

Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions NEWSLETTER ON THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

No. 3, September 2003

Editor: Henrik Alberius OP, JP-Sweden



In this issue:

- Introduction
- Social cohesion
- Migration
- Inter-religious dialogue
- Some practical proposals
- Contact the "core-group"

Introduction

In an address given at his summer-residence Castel Gandolfo outside Rome on August the 24th this year pope John Paul II stated: "I think, moreover, of the Council of Europe, with headquarters at Strasbourg, and of the annexed European Court of the Rights of Man, which carry out the noble task of creating a Europe of liberties, justice and solidarity".

This recognition by the pope of the work carried out by the Council of Europe (CoE) is important and encouraging, not only for the CoE itself but also for all the NGO's present at and participating in the work of the Council – among them the Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions (JPE).

This work, presently carried out for the Justice and Peace Commissions by the "core-group" of Jonneke Naber (staff JP-Netherlands) and Henrik Alberius (JP-Sweden), will be one of the topics discussed

at the next **General Assembly** of JPE in Geneva in October 2003. The matter is given further importance by the fact, that the status of the NGO's recognized by the CoE is in the process of being upgraded from the present "consultative" to the new "participating".

To help in this discussion the "core-group" has invited **Mr Daniel Zielinski** to address the General Assembly on the importance of and what can be achieved by working at the CoE. Mr Zielinski is the president of the Liaison Committee of the NGO's recognized by the CoE, and he represents the NGO's on working-committees of the Council itself. He will also be available for questions during the Assembly.

Below you will now find short reports from the three focal points of the "JPE core-group" at the CoE, and some practical proposals for the JP-commissions in Europe to join in the work.

Social Cohesion

During the Parliamentary Session of the CoE in the end of June 2003, the "JPE core-group" took part in a number meetings of the NGO's as well as had personal meetings with key-persons of the CoE-administration.

As to what concerns Social Cohesion three topics will be reported in this newsletter: improving access to social rights, revision of the social cohesion strategy, and relations with the European Union.

A productive partnership has already been established between the NGO's and the CoE's *European Committee for Social Cohesion* (CDCS). In fact, the body of NGO's have two representatives, Mr Daniel Zielinski and Mr Jean-Marie Heydt, in the CDCS which now works on the access to social rights and a revision of the social cohesion strategy.

In a meeting of the Social Policies Grouping of the NGO's Mr **Daniel Zielinski** reported on the work carried out by CDCS to **improve access to social rights**. Firstly, he pointed out that the heads of states and governments of the 45 member-states have confirmed their resolve to promote social cohesion as an essential supplement to the promotion of human rights and dignity. This has led to the setting up by CDCS of a draft of recommendations on policies for the member-states. Such policies should:

- respect the indivisibility of social rights;
- be based on the principle of freedom, equality, dignity, and solidarity;
- be based on the principle of non-discrimination, participation, quality, privacy and transparency;
- devote particular attention to persons in situations of vulnerability.

While implementing these recommendations, the governments are invited to:

- give concrete form to social rights by setting up a legal framework;
- set up appropriate social services with adequate human and financial resources;
- develop services geared by user's needs;
- introduce effective public information policies;
- ensure the quality of reception of users in social service offices;
- ensure that policies on access to social rights are monitored and evaluated;

- establish and actively support appropriate partnership among all those concerned (users, local authorities, social partners, NGO's, and others).

Mr Zielinski was especially positive to the latter recommendation of **partnership** between governmental authorities and users and their organizations. While being a word *à la mode*, it is a good way to ensure user-involvement. Remains to define the areas of partnership, and to invent laws to enforce it.

While being lucid on today's reality of cut-backs in public spending in the social field, common to all members-states, Mr Zielinski again underlined the importance of this draft of recommendations that will eventually be submitted to the CoE's Committee of Ministers.

Learn more on:

www.coe.int/T/E//Social_cohesion/Activities_for_Social_Cohesion/

Concerning the **revision of the social cohesion strategy**, Mr **Jean-Marie Heydt** reported, that one of the reasons for this revision is the changing face of the member-states economies. The social cohesion strategy has been established on the basis of the status of social rights as a fundamental component of human rights, as well as a concern for the most vulnerable groups in society, and the prospect of future European rules on social rights.

Mr Heydt said that the CDCS has noted that the strategy should be implemented with new political aspects, moving from a conceptual strategy to a more operational one comprising practical action plans. The aim is to secure a document complementing the Social Charter of the CoE. The work now carried out by the CDCS' working-group responsible for reviewing the strategy should finish during the autumn of 2003.

While presenting the work, Mr Heydt also compared the CoE's social policies with

those of the European Union (EU). He noted that the EU puts the accent on a strong economy as a way to diminish poverty and assure social rights. CoE on the other hand centres on the human dignity and the necessity to respect human rights. The "global strategy" therefore of the EU is to become the most competitive economy in the world, while CoE centres on ideas *and* progress.

According to Ms Suzy Morgan of the **European Social Charter** more member-states have signed the Revised Social Charter of the CoE. And four new complaints have been admitted. As of now 58 NGO's have the right to submit complaints against breaches of the Social Charter. See Newsletter #2 for more details on the complaints-procedure.

Learn more on:
www.coe.int/T/E/Human_Rights/Esc/

The work of the NGO's to build **relations with the European Union** to secure fundamental right in the new Constitution continues. Ms **Anne-Marie Franchi** of the Liaison Committee leads this project called *Toward a Social Europe*. The aim is to reaffirm priority status of social policy in Europe, and it seeks to bring together players from both the CoE and the EU.

In July the Social Platform (a grouping of social NGO's at the EU) and the European Trade Union Confederation visited the CoE in Strasbourg. Among other things, a joint declaration called "Social Europe" was discussed. The main point of this declaration is a paragraph which notes, that even if the procedures are different in Brussels and in Strasbourg, European civil society expects that the dignity of everyone shall be guaranteed everywhere; it therefore demands that social, economic and cultural rights are defended.

The parties of the two organizations are to pledge a common vigilance on the development of social rights in Europe. More news on this will come in the next newsletter.

Migration

The "JPE core-group" had a meeting in June with Ms **Maria Ochoa-Llidó**, head of CoE's Migration and Roma/Gypsies Division (CDMG) to learn more on the work in this field. Recently the Secretary General of the CoE, Mr **Walter Schwimmer**, stated that immigration is of benefit to both parties, and that the 45 member-states of the CoE agree that properly regulated immigration is necessary for economic and social well-being. He also said that the CoE recommends the setting up of an observatory and a comprehensive package of measures in countries of origin, transit and destination.

Ms Ochoa-Llidó confirmed that the CoE is trying to soften the tougher EU-position on migration, and that it is gaining support. She said that there are EU-countries who say that migration is too big for the EU alone, and that the larger CoE is a better forum. Furthermore there are member-states in the CoE who are countries of origin.

Hence a coordination of policies between communities and states is needed to seek the better welfare for the migrant. This because the migrant is, in every situation, still a person who has rights. Therefore the CDMG will set up a political platform in December 2003, that will continue the work of round-tables and seminars already in place. The hope is to create an agency for migration that will implement the decisions taken by the political platform. The plan is to also include countries outside of the CoE, e.g. Pakistan and China.

Learn more on:
www.coe.int/T/E/Social_Cohesion/Migration/

During the session of the Committee of Ministers in May 2003, the Foreign Affairs ministers called for reinforced action by the CoE in the field of **trafficking of human beings**. They stressed that trafficking is an intolerable affront to human dignity, and

that it has become a great concern to European citizens. Support was expressed for the preparation of a **European Convention** on action against trafficking in human beings. Such a convention should be geared towards the protection of victims' rights and the respect for human beings, and that it should aim at a proper balance between matters concerning human rights and prosecution.

This was confirmed in a meeting that the "JPE core-group" had with Ms **Anne Marie Faradji**, administrator of the CoE's Division Equality between Women and Men (CDEG). She stated that the planned convention shall be a regional instrument and a tool of monitoring. A working-group has been set up with representatives from all the member-states, and its first meeting will be in September 2003.

The convention will draw on the Palermo-protocol of the United Nations. Ms Faradji expressed hopes that the work should be finished by the end of 2004.

Learn more on:
www.coe.int/T/E/human_rights/trafficking/

She also told us of a new expert-group just started, which will look into **the role of women in inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue** in preventing violence. The group will study and have hearings pioneering on the role of women in this field. The aim is to work out a guide of good practices and to draft recommendations and guidelines for the governments of the member-states.

Inter-religious Dialogue

As a follow-up to the meeting with Mr Marc Scheuer (see Newsletter #2), the "JPE core-group" has had contacts with Mr **Jean-Charles de Cordes** of the Directorate General of Political Affairs of the CoE. According to Mr de Cordes the project

Intercultural Dialogue and Conflict Prevention, started in 2001, has been made a priority for the CoE and has received a three-year plan 2002-2004. It now focuses on four main-streams: think-tanks, field-work, guidelines, and flagship.

In the political field a ministerial meeting is planned for October 2003, where a multi-disciplinary approach will be proposed involving synergy between various sectors (religious, social, cultural, etc). And in the Hague in the Netherlands a congress on Human Rights in a Pluri form Society will be held on the 21st and 22nd of November this year.

The GT-Dialogue, the working-group organizing initiatives in this field, shows, according to Mr de Cordes, a strong willingness to revitalize its role. It will hold a new meeting in September 2003. More news on this should come in the next newsletter.

Practical proposals

Any **remarks and initiatives** by JP-commissions in any of the areas enumerated above are welcome, and should be sent to Jonneke Naber.

Note, that especially Ms Faradji is looking for contacts for the new women-project started by CDEG. Do not hesitate.

Contacts

This very important paragraph will let you easily get in contact with either Jonneke Naber or Henrik Alberius of the "JPE core-group". Please send any question, remark, idea and initiative directly to:

Jonneke Naber
jna@justitiaetpax.nl
+31 (0)70 31 36 800

Henrik Alberius
henrik@dominikan.nu
+46 (0)46 15 71 14