



REPORT
WINTER SESSION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE INGOS
STRASBOURG, 25-27 JANUARY 2010

This Winter 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 25-27 January 2010. This meeting of the Conference was focusing mainly on the issues of non discrimination (Human Rights Committee) and of a better organisation of the Conference in its policy work (transversal question in the different meetings).

The session started on Monday 25 January with a meeting of the Bureau of the Conference of the INGO and a meeting of the Liaison Committee¹. In the afternoon, the Human Rights Committee met as well as other Committees of the INGO Conference.

On Tuesday 26 January took place Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty Committee meeting as well as other Committee meetings.

On Wednesday 27 January, the Conference of INGOs was held.

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

**Meeting of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe,
Wednesday 27 January 2010**

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

Opening of the meeting

Jean Marie Heydt welcomed the participants and the presence of Thorbjørn Jagland, new Secretary General of the Council of Europe. In his welcome speech, Mr Heydt underlined the importance of cohabitation of human rights with social rights to ensure peace. Coordinated actions should contribute to the return of the social

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:

stability. Mr Heydt called on the new Secretary General (present at the beginning of the meeting) to consult the Conference as often as possible and on a regular basis. A shared construction should be done with the organised civil society.

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 1 October 2009 was presented and adopted.

2009 activity report of the Conference INGOs

Different tasks and missions had been conducted with different conceptions and every organisation had to take its responsibility to make the collaboration work. The context has changed and adaptation is needed. New challenges have to be faced like the decreasing number of staff of NGO Unit at the Council of Europe. There is an important need to change the working methods of the Conference and particularly within the Commissions due to the new challenges. This need should meet the capacities of the NGOs represented and their ideas.

2009 was a year of change with the reality of the 2008 reform. An important dialogue with other institutions of the Council of Europe has been established.

The Conference developed around 3 key axes including the promotion of the Council of Europe principles and the code on the good practices for civil participation in decision making). Important work has been done with the Intergovernmental committees of the Council of Europe. An intensification of the work with external organisations was achieved. Committees should join their efforts in common work.

The reform should be adapted so the Conference will work in a more effective manner. Work with the EU should be maintained. Council of Europe actions should be flexible and transparent. The Conference should work better and in an informal way too.

The activity report for 2009 was adopted by the Conference.

Priorities of the Conference of INGOs

Jean Marie Heydt presented the document containing the priorities of the Conference for 2010. Small changes were made on the 4th priority. The importance of the Commission on culture and education work has been underlined. A practical suggestion was made about the organisation of the document: it should be divided between Mission, vision and strategy. The question of the collaboration with the Fundamental Rights Platform of the EU was raised.

Jean Marie Heydt suggested that representatives send suggestions in the two working languages to the secretariat and the Bureau will work to collect and put together the amendments. The permanent Commission will validate the document. Deadline for suggestions has been set on 15th February 2010.

Internal governance of NGOs:

Cyril Ritchie, chair of the Expert Council of NGO Law made a presentation for adoption of a draft Recommendation arising from the second report of Council. After recontextualising the report, he explained that Expert Council as major organ must be able to function adequately with sufficient fundings. Assistance to the Conference in this issue would be foreseen. The Expert Council will be subject to evaluation this

year to determine the future of this Council. Cyril Ritchie urged the bureau to initiate the process of evaluation quickly.
The text of the report has been adopted by the Conference.

Rules of procedure of the Conference of INGOs

Rémy Berthier, International Union of Guides and Scouts of Europe, made a presentation of the ongoing work regarding the terms of reference of the Conference; including on election procedures. There is an ongoing reflection on the possible evolutions of the terms of reference. NGOs should send their comments and questions to the secretariat (NGO Unit) by the end of February. A year of work is foreseen in order to create orientations in links with the conference, the bureau and the plenary.

Activities of the Conference of INGOs in 2010

Activities of the Conference are possible if human and financial means exist. Michel Muller from NGO Service made a presentation on the financial situation for 2009. 2009 was the first year with deficits. Only 140 NGOs paid their fees, 200 organisations are "ghosting" the Conference. The questionnaire sent by Mr Muller was filled by only 15 organisations previous to the meeting. It rose that taboos exist in the finances like the composition of the Board of NGO Service, the issue of compulsory fees, registered seat of NGO service etc.
The questionnaire of Mr Muller was available at the Conference and needs to be filled as soon as possible by every organisation.

Date of the next meeting: Thursday 24 June 2010 (morning)