



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

GENDER EQUALITY EXPERT CONF/GEE(2012)REPORT1

Strasbourg, 28 November 2012

Overview of activities: Gender Equality Expert (GEE)
at the Standing Committee of the International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGO)
Conference at the Council of Europe (COE), Strasbourg, France.

Report by Betty Doornenbal, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

1. Introduction

In January 2012, I was 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 I have undertaken is a voluntary one, which I will fulfil in addition to my other employment. This report provides an outline of my activities from January to August 2012.

2. Council of Europe & the INGO Conference

The INGO Conference is also referred to as the 4th pillar of the COE.
The first pillar: the Committee of Ministers (47 member States);
The second pillar: the Parliamentary Assembly;
The third pillar: the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.
Every pillar has a gender equality expert.
Link: www.coe.int

3. Activities

February

Guest speaker at a conference organised by Gender Concerns International (GCI)

Location: The Hague, The Netherlands.

Subject: One year on; the Arab Spring, Gender Agenda 2012.

Link: www.genderconcerns.org

Summary of contribution as GEE:

- An introduction of the role of the COE.

- Emphasizing the importance of women working together in order to increase strength by cooperating with and asking for support from other INGOs (ie- human rights organisations, unions, education organisations). The bottom line is: work together with everybody who supports human rights. Women's rights are human rights.

An example: 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 COE, January 2012. Thanks to all the INGOs who have supported it.

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

March

Guest speaker at the House of Europe

(organised by the Dutch Institute of Political Education)

Location: The Hague

Summary of contribution as GEE:

- Power point presentation about the COE and my work as a GEE.
- Preparing for the April Standing Committee Meetings and writing the proposal for establishing a new Working Group (see April).

April

Attending the **meetings of the Standing Committee of the INGO Conference of the COE**, Strasbourg

Summary of contribution as GEE:

- Preparing for and attending the meetings.
- Lobbying for the establishment of a Working Group on preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings within 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 COE, Strasbourg (first meeting)

Summary of contribution as GEE:

- Discussing the role, working methods of the Network and deciding upon the subject for our Conference in Istanbul, Turkey, November 2012.

Subject: "The Political and Socio-economical Empowerment of Women based on Women's Stories".

Link: www.nswomennetwork.org

May

Meeting of the permanent representatives of the Committee of Ministers of the COE

Location: Strasbourg.

Subject: cooperation between the four pillars of the COE.

Summary of contribution as GEE:

- Joining the INGO delegation.
- To meet with the GEE of the 3rd pillar (Congress of local & regional authorities).

June

6-8 June

Participant in the Gender Equality Commission (GEC) of the Committee of Ministers of the COE, 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)

Summary of contribution as GEE:

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 COE Convention on “preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (2011, Istanbul, Turkey).
- It has been signed by 21 countries and Turkey has become the first country to ratify the Convention till today: 13 september 2012.

25-28 June

Attending the **meetings of the Standing Committee of the INGO Conference of the COE, Strasbourg**

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

Attending **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.
- The Working Group will be a part of this Human Rights Committee.

Attending the **Freely Constituted Equality Group meeting;**

- Planning and carrying out an effective lobby strategy with group members.
(see report Anje Wiersinga)

July

Attending a **Council Committee of the City Council of Amsterdam.**

Subject: the concept new national law on prostitution.

Main subjects:

1. Increasing the age of prostitutes from 18 to 21 years of age.
2. Sentencing the clients of illegal prostitutes.
3. Registration of prostitutes.

4. The work in general

The work conducted involves a number of activities including preparing for meetings *1, brainstorming, discussions with colleagues, writing, organising travel and logistics to Strasbourg, and travelling itself.

*1) Attending the meetings of a.o.:

The Standing Committee of the INGO Conference,

The INGO Conference and its Committees,

The Gender Equality Commission (GEC) of the Committee of Ministers of the COE,

The Steering Committee of the Euro-Med Network for the empowerment of women of the North-South Centre of the COE,

The Working Group on preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings,
The Freely Constituted Equality Group,
Experts on violence against women and children, as much as possible,
The Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, as much as possible.

5. Special thanks

I would like to give a special thanks to the International Alliance of Women (IAW), my colleague IAW representatives Anje Wiersinga, Monique Bouchet and IAW president Lyda Verstegen in addition to the Members of the Freely Constituted Equality Group, women's organisations and civil society organisations for their support.

Also I like to thank Marion Minis, Saskia Loos, Eileen Focke and Audrey Kühler for their support. Furthermore I would like to thank my colleagues at the Standing Committee and at the Council of Europe.

And last but not least, Melanie Hyde, who translated my Dutchy English into English.