



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

CONF/2012/RAPACT

2012 ACTIVITY REPORT

OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs

<http://www.coe.int/ONG>

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I. THE CONFERENCE OF INGOS

1. Introduction

The capacity of the Conference of INGOs to mobilise Europe's key players and react to diverse situations depends primarily on the willingness and commitment of the member NGOs and has an impact on the ground as soon as the management team – the Bureau and the Standing Committee – translates it into action.

In this context, one of the major developments of 2012 on the statutory front was the renewal of the President and the members of the Bureau as well as the Gender Equality Expert. The January session saw the election of:

- the President, Jean-Marie Heydt;
- the three Vice-Presidents, Antonina Dashkina, Sophie Dimitroulias and Alain Mouchoux;
- the four Rapporteurs, Veysel Filiz, Alain Koskas, Taras Poljanec and Maritchu Rall;
- the Gender Equality Expert: Betty Doornenbal

After his re-election, the President reiterated his desire to enhance the credibility of the Conference and its place within the quadrilogue as the spearhead of civil society. In this context, it should be emphasised that he took part in a very large number of ministerial conferences during the year as well as contributing to meetings with the other pillars of the Council of Europe, namely the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. This presence in the highest decision-making bodies reflects the recognition that is granted to organised civil society and demonstrates that the issues it raises make it a major asset where it comes to enhancing the role of the Council of Europe and securing its place on the European and world stage.

Added to this was the election of the President of the Conference of INGOs as the Vice-President of the North-South Centre, which is also a mark of the trust and credibility afforded to organised civil society.

Furthermore, in order to improve exchanges between INGOs, an experiment was carried out with "open" questions for the first time at the January 2012 Conference and specific persons were appointed to take charge of priority work areas.

2. Priorities of the Conference of INGOS and relations with the quadrilogue

A. Setting up instruments

The President has regularly underlined his commitment to full dialogue pursuing two aims:

- a culture of participation to counter intolerance, xenophobia and extremism;
- the assertion of the values that form the cornerstone of democracy, namely human rights and the rule of law.

The Conference's priorities related to the means of setting up easily accessible instruments to foster intercultural dialogue in order to improve the practice of "better living together". The aim is to think about original blueprints for societies that would accommodate each person's specific characteristics while being built on absolute respect for fundamental rights and the rule of law, as advocated by the Group of Eminent Persons of the Council of Europe. As a result the following instruments have been or are being set up:

a. the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process

The Code is one of the products of the 2007 Forum for the Future of Democracy. Its main aim is to help to create an environment conducive to NGOs in the Council of Europe member states. It seeks to facilitate participation by NGOs in the decision-making process at all levels, local, regional and national. This reference tool has been presented in many countries including, recently, Morocco. It has been translated into 20 languages including Arabic. It has become a source of examples of good practice, which is also proposed as part of the activities with neighbourhood countries.

b. The Dialogue Toolkit

This was presented last June along with the website www.dialoguetoolkit.net, which is run by the Conference. By implementing this practical guide, operators in the field should be able to contribute to greater social cohesion and the management of diversity issues on the basis of human rights. An initial training session for INGO dialogue facilitators was held with the support of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. A French and Russian version of the toolkit are currently being prepared.

B. Participation in intergovernmental committees

As a result of the reform of the Council of Europe, the number of committees has been reduced and their terms of reference have been revised. Moreover, only one representative of the Conference per meeting may now claim reimbursement for travel and subsistence expenses. Participation by INGOs in Steering Committees is essential and is a reflection of the role of organised civil society.

C. Future of the European Court of Human Rights

Since 2009, the NGOs have been asked to discuss and compare their ideas and make a contribution to the essential debate on the reform of the European Court of Human Rights and hence of democracy in Europe. The Conference of INGOs calls on the states to ensure that the Court can retain a human and social dimension so that it remains accessible to all individuals (see the President's speech in Brighton, 18-20 April 2012).

3. Activities and structures of the Conference

The activities of the Conference of INGOs, its Bureau and its Standing Committee focused on themes linked to the work of the Quadriologue.

A. The Expert Council on NGO Law

The Expert Council was set up in 2008 and its terms of reference were renewed by the Conference in 2012. The plenary Conference also confirmed Cyril Ritchie as the President of the Expert Council and reaffirmed its role as a major body of the Conference, which contributes to the promotion of the full range of the Council of Europe's fundamental values. The "new" Expert Council has up to fifteen members and the first nine appointments were approved by the Standing Committee (see list and personal notices on the website). The first meeting of the new Council was held in December 2012, when it prepared its work programme for 2013 and 2014. The Expert Council will extend and flesh out its network of contacts and consultations with other Council of Europe bodies and with outside institutions involved in consolidating NGO law. In particular, the Expert Council had its first experience of organising a joint seminar, which it held in co-operation with the Venice Commission on the subject of freedom of association in Azerbaijan.

B. The first World Forum for Democracy on the theme “Bridging the gap - Democracy: between old models and new realities”

The first World Forum for Democracy was a major event, which involved all the Council of Europe’s bodies and was attended by nearly 1 500 officials from 120 countries spread over five continents and a large media contingent.

The INGO Conference’s participation in the Forum took two forms:

- a debate on 7 October on the theme “Inclusive Democracy and Human Rights”, followed by two round tables, one on “Building Inclusive Democracy through Media” and the other on “Building Inclusive Democracy with Women”;
- a round table on 10 October on the theme “Civil society, a key player for living together” in the context of the series of round tables on “Democracy in the 21st century”.

C. The Conference on “Building Europe through Human Rights: Acting Together against Extreme Poverty”

The conference held on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, on 17 October was marked by a joint declaration on “Acting together to eradicate extreme poverty in Europe”, signed by the four pillars of the Council of Europe. The adoption of this declaration should result in an action plan for 2014-2023. A large Russian delegation representing several regions took part in the work, along with people living in poverty. Three panel discussions were held on the following themes:

- civil and political participation of people living in poverty;
- social exclusion and health: the right to health for all;
- extreme poverty is violence: breaking the silence – building peace.

D. Strategy of the Conference of INGOs in the countries of the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean

Many INGOs are engaged in activities in several countries in the Mediterranean basin and the two main focuses of this work are young people and the place of women in society, and the two main goals are organisation and co-ordination so as to raise the profile of the action through appropriate responses. The President appealed to the NGOs already present in any of these countries to make their work known to Alain Koskas or Sophie Dimitroulias. In 2013, it is planned to give the Conference’s work in the civil societies of these countries a more practical dimension and this can also be facilitated through efficient co-operation with the North-South Centre in Lisbon.

E. Adjustment of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs to the new context

At the end of the transition period following the reform, the Conference’s Rules of Procedure were adjusted in line with the new context. The text was reworked by the Verification and Dispute Committee, working with the Standing Committee. The proposed amendments were sent by the Standing Committee to all the INGOs. The new Rules of Procedure will be submitted to the Conference for adoption at its meeting in January 2013.

F. Creation of a working group on the revision of participatory status

The Conference of INGOs wishes to be involved in the revision of Resolution (2003)8 on the participatory status for INGOs with the Council of Europe and has set up a working group

chaired by Daniel Zielinski, which has been charged with making practical proposals on granting and withdrawing participatory status, as stipulated in the resolution.

G. Communication

A communication tool presenting the Conference's structures and activities was drawn up and distributed on the occasion of the World Forum for Democracy. This brochure is a means of promoting and providing information about NGOs, designed both for internal use and external partners. This document is available on the INGO website.

There were also many exchanges of views with the Presidents, Chairs and committees of the Council of Europe's other pillars, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Secretariat and the heads of the operational directorates, at the INGO Conferences in January and June 2012. The statements by the various personalities who attended aroused considerable interest and were universally appreciated.

H. UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York in March

Renée Gérard and Anje Wiersinga represented the interest of the Conference of INGOs and promoted the Council of Europe values during the 56th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 56th) as decided by the Conference of INGOs in January 2012.

4. Plans for 2013

Certain projects are already being discussed or prepared:

- 2013 is the European Union's "European Year of Citizens". The Vice-President, Alain Mouchoux, is responsible for following up on this. It would seem that many towns are planning to organise events to mark the year. The National Federation of Municipal Social Welfare Centres (UNCCAS), of which Daniel Zielinski is the Secretary General, is holding a colloquy in Marseille;
- the implementation of an activity in one of the neighbouring countries (in the Mediterranean basin), in co-operation with the North-South Centre in Lisbon, ten years after the Tlemcen Forum in 2002 (Education and Culture Committee);
- follow-up to the programme "Building a Europe for and with children", with the establishment of a working group led by Anna Rurka (Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee);
- preparation of a toolkit for the implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at national level (Human Rights Committee).

5. Conclusion

The Conference of INGOs is concerned about the economic and social crisis and aware that an effort has to be made to address the crisis of confidence this has prompted in society. Its determined response to this is shaped by a desire not only to act as a social shock absorber and the spokesperson for a diverse range of opinions but also to contribute to a wide-ranging constructive dialogue, particularly in the two key areas of human rights and the rule of law on the one hand and democracy and governance on the other. It hopes that this will lead to the emergence of a favourable environment for participation resulting in turn in greater social cohesion in the context of the new synergies developed with the quadrilogue.

The activities of the Conference of INGOs and its subordinate bodies have been made possible thanks to the steadfast and efficient support of the Civil Society Division team.

Rapporteur: Maritchu Rall, Bureau member

II. INGO-SERVICE

To date 120 INGOs have paid their subscriptions to INGO-Service. INGO-Service's aim is to promote the functioning of the Conference of INGOs holding participatory status with the Council of Europe and its structures. The Chair of the association has appealed to all the INGOs to pay subscriptions, thus increasing the membership and reflecting the vitality of the Conference and the solidarity between INGOs.

The Chair drew attention to the following points:

- the rules on reimbursement, which called for a prior request;
- the importance of planning for expenditure as soon as possible;
- the impossibility of reimbursing the expenses of guests invited to address committees.

It should be pointed out that the Council of Europe reimburses the expenses of representatives of the Conference of INGOs attending intergovernmental committee meetings, ministerial conferences and other specific events in accordance with a budget established at the beginning of the year.

Rapporteur: Maritchu Rall, Vice-Chair of INGO-Service

III. THE THEME-BASED COMMITTEES AND THE GENDER EQUALITY EXPERT

1. The Human Rights Committee

(Chair: Annelise Oeschger, Vice-Chairs: Gérard Greneron and Marie-José Schmitt, Rapporteur: Maritchu Rall)

A. Reform of the European Court of Human Rights

In preparation for the Brighton Conference, the Committee prepared a recommendation and a position paper of the Conference of INGOs, in which it opposed any measures restricting the right of individual application or limiting the Court's independence, and it is now closely monitoring the application of the Brighton Declaration.

B. The Conference on "Building Europe through Human Rights: Acting Together against Extreme Poverty"

On 17 October, on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, this Conference, held at the Council of Europe and conducted in English, French and Russian, was attended by about 200 people. The working group on "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights" did most of the preparation work. Contributions from people who have experienced poverty first hand helped the participants to gain a better understanding and identify possible courses of action, particularly in the areas of community-based and political participation, the right to health for all and violence to poor people, which called for peaceful solutions to be sought. The Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of INGOs signed a joint declaration entitled "Acting together to eradicate extreme poverty in Europe", reiterating states' obligations and commitments in this area.

C. Work on themes forming the basis of recommendations adopted by the Conference of INGOs at its January and June sessions

- The Committee was very concerned about the growing trend of cultural relativism and the increasing and sometimes violent attempts to restrict or even to destroy democratic principles and the rule of law which is seen at international, European, national and local level, and hence proposed that the INGOs should make an unequivocal statement on gender equality's status as a universal value, principle and human right, to be respected and promoted in all fields.
- In response to the failure to respect the fundamental rights of LGBT people or even their disavowal in many countries, the Committee alerted INGOs to the problem and proposed two successive recommendations, one against discrimination on the ground of sexual orientation or gender identity and the other for freedom of expression.
- Following reports of the threats and harassment to which human rights defenders are subjected in Russia, the country was called on to take all the necessary measures to protect the physical and mental integrity of all human rights defenders working in the country and to create conditions conducive to their activities.

D. Hearing by the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter

Plea for the ratification of the Additional Protocol providing for a system of collective complaints and questions concerning the practice of placing of children in often brutal conditions because of the consequences of poverty and a lack of support for parents (Article 7, 16 and 17). The hearing was prepared by the “European Social Charter” working group.

E. Follow-up to work with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities for the implementation of human rights at local level

The working group on “Human rights and religion” completed its work with a report and a draft recommendation, which will be dealt with by the Committee in 2013.

Some plans for 2013:

- Follow-up to the results of the conference of 17 October and implementation of the undertakings made in the declaration on “Acting together to eradicate extreme poverty in Europe”.
- Working towards a Europe without torture – work following the presentation of the ACAT report entitled “*Un monde tortionnaire*” (“A torturer’s world”) to the Council of Europe.
- Contribution to the ratification and implementation of the conventions on violence against women, trafficking in human beings and sexual exploitation of children.
- Preparation of a toolkit for the full implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights at national level.

Rapporteur: Annelise Oeschger, Chair

2. The Education and Culture Committee

Chair: Sabine Rohmann, Vice-Chairs: Harry Rogge and Yosanne Vella, Rapporteur: Roseline Moreau.

A. The working groups

The working groups made progress in line with their objectives:

a. History teaching

The working group co-operates with Tatiana Milko, the head of history teaching programmes in the Council of Europe’s Education Policy Division.

The group considers that it plays an expert role because of its members’ recognised qualifications as well as raising awareness about and disseminating the work of the Council of Europe in this field.

At the meeting of June 2012, the group decided to concentrate on the following themes:

- history’s supporting role in education for democracy;
- the history of women;
- how history can generate prejudices;
- the misuse of history.

The themes will continue to be centred on both formal education (for young people in school and older students) and non-formal education (adult education, tourism, the media, etc.).

b. Access to the digital media

This group makes an inventory of the work already carried out at the Council of Europe and in other international institutions (such as the EU and the United Nations). Its adopted themes are:

- education in information management;
- education in participation;
- education in the management of social networks.

c. The teaching profession in the 21st century

This group is currently drawing up a questionnaire on teaching practices. The questionnaire is intended to provide the framework for an interview with teachers in all the Council of Europe member states.

The results of these interviews should reveal what teachers' new in-service training needs are, as paradigms shift in the education world.

The work will lead to the production of a tool designed to assist teachers in their efforts to acquire training in line with a new culture of education and learning.

The group has been working in close co-operation with the Pestalozzi Programme and this work will lead to a joint production of some kind.

d. Education 21

The group launched a process of reflection entitled "How to educate learners, whether adults or young people, and prepare them to cope with the challenges they face?" These challenges relate both to their access to the European labour market and to their active involvement in the community and civic life in a European context.

The current focus is the issue of how to pinpoint modern forms of governance in the education field. The question is whether it is possible to implement systems of shared responsibility between learners, their families, education establishments, local, regional and national elected representatives, business people and civil society representatives.

e. Living together

With the support of the speakers, the group discussed the impact of intercultural dialogue, living together and the toolkit on dialogue. This was preparatory work for the close co-operation with the CDCPP on the theme "Living together in multicultural societies – access to participation and culture", which will begin in January 2013.

B. Other activities

Preparation of the working group's report on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue is in its final phase.

On 26 June 2012, the Committee heard the Vice-President of the European Federation of Centres of Research and Information on Sectarianism, who presented her work on the problem of infiltration by sects into the education system, which is a topical issue considered by the Council of Europe and the United Nations to be extremely important.

C. The Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE)

The Conference of INGOS is represented on the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice (CDPPE) and its Bureau by the Chair of the Education and Culture Committee.

D. Participation in meetings:

- CDPPE meeting, March 2012 – at this meeting Gabriel Nissim spoke about digital media and human rights;
- CDPPE meeting, July 2012;
- 6th Prague Forum, organised by the Czech Ministry of Education on the theme “Governance and quality education”. The forum worked in workshops on the following topics:
 - decentralisation, social participation and empowerment of local authorities in the governance of education;
 - ethics and integrity for the quality of education systems;
 - involvement of parents, teachers and pupils in education governance and education management and quality.

These themes form subjects for discussion at the Conference of Ministers of Education to be held in Helsinki in April 2013.

- the Bureau meeting in November.

World Forum for Democracy

The Committee was represented by its Vice-Chair, Harry Rogge.

High-level Conference in Tirana, November

The closing conference of the Albanian Chairmanship and the handover to the Andorran Chairmanship centred on the theme of diversity in Europe. The Committee was represented by its Chair.

MEET – Launch of a European citizens’ initiative for a quality European education for all

The Committee was represented by means of a written message from its Chair, Sabine Rohmann.

2012 EDC/HRE Conference - Human Rights and Democracy in Action - Looking Ahead

The Committee was represented by Roseline Moreau.

Rapporteur: Sabine Rohmann, Chair

3. *The Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee*

Chair: Anne-Marie Chavanon, Vice-Chairs: Vera John-Mikolajewski and Israël Mensah, Rapporteur: Edith Wenger

A. The Committee’s work

In 2012, the Committee focused on four of its founding themes: social cohesion, democracy, sustainable development and global challenges.

a. Social cohesion

In January, the new Committee's work began with a round table on the theme: "How should we construct social cohesion in Europe? New tools", attended by representatives of the quadrilogue (Gilda Farrell, Head of the Social Cohesion, Research and Early Warning Division, Bernard Marquet, Vice-Chair of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly, Andrée Buchmann, member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Marinette Gonon, President of the association "Les 7 pains" and Yawo Abotsi, Secretary General of the association "Co-habiter" ("Living together") for the NGOs).

The main focus of debate was the Committee's support for the draft European Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities being prepared by the Council of Europe's Social Cohesion Division.

b. Democracy

- Preparation of a draft Declaration on Democracy by the ad hoc Working Group led by Giuseppe Guarneri (International Institute of Human Rights Studies).
- In June, round table meeting on the search for a common agenda for all the Council of Europe bodies in the sphere of democracy, with contributions from the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Keith Whitmore, the President of the Conference of INGOs, Jean-Marie Heydt, and the Head of the Democracy, Institutions and Governance Department, Alfonso Zardi.
- Contribution to European Local Democracy Week 2012, which focused on the theme "Human rights make for more inclusive communities".
- Analysis of political developments and warning about the threat of regressions in certain Middle Eastern and North African countries in the sphere of individual freedoms, democracy and human rights (opinion of Jean-Pierre Estival, leader of the ad hoc working group).
- Working meetings and exchanges with women from these countries and adoption of a recommendation and a resolution of support submitted by the working group on "Women's participation in political and democratic processes, particularly those dealing with conflicts", led by Anje Wiersinga, entitled respectively "Gender perspectives in political and democratic processes in the MENA Region" and "Gender equality: a condition for the success of the Arab spring".
- Contribution to the work on "Territorial democracy: the role of public participation in the process of sustainable territorial development of the European continent", the theme of the 16th session of the Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning (CEMAT), in co-operation with Maguelonne Déjeant-Pons, Head of the Heritage, Landscape and Technical Assistance Division.
- Dissemination of the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-making Process and the example set by the Council of Europe in the field of participation:
 - . hearing by the European Economic and Social Committee – Anne-Marie Chavanon (IFHP) and Antonella Valmorbida (ALDA) – 24 April 2012;
 - . statement by Anne-Marie Chavanon to the International Observatory on Participatory Democracy in Porto Alegre (Brazil);

- . World Congress of Civilscape on new energy policies and their impact on landscape by Gerhard Ermischer, leader of the working group on “Landscape: a social cohesion tool at threat”
- . dissemination at meetings of the Council of Europe’s Steering Committee for Local and Regional Democracy.

c. Sustainable development and global challenges

Statements and participation at major global debates in 2012

UNCSD RIO + 20 – adoption of two declarations disseminated in Rio and posted on the websites of various platforms working with the United Nations. Participation of Cyril Ritchie, President of the Expert Council, representatives of ATD Fourth World and Anne-Marie Chavanon, Chair of the Committee. Development of a dedicated Internet site.

Hearings

- Hearings by the Sub-Committee on Environment and Energy of the Parliamentary Assembly on the Committee’s contributions to the Earth Summit (Anne-Marie Chavanon)
- Hearings by the Sub-Committee on Environment and Energy of the Parliamentary Assembly on the Committee’s views on the Doha Summit (UNFCCC) (Edith Wenger, leader of the “Climate change and human rights” Working Group)
- Hearing by the Group of Experts on the Bern Convention on climate change and biodiversity (Edith Wenger, leader of the “Climate change and human rights” Working Group)

Joint drafting of the Pan-European Charter for the Rural Heritage: Promoting Sustainable Spatial Development (Patrice Collignon - RED)

d. Activities of the Committee’s other working groups in 2012

- Development of relations with the organised civil society of the European Union (Claude-Laurent Genty - CITI);
- Preparation of a study on European citizenship in the Council of Europe member states by the “European citizenship” Working Group (Hélène Pichon - CESP) ;
- Co-ordination of joint work between doctors and town planners on the impact of housing conditions on health by the “Housing and health” Working Group (Bernard Aubert – ISOCARP);
- Establishment of a joint working framework for the Parliamentary Assembly’s Migration Committee and the “Migration and democracy” Working Group (Jean-Claude Gonon - AEDE);
- Comparative analysis of policies on the proper use of antibiotics in Europe, first stage of the work on the theme “Health risks and mobility: a global challenge” (Thierry Mathieu).

e. Other persons participating on behalf of the Committee and/or the Conference of INGOs

Participation in the work of the CDCS (Daniel Zielinski):

- work on the draft Recommendation on the Council of Europe Charter on Shared Social Responsibilities;
- work on the draft recommendation on intercultural competences in services to the public in order to ensure social cohesion in Europe;
- preparation of the 2013 Conference on “Human rights of people experiencing poverty”;
- establishment of a network of territories/pilot projects of shared social responsibilities.

Meetings of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) in Budapest in March 2012 and the Youth Advisory Council in Strasbourg on 14 November 2012 – presentation of the intercultural dialogue toolkit by Israël Mensah, Vice-Chair of the Committee.

European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) – Strasbourg, 2 and 3 April 2012 – Anne-Marie Chavanon

Bern Convention – Strasbourg, 24-26 April 2012 – Edith Wenger (EEB)

Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP), 15 and 16 May 2012 – Anne-Marie Chavanon, Patrice Collignon (RED), Gerhardt Ermischer (CIVILSCAPE), Luc-Emile Bouche-Florin (ECTP-CEU)

9th Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth – Saint Petersburg, 23-25 September 2012 – Israel Mensah (OIEC)

European Landscape Convention Workshops (Anne-Marie Chavanon, Patrice Collignon (RED), Gerhardt Ermischer (CIVILSCAPE), Thessaloniki (30 September – 3 October 2012)

Landscape workshops and European Landscape Award, Carbonia, June 2012 – Luc-Emile Bouche-Florin (ECTP-CEU), Patrice Collignon (RED), Gerhardt Ermischer (CIVILSCAPE)

Council of Europe interdepartmental working group on the preparation of a conference on climate change and human rights (Edith Wenger)

Standing Committee of the Bern Convention, 27-30 November (Edith Wenger)

Rapporteur: Anne-Marie Chavanon, Chair

4. The Gender Equality Expert

Betty Doornenbal

A. Introduction

January 2012: elected as Gender Equality Expert to the Standing Committee of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe for a period of 3 years. The position is a voluntary one, which I will fulfil in addition to my other employment. This report summarises my activities in 2012.

B. Activities

February: Took part in a conference held by Gender Concerns International (GCI), the Hague, the Netherlands. Subject: One year on; the Arab Spring, Gender Agenda 2012 (www.genderconcerns.org).

Summary of my statement:

- Introduction on the role of the Council of Europe
- Emphasised the importance of women working together to increase their influence by cooperating with and asking for support from other INGOs (i.e. human rights organisations, unions, education organisations). Stressed need to work with everybody who supports human rights, as women's rights are fundamental rights.

One example of my contribution: our resolution [CONF/PLEN(2012)RES2] and recommendation [CONF/PLEN(2012)REC4] "Gender perspectives in political and democratic processes in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) Region" were adopted by the INGO Conference at the Council of Europe, January 2012. Thank you to all the INGOs who supported these texts.

For more information, please read the report prepared by Anje Wiersinga.

March:

Guest speaker at the House of Europe, an event organised by the Dutch Institute of Political Education in the Hague: PowerPoint presentation on the Council of Europe and my work as Gender Equality Expert.

Prepared for the April Standing Committee meetings and drafted the proposal for the establishment of a new working group (see April).

April:

Prepared for and attended the meetings of the Standing Committee of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

Prepared for and attended the meetings on combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings held by the Human Rights Committee of the INGO Conference.

Member of the Steering Committee of the Euro-Med Network for the empowerment of women of the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg (first meeting)

Discussed the role and working methods of the Network and decided on the subject for our Conference in Istanbul, Turkey, November 2012 – Subject: "The Political and Socio-economic Empowerment of Women based on Women's Stories" (www.nswomennetwork.org)

May: Meeting of the permanent representatives of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg – Subject: Co-operation between the four pillars of the Council of Europe.

Joined the INGO delegation.

Met the Gender Equality Expert of the 3rd pillar (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities).

June

6-8 June: Participant in the meeting of the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg (first meeting). General goal of

the GEC: to advise the Committee of Ministers on a Council of Europe Strategy on Gender Equality (2014-2017).

Stressed the importance of implementing treaties and policies through work with INGOs, establishing sustainable gender equality by focusing on constructing "automatic mechanisms" in treaties and laws etc. and ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence. The convention has been signed by 21 countries and Turkey is the only country to have ratified it to date – on 13 September 2012.

25-28 June

Attended the meetings of the Standing Committee of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg.

The proposal of the Working Group on preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings was adopted.

Attended the meeting of the Human Rights Committee of the INGO Conference.

The proposal of the Working Group on preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings was adopted.

Attended the Freely Constituted Equality Group meeting.

Planned and carried out an effective lobbying strategy with group members (see report by Anje Wiersinga).

July:

Attended the meeting of a committee of Amsterdam City Council. Subject: drawing up new national legislation on prostitution. Main themes: Increasing the minimum age of prostitutes from 18 to 21, punishing the clients of prostitutes in illegal situations, registration of prostitutes.

September:

Writing my Midterm report January till September 2012 'Overview of activities of the Gender Equality Expert'

In co-operation with the Council of Europe Secretariat, it is published on the website
Preparation of the October meetings

October:

Attending the meetings of the Standing Committees of the Conference of INGOs, Strasbourg (6 October)

Attending the meetings of the Civil Society Debate organised by the Conference of INGOs, Strasbourg (7 October)

Link: www.coe.int/ingo/events. The following reports are available on this website:

Report of the session on 'Inclusive democracy and human rights'

Report of the session on 'Building inclusive democracy through media'

Report of the session on 'Building inclusive democracy through women'

Attending the meetings of the World Forum for Democracy 2012, Strasbourg

Link: www.coe.int/en/web/world-forum-democracy

November:

Representation of the Conference of INGOs to the second meeting of the Gender Equality Commission. Goal: Preparation of a strategy on Gender Equality for 2014-2017.

Contribution: Stressing the importance of :

- the implementation of treaties and policies through working with INGOs;
- establishing sustainable gender equality by focussing on constructing 'self working mechanisms' in treaties and laws etc.;
- the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on 'preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence' (2011, Istanbul, Turkey).

Short and excellent first ad hoc meeting with Mendes Bota, General Rapporteur on Violence against women, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. Subjects:

- violence against women in general;
- a University in Spain publishes on a regular basis the cases of violence against women in Spain in order to make this violence visible.

December:

Writing this annual report

Preparing the meetings of the Standing Committee and the Conference of INGOs of January 2013.

C. General activities

The work conducted involves various activities including preparing meetings, brainstorming, discussions with colleagues, travel to Strasbourg, organising journeys and related logistical arrangements.

D. Special thanks

I would like to give special thanks to the International Alliance of Women (IAW), my colleagues in the IAW, Anje Wiersinga and Monique Bouchet, and the IAW President, Lyda Versteegen, for their support, along with the members of the Freely Constituted Equality Group, women's organisations and civil society organisations. I am also grateful to Marion Minis, Saskia Loos, Eileen Focke and Audrey Kühler for their assistance, and to my colleagues in the Standing Committee and the Council of Europe and, lastly, to Melanie Hyde, who translated my Dutch English into proper English.

Rapporteur: Betty Doornenbal, Gender Equality Expert

IV. TEXTS ADOPTED BY THE CONFERENCE IN 2012

In 2012 the Conference of INGOs adopted several recommendations related to its main areas of activity.

- CONF/PLE(2012)REC1
Recommendation adopted on 27 January 2012 on "The Reform of the European Court of Human Rights"
- CONF/PLE(2012)REC2
Recommendation adopted on 27 January 2012 on "The protection of Human Rights Defenders in the Russian Federation"
- CONF/PLE(2012)REC3
Recommendation adopted on 27 January 2012 on "Combating discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity"
- CONF/PLE(2012)REC4
Recommendation adopted on 27 January 2012 on "Gender equality perspectives in political and democratic processes in the MENA Region (Middle East and Northern African)"
- CONF/PLE(2012)REC5
Recommendation adopted on 27 June 2012 on "Gender Equality: a universal value, principle and human right to be respected and promoted in all fields"
- CONF/PLE(2012)REC6
Recommendation adopted on 27 June 2012 on "Attacks on the right to freedom of expression of LGBT people and those who advocate for their rights"
- CONF/PLE(2012)RES1
Resolution adopted on 27 January 2012 concerning Civil Society in Belarus
- CONF/PLE(2012)RES2
Resolution adopted on 27 January 2012 on "Gender perspectives in political and democratic processes in the MENA Region (Middle East and Northern Africa)"
- CONF/PLE(2012)RES3
Resolution adopted on 27 June 2012 concerning Civil Society in Belarus
- CONF/PLE(2012)DECISION1
Decision adopted on 27 January 2012 on the Expert Council on NGO Law