

Strasbourg, 4 January 1982

DH/Inf-Co (82) 1

European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation

Second meeting
14 December 1981
Council of Europe Headquarters,
Strasbourg

SUMMARY REPORT

Introduction

The European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation held its second meeting (1) in Strasbourg, at the Council of Europe headquarters, on 14 December 1981.

The meeting was convened by the Directorate of Human Rights of the Council of Europe and was opened by Mr Frits Hondius, Deputy to the Director of Human Rights.

The summary report of the meeting is set out below.

(1) The report of the first meeting (DH/Inf-Co (81) 4) may be obtained from the Directorate of Human Rights, Council of Europe, B.P. 431 R6, F-67006 STRASBOURG CEDEX.

I. Reports on developments since the first meeting of the Coordination Committee (5 June 1981)

i. Within the HURIDOCS working group

The Committee was informed of developments within the HURIDOCS working group. The Directory of documentation and information facilities in the field of human rights in Western Europe would be available in January 1982. A similar survey relating to the Americas was nearing completion.

Huridocs and Amnesty International had organised a consultation meeting for London based organisations and a loose-ended human rights network had been set up, similar to that of the Geneva based organisations.

Huridocs would be attending a meeting in Lisbon in January 1982 on Documentation for Change - Third World Issues and Documentation. It would hold a meeting of the group to discuss the future strategy.

A meeting would be held in spring 1982 in Ecuador and it was expected that a coordinating group, similar to the European Coordination Committee, would emerge from it.

Huridocs also intended holding a meeting in summer 1982, probably in Strasbourg, comprising a broad range of organisations, to report on the work the group had achieved since its creation. It was hoped that agreement would be reached on a future structure for HURIDOCS which would enable the group to be dissolved.

The Committee noted with satisfaction these developments and stressed once more the desire that the Directory of documentation and information facilities should be available as soon as possible, since it constituted an important basis for carrying out the tasks assigned in its terms of reference.

ii. Within the International Expert Group: the Human Rights Thesaurus

The Committee was informed of progress relating to the Human Rights Thesaurus and of the proceedings of the second meeting of the International Expert Group held on 30 October 1981 in Geneva. The Committee noted that although work had now begun on the Thesaurus, it might no longer be possible to meet the initial deadline of early 1982 for the first version of the Thesaurus. The Committee regretted that delays had been incurred, drawing attention to the urgency of a provisional outline of the Thesaurus being available. Although it had been agreed by both the International Expert Group and the Coordination Committee that the Thesaurus would largely serve retrieval purposes, it would nevertheless be an important instrument for those organisations and institutions which were about to develop a classification system or change their existing system. This was the case of several organisations and institutions at present. Accordingly, the Committee expressed the wish that those organisations and institutions which had undertaken to collect terms should do so forthwith for the benefit of all concerned.

In this connection the Committee also expressed concern that gaps might occur in the Thesaurus due to inadequate coverage of certain areas. Such gaps should be avoided at all costs if the Thesaurus was to be universally accepted as was intended. The Committee recalled the proposal, at the meeting of human rights organisations and institutions in February 1981, that recourse should also be had to experts from outside the International Expert Group. For example, it was thought that advantage might be drawn from the specialist expertise of certain organisations and institutions participating in the Co-ordination Committee.

Ms F. Knabe had agreed at the meeting of the International Expert Group to coordinate and classify collected terms for the Thesaurus. Accordingly, the Committee urged all organisations and institutions which might usefully contribute terms in their area of specialist responsibility to send them to:

Ms F. Knabe
P.O. Box 206
LONDON WC2E 7JR.

iii. Within international organisations (1)

The Committee was informed of developments concerning: SIM, which would be operational early in 1982, with an overall emphasis on human rights and development, but which planned to prepare a digest of decisions of the courts of member States of the Council of Europe relating to the European Convention on Human Rights; the Human Rights Documentation Centre of the Directorate of Human Rights of the Council of Europe, which had just been approved and would become operational in the course of 1982, with an emphasis on the case law of the European Commission and Court of Human Rights and the human rights activities of the Council of Europe; CEDIA, attached to the Paris Bar which was already operational, already provided information on French court decisions relating to the European Convention on Human Rights, would soon have the European Court of Human Rights' judgments on its data base and intended providing information on human rights fact-finding missions carried out by NGOs; the Centre for information and documentation about refugees which held a substantial amount of German case law relating to refugees and asylum; an NGO bibliography (1970-1981) which would soon be available; an inventory on human rights and development resources prepared by PRIO; plans for a possible network of Norwegian based institutions and organisations and finally, SIFT, the new text retrieval package being developed in Norway, the portable version of which would soon be operational.

II. Review of the Co-ordination Committee's terms of reference and programme of implementation

The Committee reviewed its terms of reference, drawn up at its first meeting (see Appendix) and agreed that among the activities laid down in the terms of reference priority should be given at this stage to information. Indeed there was an apparent need for members of the Committee and others

(1) More information on these developments will be included in the first issue of the Bulletin (see below II, p. 4).

to be regularly informed of projects and progress realised in individual organisations and institutions as a first step towards stimulating and facilitating the coordination of human rights information handling.

To effectively achieve this, there should be regular information on both substance (area of information handled) and on technology.

The Coordination Committee therefore decided that it should issue a periodical Bulletin on developments in human rights information handling which would be widely distributed to all institutions and organisations concerned in Europe.

All Coordination Committee members would be expected to contribute to the Bulletin. They would be responsible for reporting on projects in their own institutions as well as in other organisations and institutions within their geographical area.

The first issue of the Bulletin would be available by the end of February 1982. Contributions of all members of the Coordination Committee should be sent to the Convenor before 15 February 1982 at the following address:

Directorate of Human Rights
(European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation),
Council of Europe, B.P. 431 R6,
F-67006 STRASBOURG CEDEX

Thereafter contributions should be submitted to the Convenor on a periodical basis, but where appropriate at least every six months.

Contributions should contain descriptions of projects and programmes. It was essential that the description should cover both the subject area and the technology applied.

It was agreed that all contributions should follow a standard pattern of presentation covering substance, size, staff, technology applied and services offered and should not be more than about half a page long.

To facilitate the task of members of the Coordination Committee, two examples are set out below:

a. TITLE

Directory of documentation and information facilities in the field of human rights in Western Europe.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The directory has been compiled by HURIDOCs based on information provided by 120 institutions (IGO / NGO / University / Research Centres / Information services) in response to a questionnaire mailed out to some 200 institutions as part of a survey on human rights documentation collections.

The directory covers the following headings:-

Name and address of the institutions	e.g.	International Planned Parenthood Federation (address supplied)
Subject specialization of the collection		Education, Medicine, Social Sciences, Human Rights, Development.
Size of the collection		Substantial
Accessibility to the public		Open (Free, except reproduction)
Classification systems used		Own (population and family planning classification)
Publications and other pertinent information		Journals, Bibliographical Bulletin, Books (List published) (IPPF Cooperative information service)

It has an alphabetical list of the organizations and a subject index.

METHODOLOGY

At present all processing of data is manual except for the list of addresses which is maintained on a microcomputer.

AVAILABILITY

The directory will be available shortly from HURIDOCs, PO Box 206, London WC2 for £4.00 production cost. It will be in loose leaf format and up-dates are planned periodically.

b. TITLE

Human Rights Documentation Centre, Directorate of Human Rights, Council of Europe.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

The Centre's creation has recently been approved; it should become operational in the course of 1982. It will offer internal and external information and documentation services in addition to traditional library facilities. The Centre will provide coverage of the human rights activities of the Council of Europe, mainly, but not exclusively, in the broad field of civil and political rights, in particular the case law of the organs of the European Convention on Human Rights. Bibliographical information, essentially confined to the European Convention on Human Rights and domestic issues relating to the Convention will be available. Some coverage of domestic case law relating to the European Convention on Human Rights, domestic legislation and other official acts in the field of human rights will be given. A small section of the centre will cover information and documentation concerning mass media issues.

METHODOLOGY

The Centre will become operational on a gradual basis with a certain priority to internal services. Initially it will function with a small staff of four persons. The system will be manual but will move progressively towards automation. In a first stage priority will be given to computerisation of the case law of the European Convention on Human Rights, official communications and acts under this instrument and "legislative" activities of the Council of Europe in the broad field of human rights (Conventions, Resolutions, Recommendations and Declarations)

AVAILABILITY

Public information in the Centre will be available on request or for consultation. Automatic mailing services will be offered to certain categories of individuals and institutions.

With regard to the future programme, the Committee recommended that once the Directory of Documentation and Information facilities was available and the first outline of the Thesaurus had been drawn up, it would be desirable to hold a joint meeting of the Coordination Committee and the International Expert Group since their work was closely interrelated. Such a meeting would enable the two bodies to take stock of progress and to concert on a realistic strategy for the continuation of work within their respective fields of competence. It was suggested that such a meeting might take place in May or June 1982 in Strasbourg or Paris and in any event before the meeting which HURIDOCs planned to hold in the summer.

A P P E N D I X

Terms of Reference of the European Coordination
Committee on Human Rights Documentation

- Objectives: In accordance with international human rights instruments, to stimulate and to facilitate the co-ordination of information handling between European based organisations, institutions and individuals with particular interest in human rights.
- Methods: - To provide a framework for the communication and exchange of public information on human rights and to enhance co-ordination between existing and developing documentation and information centres in this field;
- to invite the participation of all interested organisations and institutions in the proposed framework;
- to inform at regular intervals, by appropriate means, those involved in Europe in the handling of human rights information about developments in the classification and retrieval of public human rights information;
- to encourage the use of similar and compatible systems for the classification and retrieval of public human rights information.
- Type of activity: to provide, where possible, information, advice and assistance;
- to make recommendations;
- to liaise with other functional or regional groups or committees;
- to encourage liaison on an inter-regional basis.

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 30 November 1981

DH/Inf-Co (81) OJ 2

EUROPEAN CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION

Second meeting,
14 December 1981
Council of Europe Headquarters, Strasbourg, Room O-14,
9 a.m. to 5.30 p.m.

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting by the Director of Human Rights
2. Report on developments since the first meeting (5 June 1981):
 - i. within the HURIDOCs working group
 - ii. within the International Expert Group: the Human Rights Thesaurus
 - iii. within individual organisations.
3. Review of the Committee's terms of reference, programme of implementation and identification of areas of specialist responsibility.
4. Date and preparation of the meeting of European based organisations and institutions specialising in human rights to review progress in the co-ordination of the handling of public human rights information.

Working documents:

Summary of the conclusions of the meeting of 2 and 3 February 1981 -
DH/Inf-Co (81) 2

Report of the meeting of 2 and 3 February 1981 -
DH/Inf-Co (81) 2

Discussion paper prepared by Ms Knabe -
DH/Inf-Co (81) 3

Summary report of the first meeting of the European Co-ordination Committee -
DH/Inf-Co (81) 4

Summary of the second meeting of the International Working Group: The
Human Rights Thesaurus -
DH/Inf-Co (81) 5