



**REPORT**  
**SUMMER SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE INGOS**  
**STRASBOURG, 23-26 JUNE 2008**

This Summer 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 23-26 June 2008.

The session started on Monday 23 June with a meeting of the Bureau of the Liaison Committee and a meeting of the Liaison Committee<sup>1</sup>.

On Wednesday 25 June the Conference of INGOs was held.

On Thursday 26 June meetings of the various Groupings (European Social Charter and Social Policies; Human Rights; Health) took place.

It was followed by a Round table on "The Rule of Law and Intercultural dialogue"

Mental Health Europe (MHE) was represented by Fanny Muller, Information and Human Rights Officer and Roselyne Bourgon, stagiaire.

## **1 Background information**

An in-depth analysis on the reorganisation of the Conference of INGOs with the view to reinforcing its visibility and effectiveness took place.

Following up on this, the Summer Session represented an opportunity for resolving fundamental questions, in particular as regards thematic work.

During summer session the new internal rules have been presented, debated, and adopted.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](http://www.coe.int/t/e/ngo/public/liaison_committee/Summary.asp#TopOfPage)

## **2 Meeting of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, Wednesday 25 June**

The meeting was chaired by Annelise Oeschger, President of the Conference.

### ***Opening of the meeting***

Oeschger welcomed the participants and informed them that written presentations of all candidates for the position of President and Vice-President would be posted soon on the CoE website, in the INGO section.

Public hearings of all candidates will be held in October 2008 and January 2009.

### ***Adoption of the Agenda***

The agenda of the meeting was presented and adopted.

### ***Presentation of the results of the European Youth Survey in the framework of the "Building a Europe for and with Children campaign***

The presentation was made by Jenny Schuler member of the Bureau who summarized the young point of view on different areas which are focused by thematic works of the Conference.

### ***Reorganisation of the structures and working methods of the Conference of INGOs***

Since a year and a half, the new rules of procedure have been elaborated and this Conference was the final step in order to adopt the new rules including the ones concerning thematic work.

The first part of the proposed rules of procedure deals with the governing bodies' reform, whereas their second part is about the reform of the thematic work.

The new rule of procedure document was elaborated by Claude-Laurent Genty, rapporteur. This document is based on the former texts concerning that field and on the discussions which have taken place on the website of the CoE between different NGO representants. (The discussion took place from 25.04.2008 until the beginning of June)

Claude-Laurent Genty, member of the Liaison Committee, added that contrary to its current competencies, the Bureau will not be a deciding body; it will only be responsible for ensuring that the decisions are implemented.

The Standing Committee will have more political power because its President and Vice President will be elected.

The establishment of transversal and/or expert groups is now recognised. Two propositions of reorganisation have been presented but the one proposed by Annelise Oeschger has been adopted with some modifications about the names of the groups (with the question of human rights translation into French and its currently evolving process)

The new working groups (with name modifications) are Human Rights Committee, Culture and Education Committee, Civil Society and Democracy Committee, Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty Committee and Sustainable Territorial Development Committee. In addition to that, two other transversal groups will be created named Gender Equality Group (transitional name until January 2009) and Europe and Global Challenges Group.

The elections of the Presidents and vice-Presidents of the new committees will be held on 2-3 October 2008.

For more information see the link <http://www.coe.int/T/E/NGO/Public/>

### ***Cooperation between the INGO Conference and the EU Fundamental Rights Agency Platform***

a. Relations with the European Union's Fundamental Rights Agency: for **information** and **exchange of views**

The new EU Fundamental Rights Agency Director Morten Kjaerum recently in function went to Strasbourg to meet the Council of Europe representants and particularly the OING Conference. Anne Lise Oeschger underlined the fact that the FRA does consider the INGO as the gathering of the civil society's will and the relationship between the FRA and the INGO has to be very tight in order to collaborate and make a practical platform to convey the ideas of the civil society and to asset this place in the decision making process.

b. Presentation of the guide to the European Union's Charter of Fundamental Rights (Marie-José Schmitt, AEH)

Marie-Josée Schmitt, Vice-President of the European Social Charter and Social Policies Grouping, presented a reading guide of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the EU focusing on the fact that the rights inside the Charter are deeply rooted in the former treaties and on the parallel between the different legal binding instruments.

### ***Update on INGO-Service***

The Conference of INGOs' next meeting will take place on **28 January 2009**.

The INGO Plenary Conference was followed by meetings of the following thematic Groupings:

- 1 Civil Society and Democracy,
- 2 North South Dialogue and Solidarity,
- 3 Extreme Poverty and Social Cohesion,
- 4 Health,
- 5 European Social Charter and Social Policies.

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