

Minutes of the first meeting of the Working Group on the Rights of the Child

On Wednesday 25 January 2017 from 16:30 to 18:00 at the Palais

Commission on Human Rights

Registration of the working group within the Conference of INGOs and the Council of Europe

The new strategy for the rights of the child 2016-2021, adopted in Sofia in April 2016, identifies 5 priority areas:

- Equal opportunities for all children;
- Participation of all children;
- A violence free life for all children;
- Justice for all children;
- The rights of the child in numbers.

In accordance with the Council of Europe's Children's Rights Strategy 2016-2012, the working group will prepare a contribution from the Conference of INGOs, based on the compendium of good practice and with a critical look to identify by the participants of the projects themselves, the obstacles in the implementation of their innovative actions. This collection will be the subject of a publication which will be disseminated within and outside the Council of Europe in order to inspire and encourage policy makers to facilitate the implementation of actions which respect the rights of children at the local level and to share good practices within INGOs.

Methodology and composition of the working group

Following the official launch of this new working group on the rights of the child at the June 2016 session, a questionnaire was sent to approximately 90 INGOs of the Conference, identified using the INGO database from the Conference website. Through this action, 12 positive responses were received. To this they added those INGO who had already indicated their interest and their desire to participate in this working group, at the session of June 2016.

The first meeting of the working group was held on Wednesday, 15 January 2017, as part of the winter session of the Conference of INGOs. This first meeting brought together 17 people, representing 14 INGOs, including 9 not yet identified INGOs. To this number, 4 INGOs joined the working group at the meeting of the Commission on Human Rights.

To date, the Working Group on the Rights of the Child has brought together 23 INGOs. NGOs have also expressed their interest and wish to be able to contribute to the work carried out.

Exchanges between members of the working group

1. The members of the working group quickly realized that there was already much work on the rights of the child, as well as numerous good compilations of practices. Some of them have existed for several years, although the situation in the different states of the Council of Europe has not changed.

2. Therefore, the members of the working group insist that they do not wish to produce an additional good practice guide, which in turn would not be used and quickly forgotten. The question then is to know what types of action and what types of strategy it is now relevant to put in place so that the work undertaken has a real impact.

- One of the paths could be the production of a written contribution and the provision of expertise within the framework of the reporting system of the European Social Charter. Reports on articles related to the child, family, and migrants, will be submitted by 31/10/2018.

3. The members of the working group also stressed their desire to create a multidisciplinary status within this working group, both within the conference and between the Council of Europe's institutions. It seems that different Working Groups led by the Committee of Ministers or the Parliamentary Assembly could nurture also the Working Group on the Rights of the Child.

4. The concrete objectives of this working group need to be further defined. However, members of the working group advocated in advance that a work of identification and collection should be carried out to centralize and to have an overview of the work that exists on the subjects of good practices in the field of human rights. Children, recommendations, specifications ...

5. At the same time, it will be necessary to target some social problems and a few specific audiences, always linked to the new strategy on the rights of the child. These themes will be further defined and selected by the members of the working group, in order to identify both the most important problems and those in which we can act and bring about change.

- First social issues: access to education, the right to live in one's family, retention of minors, poverty, precariousness and exclusion, positive parenthood, trafficking in human beings

- First categories: MENA, Roma children, children with disabilities, children taken in care for the protection

6. The members of the working group asked for a report on the work of the Council of Europe's ad hoc Committee on the Rights of the Child at each session of the Conference and INGOs and meeting of the working group.

7. For the next 6 months and until the next meeting of the working group, the members of the group decide to carry out a work of collecting and identifying material what exists, both within the Conference of INGOs, The Council of Europe and other European and international bodies, but also within INGOs and NGOs.

8. The members of the working group unanimously decided to use the e-mails as communication and coordination tools for the working group.

9. The members of the working group proposed that interested NGOs should be able to familiarize themselves with the European tools on the rights of the child, the European Convention on the Rights of the Child, the European Social Charter, etc. to provide a feedback on the problems encountered in their state, in connection with these tools.