

Standing Committee
CONF/SC(2024)SYN3

Standing Committee meeting
Report
21.05.2024-22.05.2024
14:00-18:00 09:30-12:30
Hybrid meeting
Mundo-Trone, 2nd floor, room Nelson Mandela
Brussels, 10 Rue de l'Industrie
(please note the changed access code for online participation)

In attendance: Simon Matthijssen; Gerhard Ermischer; Piotr Sadowski; Ciaran King; Geneviève Laloy; Ece Ciftci.
Online: Ruth Allen; Goran Miletic; Christophe Speckbacher.

1. Opening of the meeting by Gerhard Ermischer, Chair of the SC
2. Rapporteurs will now act according to the actual list
3. Draft agenda – agreed and Adopted
- 4. Short report on first session of CD-Dem and Ministerial Conference**

Gerhard's update on the session of CD-Dem and Ministerial Conference: The Composition is new; the CD-Dem does not yet have a board so the meeting was organized directly by the secretariat. Elections for committee chairs will take place in next CD-Dem meeting in October.

In the past, few INGO orgs have been represented. A new policy has been announced and a call will go out to civil society organisations to ask for observer status to CD-Dem meetings. Nevertheless, Gerhard was given time at this meeting to present the CINGO representatives.

Two working groups were established: One on parameters to facilitate the application and implementation of the Reykjavik Principles and other relevant Council of Europe standards to promote, protect and strengthen democracy throughout the member States; and one on civil society participation.

Jeremy McBride will prepare a text to be sent to the CD-Dem for the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers in response to these working groups.

The CD-Dem wants CINGO participation in the working groups, but we need to bear in mind that they do not have budget for many civil society observers. Standing committee members may exceptionally be able to attend through OING service budget, but others will need to pay on their own.

The new framework on artificial intelligence was officially opened, but there is currently no monitoring mechanism. The Secretariat will prepare an outline on a draft study on advances and risks of the use of artificial intelligence in public debate and democratic processes.

Action: We need to appoint at least 2 representatives for the new working groups that were established. In the open online format, the Standing Committee should participate as much as possible to better understand how these working groups will operate.

Update on the Ministerial Conference:

Many country representatives wanted Kosovo's accession to CoE to be announced at the latest Ministerial conference but this did not happen. Germany and Austria are trying to speed up the announcement of Kosovo's accession (now likely during Summer 2024).

The next step is to consider the new CoE Presidency of Lithuania. The new Lithuania ambassador had a long meeting with Gerhard before the ministerial conference. It is clear from this meeting that the absolute priority of the Presidency is on the conflict in Ukraine and the work of civil society of Belarus. There is no focus on civil society in Russia. There are important themes like environment etc that cannot be left without progress for 6-12 months, so it is crucial that civil society/CINGO demand that certain issues are not forgotten.

5. Upcoming high level events:

- **CDDH and Civil Society Conference in Helsinki**

Meeting in June 25-28th. Standing Committee needs representation in this meeting. Ciaran and Piotr unable to attend in person. Others are interested in attending but we need to confirm the budget that is available and the number of SC members that can attend.

It is important that CDDH sub committees have their views shared with the whole network.

- **Social Charta in Vilnius**

Meeting in July: Gerhard and Piotr will be present and speaking at this event.

- **Side Events UN New York and Geneva**

This event will take place online. Final decisions on the format of the side events will be made by end of May. We should liaise with Amy Jacobson to ensure CINGO can make effective contributions at these events.

6. Co-operation with FRA and other related bodies

Piotr and Gerhard were in attendance in the meeting with FRA.

CINGO has had a long-standing relationship and engagement with FRA but it has undergone changes. CINGO no longer has an official role within FRA. However, FRA is interested in having CINGO members participate at some events. And we agree that we should encourage FRA to participate in our CINGO General Assembly.

Piotr: The new FRA director is aware that there is a need for regular dialogue with CINGO as part of her role. There will be a monthly update call with the Brussels community online and we should share this with our networks and all other brussels NGOs. Piotr to share the link when available.

Gerhard: action point is to take steps to strengthen and intensifying our cooperation with FRA. Perhaps the SC should appoint a liaison to our activities with FRA?

Other related bodies:

Gerhard: The drafting group on environment and human rights have made a positive impression.

Ece: Comment on UN engagement (example of ECOSOC): we should try and engage with UN committees and align our General Assemblies with any UN side events. Ece and Simon to liaise.

7. Our representation in various bodies of the CoE – representatives and methods to appoint representatives

Ciaran: A suggestion was made in our previous meeting to appoint a lead rep/liaison and a deputy rep. This means we should ideally have two standing committee members appointed to liaise with each group. A summary of the roles assigned is below:

- i. Education (Iordanis); To appoint one more person
- ii. Child rights (Ruth and Ece and Ciaran);
- iii. Interreligious dialogue (Gerhard and Simon);
- iv. Migration (Ciaran and Geneviève);
- v. Artificial intelligence (Geneviève and Iordanis);
- vi. Health crisis and Environment (Piotr and Simon);
- vii. Gender equality (Ruth and Anna);
- viii. Sport & HR (Ece and Simon)

CDDH:

Simon wrote to those who wish to be in the CDDH but we could not find a time to meet before our Brussels meeting.

Gerhard: we need to identify reps for each of the sub committees of the CDDH. It deals with such a diverse set of issues. We need to find people with thematic expertise. We need to form a small team for the CDDH.

Ciaran appointed suppléant to CDDH. **Olga** now working on the 47+1 (entry of EU). **Simon** and other CDDH members to meet separately to follow up on activities.

Christophe Speckbacher: Standing Committee to share an agreed list of names of CINGO rapporteurs to intergovernmental committees. We can then post this information on the CINGO website.

Gerhard: we need to draft a general letter with details about vacant Committee positions that we need to fill. We need to be clear with members what the Committees do and what is expected and needed from them. This makes it more likely they will commit to the tasks that need to be carried out for the Committee. CDDH for example, we need to know meeting agendas in advance so we can steer the agenda rather than follow the activities from afar.

- Special relation with Reykjavik Process.
- **Davos Forum** and Landscape Convention – Anna Sevortian is liaison for the landscape convention. Luc-Emil will continue until we find a replacement. A European Association of Archaeologists representative might be suitable for this group (Sophie Hüglin potential candidate).
- **Pompidou Group** – we need to find a strong representative for this group and someone capable of chairing a discussion effectively. Piotr wrote to Thomas Wuthrich and will provide an update at the next SC monthly meeting.

How to appoint representatives to committees in the future: It is agreed that we will not necessarily know the individual most suitable, so it would be sensible to send a general letter to CINGO members indicating the positions to be filled so individuals can nominate themselves.

- And others...

CD-Edu: **Genevieve** would be interested in being a SC representative to CD-Edu.

8. Country visits this year:

- Urgent visit to Georgia

Standing Committee agreed that this should be an official country visit and conducted as soon as possible. The objective is to engage with people from the Ministry and Parliament and with civil society actors. Gerhard and 1 other SC member will attend. Olga and Anna both suggested as participants. Simon to ask Olga and Anna about their availability.

Christophe Speckbacher will contact the Georgian authorities to arrange the meeting.

Other country visits:

Ece: proposed an official country visit to North Macedonia or Turkey to visit the earthquake affected areas and the response.

Simon: proposed visit to Spain based on the potential impact of Catalonia independence on the work of NGOs.

Gerhard: Suggestion of Slovakia: laws on free press and attacks on civil society members. The current budget could allow 2-3 informal visits this year paid out of the CINGO budget. Informal visits do not require the SC to make a request to the government, but we need contacts in the country who understand the actual situation on the ground.

Action point: for informal visits, we must decide on the contacts that can support us to get started on the mission. Slovakia, we have a limited network. Piotr to start reaching out to contacts in Slovakia.

Conclusion: Official visits to Georgia and North Macedonia. Unofficial visits to Turkey, Poland and Slovakia, and Spain.

9. Our strategies:

- **3-year strategy Questionnaire:**

Survey monkey is the most feasible option to circulate the questionnaire; we need to agree on questions asked to members; questions need to relate to Rejkavik decisions and the key issues members would like to see in our strategy. The aim is to get feedback from members about their priority areas. Topics that could potentially be included are: environment and climate change; social justice charta; AI and human rights; youth participation; and the pressures and challenges civil society is facing.

Anna, Ruth, Ciaran, and Gerhard to help with the questionnaire. Not more than 10 questions (absolute maximum) and publish two questionnaires on survey monkey (French and English).

- Youth strategy

Ece has shared draft content of the youth engagement and participation strategy. The main question to address is where we position youth participation in CINGO and how can this be done in way that is engaging and empowering.

Standing Committee members discussed how we can include youth representatives and provide a platform for youth in the CINGO General Assembly. This needs to be done in way that promotes diversity; does not create a bubble where only the same groups have an opportunity to share their views. We also discussed how we can mobilise our own CINGO members. Perhaps CINGO reps could appoint youth representatives within their delegation? We should also discuss at a later date how the Youth Parliament and CINGO can engage. However, we need to think about the budget that is available to support this strategy.

- Communication and media strategy

Ece, Ruth, and Iordannis suggested as the lead contacts for the communication and social media strategy.

Gerhard: we need to have careful use of CoE logos and needs to be clear what is and isn't official correspondence of the CoE. As a group, we communicate as the "CINGO of the CoE". We cannot falsely give the impression that we are working in an official capacity of the Council of Europe.

Ece: to send a monthly plan/schedule of our posts including LinkedIn, Instagram etc; and our monthly texts and images to be used. Ece to send more info on social media strategy and monthly plan.

The SC also discussed the need for a social media strategy booklet and practical guide; including login/account details so the account can be handed over in the event of committee and presidency changes. OING Service will own the account.

- Internal communication

Simon: To ask INGO service to acquire CINGO email so we can send and receive from these email addresses.

Piotr: In future, we now have a good opportunity to meet with Brussels NGOs and to hear the views of Brussels NGOs who cannot attend Strasbourg.

Gerhard: We also have the possibility and connections to meet in Paris.

10. Any other business

Many SC members are not available on 6th June so we propose to move our regular meeting to **Thursday 13th June**.

The group discussed the need for some guidelines for members of the SC members. It needs to be clear that committee members are representing the CINGO conference and not one organisation. We also need to have a clear outline of consequences if members consistently fail to follow these guidelines.