

DIRECTORATE OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS

Zoltán TAUBNER
Director of External Relations



Strasbourg, 23 April 2015

Dear Deputy Director,

Thank you for your letter of 21 April about the strengthening of co-operation between our two organisations.

I am pleased to share with you my evaluation of the state of relations and co-operation between the Council of Europe (hereinafter "CoE") and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office of the Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (hereinafter "ODIHR").

Since the member states of the CoE and the Participating States of the OSCE adopted the Declaration on Co-operation between the two organisations ten years ago¹, the relations and co-operation between the CoE and ODIHR have developed substantially.

The following examples could also be referred to confirming the continuing relevance of the 2004-2005 documents still today:

- The Director of ODIHR is the OSCE focal point for one of the four priority areas dealt with by the CoE-OSCE Co-ordination Group "promoting tolerance and non-discrimination";
- In electoral matters, ODIHR and the CoE Parliamentary Assembly are the most important partners in the observation of elections, whilst the joint opinions on electoral legislations by the CoE Venice Commission and ODIHR are respected as benchmarks in Europe;
- ODIHR and the CoE Venice Commission also have a longstanding co-operation on joint opinions in the human dimension other than elections, including joint Guidelines on Freedom of Religion or Belief, Freedom of Assembly, Political Party Regulation or Freedom of Association;

.../...

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¹ (Approved at the joint meeting between the Committee of Ministers and the Permanent Council in Strasbourg on 18 April 2005 on the basis of simultaneous decisions taken in December 2004 by the Committee of Ministers - CM/865/01122004 - and the Permanent Council - No. 637. The adoption of this Declaration was announced by a Joint Statement signed by the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers and the Chairman-in-Office of the OSCE on 17 May 2005 in Warsaw – hereinafter the "2004-2005 documents").

- ODIHR continues to act as the OSCE liaison to the Council of Europe on local governance in South Eastern Europe and as such facilitates annual meetings between OSCE Field Operations and the CoE Field Offices;
- ODIHR was granted participant status in 14 CoE Steering Committees or their subordinate bodies and observer status in four committees established under the CoE conventions;
- The CoE contributes to each item on the agenda of the annual OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meetings and actively participates in other OSCE Human Dimension events;
- Intercultural dialogue and education for democratic citizenship, human rights and mutual respect and understanding, counter-terrorism and human rights, freedom of religion or belief, strengthening the rule of law, democratic governance and combating corruption, women's and youth political participation, hate crime, intolerance and discrimination against Roma and Sinti are other fields where the CoE and ODIHR have established and continue to develop close co-operation;
- The importance of the CoE-ODHIR relations was underlined by the opening in 2011 of the CoE Office in Warsaw in charge, in particular, of relations with ODIHR.

With reference to our recent exchanges of views about possible modalities for further strengthening the interaction and co-operation between the CoE and ODIHR within the existing framework of implementation of the 2004-2005 documents, I am pleased to confirm that:

- the Director of External Relations of the CoE Secretariat and the First Deputy Director of ODIHR will act as respective contact points for co-ordination and further strengthening the interaction and co-operation between the CoE and ODIHR. The CoE Office in Warsaw will facilitate the communication between the contact points.
- the contact points will meet at least once per year, preferably on the occasion of the meeting of the Co-ordination Group (in Strasbourg) or a Human Dimension Meeting (in Warsaw).
- in addition to the continuation and further development of the existing ways of interaction, the feasibility of the following modalities will be jointly looked into:
 - enhanced political dialogue, including exchanges of views between the ODIHR Director and the CoE Committee of Ministers and addresses by the CoE Secretary General or other Senior Officials to the OSCE Human Dimension meetings;
 - co-ordination of future activities as from the early stages of the planning processes.

I am looking forward to our future co-operation.

Yours sincerely,



Zoltán Taubner