



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE CONF/HR(2014)RAPACT

Activity report for 2014

In 2014, the Human Rights Committee's work was, of course, closely related to topical developments.

Human rights are being challenged in all respects. Both from the point of view of the legitimacy of their universalism, and with regard to the "demands" of the economy. Recognising this change in situation, which is being reflected dramatically in a wide range of areas, the Human Rights Committee has worked in many different but nevertheless converging directions to promote human rights effectively.

Points worth noting in 2014 included:

- The side event, "*A Europe without torture: what is today's reality?*", with contributions by the CPT and the European Court of Human Rights regarding the legal aspects and the CESP regarding the policing aspects;
- The adoption by the Conference of the latest documents from the *Working Group on Human Rights and Religions*: [*Proposed avenues of approach and action for members and leaders of religions*](#) and [*An appeal to the citizens of Europe and International Non-Governmental Organisations \(INGOs\)*](#);
- The steadfast efforts of J.-B. Marie, representative on the CDDH, and the warnings he issued to the Human Rights Committee and also to the Conference plenaries concerning the process of reform both of the Court and of the Convention system, a process due to be completed by the end of 2015;
- The [*Decision by the Conference of INGOs to conduct a project to combat hate speech*](#) and the establishment of the *Working Group on Hate Speech* in liaison with ECRI. We are deeply saddened by the sudden death of Marc Leyenberger. However, given the spread of hate speech, the Human Rights Committee is continuing the work he started in co-operation with ECRI;
- The [*Recommendation on combating anti-Semitism in Europe*](#) adopted by the Conference;
- The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty event (17 October) organised by the Working Group on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty in Turin on the occasion of the High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter, which was attended by a delegation from the INGO Conference. This carried on

from the commitment made on 17 October 2012 by the four pillars of the Council of Europe;

- Welcoming the release of an opposition figure in Belarus but remaining concerned about cases of imprisonment in various states, the committee proposed the adoption by the Conference of a [Declaration on the protection of human rights defenders in Europe](#) prepared by the Working Group on Human Rights Defenders;
- Preventing child sex abuse and exploitation remains a priority, especially when both in the North and in the South violent organisations are subverting religions and exploiting for criminal purposes people who have no land, resources or futures;
- The Working Group on Human Rights, Co-Development and Migration is continuing its work;
- At the request of Mr Spielmann, President of the European Court of Human Rights, the Human Rights Committee is co-operating with the groups supporting the poorest and most vulnerable applicants (seminar at the Court on 21 November 2014);

Being particularly concerned about the clear threats to universal economic, social and cultural rights, the Human Rights Committee focuses its commitment and its work on the acutest issues. The report by *Médecins du Monde* at its June session was a moving account of some of the issues on which the committee focuses its efforts. It intends keeping fully abreast of topical issues and being a driving force for proposals in a number of areas:

- Monitoring closely the way in which under 35-year-olds perceive and view human rights;
- Developing clearer understanding and accordingly making proposals to the pillars and organs of the Council of Europe for the benefit of Roma and minorities in general;
- Identifying and disseminating good practices concerning hate speech and populist discourse on the Internet;
- Following the process of reform of the European Court of Human Rights closely and being a more active partner of that invaluable institution;
- Continuing the cycle of annual activities concerning the Social Charter;
- Following up the commitments made by the four pillars of the Council of Europe concerning the eradication of poverty;
- Taking practical action against hate speech of all kinds.

In carrying out political action in all these areas, the Human Rights Committee is working in line with the seven priorities for the Secretary General's second term as set out on 16 September 2014.

Being convinced that its efforts will be consistent with the priorities of the new Bureau of the Conference of INGOs, the Human Rights Committee hopes to make a distinct contribution by civil society within the Quadrilogue.