



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Synopsis of the meeting of the Standing Committee held on Thursday 26 January 2017

Present: Anna Rurka, Michel Aguilar, Jean-Michel Caudron, Anne-Marie Chavanon, Antonina Dashkina, Karl Donert, Simon Matthijssen, Oren Gostiaux, Salomon Levy, Anne Nègre, Maritchu Rall, Iamvi Totsi, Cyril Ritchie, Thierry Mathieu, Sabine Rohmann, Didier Schretter, Anne Kraus

Apologies for absence:

Roseline Moreau, Laura Frati-Gucci, Jessica Chamba, Jean-Marie Heydt

1. Opening of the meeting: Anna Rurka, President of the Conference

In connection with the debate concerning alleged corruption within the PACE held during the winter session, the President and the Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs had met the President of the PACE. The meeting had followed [a letter](#) from the President to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

2. Adoption of the agenda and choice of rapporteur

- Continuation of the agenda of the Standing Committee of 24 January 2017, followed by discussion of the agenda for the present meeting. The two agendas had been adopted by the Standing Committee on 24 January 2017
- Rapporteur: Jean-Michel Caudron

3. Contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the guidelines on civil participation in political decision-making

Following the change in the approach for drafting the guidelines by the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), the Standing Committee would remain vigilant concerning the wording of the final text. Regarding the issue discussed as to whether a distinction should be drawn between NGOs that supported political parties and NGOs acting within the framework of public policies, it was concluded that the documents to which reference should be made were [Recommendation 2007\(14\) of the Committee of Ministers](#) of the Council of Europe and the study on [regulating political activities](#) (available in English and Russian) carried out by the Expert Council on NGO Law of the Conference of INGOs.

4. Contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the Council of Europe's activity report and mechanism for the protection of human rights defenders

For the first time in a number of years, it had been proposed that the Conference of INGOs have its own chapter in the activity report of the Council of Europe. A 500-word text had been finalised by the Secretariat.

Under the mechanism for protecting human rights defenders being drawn up under the authority of the Secretary General, the President of the Conference of INGOS would have the power to send alerts and to trigger the mechanism, including where such persons were in danger due to their participation in the activities of the Conference of INGOS.

5. **The evolution of collaboration between the Conference of INGOs and the Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union (FRA)**

The meeting between the President of the Conference and the Director of the FRA had confirmed the partnership previously established. The co-operation would focus as a priority matter on the narrowing of the civic space for NGOs, but could also be extended to other issues. It was currently proposed that the President of the Conference of INGOs sit as an observer on the Civil Society Platform established by the FRA and that a representative of the FRA attend some of the meetings of the Expert Council on NGO Law of the Conference of INGOs.

6. **2017 budget**

6.1 *INGO Service*

Maritchu Rall, President of [INGO-Service](#), presented the association's budget and the main expenditure lines.

6.2 *Civil Society Division*

Mary Ann Hennessey, Head of the Civil Society Division of the Council of Europe, presented the 2017 ordinary budget, including, in particular, the subhead available for supporting the activity of the Conference of INGOs, divided into different budget items: (1) meetings and operation of its statutory bodies, 2) administrative activities relating to representation, 3) support for NGOs in the member states, 4) promotional activities, the provision of information and public events held or supported by the Conference of INGOs.

In her view, the budget was low, but the Conference was able to produce major results.

During the exchange of views between the President of the Conference and the Committee of Ministers, some member states had proposed the option of voluntary contributions for financing some Conference of INGOs activities. This possibility still needed to be assessed. Taking account of the risk that the budget of the Conference of INGOs might not increase in 2018 and 2019, if the Conference wished to expand its activities, it would have to look for other sources of financing on the basis of specific projects, including through voluntary contributions from states. The Secretariat would look into the feasibility and the procedure that could be used for making relevant requests.

Among other things, voluntary contributions could support the Conference's plan to develop a proactive, multi-dimensional platform for civic dialogue between the NGOs and public authorities.

7. **Proposed events in 2017**

7.1 *40th anniversary of the Conference of INGOs*

A group comprised of Oren Gostiaux, Iamvi Totsi and Karl Donert and co-ordinated by Antonina Dashkina was preparing a project for celebrating the Conference's work within the Council of Europe over the past 40 years, which would tie in with the broader context of the importance of NGOs within the member states.

7.2 *Living Together Café on “Why do we need NGOs” (June 2017)*

The specific Living Together Café project would be incorporated into the organisation of the 40th anniversary of the Conference.

7.3 *Debate on the death penalty and torture (10 October 2017)*

The planned event initiated by Michel Aguilar, Jean-Bernard Marie and Gabriel Nissim, in co-operation with FIACAT, would be held on 10 October on the occasion of the International Day against the Death Penalty.

7.4 *Event to mark the World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty (17 October)*

Project in progress

7.5 *Conference on “The reception of refugees and migrants in European societies – challenges, approaches and solutions” (1 June 2017)*

In partnership with the Euro Institute in Kehl (Germany) and the INGO, Europa. Item not discussed.

7.6 *Seminar on access to rights (December 2017)*

In partnership with ATD Fourth World International Movement in connection with the 30th anniversary of the Wresinski report (December 2017). Item not discussed.

7.7 *Debate on populism*

Item not discussed.

8. **Texts for adoption**

8.1 *Situation of NGOs based in Turkey – Draft resolution of the Conference of INGOs on the protection of freedom of expression and association in Turkey following the attempted coup of 15 July 2016*

Anna Rurka and Cyril Ritchie, President of the Expert Council on NGO Law, presented the text. It was approved for presentation and recommended for adoption during the plenary session subject to some minor amendments.

8.2 *Roadmap on migration*

Jean-Michel Caudron presented the text. It was approved for presentation and recommended for adoption during the plenary session.

8.3 *Recommendation on human rights and business*

Michel Aguilar explained the need to postpone the presentation of this text for adoption. The postponement was approved.

8.4 *Recommendation on the need for standards to protect the confidentiality between lawyers and their clients*

Michel Aguilar presented the text. It was approved for presentation and recommended for adoption during the plenary session.

9. **Work carried out by the ad hoc committee on representativeness within the Conference of INGOs**

Anne Kraus proposed that the Standing Committee approve the ad hoc committee's timetable. The Standing Committee approved the timetable.

- Meeting of the Standing Committee on 24 April 2017 – Identification of “major problems”, arrangements for co-operation with the secretariat and reference framework
- Meeting of the Standing Committee in June 2017 – Presentation of the results and proposal for a roadmap covering immediate changes and gradual changes

- January 2018: start of implementation for inclusion in the 2018-2021 Action Plan

A more substantive discussion would be held at the Standing Committee's April meeting.

10. Contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the next World Forum for Democracy

Item not discussed.

11. Participation of NGOs in the decision-making process

Exploratory visits by the President to the member states (dates to be confirmed): Turkey from 13 to 17 March, Ireland from 10 to 12 April, Cyprus from 16 to 19 May (on the occasion of the Session of the Committee of Ministers), Estonia from 25 to 27 September and Serbia from 13 to 15 November.

12. Activities of the Expert Council on NGO Law

Item not discussed.

13. Other business

The proposal by the Gender Equality Expert to hold a side event on women's rights was accepted. It should focus on the current mobilisation of women (USA, Poland, Turkey, etc.) through recently established international solidarity movements, which were still developing.

14. Dates of next meetings

- Meeting of the Standing Committee in Strasbourg on 24 April 2017;
- Seminar of the Standing Committee at the Youth Centre in Strasbourg on 8 October 2017 (Sunday event);
- Meeting of the Standing Committee at the Agora in Strasbourg on 9 October.