



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Standing Committee
CONF/SC(2018)SYN3

SYNOPSIS OF THE MEETING
Monday 23 April 2018
(9.00-12.30, 14.00– 17.00)
Agora – Room G04

Present:

Committees:

Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee: Gerhard Ermischer, Alexandra Luminata Petrescu

Human Rights Committee: Simon Matthijssen, Miguel Cabral

Education and Culture Committee: Claude Vivier Le Got, Karl Donert and Julianne Lagadec

The President of the Expert Council on NGO Law: Cyril Ritchie

The President of OING-Service: Maritchu Rall

The President of Verification and Dispute Committee: Salomon Levy

Bureau: Anna Rurka, Robert Bergougnan, Anne Negre, Christoph Spreng, Rares-Augustin Craiut, Katarzyna Sokolowska

Secretariat: Mary-Ann Hennessey, Jane Crozier

Apologies for absence: Anne Kraus, Thierry Mathieu, Richard Pirolt, Iamvi Totsi

1. Opening of the meeting by Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs
2. The agenda was approved with one change: switching items 2 and 4.
3. Reports of the meetings of 22 and 26 January - adopted
 - **Decision:** In future the Standing Committee meeting reports would only be published on the website after they had been approved by the Standing Committee.
4. Rapporteurs of the meeting: Rares-Augustin Craiut and Katarzyna Sokolowska were nominated rapporteurs
5. Communication strategy (Anne Kraus, Rares Craiut, Richard Pirolt)

At the communication workshop which took place on 22 April 2018, the list of the 5 most crucial points regarding improvements to internal and external communication was agreed and adopted. The document would be integrated into the Action Plan 2018-2021.

The Standing Committee has developed and prioritised the following internal and external objectives as part of the communication strategy, to be researched, set up and implemented by the Bureau of the Conference during its mandate:

External communication

- a. Creation of a Press Kit, a bundle containing high resolution photos, texts, presentation texts related to the work and functioning of the conference, possibly an institutional video-clip; while at the same time investigating with the Press and Communication department of the Council of Europe what institutional protocols exist with regard to contacting the Press to promote the Conference;
- b. Creation of a general tri-annual "outside newsletter" comprising among others: resolutions of the conference, political actions, activities of the Standing Committee and Bureau, other topics that should make the work of the Conference known to outside stakeholders;
- c. continuing the work already carried out in mapping the external stakeholders, identifying stakeholders to which the Conference needs to make known its work;
- d. clarifying and integrating the protocols of communication of the Council of Europe in the practice of the Conference and its members, respecting the Communication Charter of the Conference of INGOs;
- e. setting up the tools and purposefully carrying out an evaluation activity on external communication whilst at the same time increase the use of existing social media accounts, including Facebook and Twitter.

Internal communication

- a. creation of a shared agenda for timely information distribution, where information could be consulted one month in advance of the work and activities of the Conference, possibly including also a retrograde or "alarm to deadlines" function;
- b. setting up an internal newsletter communicating the work done within the conference containing also a digest section of relevant CoE bodies;
- c. working on improving the existing database, ensuring it is complete and up to date especially with regard to the contact information;
- d. looking for and putting at the disposal of the Standing Committee collaborative tools of communication that are compliant with the DigitalData Protection measures;
- e. continuing the development of the organisational chart in an attempt to clarify who's who in view of better internal communication.

6. Update of the thematic committees' roadmaps (Human Rights, Education and Culture, Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges), mandates of the working groups (Simon Matthijssen, Claude Vivier Le Got, Thierry Mathieu)

The Committees provided an update about their activities. The terms of reference of the working groups (specific and transversal) would be attached to the Action Plan. Each of the Committees should send them to the Secretariat and Bureau by the end of May. On the basis of these documents the Bureau would send out at the beginning of June the open call for INGOs which are willing to work with the working groups. The specific information sheet transmitted by Anna Rurka should be completed by each working group. These documents would be published on the website to facilitate the connection between the INGOs and the coordinators of the working groups. Final deadline for the transmission of the documents: 4 June.

7. Calendar of the Summer session of the Conference of INGOs

Anna Rurka, in co-operation with the Secretariat, had proposed 3 different possibilities regarding the calendar of the June session. After discussion one of the proposals was approved, with the remark that the unavailability of Room G03 for the whole week put several entities of the conference in difficulty and with the request that for the winter session room G03 should be reserved well in advance. Concerning the working groups, the committees should to send their preferences and estimated attendance numbers to the Bureau and Secretariat in order to make the agenda as suitable as possible.

It was decided that the market place would not be organised at the next session. The time slot would be used instead for the three transversal groups.

8. Dates / period of the future sessions of the Conference of INGOs

The decision regarding the dates of the Conference sessions in 2019 would be made after the June 2018 session in order to sound out the members whether the sessions should take place at the same time as a session of the PACE or of the Congress. The question regarding the dates would be sent to all the INGOs with the invitation letter to the June 2018 Session.

The Standing Committee decided that in 2019 the session would not take place in January as the organisation of the January session is very complicated taking into account the budgetary procedures and the holidays.

9. Code of conduct (Salomon Levy, Simon Matthijssen, Cyril Ritchie)

In the context of the fight against corruption and of the conflict of interest within Council of Europe, the President of the Conference solicited GRECO (Group of States against Corruption) recommendations regarding a specific mechanism adapted to the functioning of the Conference of INGOs. After receiving the recommendations which clearly indicate the code of conduct as the instrument, the Standing Committee decided to set-up a drafting group which aim was to prepare a specific Code of Conduct regarding the prevention of the risk of corruption and conflict of interest within the Conference of INGOs. Codes of Conduct are present in other Council of Europe organs to protect them against risk, and the Conference of INGOs is equally concerned. The terms of reference of the drafting group of the Code of Conduct was adopted by the Standing Committee one year ago. Since then, several meetings have taken place and the first proposal was discussed during this meeting. This discussion has shown that there is no consensus within the members regarding this legal instrument and its content. Some members underlined that the Code of Conduct contains severe propositions, and the status of volunteers within the Conference should not force representatives to respect too many constraints. Some other members expressed their astonishment that, as a Council of Europe body, the Conference of INGOs does not already have such an instrument and emphasized the urgent need for such an instrument. Finally, a recommendation was made to clarify the different categories of persons concerned by the Code.

All comments would be transmitted to the drafting group in charge of the Code of Conduct.

10. Requests for participatory status: opinion of the Standing Committee

The Standing Committee accepted the propositions of the Secretary General with regard to granting and refusing participatory status. The Standing committee proposed to raise awareness with new INGOs in order for them to understand how they could get involved with the Conference.

11. Task force on gender equality (Anne Nègre) – the terms of reference of the new task force were approved by the Standing Committee. This task force is complementary to the working group on gender perspectives in political and democratic processes which works under the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee. The working group will organise a side event on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 during the June session.

12. Steering committees – guidelines for reporting and list of Conference of INGOs representatives (Christoph Spreng)

The guidelines were adopted. The list of the Steering Committees was amended taking into account the committees numbered 3, 13 and 25 that no longer existed. Christoph Spreng in his capacity as a Vice President was appointed within the Bureau for liaison with the representatives of the Conference of INGOs to the steering committees and subordinated drafting groups.

13. Reviewing of the existing rules of procedure and proposals for the good governance, efficiency and functioning of the Conference of INGOs (period April 2018-January 2020) – Ad hoc committee in charge to be created

The terms of reference of the new ad hoc committee which would be in charge of drafting proposals regarding the Rules of Procedure or other statutory provisions, was adopted with minor modifications. Gerhard Ermischer will represent the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee, Miguel Cabral - Human Rights Committee. The complete composition of the ad hoc committee will be known very soon, after the nomination by the Chairs of the different bodies of the Conference of INGOs.

14. Project related to the honorary award for the Grand Témoins (Major Witnesses) delivered by the Conference of INGOs in partnership with the Strasbourg Townhall – (Maritchu Rall)

The Standing Committee agreed that the proposal was a good move toward the improvement of external communication. In order to establish the prize, it was necessary to have a clearer definition of the prize and the target group. Maritchu Rall would continue working on it with interested members of the Standing Committee.

15. Proposal made by the Coordination Committee of the Conference of INGOs for the Turin Process and the European Social Charter (ESC)

The Standing Committee is in favour of this proposal but no final decision was taken. Some of the questions raised during the discussion are related to the timing and the World Forum for Democracy, or the fact that the 70 years of the Council of Europe would be celebrated in May 2019.

16. Update of the Code of good practice for the civil participation in the decision-making process – Creation of a group

In the light of the new CoE Guidelines on civil participation in political decision-making and the Recommendation of the Congress in 2015 regarding the use of the Code, the Conference of INGOs should update the existing Code of good practice for civil participation in the decision-making process in the way to make it more practical and easier to implement. Gerhard Ermischer, Julianne Lagadec, Cyril Ritchie and Katarzyna Sokołowska would be part of the group in charge of this work.

17. Action plan 2018-2021

Each Committee and the Bureau would work on the Action Plan. The document would build on the 4 common priorities regarding the thematic and organisational aspects. The document should not be longer than 3 pages. Anna Rurka would put the document on the Google Drive in order to enable each Standing Committee member to edit it or make comments. The deadline for contributions would be 15 May, after which the Bureau would finalise it for transmission to the secretariat and INGOs on 1 June.

18. Danish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers and reform of the European Convention on Human Rights system – contribution of the Conference of INGOs to Copenhagen Declaration

Jean Bernard Marie, Simon Matthijssen and Anna Rurka drafted the contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the Copenhagen Declaration adopted during the High Level Conference on the reform of ECHR. The contribution was well received by the member States. Anna Rurka and Simon Matthijssen represented the Conference of INGOs at the high-level Conference.

19. Budgetary situation and restructuring of the activities within the Council of Europe (Mary Ann Hennessey)

Mary Ann Hennessey provided an update on the budgetary situation of the Council of Europe. In the Civil Society Division the biggest changes have been made in human resources. There are no major reforms which directly affect the Conference.

20. Strengthening Freedom of Association in Council of Europe Member States. A Council of Europe response to the shrinking of civic and civil society space in Europe – Conference of INGOs project

The Standing committee discussed the aim of the project. Further work will be made by the Expert Council on NGO Law regarding the assessment criteria. The next step would be to encourage the donors for funding.

21. Gender equality update (Anne Nègre).

Due to the lack of time this item was postponed.

22. Events and contributions: for information - International day of Democracy 15 September, World Forum for Democracy, Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) Forum, Open Government Partnership (OGP) Summit – for information, 2018 UN Forum on Business & Human Rights

The World Forum for Democracy would take place from 19 to 22 November and would focus on inequalities between women and men and carry out a critical analysis of tested initiatives. Anne Negre would be in charge of the lab proposal on behalf of the Standing Committee with the collaboration with Maritchu Rall who represents the Conference of INGOs in the steering committee of the Forum. Anne Negre proposed the theme of the lab which would be “participation of women in Boards”.

15 September is the International Day for Democracy. The Bureau and Secretariat decided to organise a high level event at this occasion (17-18 September) which would be entitled “Is it still democracy without us?” The Secretariat invited members of Standing Committee to make proposals for personalities who could be invited to the event.

23. Any other business: following questions from Standing Committee members the Secretariat provided information on the follow-up to an unprecedented situation caused by Oren Gostiaux who disrupted the item on elections during the plenary meeting. Mary Ann Hennessey informed the Standing Committee that the Secretariat had taken the initiative to send the letter to the President of the European Parents’ Association represented by Oren Gostiaux. The exchange of letters led to the conclusion that Oren Gostiaux was no longer a member of the delegation of the European Parents’ Association.

24. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of Standing Committee would take place in the morning of 25 June and would be followed in the afternoon by the meeting of Bureau. The Standing Committee expressed the wish to hold an informal working seminar (the day before the formal meeting) at its autumn meeting.