



## Standing Committee

CONF/SC(2019)SYN 2

### MEETING OF THE STANDING COMMITTEE

#### Synopsis

Monday 8 April 2019

Present: Anna Rurka, Anne Kraus, Anne Nègre, Christoph Spreng, Rares Craiut, Richard Pirolt, Katarzyna Sokolowska, Claude Vivier Le Got, Simon Matthijssen, Miguel Cabral de Pinho, Iamvi Totsi, Gerhard Ermischer, Luminita Petrescu, Salomon Levy, Cyril Ritchie, Annelise Oeschger

Secretariat: Mary Ann Hennessey, Jane Crozier

Apologised for absence: Karl Donert, Robert Bergougnan, Thierry Mathieu

1. **Opening of the meeting by Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs**
2. **Nomination of the Rapporteur of the meeting:** Rares Craiut.
3. **Agenda for adoption:** proposal to replace item 16 (preparation of the Autumn Session) by a discussion on the new Report of the Secretary General. Agenda adopted with the proposed modification.
4. **Report of the meeting of 21 January ('7) – for adoption**

Simon Matthijssen recalled that on item 8 of the agenda, there was a decision to propose a transversal training for all 3 committees on monitoring during the autumn session. The Human Rights Committee would take the lead for the organisation of the training, with a proposal to invite "Videre et Credere". The contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the Council of Europe's monitoring activities became more important in the light of the new report of the Secretary General.

Miguel Cabral de Pinho recalled the correct spelling of his name.

The report was adopted with the modifications.

5. **Resignation of Julianne Lagadec, Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee**

The Standing Committee thanked Julianne Lagadec for her work and took note of her letter of resignation. Claude Vivier Le Got and Karl Donert proposed that the vacancy be filled for the rest of the mandate by the candidate who had obtained the most votes among the unsuccessful candidates in the previous election of the Vice-chairs of the Education and Culture Committee. This provision was not covered by the Rules of Procedure and could therefore not be taken applied.

Decision for adoption: Not to hold anticipated elections for the end of the mandate of the Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee.

For: 9

Against: 1

Abstention: 3

## 6. Resolutions and Recommendations for adoption during the session

Anne Nègre and Bettina Hahne proposed to draft a resolution on women's rights, which would include the call for liberation of the Iranian Lawyer Nasrin Sotoudeh.

The proposal was refused because Iran is not a member State of the Council of Europe and does not fall within its remit and influence. The Conference of INGOs cannot engage the Council of Europe in such actions that exceed the Council of Europe's mandate. However, INGOs could take individual action.

There was a proposal to write a short declaration following the round table on the Istanbul Convention which would take place on Thursday.

The Recommendation on student poverty and the Recommendation on housing were written in two different ways. Simon Matthijssen suggested for the future using a template to ensure the same format for such documents.

The Standing Committee proposed some changes to the recommendations:

In the recommendation on Poverty:

- on page 2, in the first paragraph, "17 October 2012" should be included.
- there were a couple of points that seemed a bit off topic: the ability of students who protest; the point on prostitution appeared only in the recommendation section, without a prior introduction.

In the recommendation on Housing, there should be:

- a realistic timeline, which is more feasible than "take all necessary measures".
- an emphasis that housing can break the vicious circle of poverty.
- a replacement of "the majority of NGOs with participatory status" with "the Conference".

Anna Rurka recalled that each recommendation or resolution linked to the activities of the Committees needed to be adopted by the Committee during its meeting, before proposing it for adoption to the Conference of INGOs during the plenary meeting.

## 7. Translation of working documents (Annelise Oeschger)

It was decided that:

- each entity and person in charge of an activity would translate its working documents before transmission to the Secretariat. There were tools available which facilitated this task: DeepL translator or Google translator. Only documents for adoption by the Standing Committee or Conference would be translated by the Council of Europe.
- All entities and persons translating documents should ensure that these documents are proof read and edited.

- Sexist formulation should be avoided.

**8. Results of the survey on the participation of NGOs in the Council of Europe - for discussion ('20)**

Anna Rurka thanked everyone for their contribution.

A questionnaire had been sent to all the INGOs with participatory status. One of the most obvious things noted was the need to facilitate the participation of NGOs with participatory status in the other bodies of the Council of Europe.

There was no, or insufficient, interaction between INGOs and monitoring bodies. There was a need for some coordination and some exchange. This is where we should be concentrating our efforts.

To increase interaction, we should envisage organising a workshop or an information session.

Decision: a capacity building training focusing on the contributions by INGOs and their impact through interaction with the CoE bodies would be organised during the Autumn Session.

Rares Craiut and Anne Kraus would take a lead on this.

**9. Conclusions of the Warsaw Conference on the role and position of NGOs in the Council of Europe (22 March 2019) – for discussion and potential decisions**

Recalling the fact that last Council of Europe discussion on this issue took place in 2015 but without any decision, the Warsaw Conference constituted a momentum.

The Ambassadors of Poland and Finland were invited to present the conclusions during the plenary meeting of the Conference. The Committee of Ministers plan to adopt a specific decision during its Session in Helsinki in May 2019.

**10. Call for youth delegates: process and results of the selection, guidance to the youth candidates during the year (Rares Craiut, Anne Kraus)**

A call had been launched, and a selection process concluded. There had been good collaboration with the Advisory Council on Youth. Six delegates were chosen to participate to the 2019 Sessions and who would give their observations and contribute to the Conference's work. The aim was to encourage INGO members to send more young people to the sessions of the Conference.

In order to encourage the participation of young people in the work of the Conference – a question which was considered a priority in the last reform of the CoE – a new source of funding would need to be found. We should also look at means that would render such a participation obligatory.

**11. Research project 'Social Rights in Action' – Horizon 2020 (Annelise Oeschger, Anna Rurka)**

INGO-Service represented the Conference of INGOs in the submitted research proposal. If accepted, the project, which sets out an important agenda for social rights for the next 2 years, would start around October/November. The number of universities that were involved and the quality of the proposal was such that even if the proposal was not accepted, it was a huge step forward.

**12. Project to hold a conference on Social Rights (October, November 2019) – for information**

The feasibility of this project was still being studied. Peter Verhaeghe had contacted ECOSOC in Brussels which had proposed meeting room facilities, interpretation and lunch. He had also been in contact with the Ministry of Social Affairs of Finland. France expressed its willingness to be a speaker but underlined that it had not included the Conference in the programme of its Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers as it already included a workshop on social rights which would be organised in September during the CDDH-SOC meeting. The Ministry for Foreign Affairs did not wish to have two events on social rights during the French Chairmanship. Anna Rurka and Jean-Bernard Marie had held several discussions with the French representatives. The Conference of INGOs would be invited to contribute to the workshop in September, specifically with regard to the collective complaint procedures.

**13. Mid-term assessment of the Action Plan of the Conference of INGO (Katarzyna Sokolowska, Robert Bergougnan)**

It was recalled that each entity was obliged to implement the Action Plan. The Bureau proposed a tool to do a continuous assessment throughout the mandate which would replace the system of reporting and would allow periodic evaluation of our work.

The persons in charge of the committees and of the integrated approaches should send in their reports on time. Should someone be faced with the impossibility of doing this, an alternative internal solution must be found and the Bureau must be informed and consulted. It was to be recalled that the quality of documents that involve the entire Conference stems from the effectiveness and efficiency of the work provided by each entity and person in charge of an activity.

**14. Drafting group on the updating of the Code of good practice for civil participation in the decision-making process (Gerhard Ermischer, Cyril Ritchie)**

The drafting group was composed of representatives of the Standing Committee (Gerhard Ermischer, Cyril Ritchie, Katarzyna Sokolowska) and representatives of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and was coordinated by Gerhard Ermischer. Once the code was updated it would be approved by both bodies at their respective sessions in October.

The code looked nice on paper but it needed to be accompanied by a set of tools for its implementation which would give examples of both good and bad practices and would include regional examples. As the Code would be adopted by both bodies in the autumn, the text needed to be ready before the summer break. The final result of this process would not only be from the point of view of standard setting but also in terms of cooperation.

Cyril Ritchie thanked Gerhard for mastering the process and Jane Crozier for producing each of the consecutive new versions.

**15. Drafting group in charge of proposals regarding the Rules of Procedure or other statutory provisions of the Conference of INGOs (Christoph Spreng, Gerhard Ermischer, Miguel Cabral, Jeremy McBride, Salomon Levy)**

The Standing Committee received a preliminary report from the drafting group which proposed transforming the structure of the Conference of INGOs and moving from five to three levels. The work was an open process. The rules of procedure in which the new structure would be proposed should be produced this year.

**16. 2019 Report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe “[Ready for Future Challenges – Reinforcing the Council of Europe](#)”**

The Standing Committee members read the new Secretary General report with interest. They remarked that the Conference of INGOs was not named as a source for monitoring. However, its body that flags trends on NGO law – the Expert council – was mentioned.

Anna Rurka proposed that the Standing Committee prepare a short resolution in response to report, which would be submitted for adoption at the plenary meeting of the Conference.

**17. Information item: artificial intelligence and gender bias (Anne Nègre)**

Item not taken

**18. Any other business ('3)**

**19. Date of the next meeting**

The Standing Committee would be informed during the course of the week whether or not budgetary resources were sufficient to hold a meeting in June in Strasbourg.