

Standing Committee

CONF/SC(2020)SYN1

MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

Report

Monday 27 January 2020

9.30-13.00 & 14h30 – 18h

Palais – Room 2

Members present: Anna Rurka, Miguel Cabral de Pinho, Gerhard Ermischer (via skype), Anne Kraus, Salomon Levy, Thierry Mathieu, Annelise Oeschger, Cyril Ritchie, Katarzyna Sokolowska, Christoph Spreng, Simon Matthijssen, Claude Vivier Le Got, Anne Nègre,

Apologies for absence: Robert Bergougnan, Rares Craiut, Karl Donert, Luminita Petrescu, Iamvi Totsi, who all provided a proxy vote

1. The meeting was opened by Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs.
2. Richard Pirolt and Katarzyna Sokolowska were nominated as Rapporteurs of the meeting.
3. The draft agenda was unanimously adopted. The exact voting results (yes, no, abstentions) should figure in the report.
4. Report of the meeting of 28 October 2019 - The quality of the meeting reports needed to be improved. Rapporteurs should deliver their reports in a “finalized, ready to use way”. A review of each draft (proof reading) by other colleagues of the Bureau was necessary before translation and submission to the Secretariat. The English version of the report was approved with amendments; the French version would have to be reformulated and approved by e-mail.
5. Information on the latest (since 28 October) and future activities of the members of the Standing Committee

Miguel Cabral de Pinho reported on the Oviedo Convention: changes to an additional protocol had been submitted.

Christoph Spreng attended the Lisbon Forum in November: The North-South-Centre should be the link between the UN SDG Global Agenda and the Council of Europe. The INGO Conference had a slot for a workshop.

In the context of the ongoing co-operation of the Conference of INGOs with the Youth Department, Anne Kraus and Rares Craiut reported on the work that was more specifically focused on the matter of shrinking civic space. After participating in the initial seminar, they were asked by the Advisory Council on Youth to contribute to the drafting of a “youth specific” Recommendation “on protecting youth civil society organisations and young people and supporting their participation in democratic processes”. The next meeting was planned for April.

Anne Nègre reported on a meeting of the Gender Equality Commission as well as on a trip to Israel with meetings at the Knesset on behalf of University Women of Europe.

Claude Vivier LeGot reported on the possible creation of an “Observatory of History”, as a new Council of Europe partial agreement (discussed during the meeting of the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice - CDPPE).

Anna Rurka mentioned the fact finding visit that took place in Armenia at the end of November.

6. Exchange of views with Claudia Luciani, Director of Human Dignity, Equality and Governance, and Mr Daniel Popescu, Head of the Democratic Governance Department about the Council of Europe reform and expectations in respect to the Conference of INGOs

Claudia Luciani highlighted that the word “reform” remained very present throughout the whole organisation, as an ongoing process and with the call to become rapidly more efficient, to strengthen links, to improve quality and establish more synergies (CDDG work, civil society).

The previous Secretary General had started the reform by making the Court more agile and by allowing improvements on the ground.

The Committee of Minister during its Meeting in Helsinki in May last year clearly stated that the Council of Europe organs must adopt more flexibility, be more focus-oriented and increase effectiveness at all levels.

The new Secretary General was elected in a context of reforms and would present further concrete (more effective, focused on the real situation) reform plans to the Committee of Ministers very soon.

The Committee of Ministers had adopted a biennium budget with a nominal zero growth, which meant that activities could be maintained but that savings still had to be made.

“Streamlining” is not seen as a way to save, it is rather a tool to “better balance the functioning”: structures have to be questioned (within the whole Council of Europe), as some of them have existed for decades and there is a need for a deep change for better outcomes. An example of this is the anti-discrimination activity at the intergovernmental level. To be more effective in fighting discrimination, a new steering committee with two expert groups replaced the CAHROM whose mandate had ended.

Thematic priorities of the Council of Europe came from the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General. One of the priorities is Artificial Intelligence: a more pragmatic organization was set up to gather all existing efforts into one single ad hoc committee, called the CAHAI.

The effective dialogue and interaction with civil society was part of the priorities. There was a high demand from the CM/SG towards the work of the Conference of INGOs: relevant contributions to the defined Council of Europe areas were expected.

The Council of Europe has 3 legal documents (Recommendation CM/Rec 2007(14) and more recently Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 and the Helsinki decision (CM/Del/Dec(2019)129/2) related to civil society and this must be seen as a very positive development.

Ms Luciani thanked the Conference of INGO President for previous efforts and encouraged the Conference to continue its reform process. In this context an internal evaluation of the Conference of INGOs’ working tools and efficiency would be carried out.

The DG2 had restructured some of its entities in January 2020. Mr Daniel Popescu, Head of the Democratic Governance Department, provided further details about the new structures:

1. Democratic Governance (European Committee on Democratic Governance and the Centre of Expertise for Good Governance): implements projects in approximately 20 countries and is currently working on reforms linked to democratic governance.

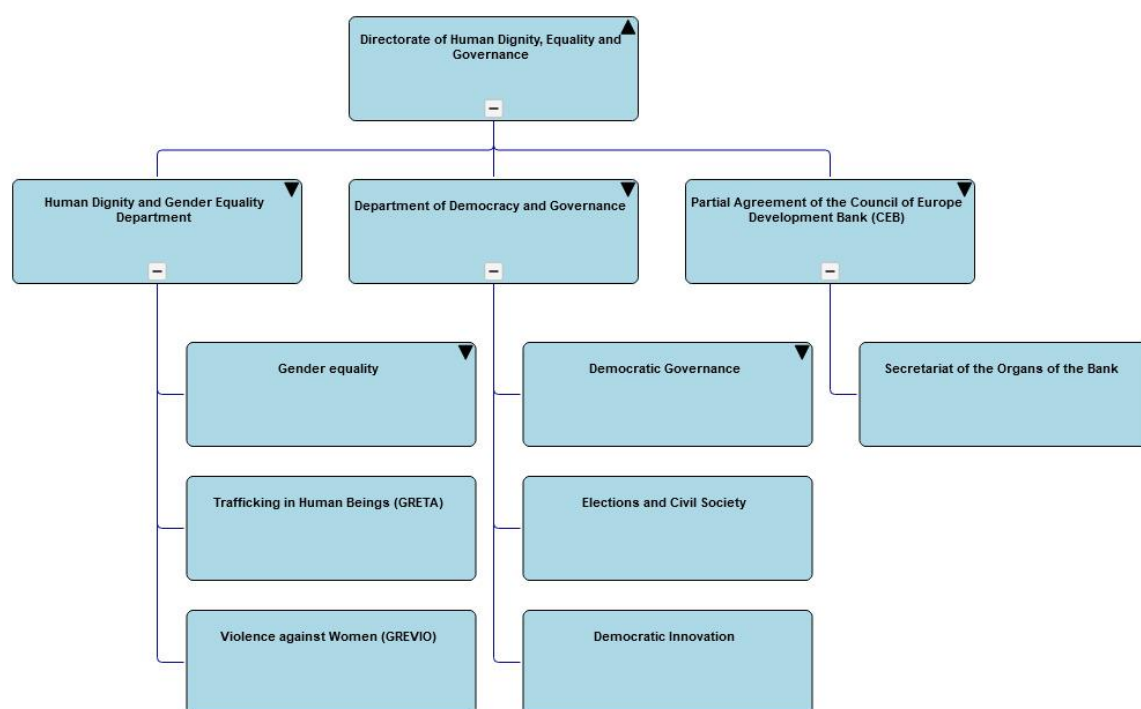
2. Elections and civil participation and assistance to co-operation projects: the name would be changed. Its goal: more effectiveness of co-operation

3. Democratic innovation (overseen by Mary Ann Hennessey). The Civil Society Division was now called the “Division for Democratic Innovation” and was now in charge of both the Conference of INGOs and the World Forum of Democracy held each year in November.

Therefore, there was a need to work on

- IMPACT, mainly by:
 - "thematic grouping"
 - "establishing quality criteria (“value for money”),
- Improvement expected;
- Question of political relevance;
- Ability to influence the authorities;
- make a change on the ground;
- Do we know how to make ourselves known? (cf. Venice Committee output)

Conclusion: Expectations: "thematic grouping" and more transversal agility! Establish a new culture with bilateral communication reflexes. The 2020 evaluation may highlight resource limits, room for improvement and achievements.



7. Update on the work of the [drafting group in charge of proposals regarding the Rules of Procedure or other statutory provisions](#) in the light of the proposals received from the INGOs, on the working process and on the calendar (for decision)

The drafting Group received in total 384 comments from 42 contributors, which were sorted into five categories:

1. Cat – to adopt with or without some modification: > 39
2. Cat – to reject whether because they make no sense or reflect a misunderstanding: >83
3. Cat – those which repeat points already covered: > 191
4. Cat – issues that appear to be only linked to translation: > 9
5. Cat – matters requiring DGRR discussion: > 62

The Standing Committee started the collective reading of the draft rules and agreed on some changes. The work on the document would be continued during an informal meeting on 19 April. The working document – as agreed during the previous Standing Committee meeting – was the English version.

8. Results of the satisfaction survey sent to participants after the October session (Katarzyna Sokolowska):

Due to lack of time this item was not discussed. The relevant documents were available on the Standing Committee shared Cloud.

9. Preparation of the Spring session of the Conference of INGOs, 20 - 24 April 2020: transversal theme, agenda of the meetings, side events, texts to be adopted, 2019 activity report (for decision)

The calendar of the session was adopted with some modifications.

Claude Vivier Le Got, Thierry Mathieu and Anne Nègre would submit a proposal for a side event on Artificial Intelligence (AI) by mid-February, taking into account the large scope of the implication that AI can have on the civil society sector. Logistics such as time allocation for presentations, number of speakers in one panel, the need for a concept note and programme before the meeting were discussed. The programme for the training on Monitoring, planned for the session, would be drafted by mid-February.

10. Information on the October Session (Mary Ann Hennessey)

Considering the short time between the Conference of INGOs' Session in October and the World Forum for Democracy (16-18 November 2020) it would be difficult for the Secretariat to organize the INGO Session in the usual format. In this context, it was decided that the Conference of INGOs' Autumn Session would exceptionally be shorter and would take place from Wednesday 14 to Friday 16 October 2020. Working groups would have the possibility to meet around those dates. Member organizations would be informed about this change as soon as possible.

11. Contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the implementation of the [Helsinki decisions](#) (129th Session of the Committee of Ministers, Helsinki, 17 May 2019) "A shared responsibility for democratic security in Europe - the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe"

Due to lack of time this item was not discussed.

12. Approval of the Revised Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation by other bodies of the Council of Europe, [call for case studies of civil participation in decision-making processes](#) (Gerhard Ermischer)

Due to lack of time this item was not discussed.

13. Declarations proposed by the Education and Culture Committee

Due to lack of time this item was not discussed.

14. Conference of INGOs' proposal for nominations for the Vaclav Havel Prize 2020

Due to lack of time this item was not discussed.

15. Youth delegates programme 2020 (Rares Craiut, Anne Kraus)

Due to lack of time this item was not discussed.

16. Work plan 2020 of the Expert Council on NGO Law (Jeremy McBride, Cyril Ritchie) (for information) ('10)

Due to lack of time this item was not discussed.

17. Updating of the list of Conference of INGOs' representatives to the new steering committees and new drafting groups (for decision) ('15)

Some members of the Standing Committee expressed the need to have an effective structure for reporting INGO participation in the steering committees. Miguel Cabral de Pinho would submit a proposal for improving the reporting system. The Standing Committee had already agreed in the past that in the case of two INGO representatives participating in the same Committee or Expert Group, only *one* of them would be covered by INGOs Service. The following changes were approved:

- Working Group on Accountability under the CDDG / Groupe de travail sur la responsabilité publique sous CDDG - Gerhard Ermischer
- Working Group on Democracy and Technology (GT-DT) Groupe de travail sur la démocratie et la technologie (R-DT) - Didier Schretter (covered by INGO-Service), Francesca Fannuci (covered by ECNL)
- Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CADI) - Gilbert Flam and Claude Vivier Le Got
 - o Subordinated Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM) / Comité d'experts sur les questions relatives aux Roms et aux Gens du voyage - Claude Vivier Le Got
 - o Subordinated Committee of Experts on Combating Hate Speech (ADI/MSI-DIS) / Comité d'experts sur la lutte contre le discours de haine - Gilbert Flam

18. Information on forthcoming events:

- International NGO Day event (Brussels, 28 February),
- High Level Conference on Civil Participation (6 March, Strasbourg),
- International Day for the Eradication of Poverty
- fact finding visits to member States (Bosnia and Herzegovina, Turkey)

Decision was taken that the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty event would take place on 16 October (last day of the Autumn session). The ceremony on the forecourt would take place at 12h, followed by a seminar with translation;

19. World Forum for Democracy, 16-18 November 2020

Maritchu Rall would be in touch with the Standing Committee regarding the topic and what could be the possible input from the Conference.

20. INGO-Service

Due to lack of time this item was not taken.

21. Any other business

22. Date of the next meeting: Monday, 20 April 2020. An additional informal working meeting focused only on the draft Rules of Procedure would take place on Sunday 19 April 2020.