to good and promising practices aimed at preventing and combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage](#)".

Work in progress:

- a report on the legal protection of social rights would be used in preparing a *Good practice guide* and a non-binding instrument. It was meeting some resistance from certain government experts who had reservations with regard to social rights. The Conference of INGOs had pointed out that these rights were fully fledged human rights which must be fully protected;
- preparation of an "Analysis of the legal and practical aspects of effective alternatives to detention in the context of migration". An easy-to-use practical handbook on the effective implementation of alternatives to the detention of migrants could be prepared for the authorities;
- preparation of a Guide to good practices on ways of reconciling freedom of expression with other human rights and freedoms, in particular in culturally diverse societies – member states had submitted contributions to the guide;
- the CDDH had adopted a "*draft analysis of the impact of current national legislation, policies and practices on the activities of civil society organisations, human rights defenders and national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights*";
- preparation of a guide of good practice for member states so that, through their legislation, policies and practices, they effectively protected the civil society space. A non-binding draft legal instrument might be prepared in this area (Declaration/Recommendation by the Committee of Ministers).

Regarding the European Convention on Human Rights system, the CDDH had prepared a report on the procedure for selecting and electing judges of the Court, which had been forwarded to the Committee of Ministers [[CDDH\(2017\)R88, Addendum I](#)].

6. Progress report of the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO), André Clavert

The session of the Committee on Bioethics (DH-BIO) had taken place from 24 to 27 October in two parts:

- Firstly, for two days, an international conference to mark the 20th anniversary of the Oviedo Convention had taken place. The "Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology" dealt with the

issues of consent, information, the consequences of genetics for organ transplantation, profit, etc. The participants had gone over the different issues and new developments in biological techniques and examined the consequences of big data. This work had opened up new avenues for the future work of the Committee.

- Secondly, the Committee had examined the “guide for the implementation of the principle of prohibition of financial gain with respect to the human body” and the “Additional Protocol on the protection of the human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorders with regard to involuntary placement and involuntary treatment”. The last point had met with a lot of criticism. New proposals would be made.

The conference could provide the Committee with information from the field, which was always important when it came to ethics.

7. State of play of the work of the Committee’s working group on the “rights of the child”: the Chair of the working group, Mr Geert Priem, had not replied to the members of his working group or to questions by the Chair. It was to be feared that the working group was now defunct.

8. Presentation of the side event on “Human Rights Defenders” on Tuesday 23 January 2018 from 1.00 pm to 2.15 pm

Konstantin Baranov (International Youth Human Rights Movement – IYHRM) presented the various speakers at [the event](#).

9. Conclusions of the Chair

The new Chair would bring his expertise to the work of the Conference of INGOs. The Committee would contribute to the work of the steering committees such as the Committee for Human Rights and the Committee on Bioethics. The future working groups would be discussed at the second part of the meeting.

Second part: interactive session

10. The Chair of the Committee presented its roadmap for the next three years.

11. Discussion on the proposed working groups:

11.1 Protection mechanisms for human rights defenders in danger – Simon Matthijssen, Gulnara Akhundova. Moderator: Iamvi Totsi

The working group wished to work on freedom of expression in the media and to protect the rights of persons subjected to undue pressure in this field. Gulnara Akhundova agreed to make proposals in this respect.

11.2. Grassroots monitoring toolbox – Simon Matthijssen – Moderator: Miguel Cabral

New proposals would be presented to garner more support for the working group's theme.

11.3. Human rights and digital technology – Iamvi Totsi said that the working group on "Human rights and digital technology" was part of the work of the cross-cutting group on digital technology. It would continue its discussion process by inviting experts in order to widen its scope. Iamvi Totsi was elected to represent the Human Rights Committee at the cross-cutting group.

11.4. Poverty, discrimination and exclusion – Miguel Cabral and Marie-José Schmitt

Miguel Cabral would ensure co-operation between the Human Rights Committee and the cross-cutting group on "Poverty".

Marie-José Schmitt and Miguel Cabral from the working group on poverty stressed that there was a deepening divide, that progress needed to be made, and a political message sent. A three-phase working method was proposed:

- an analysis of the field, with an increase in the number of groups concerned
- an assessment of the risks linked to the lack of access to rights
- an economic analysis of the causes of poverty.

The issue of poverty must be dealt with from a clear basis. The organisations would be able to make proposals based on their experience on the ground.

12. Closing of the meeting by Mr Simon Matthijssen, the Chair, who thanked everybody for their constructive contributions.

¹ In memory of Ambassador Guido Bellati Ceccoli

On 28 June 2017, that is 6 months and 26 days, just over half a year ago Ambassador Guido Bellati Ceccoli said to us "Il faut donc que nous continuions de nous attacher à créer une société plus égalitaire et plus démocratique, où personne ne cède au désespoir et ne se sente exclu et oublié par la classe politique. Une société où la diversité ne soit pas considérée comme une menace, mais comme une occasion d'enrichir et de renforcer le tissu social et culturel." (We must therefore continue to strive to create a more egalitarian and democratic society, where no one gives in to despair and feels excluded and forgotten by the political class. A society where diversity is not seen as a threat but as an opportunity to enrich and strengthen the social and cultural fabric.) On 21 October 2017, 3 months and 23 days after his contribution, our beloved Guido passed away very unexpectedly.

We mourn the loss of a gifted man,

- attorney at Law, notary,
- experienced researcher in the field of religious studies and dialogue,
- modern Catholic History,
- musician

It is with sorrow and regret that we received the news of his passing.

I met him in his capacity of:

- Permanent Representative of the Republic of San Marino to the Council of Europe;
- Chair of the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H);
- Member of the Board of the "North-South Centre";

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- Co-Chair of the 2016 “Council of Europe Annual Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue”, Strasbourg.

Mr Bellati Ceccoli will always be remembered as a firm defender of human rights and intercultural dialogue and a strong supporter of the side event, “HR & Business”, January 2017.

We pay respect to his family and loved ones and to all the colleagues in the Permanent Representation of the Republic of San Marino in Strasbourg as well as in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I’m happy the INGO-Conference was represented at all ceremonies which marked the sudden departure of Guido.

- Jean-Michel Caudron as a member of the Bureau and INGOs representatives attended the ceremonies organised by the Council of Europe.
- Anna Rurka was present at the ceremony organised by the family at the cemetery.

I am sure I am acting in the spirit of our previous chairman, dear Michel Aguilar, who was a good friend of Guido, when I ask you to observe a minute’s silence to let our thoughts linger a short moment with the memories of this sincere European.