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REPORT
SPRING SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE INGOS
STRASBOURG, 27-29 APRIL 2009

This Spring Session of the Council of Europe (CoE) INGOs (International Non Governmental Organisations enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe) took place in Strasbourg (France) on 26-29 April 2009. This meeting of the Conference was focusing mainly on three activities: the adoption of the code of good practice for civil participation, the regional NGO Congress in Penza and submission of texts to the INGO Conference including a resolution on the UN Convention on the rights of persons with disabilities.

The session started on Monday 27 April with a meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the INGO and a meeting of the Liaison Committee¹.

On Tuesday 28 April took place meetings of various Committees as the Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty Committee, Human Rights Committee as well as the Culture, Science and Education Committee and Civil Society and Democracy Committee.

On Wednesday 29 April the Conference of INGOs was held.

Mental Health Europe (MHE) was represented by Roselyne Bourgon, Human Rights Officer.

¹ The INGO Liaison Committee, set up in 1976, liaises with the Secretariat General, and encourages INGOs to co-operate with the Council of Europe.

For more information, visit:

http://www.coe.int/t/e/ngo/public/liaison_committee/Summary.asp#TopOfPage

Meeting of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, Wednesday 29 April

The meeting was chaired by Jean Marie Heydt, President of the Conference.

Opening of the meeting

JM Heydt welcomed the participants and the representative of the Austrian Embassy. The elections of the next Secretary General of the Council of Europe were discussed as it should take place in June. It was mentioned that some candidates expressed their wish to meet with the INGO Conference.

Adoption of the Agenda

The agenda of the meeting was presented and adopted.

Adoption of the synopsis of the meeting of January

The synopsis of the meeting held on 28 January 2009 was presented and adopted.

Code of good practice for civil participation

Cyril Ritchie, President of the Expert Council on NGO law presented the code of good practice for civil participation on demand of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. Some comments from NGOs should be given and will be followed by a consultation process with other pillars of the Council of Europe before the finale adoption foreseen by autumn 2010. INGO Conference is expected to adopt the code in September. This code may be discussed during the meeting of the Civil Society and Democracy Committee in June. Some comments were made during the meeting about the fact that the code is not really reachable for organisations which are not familiar with this matter. The text may be simplified to make it more comprehensive especially for local organisations. The draft code has been approved by the Conference and will be presented for adoption in September.

The "Strasbourg dialogue"

This issue was raised for following up to the Regional NGO Congress in Penza² (5-7 December 2008) and the Strasbourg roundtable (16-17 February 2009)³. Some views have been exchanged during the Conference of INGO underlining the need for overcoming humanitarian problems and human rights violations after conflicts. There is a need for a transparent dialogue and a need for the Council of Europe to promote the core values of the organisation.

Other information on texts adopted during the Conference and ongoing activities

Following the issues raised during the INGO Conference Winter session, the INGO Conference voted on a resolution on INGO Conference position towards the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The Conference worked on this resolution and the document was presented by Marie Josée Schmitt. The resolution has been adopted by the Conference.

² http://www.coe.int/t/e/ngo/public/declaration_Penza_Eng_0712_%20final_en.asp#TopOfPage

³ http://www.coe.int/t/e/ngo/public/CONF_PLE_2009_OJ2_docRoundTable_en.asp#TopOfPage

To better focus on poverty, Irene Donadio, Chair of the Committee on Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty called for the creation of a subcommittee which will work on issues linked to poverty. Mental Health Europe will participate to the work of this subcommittee as well as continue its work within the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on Social Cohesion.

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Roselyne Bourgon May 2009