

HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

Think Tank on Monitoring

Themes discussed:

NGOs are probably the first to see what goes wrong at a grass root level. Regrettably it is shown time and again that the monitoring function of NGOs is not recognised by others within the Council of Europe. This denial of this important function of the INGOs jeopardises the INGO credibility. It is a denial of the fact that NGOs emerge where public authorities fail to see a need for help, and enterprises do not see opportunities to offer profitable services.

In various states third-party monitoring is considered “unnecessary” because the state provides its own “inspections”, or there are mechanisms of “self-reporting”. In the long run all these systems appear to be susceptible to undesirable government influence or witness to a naïve assumption that institutions / states will give sincere, timely and complete openness about cases where they have failed.

We notice that NGOs that actively monitor are sometimes hindered and intimidated, possibly because they are uninvited (self-proclaimed) countervailing powers.

We want NGOs that monitor to be heard by the responsible authorities. The information given to the relevant organisations by the monitoring NGOs should be impeccable: concise, complete and relevant. Effective monitoring is a skill that needs to be developed. Not only for the better of the NGOs, but most and for all for the protection of vulnerable groups whose well-being may depend on mature and realistic monitoring capabilities.

Aims:

We want to install a think tank that develops insight in the process of NGO monitoring:

- Is it the responsibility of an INGO with participatory status to monitor and report important developments in its surroundings concerning human rights, rule of law and democracy? Can such an INGO ignore this task?
- What are the basic skills needed for effective / adequate monitoring?
- Is there room for improvement or empowerment of NGOs that monitor? If so, how?
- What makes relevant authorities permeable to NGO input?
- Can online monitoring tools be of help?
- What are the dangers for NGOs when they start monitoring?

Working languages: English (French and German)

Coordinator: Simon Matthijssen

INGO members : to be completed

Date created: June 2018

Foreseen duration: Autumn 2020

Expected results:

- Awareness-raising around the instrument “monitoring by third parties (NGOs)”;
- An analysis of why NGOs should or should not monitor, what the monitoring capabilities are and how to improve them;
- possible online tools or training sessions to be used or developed;

- Maybe even the start of a working group.

Dissemination of the results:

- Reports to the INGO Conference
- Lectures from experts
- Round table discussion
- Internet tools

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