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## **REPORT**

### **AUTUMN SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE INGOS STRASBOURG, 29 SEPTEMBER-1 OCTOBER 2009**

This Autumn 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 29 September- 1 October 2009. This meeting of the Conference was focusing mainly on different activities including the adoption of the code of good practice for civil participation and submission of texts to the INGO Conference including a draft recommendation regarding a position paper to the Committee of Ministers on European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion Recommendation.

The session started on Tuesday 29 September with a meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the INGO and a meeting of the Liaison Committee<sup>1</sup>. In the afternoon, the Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty Committee met as well as other Committees of the INGO Conference.

On Wednesday 30 October took place Human Rights Committee meeting as well as other Committee meetings.

On Thursday 1 October, the Conference of INGOs was held.

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

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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)

## **Meeting of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, Thursday 1 October**

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

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

JM Heydt welcomed the participants and the President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

### ***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 29 April 2009 was presented and adopted.

### ***Code of good practice for civil participation in the decision-making process: for presentation by Cyril Ritchie, Rapporteur, discussion and final adoption of the code and its promotion and implementation strategy***

Cyril Ritchie made a brief recall to the history of this code and how it came into the Council of Europe representatives mind. The mandate was given to the Conference of INGO to draft this code in 2007. The President of the Conference asked organs of the Conference to accept and appoint Cyril Ritchie as the responsible person for this. Cyril Ritchie explained which discussions took place and at which stage as well as where the consultations took place in Europe and the discussion of the draft in order to get more experiences from different place in Europe. The text includes all comments for discussion. Some inputs were given from the PACE and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities as well as with the Committee of Ministers. The Conference of INGO never adopted a « Code » so it was an important political action as well as a strong reaffirmation of the political role of the Conference within the Council of Europe: NGOs are in the foot plain of democracy. After some remarks were made, the Conference of INGO voted on the text and adopted it with a large majority.

### ***"Internal governance of NGOs": presentation of the second thematic report by the Expert Council on NGO Law, by Cyril Ritchie, Chair of the Expert Council and Jeremy McBride, Coordinator***

After Cyril Ritchie explained the background of the report and thanked his colleague Mr McBride and other colleagues, Mr McBride briefly presented the second thematic report. The report gives a picture of the issues affecting internal governance idea of self governance. The situation in Europe according to the report's results is not of particular worry except in the field of participation in decision making authorities. Substance is an issue to be addressed next year, in a few countries problems in meetings of internal bodies being forced to accept participation. It seems to have a lack of recognition of different types of NGOs in some countries as same rules seem to apply in some countries. The recommendation mirrors these points. The mandate of the INGO Conference could be to conduct an evaluation; process should be endorsed by January.

***European Year for Combating Poverty and Social Exclusion (European Union, 2010)***

The Conference adopted, with four abstentions, a Recommendation on poverty in Europe [[CONF/PLE\(2009\)REC8](#)] asking the Committee of Ministers to follow up the Conference of INGOs' proposal to include Article 30 of the revised European Social Charter in its core provisions and urge member states, if they have not already done so, to accept this provision and/or ratify the revised Social Charter. The Committee of Ministers should also adopt an action plan for the years 2011 – 2021 to offer guidance to member states, as part of a poverty eradication programme that would take account, inter alia, of the measures proposed above and ensure that the means are available to monitor its implementation.

***Other business***

Michel Muller, Chair of INGO-Service, presented the worrying situation of the subscriptions for 2009 received to date, the number of which (111) had decreased sharply compared to 2008 (197). At this stage, the 2009 budget had not been covered. As subscriptions were not compulsory, it was important to continue drawing members' attention to the usefulness of and the use to which the INGO-Service funds were put.

*Mental Health Europe, November 2009*