

COUNCIL OF EUROPE ---

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 30 January 1984

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European Co-ordination Committee
On Human Rights Documentation

6th meeting, 30 January 1984
Strasbourg, Human Rights Building

Summary Report

I. Introduction

The European Co-ordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation held its 6th meeting in Strasbourg, Council of Europe headquarters (Human Rights buildings) on 30 January 1984.

The meeting was opened by the Convenor, Mr Frits Hondius, Deputy to the Director of Human Rights, who welcomed participants and regretted that several members of the Committee had been unable to attend.

The agenda of the meeting, as adopted, is in Appendix I: the list of participants is in Appendix II.

The summary of the proceedings of the meeting is set out in this report.

During this meeting the co-ordination Committee in particular:

1. Decided that a Seminar on information techniques for human rights (collection, storage and retrieval)-should be organised in Strasbourg from 18 to 20 July 1984 with the support of HURIDOCs, and if possible with the assistance of the Council of Europe.
2. Agreed that this seminar should be for European based organisations and centres and would be directed towards three categories of persons: the decision-makers of such organisations and centres, the heads of the technical side of such organisations and centres and those actually handling and classifying information.
3. Decided that the next meeting of the Co-ordination Committee should be held in conjunction with the seminar on the morning of 18 July.
4. Took note with interest that the International Expert Group on the Human Rights Thesaurus would probably be holding a meeting in March 1984 and urged that progress be made in the preparation of the Thesaurus as well as the abridged 150 terms Thesaurus.
5. Regretted the lack of progress in the publication of the "EUROTECH, BULLETIN" and reiterated its interest in, and the need for, such a bulletin.
6. Noted, that although progress was slow, the Directory of Western European Collections would be up-dated in the course of 1984.
7. Decided that the idea of a large European Consulstition meeting, to be held early in 1985, possibly in Geneva, should be ventilated among all relevant organisations and centres. The purpose of such a meeting would be to bring together human rights activists (ie users of information) and those handling human rights information in order to identify needs and develop co-ordination.
8. Decided in this context to approach the Church's Committee on Migrant Workers in Europe to see whether such a meeting could not be envisaged in the framework of its mandate.

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Items 1 and 2 of the agenda: Opening of the meeting and adoption of the agenda

See Introduction.

Item 3 of the agenda: Developments since the 5th meeting of the Committee

Mr Johnsen, Head of the Human Rights Documentation Centre of the Council of Europe gave information on the latest developments in it. The Centre had now developed a series of small data bases (using SIFT) covering the basic texts of the European Convention on Human Rights, judgments of the Court, decisions and reports of the Commission, resolutions of the Committee of Ministers. The main problem to be faced now was the backlog of decisions of the Commission; the backlog of judgments, reports and resolutions could probably be handled within the framework of existing resources in the Centre.

The Centre would in the medium term be open to external users but for the time being, it was not equipped to handle information requests on a large scale; individual requests were nevertheless, handled. When the time came the Centre

would probably produce a booklet indicating the services it offered and the terms on which they were provided.

Mr Colombey gave the latest information on developments regarding the HCR's Documentation Centre on Refugee law. An agreement had been concluded with the International Institute of Humanitarian Law in San Remo for the administration of the Centre, which was based in Geneva. The Centre aimed at being a universal centre of information and documentation on matters pertaining to refugees. It intended developing a dissemination programme and collaborating with other centres. The main functions were: developing legal archives; collecting laws and administrative provisions on refugees and stateless persons; building up a library and documentation holdings on refugee law. The Centre would develop computerised facilities and would in due course issue a booklet on the services offered and the conditions. It was clear that some areas would be "reserved" in order to protect the anonymity of the persons concerned.

The Committee remarked with interest in this connection that more and more governmental and intergovernmental agencies felt a need to collaborate with non-governmental bodies in the area of documentation and information. The Council of Europe's network of national correspondents was referred to here as well as SIM's support from the Dutch Government. This development was welcomed.

Mr Wilhelm referred to the creation of CIAS (Centre International des Avocats de Strasbourg pour les droits de l'homme et le droit communautaire européen). One of its functions would be to act as a relay for all matters concerning the rights of the defence under the European Convention on Human Rights.

Mr Thoolen gave information on the latest developments in SIM regarding a number of projects. The Digest of case law of the European Convention on Human Rights produced by the Council of Europe in collaboration with SIM would be available in the course of 1984. The first volume would be out in the next few days; the other volumes would follow. SIM had embarked on its Digest 2 project which aimed at covering national case law relating to the European Convention on Human Rights. This was an enormous undertaking involving a network of correspondents. The problems were obtaining the material in machine readable form, language and volume. The Digest would probably have to be developed in several phases and would not be full text. A reference list would be the first stage, then a summary of the facts and possibly the translation of extracts in English or in French. SIM had undertaken the task of collecting Dutch case law. Some 400 cases had been collected so far. SIM would also organise a Conference from 6 to 9 June in Utrecht in collaboration with the International Law Association, open to lawyers, NGOs and others, with a view to determining whether it would be possible to establish an international instrument on the right to food. As a follow-up to its Conference on Fact-Finding (June 1983), SIM was undertaking quantitative and qualitative research into NGO fact-finding missions (excluding observer missions). Finally reference was made to SIM's latest Newsletter which contained inter alia an article on IDOC's training course on human rights documentation (summer 1983).

Information was also given on the latest developments concerning HURIDOCS. Mr Wilhelm had recently been co-opted on the HURIDOCS Board. HURIDOCS now had two employees, an executive consultant and a person permanently based in Utrecht. HURIDOCS's unit now had its own office and telephone in the same premises as SIM but was a separate entity from it. It had its own terminal on SIM's computer and would have access to SIFT which SIM hoped to implement in March 1984.

At the recent Board meeting (December 1983), three main decisions were taken on priorities: firstly, it was decided to try and embrace compatibility at the highest possible level and, for this, to openly recommend SIFT which could now be implemented on a micro computer (approx. 25,000 \$) instead of on a mini computer (approx. the double). This was an advantage for small centres. In addition SIFT was free and HURIDOCS could now offer support and maintenance of

the system; a user's handbook was being prepared by HURIDOCS' executive consultant. Secondly, it had been decided to concentrate on issuing standard formats for the highest compatibility for both manual and automatic systems. Five universal formats were now ready in A6 format (meaning that manual systems could pick up and use computer prints) covering organisations, information holdings, articles, documents and books. Linked to the decision to develop standard formats was the adoption by HURIDOCS of the Human Rights Internet system for standard codes (geographical and organisational). Those would be ready by the end of 1984. Ideally the codes should be used by new centres, but it was hoped that existing centres would gradually implement them. The third decision concerned the establishment of HURIDOCS' own data base and its contents. For the moment this would be an organisational data base, describing NGOs, their holdings and how to access them.

Item 4 of the agenda: The Human Rights Thesaurus

HURIDOCS was continuing to support the Human Rights Thesaurus, but stressed that the work had to be done by the International Expert Group in consultation with all concerned. To a certain extent, technological developments were such that the Thesaurus was less urgent and interesting for some organisations and centres, and it was clear that any thesaurus developed would not satisfy everyone. The Committee was pleased to note that the International Expert Group on the Human Rights Thesaurus would probably be convened in Geneva in March 1984 and expressed the wish that progress could be made in its elaboration. As for the abridged 150 term Thesaurus, a first listing had been sent out to NGOs and IGOs for comments. It was hoped to produce this abridged version fairly quickly on the basis of this consultation.

The Committee hoped to receive more complete information on the Thesaurus at its next meeting.

Item 5 of the agenda: Progress in the publication of the EUROTCH BULLETIN

The Committee noted the lack of progress in the publication of the Eurotech Bulletin and reiterated its interest in, and the need for, such a bulletin. It noted that the Council of Europe was still prepared to reproduce and disseminate the Bulletin and expressed the wish that individual organisations and centres should contribute information on technical developments within them.

Item 6 of the agenda: Progress in the Directory of Western European Collections

The Committee noted that progress was also slow in this respect. The Committee was pleased to note, however, that Mr Toth was still ready to up-date the Directory and would be making the necessary contacts in the course of the year.

Item 7 of the agenda: HURIDOCS budget and fundraising

Due to the absence of Mr De Smet, who was to have presented a report on this question, the Committee decided to defer the matter to its next meeting and hoped that the report would be available in good time for it.

Item 8 of the agenda: European Consultation Meeting

Item 9 of the agenda: Training of documentalists

The Committee took these items together since they were inter-related.

The idea of a European Consultation Meeting was discussed once more, bearing in mind the blueprint prepared for the last meeting by Mr Lottje (see Appendix III to this report). Whilst recognising the need for such a consultation meeting, which was long overdue in Europe, the Committee felt that technological developments in HURIDOCS and elsewhere had now reached a stage such that it was necessary in a first stage to concentrate on them at a

technical meeting. This should allow participants to take stock of these developments, to see the different systems adopted by same organisations and centres and to seek common solutions to the technical problems that co-ordination posed.

It was felt that July 1984 would be an appropriate date for such a meeting since developments in HURIDOCS and different organisations and centres would have reached a crucial and interesting stage. The advantage of July was also that some participants at the session of the International Institute of Human Rights would be able to take part without engaging additional expenditure, if the meeting was held in Strasbourg.

The Committee defined the profile of the participants at such a meeting. Firstly, it was important to have the decision-makers of organisations and centres (since they finally took the decisions on what technology should be acquired). Secondly, the heads of the technical side of such organisations and centres should take part in order to become familiar with the latest technological developments and grasp the problems of co-ordination. Finally those handling information on a day-to-day basis should be involved since they would be the ones to actually undertake co-ordination.

It was agreed that it would be necessary to meet for 2 to 3 days in order to present different types of systems and to allow for group work. The dates retained were 18 to 20 July 1984, it being understood that a request for facilities and interpretation would be submitted to the appropriate authorities of the Council of Europe.

One of the questions to be discussed at the meeting would be training requirements. The Committee was pleased to note in this connection that, following the request made at the last meeting, the International Institute of Human Rights had given a favourable response to the idea of organising a training course on human rights documentation and had prepared a questionnaire to identify needs and interest. It seemed logical to ventilate the questionnaire prior to the meeting, in order to reach concrete conclusions on what ought to be done. If a strong need was felt it would be possible to envisage a training course in 1985 in connection with the Institute's session.

Finally, in order to make clear from the outset the technical nature of the planned meeting and to ensure the participation of persons referred to above, it was agreed to entitle it "Information techniques for human rights (collection, storage and retrieval)". Mr Wilhelm was asked to handle the organisational aspects of the meeting in collaboration with HURIDOCS and in liaison with the Council of Europe.

Returning to the idea of a larger European Consultation meeting involving human rights activists and human rights information handlers, the Committee agreed that such a meeting - similar to the Quito Conference - should still be envisaged and should be returned to at the next meeting. It was recognised that the organisation of such a meeting involved far more finance, time, facilities, etc than the seminar envisaged above. It was also essential to find a suitable organiser and a suitable location. It was felt that Geneva would be a suitable location in so far as many organisations could be involved on the spot without engaging important financial means. It was also suggested that support for the meeting might possibly be forthcoming under the UN's Advisory Services Sub-Programme.

It was agreed that at this stage the idea of such a meeting should be advertised through the network on the basis of the blueprint in Appendix III to this report. At the same time, it was thought that the Church's Committee on Migrant Workers in Europe could be approached with a view to determining whether it could envisage the meeting in the framework of its mandate.

The Committee decided to consider this question again at its next meeting on the basis of the feedback from individual organisations and centres and in the light of the contacts with the Church's Committee.

Item 1.0 on the agenda: Next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee was fixed for the morning of 18 July 1984 in Strasbourg. The meeting would be followed by the Seminar on Information Techniques.

APPENDIX I

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Developments since the 5th meeting of the Committee
4. Human Rights Thesaurus
5. Progress in the publication of the "Eurotech Bulletin"
6. Progress in the Directory of Western European Collections
7. HURIDOCS budget and fundraising
8. Progress in the organisation of the European Consultation Meeting
9. Progress in the training of documentalists
10. Date of next meeting

APPENDIX II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

M. Jean-Pierre COLOMBEY, Legal Officer, Head Refugee Law Documentation Centre,
Haut Commissariat des Nations Unies pour les Réfugiés, GENEVE

Mr Werner LOTTJE, Secretary for Human Rights and Refugees, Diakonisches Werk des
Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, STUTTGART

Mme Anne-Lise PERRIER, Documentaliste, Institut International des Droits de l'
Homme, STRASBOURG

Mr Johannes THOOLEN, Director Institute SIM, UTRECHT

Mr Christian WILHELM, CIAS (Centre International des Avocats de Strasbourg pour
les droits de l'homme, STRASBOURG

Mr Frits HONDIUS, (Convenor), Deputy to the Director of Human Rights, Council of
Europe, STRASBOURG

Mrs Jane DINSDALE, Administrator, Directorate of Human Rights, Council of
Europe, STRASBOURG

Mr Kjetil JOHNSEN, Head of Human Rights Documentation Centre, Council of Europe,
STRASBOURG

APPENDIX III

Draft Proposal for a European Human Rights Conference on Information and action on Human Rights (feasibility study by Werner Lottje)

1. In the member States of the Council of Europe, a great number and variety of organisations and groups exist, who work in the field of Human Rights.
2. They can - in a simplified way - be divided into groups and Organisations
 - who work on Human Rights in Third World Countries
 - who work on Human Rights in Europe itself
 - who work on Human Rights related issues in their own countries, both on a national and international level. Such issues are for example Migrant Workers, Asylum Seekers and Political Refugees, Ethnic, Cultural and Religious Minorities
3. Further elements to distinguish these groups could be the following:
 - Groups and Organisations who mainly react upon information they receive from other sources
 - Groups and Organisations who collect information on Human Rights violations abroad both for their own use and for documentation and information purposes
 - Groups and Organisations who work for the promotion and protection of the rights of marginalised people in European countries. They are or should be - because of their practical involvement - sources of Human Rights information themselves, but very often for practical reasons have not yet developed the use of documentation and information as a tool to further their goals by improving their methods of work and their range of public influence by using information and documentation.
4. It has been widely observed by activists, researchers and experts in the field of Human Rights that little co-ordination among Human Rights Groups and Organisations exist in Europe, with the exception of some international non-governmental organisations and intergovernmental organisations based in Europe, mainly in Geneva. Much overlapping seems to exist in action as well as in information gathering, storing of information and in publication work.
5. Considering the limited human and financial resources available to Human Rights groups and organisations and also considering the increasing need for protection of Human Rights worldwide any means of avoiding unproductive work in the field of Human Rights should be welcome and further developed.
6. Having this in mind the European Co-ordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation proposes a European Human Rights Conference that should bring together representatives of the above-mentioned sectors of the Human Rights Movements in Europe, where HURIDOCS would be most beneficial, this means to bring together: activists researchers documentalists representatives of intergovernmental organisations (IGD) and non-governmental organisations (NGO), both on a national and international level.
7. As there is a great variety of subjects that could be dealt with on such an occasion the conference should concentrate on such topics where co-ordination of action, documentation and information would be of greatest importance.
 - a. in the defence and protection of torture victims
 - b. in the defence of the rights of migrant workers
 - c. in the defence of the rights of asylum seekers and political refugees
 - d. in the defence of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities.
8. All four topics are interrelated, thus a rather homogeneous group could be brought together. This would be supportive to achieve reasonable results, both in the interest of the participants as well as in the interest of HURIDOCS. (Of course the European Co-ordination Committee can change the above-mentioned topics or add other topics to the list. The author of this feasibility study considers these topics at present as those burning issues where Human Rights documentation and information methods would be most appropriate. Lawyers groups, civil rights groups and action groups are all to be found in relation with the above-

mentioned subjecte). 9. Participants should come from relevant organisations from all member States of the Council of Europe. In addition experts from the UN-Center for Human Rights, UNHCR, Council of Europe, UNESCO and from the European Parliament should participate at the meeting. 10. The purpose of the Conference would be: a. to get to know each other and to achieve a better knowledge and understanding of each others' activities, work methods and interests - 11 - DH/Inf-Co (84) 1 Appendix r11 b. to discuss possible combined research and action in certain areas c. to plan networking of information, especially networking of information and documentation centres in the field of Human Rights, networking of action and support groups in specified areas, such as anti-torture campaign, training of fieldworkers in the skill of documentation. 11. The convenor of the conference should be the HURIDOCs European Co-ordination Committee. For organisational and practical purposes the actual preparation and implementation of the conference should be done by a national Human Rights organisation. It is herewith being suggested that the Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists should be asked to serve as project carrier. The venue in that case would be a conference centre in Holland. 12. Working languages should be at the minimum English, French and Spanish. The necessity for such facilities might call for a conference centre where conference services such as interpretation could be provided. This would be more likely to be available in Geneva or in Strasbourg. 12. The costs for such a Conference should be calculated separately. To do an exact calculation, I have no means at hand to do it. The budget would include the following items: Co-ordinator for preparation of the conference (three to four months); travel expenses for co-ordinator and participants of the conference who cannot cover the travel expenses themselves or by their organisations. Secretarial, mailing and related expenses for the preparation of the conference. Secretarial, interpretation and other expenses during the conference. Travel and accommodation for participants who are unable to cover their own costs. Report on the conference, printing and translation. 14. As for the financial support, there should be a variety of sources approached. As there would be a variety of organisations whose Human Rights work would benefit from the outcome of such a conference, these organisations should make their own contributions. Such organisations would be national Amnesty International sections, national sections of ICJ, Church organisations, especially Church funding organisations for development aid, because much of their work is Human Rights related. There should be funds available from Government sources and from Political Foundations. The Trade Unions on the national and on the international level should not be neglected. Stuttgart, 16 June 1983 (Wemer Lottje)