

Side-events (excluding those held under the auspices of PACE)

Information note for the attention of the Conference of INGOs

Definition

By nature a side event is a short event (1h30) which may take the form of a round table. A side event cannot be organised during the plenary meetings or thematic committee meetings. A side event has the particularity of being an additional event compared to the classic character of the thematic meetings included in the programme of the session of the Conference of INGOs. Indeed a working group, a thematic committee or the gender equality expert can take the initiative to organise such an event to strongly mark the beginning of a work cycle, to mark the outcome of its work, or even to mark a special moment in the phasing out of its work. It could also be because of the emergence of a topical issue which is particularly relevant in the field of work of the originator of the event.

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the thematic committees must be involved in the reflection on the relevance of organising such an event. With regard to the working groups, the organisation of a side event comes under the responsibility of Chair of the thematic committee to which is group is attached. One week before the event the Secretariat shall receive the list of invitees (badge request) and a list of technical requirements. The room should be reserved at least 2 months in advance.

Aims

A side event aims to problematise or highlight a major aspect of a theme particularly important for a working group, the gender equality expert or a thematic committee and to draw attention not only within, but also outside the Council of Europe, to civil society's responses to legal, social and political questions, in accordance with the values and principles of the Council of Europe.

This is why it is important to reaffirm the principle that side events are not platforms for INGOs to make claims but, on the contrary, are spaces to share experience and to propose ways and means to find solutions and establish dialogue with different bodies of the Council of Europe and possibly external partners. This implies that the experts of the Conference of INGOs and the other bodies of the Council of Europe are invited to provide precise insights into the subject being discussed. The preparation in collaboration with other bodies of the Council of Europe should be a priority for the organisers of the event.

Fitting in with the overall strategy of the Conference of INGOs

To fit in with the overall coherence of the Action Plan adopted by the Conference of INGOs, side events are validated by the Standing Committee and are included in the programme of the session. The planning of side events is carried out at the basis of two sessions of the Conference of INGOs / four sessions of the PACE per year from January to

October. Ideally to facilitate the work of the Standing Committee, the planning should be done in October for the following year, with adjustments possible during the year. On this occasion the approximate cost of the side event is required. Such organization will allow to the Standing Committee to take due note of the proposed side-events and give priority to some of the working groups that feature on the list.

However, given the fact that:

- the sessions of the Conference of INGOs are held twice a year,
- the principle of balance should be met between the proposals from the three thematic committees and the gender equality expert,
- the three-year term elective mandates defines the number of possible side events organized (two side events by mandate),

the Standing Committee recommends a diversification of the forms of action, allowing more visibility for the work led by the working groups, thematic committees or gender equality expert (excluding side-event) or to organize joint side-events between the entities mentioned above, thereby enhancing the transversal dimension of our work.

Standing Committee
10 October 2016