



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

:

SUMMER SESSION

**Committee on Democracy, Social cohesion
and Global Challenges
CONF/DEM(2018)SYN1**

DRAFT SYNOPSIS OF THE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY 24 JANUARY 2018

- 1. Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda**
- 2. Adoption of the synopsis of the meeting of 28 June 2017 [[CONF/DEM\(2017\)SYN2](#)]**
- 3. Adoption of the 2017 Activity report**
- 4. Civil Society participation in political decision-making**

Introduction by Alexandra Luminita Petrescu (FITRAM), Vice-chair of the committee, Former Secretary of State at the Ministry for Public Consultation and Civil Dialogue in Romania, President of Foundation for Pluralism.

Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017

Intervention of Jutta Gützkow, Head of the Division on Good Governance

Intervention of Anne-Marie Chavanon, former co-chair of the Working Group in charge of the text writing.

Ms Petrescu spoke about the importance of citizen's participation in political decision making based on the strategy and the results of the Romanian Ministry for Public Consultation and Civil Dialogue. Giving specific examples of actions performed by the 2017 Romanian Government, she emphasized the role of transparency in delivering information to the citizens, as well as the importance of public consultation and dialogue between government and citizens for a healthy democratic society.

Intervention of Jutta Gützkow, Head of the Division on Good Governance

Ms. Gützkow presented the importance of the Guidelines to strengthen and facilitate the access of citizens, NGOs and civil society in the process of political decision making. She mentioned that the document was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 27 September 2017 at the 1295th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies. The guidelines define the conditions and the main principles for dialogue, public consultation and cooperation between civil society and local and national governments. She emphasized that trust, respect and specifically, respect for the human rights are essential conditions for effective civil participation. The CDDG also produced a Tool kit which provides information for local government representatives and

citizens to design and implement strategies to foster citizens' participation in the political decision process. Ms Gützkow recommended that public participation in the decision making should be included in the Road Maps presented by each of the three Committees of the Conference of INGOs.

Intervention of Anne-Marie Chavanon, former co-chair of the Working Group in charge of the text writing

Ms. Chavanon recommended the necessity of a follow up to ensure that civil participation in the decision making process will be enlarged. She mentioned that even if there is no monitoring, there is a strong commitment to implement the guidelines

Discussion

Participants expressed their concern that many citizens do not know the work of the Conference of INGOs, or the Council of Europe. They also suggested to make a research to find out laws and public policies inspired by the work of civil society organizations. The youth participation in the decision making process is not very visible. Ms Gützkow recommended participants to give examples of how their NGOs participation in the decision making process attracts the attention of officials. The youth participation is treated at general level in the Guidelines, only the Recommendation on citizen participation in the political decision process at local level has specific aspects concerning youth.

5. Recent work with other Council of Europe bodies

5.1. The Oviedo Convention – Laurence Lwoff, Executive Secretary to the Bioethics Committee of the Council of Europe (DH-BIO)

5.2. European Landscape Convention Workshops – Maguelonne Dejeant-Pons, Head of Division, Executive Secretary of the European Landscape Convention

Maguelonne Dejeant-Pons gave an overview of the recent activities concerning the European Landscape Convention and the recent landscape awards.

5.3. Good Governance Principles and the World Forum for Democracy– Gerhard Ermischer, Vice-chair of the Committee

The Committee participated in the World Forum of Democracy in the Council of Europe co-organizing an interactive group testing new methods of participatory democracy, especially to be used in local and regional governance. The method allows the dialogue with small but also with very big groups, structuring the results and empowering people to participate, even if they do not feel to be experts or know the technical language often used in formal participatory processes. Nevertheless it can be implemented in formal processes of planning as well as in cases of conflict management.

5.4. Collaboration with committees of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe by Thierry Mathieu, Chair of the committee

5.5. Climate Change: from Bonn to Katowice by Edith WENGER, Delegate from the European Environment Bureau

Edith Wenger reported on the developments since the last Climate Conference in Bonn and the roadmap towards the COP 28 in Katowice in December 2018. She will give an update on the current events in the June meeting of the Committee.

6. Other Business

7. Working programme for 2018

7.1. Priorities of the Council of Europe bodies

(European Committee on good governance, Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape, Committee of Bioethics, Parliamentary Assembly, Local and Regional Authorities)

The Council of Europe is undergoing a trying period, with democracy, rule of law and human rights challenged in many states even inside Europe and financial problems, which make it difficult to stay pro-active. It is important for the committee to strengthen the co-operation with the appropriate steering committees, the PACE and the Congress of the Regions. But it is also essential that members be pro-active in advocating our own priorities inside the house but especially with the national parliaments and governments. We need to use our relations to make decision makers at home aware of the problems and to back up the wider range of priorities inside the Council of Europe and not just concentrate on fundamental human rights and the Court of Human Rights, putting aside all other issues.

7.2. Priorities of the Conference of INGOs

2018-2020 Roadmap

The draft road map was presented.

7.3. Priorities of the Committee

The draft road map was presented, especially the role of the Working Groups and Transversal Working Groups was discussed.

7.4. Related priorities of NGOs

Exchange of views

7.5. Setting of working groups

This was the most important part of the January meeting. The meeting split into three groups to discuss the working groups, their goals, mission and potential outcome in separate groups. This had to be done without translation, but by and large the problems were overcome and it was a lively debate. The working groups were established and a draft agenda was set for their future progress.

WG 1: Participation in Democratic Decision making. The working group will have two major goals: Revision of the Recommendation on the Supervision of Local Authorities Action GT-CACL(2018)1E, in close co-operation with the appropriate WG of the CDDG and Monitoring of the Guidelines for Good Practice in Democratic Decision Making Processes in three selected countries with grass root NGOs in the field in close communication with the CDDG and the Congress of the Regions. Participants will be informed and be able to participate between meetings through email and a web platform shall be set up with Loomio.

WG 2: "Preventing corruption by engaging the civil society" has three major goals: to educate citizens in the prevention of corruption, to contribute to the reduction of corruption at national and international level and to identify tools to recognize proofs of corruption. Expected results identified by participants are: tools for youth oriented education campaigns, corruption awareness campaigns organized on university campuses, a good practices guide to lower corruption.