



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

SUMMER SESSION CONFERENCE OF INGOs

CONF/PLE(2016)SYN2

2 August 2016

MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs SYNOPSIS

Friday 24 June 2016

(9.30 am – 1 pm and 2.30 – 4.30 pm)

Strasbourg, Palais, Room 1

1. Opening of the meeting by Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs

Anna Rurka welcomed the representatives of the INGOs and everyone present and mentioned the key points of the plenary meeting. She explained the advantage for the Conference to move the plenary from Thursday to Friday: it enabled interaction to take place with the Permanent Delegations as that ensured that regular debates were held on key issues.

Ms Rurka then invited Jutta Gützkow to join her and announced the latter's departure to take up a new position, after fifteen years of working on behalf of civil society. She would be succeeded by Mary Ann Hennessey, who for five years had been Director of the Council of Europe Office in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Ms Gützkow then reviewed the different stages in the development of the Conference of INGOs, beginning with the presidency of Daniel Zielinski, the initiator of the change in the status of the INGOs from "consultative" to "participatory". Annelise Oeschger had given institutional shape to the Conference and introduced the Expert Council. Jean-Marie Heydt had overcome the crisis that had confronted the Conference and threatened its very existence. Anna Rurka, President for a year and a half, was doing all she could to make the Conference a political body.

2. **Agenda:** adopted unanimously.

3. **Synopsis of the meeting held on 29 January 2016:** adopted unanimously.

4. **Appointment of the meeting rapporteur:** Anne Kraus for the morning and Jean-Michel Caudron for the afternoon.

5. (10 am-1 pm) **Topical debate on the treatment of migrants, refugees and NGOs** (see separate report).

6. **Election of a Vice-Chair of the Human Rights Committee:** 2 candidates had applied and their candidatures had been approved by the Verification and Dispute Committee: Simon Matthijssen (*European Ombudsman Institute, EOI, member of the Expert Council on NGO Law*) and Aycke O. A. Smook (*Right to Die Europe*). They each had two minutes to introduce themselves. Out of 74 eligible voters, 69 voted, including one invalid vote. 56 (81.2%) voted for Simon Matthijssen and 12 (17.4%) for Aycke O. A. Smook. Simon Matthijssen was duly elected Vice-Chair of the Human Rights Committee.

7. **Adoption of the revised Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs:** After a lively debate on procedure for drafting changes to the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs, voting was held on the amendments submitted to the INGOs before the plenary meeting. Out of 77 eligible voters, 73 votes and one invalid vote were cast. The results of the vote by amendment are as follows:

- amendment 1: 61 in favour, 8 against, 3 abstentions,
- amendment 2: 46 in favour, 25 against, 1 abstention,
- amendment 3: 35 in favour, 34 against, 3 abstentions,
- amendment 4: 45 in favour, 26 against, 1 abstention,

- amendment 5: 18 in favour, 49 against, 5 abstentions,
- amendment 6: 47 in favour, 20 against, 5 abstentions,
- amendment 7: 64 in favour, 7 against, 1 abstention,
- amendment 9: 31 in favour, 40 against, 1 abstention.

The provisions of the Rules of Procedure, as amended, came into effect immediately after the vote but those relating to elections will not be implemented until the due dates provided for in the Rules of Procedure.

8. Feedback from the thematic committees: The chairs of the three thematic committees each described their respective work (*see the minutes of their meetings*).

9. Adoption of texts adopted by the thematic committees:

- Adoption (*with one vote against*) of a statement by Thierry Mathieu, co-ordinator of the Working Group on Health Risks and Economy, further to the side-event "Ageing and Health: a challenge to public health and social cohesion".
- Adoption (*with three votes against*) of a Human Rights Committee recommendation on the human rights defenders in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova as follow-up to the fact-finding visit to Moldova last autumn by the President and a Conference delegation (CONF/PLE(2016)REC1).

10. Follow-up to the work on the communication strategy of the Conference of INGOs:

Didier Schretter asked all delegates to comply with the Communication Charter of the Conference of INGOs and all of its contents. He also thanked the Council of Europe's Media Division for covering and reporting on the work carried out by the Conference of INGOs over several months.

11. Surrogacy Motherhood – call for contributions to a common position of the Conference of INGOs:

A call for contributions to a recommendation that the Conference of INGOs could be required to adopt in the near future on the subject of surrogate motherhood will be sent to the Conference INGOs with a request for replies by 31 August 2016. The INGOs will receive an explanatory memorandum together with a proposed text. This text will not be put to the vote but will provide a basis for discussion within the Conference of INGOs. In response to the contributions received, the three drafters delegated by the Standing Committee (*Michel Aguilar, Thierry Matthieu and Anne Nègre*) will draw up a draft recommendation. The plenary assembly instructed the Standing Committee to adopt a preliminary draft of this recommendation at its meeting on 10 October in the light of the feedback from the consultation of the INGOs. The final vote would take place at the plenary meeting of the Conference in January 2017.

12. As follow-up to the call for action of the Conference of INGOs of 29 January 2016 to support the Turin Process of the European Social Charter, representatives of NGOs based in Strasbourg and Brussels met in Brussels on 16 and 17 February at the headquarters of Caritas Europa. Subsequent to that meeting, the INGOs set up a co-ordinating committee to support the action that the Conference would like to take through its member INGOs in the Council of Europe member states. INGOs wishing to undertake to disseminate information on the Social Charter, prepare themselves for writing collective complaints or reflect together on how to strengthen social rights through the Turin Process were asked to contact the representatives of Caritas Europa, Justice and Peace Europe, the International Movement ATD Fourth World (ATD), the European Social Action Network (ESAN) and Marie José Schmitt, the Conference's representative for the Social Charter. Furthermore, an explanatory booklet on the European Social Charter and the Charter of Fundamental Rights with special reference to the European Convention on Human Rights had been updated by Marie José Schmitt and was available to INGOs.

13 Information was provided on future events up to the next session of the Conference of INGOs: World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty (17 October), World Forum for Democracy, visits to member states (*Romania, Hungary and Germany*).

14. Presentation of the next theme for the plenary meeting of the Conference of INGOs:

The theme of the 2017 sessions would be freedom of association and/or freedom of private life.

15. Date of the next meeting: Friday 27 January 2017, at the end of the Winter Session of the Conference of INGOs.