

Standing Committee
CONF/SC(2022)SYN1

Standing Committee meeting
Report
20 January 2022
14.00 – 17.00
Online meeting

- 1 Opening of the meeting by Gerhard Ermischer, Chair of the SC
 - Opening at 14:11.
 - Attending: Gerhard E., Mary Ann H., Lusine S, Christoph S., Piotr S., Simon M.
 - Anu Juvonen¹, Anna S. and Ruth A. joined the meeting later.
 - Mary Ann H. and Piotr S. left the meeting a before it finished.
 - We decided to hold the meeting despite the low number of participants, as very few people could come on alternative dates.
- 2 Appointment of the rapporteur of the meeting

Simon, volunteered to make the report of the meeting, but – because this is a kind of ‘informative and non-decision-making meeting’, more of a ‘points for attention and decision list’.
- 3 Draft agenda - for adoption
 - Adopted
- 4 Update on recent developments and upcoming events:
 - a. Activities in Committees
 - **Artificial intelligence:** very good online webinar (130 participants), with cooperation from UNESCO, EU, and the CoE. Unfortunately, under the influence of various countries, the texts to be adopted were seriously watered down at the last minute because anything that could be interpreted as detrimental to the freedom of action of the military complex was removed from the texts.
 - This committee appears to be very good at networking and raising awareness.
 - Francesca Fanucci and Didier Schretter are very solution-oriented.

¹ Anu Juvonen is a secondment of the Finnish government to the CoE working in our department. She helps e.g. on the report on the situation of NGOs in Europe, the reports of the expert council or the handbook for NGOs to engage with the CoE. With Jane retired she has also taken over her part for BePart and of course helps organising the country visit to Finland.

- Christoph S. mentions the Lisbon Convention and the fact that the Estonian ambassador has entered into discussion with him. Gerhard asked the German government not to abandon its HR-oriented approach and is in contact with Die Grünen.
- **Inter religious and interconfessional:** had a swift start and is now preparing a webinar.
- **Migration:** Very busy, close ties with the anti-Semitism and PACE rapporteurs, very visible in the CoE.
- **Environment & Health:** made a statement for the UN SDI
- **Environment & Heritage:** Has written to the Austrian and German government urging them to join the landscape convention
- **Child rights:** hibernating after a swinging start?
- **Social rights:** very visible and active in the field of the social convention

b. World Forum of Democracy

- This is a SC item. It would be helpful if we could produce a concept note that could serve as sort of suggestion for the upcoming theme.
 - We should not only be discussing European problems, but world problems in which the Council of Europe is involved too.
 - Remember that this is the 10th anniversary and that right now our house of “Democracy” is on fire.
 - Our analyses is, that democracy has probably come under attack because of the centrifugal forces (driving groups apart) and centripetal forces (driving bubbles to their own center) that tear societies apart because there is a growing inequality (= distance between groups) within societies. However, some co-organisers are not very keen on inviting Mr Piketty to explain the economic growth of inequality, so this seems to be a no-go.
 - At the moment, themes such as: ‘*The art of democracy and the craft of citizenship*’, or ‘*Business and democracy*’² are on the table.
 - **Simon** suggests that, if the cause of the problem cannot be discussed, then we should start with the solution scan, for example by contacting **Dr. ANJA MIHR**, who has specialised in how the wounds in torn states (South Africa, former Yugoslavia) can be repaired or are not repaired.
- ⇒ Mary Ann is preparing this item.

c. World NGO-Day

- 28 February.
 - Our input will be greatly appreciated.
 - The theme we have chosen is the closure / dissolution of important old INGOs such as Memorial in Russia and the Helsinki Committee in Belarus. We expressly do not want to mention other dissolutions, because too many cases (and we know there are many) will water things down. We also want to bring up these two INGOs at other times (e.g. during our General Assemblée), because we believe that there is power in repetition.
 - **Anna S.** gave a thorough analysis of the Memorial case.
- ⇒ Gerhard.

² Democracies with business-like extensions like: incorporated (inc). limited (ltd) or cooperative (coop)

d. Country Visits 2022

- **Finland:** everything is in place, government has reacted; planning for the end of March.
- **Bosnia and Herzegovina:** a message has been sent to the government; we are waiting for their reply; planning for early summer.
- **Portugal:** all is quiet on the south-western front; planning for autumn 2022.

e. Farwell for Jane

- 24/25 February
- ⇒ Anne Kraus.

f. Photo-badges for SC-Members and generally

The old photo badges have been deactivated and can only be nominated for reactivation by Lusine after approval by Gerhard.

We will circulate a list of people who used to have photo badges, it is up to the fellow SC members to propose who will be eligible for a photo badge again.

⇒ **ALL:** Please apply in time!

5 Preparation for the upcoming GA:

We expect a hybrid meeting, how many people can attend is still unclear. There seems to be an overflowing agenda

- Possible Intervention by Italian Minister of Labour and Social Affairs (contact through FAFCE)
Next week more info.
 - Event planned by Migration Committee
 - Role of Committees in the next GA
 - The agreement is, that all committees will give a report on what has been achieved so far and what the upcoming activities are. We will prepare this later (see also agenda item 8) with the chairpersons of the various committees and the related members of the standing committee. It is important to announce this well and not to overwhelm the committee with it.
 - Other events
 - Once again, we would like to draw attention to the dissolution of the NGOs Memorial in Russia and the Helsinki Committee in Belarus. Shall we invite the various ambassadors here? The question is how best to bring this thorny issue into the limelight.
 - Necessary Items
- ⇒ To be continued: **ALL (Gerhard)**

6 Development of Action Plan / Mission Statement

The Secretary-General asks us to make a **mission statement**. Gerhard explains that this could be a prelude to our future new role within the Council of Europe. He wants us to pay a lot of attention to this. Simon notes that the more you lay down, the less room for maneuver you have, and he does not like that.

Anna S. suggestion is accepted: we present the already existing mission statement to Mary Ann (who has left the meeting) and ask her what needs to be expanded. We can then fill in any missing sections later.

⇒ **Gerhard and Anna S.**

Action Plan: the next step is to consult with the chairpersons of the various committees. Most committees are on the right track, calendars look reasonably full.

Anna S. has prepared a questionnaire. She hopes that by filling in her questionnaire we will gain insight into the goals, results and other data relevant to measuring progress. We should use the data obtained in this way in our meeting on 20 or 21 February.

The questionnaire must be translated and sent asap to the respective chairs.

⇒ Anna S. & Gerhard

7 How to proceed with the Communication Strategy

Gerhard has apparently annoyed the Serbs with a tweet, even though this was his personal account, because the tweet was retweeted on the official account of the Ingo Conference and has been very badly received by the Serbs.

The agreement is now that three people have access to the official Twitter account of the conference: **Ruth A, Beate Z. and Rares C.** They are also in a Signal group. Gerhard can indicate here that there are private tweets from him that should not be retweeted on the official Ingo account.

⇒ **Ruth A, Beate Z. and Rares C.**

8 When to meet with the chairs of our Committees

20 or 21 February,

⇒ Gerhard will send a doodle.

9 Next dates for SC-Meetings

- 1st Thursday of the month, 15:00-17:30

10 Any other business

- **Christoph** : The Dialogue Toolkit, from polarization to participation (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/dialogue>) is life again.
- **Anu J.** will send her text about the BePart initiative
- **Anna S.** asks attention for her e-mail about CURE

Closing: 16:30