

MINUTES

19th Meeting of the European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation, Toit de la Grande Arce, Paris, 18-19 May 1995.

1. Opening of the meeting

The meeting was opened by Mr. Marc Agi (la Grande Arce), who welcomed the participants and wished a fruitful meeting. Svend Bitsch Christensen of IRCT holding the secretariat on the European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation welcomed the participants and mentioned that more participants attended every year. This year there was participants from more than 20 countries. The European Coordination Committee thanked la Grande Arce for hosting the meeting.

2. Election of chairperson

James Lawson of the Council of Europe was elected to the chair.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda of the 19th meeting was adopted.

4. Roundtable - brief presentation of name and organizations

The participants introduced themselves and their organisations.

5. Minutes of the 18th meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were adopted without modifications.

6. Micro networks

Refugees

Lise Bruun of the Danish Refugee Council and Geneviève Bador of the Refugee Documentation Centre of UNHCR.CDR informed about the activities of the International Refugee Documentation Network (IRDN). IRDN was founded in 1986 and consists of 30 organizations. At present the activities were at a low level because of lack of funding. At the moment the secretariat IRDN was with the Berlin Institute for Comparative Social Research. The revised version of the Refugee Thesaurus was expected to appear in English in the Fall of 1995.

Torture

Svend Bitsch Christensen of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims informed about the activities of the International Torture Network (ITDN). He also informed about two training seminars in Australia whereby the ITDN can count participants from all continents of the world. A training seminar also had taken place in Ecuador at the Annette Fischer Documentation Centre (named after the late chair of the Council of Amnesty International) aimed at Amnesty Medical Groups in Latin America.

Maria Cecilia Gomez-Pinilla of the ACAT told about the activities of networking that takes place between the national sections of ACAT. She expressed the hope that the documentation work of ACAT would soon be computerized.

Ben Schonveld of SOS-Torture informed that they would start sending out their appeals using e-mail in order to reduce the ever increasing costs of mailing.

Children

Some of the organisations working with children were networking and exchanging data.

CUSHRID Net

Lucie Lamoureux represented CUSHRID Net (Canada-U.S. Human Rights Information Network) and gave a report on CUSHRID's activities. The organisation was established in 1994, and is a loose network whose

members are organisations, institutions and individuals with involvement in human rights documentation/information.

DIANA

Debra Guzman gave a report from the first DIANA meeting (Direct Information Access Network Association). The participants in the DIANA meeting had been in agreement on the desirability of a European site. The information needed to be stored in a structured manner. It was felt that building a new project could involve the following priority of the materials:

1. Primary materials (treaties, IGO declarations, recommendations and resolutions). The primary sources could eg. be Council of Europe, The European Union and the OSCE.
2. Status of the instruments. This includes signature, ratification, declarations, entry into force etc.
3. Rules of procedure of all appropriate bodies.
4. Interpretation by the international supervisory bodies.

It was suggested that a section in HURIDOCS News could inform about 'EURO DIANA'.

7. Report of the activities of HURIDOCS

Bert Verstappen informed about the meeting for trainers in Pataya. There had been training seminars in the following countries: Nepal (together with AAAS), Egypt, and Kenya. James Lawson had been in South Africa training the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. There was plans for training in Pakistan, Bangkok, and Prague.

HURIDOCS publications will be translated into French, Spanish, Russian and Arabic.

Bjørn Stormorken had developed a Thesaurus building tool.

HURIDOCS had published a Directory of human rights NGOs worldwide in cooperation with OECD and UNHCR.

The members of the new Communication Task Force were: Naceur El-Kefi, Moussa Fall, Hannah Forster, Debra Guzman, Lucie Lamoureux and Marija László.

One of the long-range issues that the taskforce would explore is the possibility of including e-mail information (education and training, access and retrieval) within the human rights documentation centres currently working with HURIDOCS. These centres would no longer wait weeks or months for the latest report from the Watch Committees, the UN, or other bodies, as this material can simply be e-mailed to various centres as it becomes available online. More and more information is available in electronic form.

8. Is there a need or training for the European members and how?

There was a long discussion of this specific item. It was suggested that training should take place within the different European regions as the needs varied.

- a) wanted proper training to local information workers
- b) electronic communication, Internet for those having databases and wanting to make them accessible.
- c) HURIDOCS should focus on basic training
- d) establish groups with specific needs

9. Discussion of HURIDOCS' List of index terms and suggestions for improvement.

Agnethe Olesen of the Danish Centre for Human Rights said that in the list of index terms some important terms were missing. She suggested that rather than making a new list terms should be added. She asked the participants to send comments to DCHR. Agnetha Olesen would complete responses and forward the changes to HURIDOCS.

10. The EVENT format

Some of the participants found the EVSYS difficult to use without adequate training.

11 . Discussion on CDS/ISIS including the exchange from other systems

The manual of how to use indep/serial was now available. Kirsti Sparrevohn of IRCT suggested that users of CDS/ISIS also installed the utility programmes now available. The utility programmes made the whole program more user friendly. CDS/ISIS was now able to import and export SEEF: Standard Formats Exchange Files. Danish Refugee Council, Danish Centre of Human Rights, OASIS and IRCT was now able to exchange data. The data from the tour documentation centre will be made available on CD-Rom.

12. How can we communicate via e-mail?

The participants used e-mail in different ways.

- a) editing articles for a journal
- b) to ordering books
- c) mailing programmes
- d) electronic publishing of a newsletter
- e) used for urgent appeals

Security and virus was one problem, information overload another.

It was also mentioned that data could be changed. It was suggested that a code was added to the documents so changes could be discovered.

2/3 of the participants used e-mail.

13. Miscellaneous

Meeting organisation we re discussed. The wish for an introduction to HURIDOCS for newcomers was suggested. It was getting more difficult to get financial support for the meetings. The participants were asked to suggest venues in Paris or elsewhere. Belfast, Bonn, and Utrecht were mentioned in this regard. IRCT -Documentation Centre was willing to continue as secretariat

Next meeting May 1996.

AT the marketplace several organisations made demonstrations of their databases. Geneviève Bador (UNHCR. CDR) presented REFWORLD. Colm Campbell, the State of Emergency Database. Lise Bruun Danish Refugee Council, DRC's Information System, HURIDOCS Standard Formats for Macintosh by Boris Beer, Commission Internationale de Juristes and ICC database on mother and child health protection by Daniel Baudin.