

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

No. 12, July 2006

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### Introduction

The Council of Europe (CoE) has launched two interesting initiatives.

The first one is a campaign, which started in June 2006 to further diversity, human rights and diversity. It is called *All Different - All Equal*.

Already in 1995 the CoE marked the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of WWI with one of its most successful campaigns on the theme *All Different, All Equal*. It mobilized the young people of Europe around a common aim - to fight racism, anti-Semitism, xenophobia and intolerance.

Now well ten years later new issues face

Europe. So the new *All Different - All Equal* campaign has the horizons set wider. This campaign aims to highlight diversity by celebrating the richness of our differences, whatever they may be. Participation will be the key word, allowing everyone to play a part in building a better Europe.

Learn more on:

<http://alldifferent-allequal.info/>

The second one is a relaunch of website of the CoE's *European Heritage Network*. The improved site offers an information system on heritage policies with among other things:

- a database covering heritage policies in Europe;
- services for authorities, professionals, research workers and the public;
- the world's first multilingual thesaurus.

So far 38 European countries are involved in the project.

Learn more on:

[www.european-heritage.net/sdx/herein/](http://www.european-heritage.net/sdx/herein/)

## Human Rights

I One of the main questions being discussed during the Summer-session of the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) of the CoE was the document Freedom of Expression and Respect for Religious Beliefs. This document, whose rapporteur is Mrs Sinikka Hurskainen (Finland) of the Socialist Group, is the first of two on the topic. The second document will be presented and voted on during the Winter-session in January 2007.

After a long debate covering the whole morning of the 28<sup>th</sup> of June the document was approved and adopted by PACE. The main point of the document is: *Freedom of expression should not be further restricted to meet the increasing sensitivities of certain religious groups.*

The adopted text says that there cannot be a democratic society without the fundamental right to freedom of expression. *This freedom is not only applicable to expressions that are favorably received or regarded as inoffensive but also to those that may shock, offend or disturb the state or any sector of the population, in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights.*

In the debate leading up to the approval many parliamentarians stressed that respect for religious beliefs must at the same time be safeguarded. Something that the Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan also underlined in his speech in the parliament: *Freedom of expression should not mean the freedom to insult.* Prime Minister Erdogan also

presented his joint initiative with *Spanish Prime Minister José Luis Rodríguez Zapatero* for an *Alliance of Civilizations*. Mr Erdogan also said the recent cartoon crisis had revealed the growing and dangerous polarization of the international community along cultural and religious fault-lines, exploited by extremists. He appealed for a middle way of respect, tolerance and cultural pluralism: *We must mobilize our hopes, not our fears.*

To learn more:

Read the adopted Resolution 1510:

<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/ERes1510.htm>

On *Alliance of Civilizations*:

[www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2005/sqsm10004.html](http://www.unis.unvienna.org/unis/pressrels/2005/sqsm10004.html)

Comment by PACE President:

<http://assembly.coe.int/ASP/APFeatureManager/defaultArtSiteView.asp?ArtId=481>

I In a press conference during the PACE-session its President René van der Linden called for *the state of human rights in Europe* to be a matter for significant debate in the Parliamentary Assembly each year.

To this end he referred to a major new initiative whereby the CoE would develop a system for reporting annually on the level of respect for human rights amongst all member states: Any important relevant political issues could also be highlighted. He hoped this would catalyze debate in national parliaments.

I The creation of a Fundamental Rights Agency within the European Union (EU) continues to create some anxieties in the CoE. The risk of competences overlapping each other is apparent.

Still during the session in June the PACE-President René van der Linden said: *We have entered a decisive phase of negotiations with the European Union on our future relations*".

He stressed the need for agreement on the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency, whose competence should be limited to the application of European Community law and to the EU member states. This to avoid duplication and wasting European tax-payers' money.

He also called for recognition of the Council of Europe's role as the lead organization for questions of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in Europe.

## Intercultural/-religious Dialogue

I The Intercultural dialogue is, as is well known by now, one of the priorities of the CoE. In this dialogue Inter-religious dialogue is an important part. Still, it needs to be noted that this does not mean a Theological dialogue, but a dialogue to respect religious beliefs and lessen tensions in society.

This Intercultural/-religious dialogue is so important for the CoE, that it has proclaimed the year 2008 to the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue.

Furthermore the Committee of Ministers (CM) of the CoE in their meetings in April of this year adopted guidelines for the drawing-up of a White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. The aim is that this White Paper will be ready in time for 2008.

In the guidelines it is stated, that *the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue will be given appropriate attention*.

In a Progress report presented during the CM May-session 2006 the following is stated: *Intercultural dialogue is an essential tool for the building of a more humane and inclusive Europe. Based on the Declaration and Action Plan of the Third Summit of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 16-17 May 2005) and the commitment to the universal human rights and the common values and principles rooted in Europe's cultural, religious and humanistic heritage, the Council of Europe is systematically encouraging intercultural and inter-religious dialogue as a means of promoting awareness, understanding, reconciliation and tolerance, overcoming prejudice, preventing conflicts and ensuring integration and the cohesion of society*.

To learn more:

On the Guidelines:

<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=986313&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75>

On the Progress-report:

<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=1000437&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75>

I The call for this White Paper comes from the Faro Declaration adopted by the CoE member states Ministers of Culture in October 2005. This declaration is the *CoE's strategy for the promotion of Intercultural dialogue*.

To read the Faro Declaration:

[www.coe.int/t/dg4/CulturalConvention/Source/FARO\\_DECLARATION\\_Definitive\\_Version\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/CulturalConvention/Source/FARO_DECLARATION_Definitive_Version_EN.pdf)

I The Secretary General of the CoE has named Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Director General of DG IV, to be the Coordinator of the work of the CoE in the field of Intercultural Dialogue.

## Migration

During its Summer-session in June 2006 the PACE discussed and adopted a number of documents on migration. Some important statements were also made by the PACE.

I Whatever their legal status, irregular migrants retain their basic human rights. The PACE declared this on the 27<sup>th</sup> of June 2006. PACE then called for a consolidation of the patchwork of international laws, which currently apply to them. States should not use unreasonable force to prevent the entry of irregular migrants, and they have a duty to rescue those whose lives are in danger. They should be protected from inhuman treatment or trafficking and provided, where necessary, with basic shelter and

emergency healthcare, the parliamentarians said.

I PACE decided June 28 to reinforce its commitment to protecting the rights of immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons. In a resolution, the Assembly pledged to focus its future action on the promotion of common basic values, the integration of migrants and the management of migration.

To learn more:

Read the resolution on:

<http://assembly.coe.int/Main.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta06/Er/ec1757.htm>

I The PACE *Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population* is discussing a draft report still stamped *Restricted*. This draft report treats The Image of Asylum-seekers, migrants and Refugees in the Media. The aim of the draft report is to install national monitoring of the image of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the media in the CoE member states. A monitoring on a European level is also foreseen.

Furthermore the Committee discusses an effective complaints procedure to investigate complaints about intolerant, racist or xenophobic attitudes in the media.

It also calls for further training for media professionals on asylum and migration issues, as well as reporting in a multicultural environment.

## How to Find a Document

The number of documents produced at the CoE during the sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) or the Committee of Ministers is impressive. A Newsletter like this one can only skim the surface of all these initiatives.

To better inform yourself on the variety of proposals and adopted texts you can consult the CoE website.

First go to [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int). Choose either *Parliamentary Assembly* or *Committee of Ministers* on the top left-hand side of the page. A new page will open up.

On this second page you will find the heading *Documents* in the left margin of this page. Then choose to look at the list of either *Adopted Texts* or *Working Documents*.

To find a document of which you know the number look on top of the list to find the box *Keyword*. Open to set to *Doc.No.* A new page will open with this and then enter the wanted number, e.g. 10924 which will get the document called *Human Rights of Irregular Migrants*. Or you may choose 10910 which will give you the document called *Regularisation Programmes for Irregular Migrants*. Or 10964 which will give you the document called *Accelerated Asylum Procedures in Council of Europe Member States*.

Click to open.

## Practical Proposals and Contact

This very important paragraph will let you easily get in contact with the JPE-representative to the CoE Henrik Alberius. It has become even more important after the change of our status at the CoE to become participatory.

Please send any questions, remarks, ideas, initiatives, and petitions for aid to:

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