

# COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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# CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg 31 July 1984

DH/Inf-Co (84) 2

## EUROPEAN CO-ORDINATION COMMITTEE ON HUMAN RIGHTS DOCUMENTATION

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7th meeting, 18 July 1984  
Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg

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### Summary report

#### I. Introduction (Items 1 and 2 of the agenda)

1. The European Co-ordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation held its 7th meeting at Council of Europe Headquarters in Strasbourg, on 18 July 1984.

2. The meeting was opened by Mr Frits Hondius, Deputy to the Director of Human Rights, who welcomed participants and apologised for the absence through illness of Mr Leuprecht, Director of Human Rights.

3. The committee was informed of the sudden death on 2 July in Strasbourg of Mr Janos Toth. Mr Toth, who was of Hungarian origin, had left his country in 1956 and taken refuge in Switzerland, subsequently obtaining Swiss nationality. He had worked at the University of Geneva as a private lecturer, campaigned untiringly for human rights and human rights education, particularly in the secondary sector, and had been a very active member of the European Co-ordination Committee. The members observed a minute's silence in his memory.

4. The agenda for the meeting, as adopted, appears in Appendix I; the list of participants is set out in Appendix II.

#### Summary of proceedings

5. During the meeting, the Co-ordination Committee in particular:

- i. noted the creation of two new human rights documentation centres; that of the European Parliament and the «Interights» centre, an organisation composed of approximately 250 jurists, particularly from Britain, with the objective of giving advice on human rights issues;

- ii. noted as a very useful development the creation of a French language human rights bulletin;
- iii. confirmed that the European Co-ordination Committee covered the whole of Europe and that certain centres in Eastern Europe could therefore participate in the meetings;
- iv. noted the lack of progress in the preparation of the Human Rights Thesaurus;
- v. noted with gratitude the offer of help from "Interights" with the continued up-dating of the Directory of Western European Collections;
- vi. urged that the European Consultation Meeting, to be held at the beginning of 1985 (see item 8 of the summary report of the meeting held on 30 January 1984, DH/Inf-Co (84) 1) take place if possible at the same time and place as the Ministerial Conference on Human Rights;
- vii. noted that there was no real need to give the committee its own budget, given that it was a flexible organisation without formal status;
- viii. decided that the next meeting of the committee would take place in Strasbourg on Friday 25 January 1985.

Item 3 of the agenda: Developments since the 6th meeting of the Committee

a. Huridocs

Mr Thoolen, Secretary of the International Board and president of the Dutch institute SIM, said that SIM had finally become a practical reality since it now had its own staff. On the matter of work carried out since the 6th meeting, there had been progress in standardisation (eg structure of documents). In addition, the second number of the HURIDOCs bulletin had just been issued.

In June a meeting of the Huridocs Board had been held in Utrecht, at which the question of the future development of Huridocs had been discussed. Its development as an organisational system would be treated as a priority.

There were now several possible sources of information. For example «Europäische Grundrechte Zeitschrift» (Engle Verlag) regularly published international texts and outlined the state of ratifications of the various treaties, but other information was often lacking, for instance on revisions of treaties or conventions. This type of gap should be filled by Huridocs.

On the same subject, Mr Hondius said that although Huridocs existed primarily to serve NGOs, intergovernmental organisations, which were both suppliers and users of information, considered themselves to be part of the network. The Huridocs Board remained composed exclusively of representatives of NGOs.

b. European organisations

7. Mr Hondius referred to the particular situation in Europe, the principal focus both of human rights documentation centres and institutions working for human rights in Europe or other continents.

8. Mr Boumans reported on the new «Human Rights» Unit, recently created in the framework of the European Parliament, and due to be set up by August. He was hoping to receive useful suggestions during the seminar to be held after the meeting.

The information stored by this new service would be available to everyone. The committee hoped to receive in due course more detailed information on the planned number of staff, whether an annual report was planned etc.

9. Mrs Prindez announced the creation of a French language bulletin whose first number was due to appear before the end of 1984. This bulletin was the product of co-operation between nearly 40 organisations, and would be published by CID.

10. Mrs Häusermann reported on the new organisation «Interights» (International Human Rights Law Centre). Based in the United Kingdom, it was composed of about 250 jurists, mainly of British origin, and had adopted the following objectives;

- dealing with human rights cases in the hope of collaborating with barristers prepared to accept reduced fees;
- organising training courses;
- carrying out research and informing the public.

In short, it intended to carry out an advisory role on human rights matters.

11. Mr Hondius said he was pleased to present the first volume of the six-volume «Digest of Strasbourg Case-Law relating to the European Convention on Human Rights», covering Articles 1 to 5 of the Convention. He hoped that the other five volumes would appear by Spring 1985.

He also announced the departure of Mr Johnsen, the first head of the documentation and information centre, who would be succeeded by Mr Stormorken (Norway). Lastly, he announced the preparation of a Ministerial Conference on Human Rights in Europe to be held in Vienna in Spring 1985.

12. Mr Nastase, member of the Huridocs Board and secretary of the International Law department of the University of Bucharest, asked whether the European Co-ordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation really included the East European countries. In those countries human rights questions were not treated in the same manner as in western Europe, and in particular documentation centres were organised on a national rather than an international basis.

13. Mr Thoolen referred to the relevant decisions of the meeting at which Huridocs had been set up in 1982, when it had been unanimously decided that the whole of Europe would be taken into consideration. The reply to the second question followed on from the first. If the Eastern European countries were accepted as members of the European Committee, it was necessary to take account of the political situation, which meant that human rights questions were studied mainly in various national institutes. There were no truly international organisations. In Western Europe several national organisations belonged to Huridocs (eg SIM, or the Evangelische Kirche Deutschland). The criterion for participation in the Huridocs system was not the international status of the member organisations, but rather their interest in international questions. The committee indicated its agreement.

c. Human Rights information technology seminar

14. The committee welcomed the holding of this seminar, (due to open in the course of the afternoon of 18 July and continue on 19 and 20 July) as a result of a suggestion made at its own meeting in January 1984.

Item 4 of the agenda: Human Rights Thesaurus

15. Mrs Knabe said that as the person responsible for preparing the Thesaurus had been ill, the meeting to have been held of the International Expert Group on the Thesaurus in March 1984 had not taken place. There had been some correspondence with the Italian Institute for Legal Research, which had begun to prepare such a thesaurus. It was decided to place this item on the agenda for the next meeting.

Item 5 of the agenda: EUROTECH Bulletin

16. Mrs Knabe said that the committee had repeatedly declared its interest in this bulletin and that the main question to be dealt with now was how its publication should be organised.

17. One participant said there was little point in questions on which no progress had been made appearing on every agenda. The committee recommended that when future meetings were convened a certain discretion regarding the items to be included on the agenda should be exercised.

Item 5a of the agenda: International Institute of Human Rights

18. Mr Kiss, Secretary General of the International Institute of Human Rights, noted with satisfaction the co-operation of his institute with the Co-ordination Committee. He called for still more frequent and more far-reaching collaboration and asked Mrs Perrier to announce the findings of the questionnaire sent out by the institute. Mrs Perrier said that as suggested at the 6th meeting of the committee, the institute had investigated interest in a course or seminar on human rights documentation.

The Institute had sent out 80 questionnaires, and the 25 replies received had shown that the general feeling was in favour of a three-day course on computerised documentation, preferably to precede or follow the summer courses of the Institute.

Item 6 of the agenda: Directory of Western European Collections

19. This was a second version of the existing directory, now out of date. Mrs Häusermann offered to continue this activity, which had remained incomplete following the death of Mr Toth.

The committee thanked Mrs Häusermann for offering to undertake this task.

Item 7 of the agenda: Organisation of a European Consultation Meeting

20. The basic idea of the meeting which had been suggested at a previous meeting, was to bring together the «activists» who needed information on human rights and the documentalists required to provide it.

One of the experts suggested that the meeting should be held at the same time and place as the Ministerial Conference of the Council of Europe.

Item 8 of the agenda: Huridocs budget and fund-raising

21. Mr Thoolén said that for the time being the European Committee did not need a budget of its own. The problem of resources only arose when there was a concrete activity to be financed such as the Directory or the Consultation Meeting.

However, the committee was faced with a problem because of the lack of its own resources for the committee in the sense that it had not had the means to follow up the different activities which it had formally adopted. For example, nothing had been heard from the member who had undertaken to report on fund-raising.

Item 8a of the agenda: Future participation of organisations from socialist countries

22. The committee authorised the Convenor to begin by inviting the following four institutions from socialist countries:

- Human Rights Scientific Documentation and Information Centre, Poznan, Poland;
- Institute for State and Law, Budapest;
- Human Rights Project of the Social Research Institute, University of Zagreb;
- International Law Section, University of Bucharest;

In the case of applications from other institutes, the Convenor might either accept immediately (especially in cases where the institute in question clearly met the conditions specified in paragraph 13) or, if in doubt, consult the members of the Co-ordination Committee.

Item 9 of the agenda: Other business

23. At the request of the organisers of two events to be held in Africa, Mr Hondius reported as follows:

a. University of Kinshasa

- August 1984: Colloquy on the fundamental rights of women
- 15 October 1984: Summary report on the colloquies which had taken place throughout the year on the theme «Elimination of prejudices, intolerance and racism towards pygmies (or Batwa)».

b. Dakar

The second World Congress on Human Rights would be held in Dakar from 24 June to 1 July 1985.

Item 9 of the agenda: Next meeting

24. It was agreed to hold the 8th meeting of the committee on Friday 25 January 1985 at the Palais de l'Europe, Strasbourg.

The committee requested the Director of Human Rights to act as Convenor.

APPENDIX 1

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Developments since the 6th meeting
  - HURIDOCS
  - European-based organisations
  - Seminar on Information Techniques for Human Rights
4. Human Rights Thesaurus
5. Eurotech Bulletin
6. Directory of Western European Collections
7. Organisation of a European Consultation Meeting
8. HURIDOCS budget and fundraising
9. Other business

APPENDIX II/  
ANNEXE II

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/  
LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

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c/o IGFM, Kaiserstr. 72, 6000, FRANKFURT/M1, R.F.A.

M. Etienne BOUMANS, Administrateur, Service des Droits de l'Homme,  
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Ms Charlotte HASFORTH, Librarian, European Parliament, Bibliothèque,  
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Ms Julia HAUSERMANN, Executive Director, Interights,  
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Mr Bjørn STORMORKEN, Project Collaborator, Norwegian Human Rights Project, c/o PRIO, Radhusgt 4, OSLO 1.

Mr Johannes THOOLEN, Director, SIM, Nieuwegracht 94, 3512 LX UTRECHT, The Netherlands

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M. Beat VONLANTHEN (Université de Fribourg), Attaché à la Direction des Droits de l'Homme, Conseil de l'Europe, STRASBOURG

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