

Standing Committee
CONF/SC(2022)SYN6

Standing Committee meeting
Report
12 May 2022
15.00 – 17.00
Online meeting

1. Opening of the meeting by Gerhard Ermischer, Chair of the SC
At 15:11, the chairman opened the meeting.
2. Appointment of the rapporteur of the meeting
Simon Mathijsen made himself available as rapporteur, noting that very few elected members of the existing committee were present (sometimes without notice) and that too often the task of rapporteur fell on the same shoulders. He suggested that this be better organised in future.
3. Draft agenda - for adoption
The rapporteur proposed that the minutes of the previous sitting be added to the agenda.
4. Upcoming Ministerial Conference / Cure Campaign Side Event
The upcoming Ministerial Conference will be held next week in Turin. There will be a side event on the CURE Campaign.
It is also planned to organise a 4th summit of the Council of Europe. Our contribution in that case will be about meaningful civil participation. We expect this summit to take place within one or two years. We will have to find out what the role of our conference will be, knowing that a high-level reflection group has been set up to deal with the topic of meaningful civic participation.
Incidentally, it is to be expected that the consequences of Russia's exclusion from the Council of Europe will probably demand all the attention at the forthcoming ministerial conference. The approach will be to ensure that we are involved in the organisation of the forthcoming summit and that we can participate in the high-level Reflection Group on meaningful civic participation.
The CURE campaign starts on 19 May, the day before the ministerial conference. It is important that we coordinate well here and inform the prime minister about our people in time.
5. Information on Visits to Ambassadors of Ireland and Austria
The Chairman reported that there is a very good relationship with the Irish Ambassador, that he has expressed his wish to support us and that he is aware of our wish to continue working with NGOs from Belarus and the Russian Federation.

Mary-Ann notes that this last point will lead to discussion within the Council of Europe and advises that our standing committee will appoint two people who have good connections with NGOs in Belarus in the Russian Federation and who can be a first point of contact in this discussion with other parts of the Council of Europe, of course in coordination with Mary-Ann herself. We will have to argue that we will continue to support the pro-Democracy Forces in these countries.

The chairman went on to say that he had a very good first meeting with the Austrian ambassador, whose previous place of work was Belarus. She is still actively involved in what is going on in Belarus and the Russian Federation. On the potential summit a northern club now seems to be emerging in which Ireland and Iceland (forthcoming President of the Council of Europe) will play an active role.

6. Proposal from Finland for dialogue with CS in Russia/Belarus (Anu)

There is a proposal to spend € 50,000 for ongoing dialogue with civil society in the Russian Federation and Belarus. It is important to create a safe space for the development of ideas. We are still looking for suitable facilitators and participants. There is relatively little money for translating the core documents and Anna and Beate are asked to help with the selection of those important documents.

7. Situation in Turkey, Expert Council Study and current requests

The situation in Turkey continues to be of concern and should certainly not be forgotten during the Russian-Ukrainian war. The Expert Council has asked for action to be taken. Reports from an architects' NGO point in the same direction. The new INGO Young Bar Association has announced that it will voluntarily provide assistance to, for example, architects who are in dire straits.

Particularly problematic is the fact that there is no internationally recognised definition of terrorism, opening a door to some governments to label whatever they want as terrorism. This paves the way for adapting prosecution methods and punishments accordingly. It is proposed to ask the affiliated INGOs with police background to discuss this. The Rapporteur notes that in a previous post, he became aware of the problem of money laundering for terrorist organisations, precisely under the influence of police and security officials, had become so strictly defined that normal financial support for international NGOs had become virtually impossible. To the extent that MONEYVAL (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/moneyval>) would like input on this aspect from our conference, he offers to make a contribution.

8. Upcoming dialogues of CRs of the CM with Civil Society

3 June CR-Dem (hearing) deliberative democracy (which is the next phase after representative democracy, participative democracy). It is hoped to develop some guidelines and benchmarks. Rapporteur notes that during a Facts finding mission in Ireland he was inspired by the citizens council as an example of deliberative democracy. He remembered from the general meeting of our conference last April that the divide in society (reason for the emergence of the yellow vests, Extinction Rebellion and other groups that no longer feel represented) is now one of the most important themes and concerns. The above-mentioned two pieces of information form the intersection of two developments that must force us to further examine our democratic system.

The President said that he was in close contact with Andorra (initially in response to a request for information on participatory democracy), which was planning to take forward the initiative to reflect on new developments in democracy.

Anna Rurka recalls debate from 2020 where she was confronted with the fear that sites might one day make our international NGOs and perhaps even our conference obsolete. From this perspective, Christophe recalls what was discussed at the last World Forum for Democracy

Ruth draws attention to the quiet revolution taking place in the United Kingdom, where more and more human rights are gradually being stripped of their protective effect. An example is the so-called SLAPP regulation (Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation).

9. North-South Prize of the CoE
Christophe: memorial?
Anna Rurka: SOS -Mediterranean / sea-watch?
Anna Sevortian: Luftbrücke and a Russian NGO helping Ukrainian refugees
Simon: Women on waves
10. EIN Conference on Court Rulings ECHR, representation of CINGO Conference
Concerns the systematic non-implementation of court rulings. Conference will take place on 22 and 23 June. Simon will represent the conference.
11. Next GA / fixing the dates in light of problems with rooms
A proposal will be made, taking into account which rooms are available to us at that time. Planning for future years will also be attempted. The week from 4 to 7 October seems to be the best choice for the next General Assembly.
12. OING Service, decisions on re-imbursement for SC Members
It was decided that all travel expenses will be reimbursed and that once a year an allowance of maximum €110 per night will be given for accommodation costs to members of the standing committee.
13. Next dates for SC Meetings
The Presidium will decide whether the next meeting will take place on the 2nd or 9th of June, in any case in the morning.
14. Any other business
A fact-finding mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina will take place from 4 to 8 September. There will be travel throughout the country. Mary Anne, Anu, Gerhard and a member of the Expert Committee will be present, possibly someone else who seems suitable and desirable.

Closing of the meeting at 16:58