

This document contains general and brief information regarding the activities of the European Group (EG) of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (NHRIs).

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Abbreviations used in this document :

*EG : European Group of National Human Rights Institutions
ECC: European Coordinating Committee of National Human Rights Institutions
NHRIs : National Human Rights Institutions
HR: human rights*

Meetings of the European Group of National Human Rights Institutions (EG):

- 1. Meeting of the European Coordinating Committee (ECC) on the 14th of October 2005 in Dublin, Ireland:** the ECC held its second meeting, with a representative from the National Institutions Unit of the United Nations (UN) Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (HR) and of the Deputy Director of the Office of the Commissioner for HR of the Council of Europe (CoE). The next meeting of the ECC will be held in Copenhagen on February 2nd 2006.
- 2. Meeting of experts from European NHRIs in the field of technical assistance in Paris, November 25th:** experts from European NHRIs held a meeting with the National Institutions Unit of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for HR and the Deputy Director of the Office of the Commissioner for HR of the CoE regarding technical assistance and adopted a pilot project called JOIN (see below).

Work of the EG in relation with the United Nations

1. Idea of a meeting with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees

A letter was sent to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, Mr. Guterres, on behalf of the EG, requesting a meeting in order to discuss a possible regular cooperation with his office, to deal with Asylum issues at the European level.

2. Common position on the reform of the UN treaty body system

Following the discussion at Dublin meeting regarding the reform of the UN treaty body system, the ECC drafted a proposal for a common position which was presented to all NHRIs of the EG. This position is intended to be sent to Ms. Arbour, UN High Commissioner for HR. However, in light of observations expressed by members of the EG, the common position has not been finalized and is on hold, until its fate is discussed during the next ECC meeting.

3. Draft international convention on the rights of persons with disabilities

In view of the 7th session of the UN ad hoc committee in charge of drafting a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities, an international meeting of NHRIs was held in Harvard, Boston, on December 2-3 at the initiative of the Irish Human Rights Commission. This meeting was co-organized by the Harvard Law School and the Irish Human Rights Commission, with the support from the UN High Commissioner's Office. It gave numerous experts the opportunity to work on an international NHRI common position on the issue of monitoring.

4. Contribution to the work of the UN sub-commission for HR

The EG has been consulted by the UN sub-commission for HR in the form of a questionnaire to give relevant information on two major issues: the status of victims of terrorist attacks and the universal application of international HR treaties.

Work of the EG in relation with the Council of Europe

1. Entry into force of Protocol 12 to the European Convention of Human Rights

The entry into force of protocol 12 to the ECHR was the subject of a seminar at the Council of Europe on October 11th, which the French Commission attended on behalf of the EG. The Danish and German Institutes participated as well.

2. Meeting of the Steering Committee for Human Rights of the Council of Europe (CDDH), November 22nd-25th

The EG was represented by the French Commission (Ms. Stéphanie Djian) during the 61st meeting of the CDDH in Strasbourg. The next meeting of the CDDH will take place on April 4-7 2006.

3. Meeting of the group of experts on human rights in the fight against terrorism (DH-S-TER), December 7-9

The EG was represented by the German Institute at the first DH-S-TER meeting in Strasbourg on the 7th-9th of December, focused on the issue of diplomatic assurances. In order to provide input to this meeting, the EG had adopted a common position on this issue. The next meeting of the DH-S-TER will be held on March 29-31.

4. Pilot project on technical assistance: JOIN

The idea of a technical assistance pilot project for the creation, strengthening, and defense of NHRIs was adopted during the meeting in Paris on the 25th of November. Following this meeting, a draft mandate of the technical assistance project (named JOIN) was sent to all the NHRIs of the EG for amendments or observations. They have to be received by the 13th of January. The final mandate will ultimately be adopted during the ECC in Copenhagen on the February 2nd. A letter of agreement will be exchanged between the Commissioner for HR of the CoE and the EG, in order to formalise their partnership.

Work of the EG in relation with the European Union

1. Links with the EU Parliament

The French Commission, on behalf of the EG, met Mr. Jean-Marie CAVADA, President of the Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs Commission of the European Parliament in Strasbourg on the 26th of October 2005. Several different items such as cooperation with his Commission, the Agency of fundamental rights and the seminar on fundamental rights were tackled.

2. Common position on the European Agency of fundamental rights

Based on the two common positions that have already been adopted in December 2004 and July 2005, a new common position has been drafted by the chair of the ECC referring directly to the EU Commission's proposals. The common position will give an input to the EU parliamentary report. The consultation process within the EG has been launched and any amendments or observations must be received by the 2nd of January.

3. Idea of liaison office for NHRIs within the European commission

Following the meetings with Mr. Frattini (vice-president of the EU Commission, in charge of the Directorate General "Justice, Liberty and Security") and with Mr. Brun (Chief of the fundamental rights unit within Mr. Frattini's directorate general), the ECC adopted a draft mandate for a liaison office within the EU Commission, strongly inspired by the existing liaison office at the Council of Europe. This draft mandate proposal was directly sent to Mr. Brun.

4. Idea of a European seminar regarding fundamental rights

The ECC adopted a draft regarding the organisation of a European seminar on fundamental rights which was directly sent to Mr. Brun.

Mr Brun's office has responded suggesting a meeting in January to discuss these two ideas further.

5. Idea of an ad hoc meeting of European NHRIs on EU matters

At the ECC meeting in Dublin, it was decided to convene of a specific meeting of the EG in order to discuss substantial issues regarding the EU next year in Geneva one day before the yearly EG meeting.

Work of the EG in relation with the OSCE

1. Proposal of a liaison office within the OSCE

In a speech during the Human Dimension Conference in Warsaw, Mr. Forst, Secretary General of the French Commission, following up the Berlin resolutions suggested to Ambassador Strohal to create a liaison office for NHRIs, within the OSCE, based on existing models. The ECC welcomed this step forward and decided that it should proceed in developing a dialogue in view of such liaison office.

Miscellaneous information

1. The next Roundtable of European NHRIs with the Office of the HR Commissioner of the CoE will be held in the fall 2006 (probably mid-October) in Athens, hosted by the Greek commission. A consultation process will be carried out in due time concerning its agenda.
2. The Greek commission has a new vice-president: Mrs. Haritini Dipla
3. The French Commission has been renewed and some new members have been appointed for three years.
4. Mr Thomas Hammarberg was appointed new Commissioner for HR of the Council of Europe and will take over from Mr Alvaro Gil Robles in April 2006.