



European
Coordination
Committee on
Human
Rights
Documentation

Report of the 29th meeting of the

European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation (ECCHRD)

8-9 June 2006, London, UK

Minutes: Fiona Bolt, Iris Reiss-Golumbeck (Amnesty International)

The 29th meeting of the European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation (ECCHRD) was organised by the International Secretariat of Amnesty International, acting as well as Secretariat for the meeting. The meeting was held at the International Secretariat of AI and at The Human Rights Action Centre (Amnesty UK) in London.

Thursday 8 June 2006

1. Tour of the Information Resources Department, International Secretariat of Amnesty International

2. Opening of the meeting and Opening address

The meeting was officially opened at The Human Rights Action Centre. The opening address was given by Christine Catton, Program Director of the Information Resources Program at the International Secretariat of Amnesty International. She talked about the long existing relationship between Amnesty International and ECCHRD and that it has been 14 years since she herself attended an ECCHRD meeting. She said that it was long overdue that Amnesty International would host a meeting and pointed out the highlights of the agenda.

3. Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted with the provision that those who were interested in meeting as part of a special interest group would be given the opportunity to do so on an ad hoc basis, and that reports from these groups could be presented as part of AOB.

4. Election of chairperson

Patrick Müller (Council of Europe) was elected chair. He welcomed the participants and expressed his appreciation for the good meeting place.

5. Presentation of participants and their organisations

All the participants gave a short presentation of themselves and their organisations.

6. Minutes of the 28th meeting

The draft minutes of the 28th meeting were adopted without amendments.

7. Presentation of Oxfam's new open-source web content management / Romilly Gregory

Romilly Gregory gave a presentation on Oxfam's Content Management system, which included, among other issues, information on the benefits of an Enterprise Content Management system and details of the system selection process. The system chosen was Plone, which is an open source web content management system. Oxfam have developed their own system using Plone and Romilly gave an overview of this system which is now being used on Oxfam's websites. The various advantages (cost, single sign-on) and disadvantages (development time) were discussed. Romilly suggested that the Oxfam-developed version was useful for organizations that have to manage multiple websites but for smaller organizations with only one website, she recommends to start with the standard version of Plone. There were many questions for Romilly after the presentation, regarding metadata (hierarchical, searching by the public is done using a Google search engine but CMS users can use keywords. Plone is Dublin Core compliant and the system will be compatible with IDML); retrospective addition of content (most legacy content is now read only and won't be migrated); and the need for in-house technical expertise (Oxfam have taken on some new staff). In answer to the question of how smaller NGOs can gain from Oxfam's work, Romilly replied that Oxfam will manage metadata standards but they will be very specific to Oxfam. Oxfam also plans to make their version of the system available to others. More information here:

<http://www.oxfam.org.uk/ploneability>

<http://plone.org/>

Friday 9 June 2006

8. Information aspects of the Human Rights Impact Assessment - the example of the Human Rights Impact Resource Centre (HRIRC) / John Lannon and Jan de Vries

John Lannon (University of Limerick) and Jan de Vries (Humanist Committee on Human Rights) presented a new website which groups together the best resources on measuring impact of human rights work. These resources are organized around an eight-step process, with relevant tools for each step of the process. This very useful analytical methodology can be used not only for impact assessment, but also for developing an effective strategy for interventions – but it is not a tool for monitoring human rights abuses. Besides organising the resources around the eight step approach tools, instruments, case studies and publications can be viewed quite independently. General information on HRIA is also available from the website <http://www.humanrightsimpact.org/>

The presentation gave information about the system layout and architecture, the needs assessment that was carried out for the project and the results of the initial testing phase. The goal is to make the system inter-operable with other systems and to link it to other tools such as HuriSearch.

9. Developments within HURIDOCS / Bert Verstappen

Bert Verstappen spoke about HURIDOCS progress on its 2004-2006 strategic action plan. Developments include:

- Meeting held on Semantic Web, hosted by Amnesty International / IS in London following discussions started at the 28th ECCHR meeting in Warsaw.
- Training on documenting violations held in Liberia with ongoing contact.
- Biggest Evsys database used by CEDHU (Comisión Ecuánica de Derechos Humanos) in Ecuador (10.6000 events, 13.750 victims, 3.388 perpetrators). This database will be transferred to the present version.
- A consultant in Kenya is developing a WinEvys adaptation for HR groups in Somalia and Somaliland.
- A new version of HURITools has been published.
- Translations: Spanish translation of tools to be finished in the next month. Arab translation done by Danish Institute of HR. Portuguese translation of WinEvsys on request of AI / Dutch Section for special Africa programme.
- ECCHR and RIDHUALC are the most active networks.
- Preparation for General Assembly in 2007 has started. Conference theme will be "Communication HR: challenges in using HR information effectively.
- Several presentations of HURIDOCS tools have been done by the HURIDOCS Secretariat and the Board as well as by Genevieve Bador (UNHCR), Ion Iacos (Danish Inst. for HR) and Iris Reiss-Golumbeck (AI / IS).
- Member of network of Geneva-based organisations InForHumanum.
- The fundraising situation has slightly improved. An evaluation by an external consultant has been requested by one of the main donors at the end of the current strategic action plan.
- Training on documentation, monitoring, fact finding has been conducted. Technical training such as RSS or semantic web and HR introduction training on specific subjects, f.e. on ESCR has been initiated.

- Last year five training courses were held in Tajikistan, Ghana, Liberia, Somalia and Chechnya.
- The Iraqi human rights ministry asked for training for the future librarian of the documentation centre.
- Upcoming training will be done in Croatia (also for Serbia and Bosnia&Hercegovina), in Turkey, Great Lakes and Geneva.
- The HURIDOCS trainers pool consists of 38 members, divided into lead trainers, co-trainers and resource persons. Training of trainers was held in Warsaw and Jakarta during the last year. More trainers are always needed and welcome.
- New ideas: distance learning and video tutorials for WinEvsys.
- Challenges: monitoring impact of tools and training; ensuring sustainability; methodology of partnerships; funding

10. Demonstration of the new HURISEARCH tool / James Lawson, Bert Verstappen, Daniel D'Esposito

The HURIDOCS team presented the new version of HuriSearch (<http://www.hurisearch.org/>), which incorporates some new features which make it an essential tool for human rights researchers. This version has tried to introduce tools that help people who don't know HR terminology. The software for the search engine is called FAST. HuriSearch has now indexed more than 3000 human rights websites.

Users can choose from four groups (or select them all) which are NGO's, Academic institutions, National HR institutions and IGO's or go to a specific organisation.

In the left column of the main page are options which allow users to refine the search by homing in on information published in a specific country, in a specific language, and by a specific organization. The result list is not only ranked but it is also clustered. This allows that the search results are listed in such a way that information from smaller local organizations is very visible and often shows up near the top. HuriSearch also automatically analyses the results and detects human rights keywords (documents are ranked against HURIDOCS index terms), which can then be also used to refine the search even more.

The advanced search allows searching by metadata. HURIDOCS hopes this will encourage organisations to add more metadata to their websites. In the advanced search it is a pure vertical crawling, not horizontal. At the moment a list of organisations crawled is not available but could be made so. At the moment there are no governmental organisations included.

By 1 June 2006 the 3000 website owners will be informed about HURISEARCH. Everybody especially the ECCHR members are asked to communicate the launch, demonstrate the tool and where possible add a search box to their site between July and November 2006. On 10 December 2006 there will be an official launch in Geneva.

11. Tour of HR Action Centre / Toni Yam and Katy Wright

Toni Yam and Katy Wright, information managers at the Human Rights Action Centre (HRAC) in London gave the participants a tour of the Action Centre including its library. The HRAC houses Amnesty International's UK Section headquarters and provides creative space for human rights activists.

12. Presentation of STATEWATCH / Ben Hayes

Ben Hayes, the director of the Statewatch European Monitoring and Documentation Centre (SEMDOC) presented the work of Statewatch. Statewatch is a non-profit-making voluntary group founded in 1991. Statewatch provides a web-based service which monitors the state, justice and home affairs, civil liberties accountability and openness in the European Union, to make sure that information on policy and decisions is made available to the public. Ben spoke about the lack of access to EU documentation. At the moment the three EU bodies (Commission, Parliament, Council) have separate databases and although work has begun to link them this is not yet complete. Statewatch is trying to fill this gap.

In 1998 the *SEMDOC* website was launched, which has a unique collection of documents from the Council of the European Union, The European Commission and the European Parliament on justice and home affairs and civil liberties. This collection is the only historical record available outside the EU office. The SEMDOC website is available on subscription only but depending on some funding in the future might become available for free. The SEMDOC legislative observatory is 6 years old and it is planned to move to a new platform.

The observatories on the Statewatch websites are on 20 different specific subjects. There is a search database available on subscription basis: <http://database.statewatch.org/search.asp>.

Statewatch News Online has become the focal point of Statewatch's work. The focus lies on trying to get documents which are not in the public domain. The appearance and functionality of the websites are outdated and is it planned to renew the different services in the next 12 months.

Statewatch is one of the founding groups of ECLN (European Civil Liberties Network). ECLN was launched in 2005 and has set up a very valuable noticeboard for civil liberties organisations on its website (<http://www.ecln.org>).

More information: <http://www.statewatch.org>.

13. Demonstration of OSCE-ODIHRs information system and new website / Hanne Stemann

Hanne Stemann from ODIHR provided an update about the new website for the Tolerance and Non-Discrimination Programme they are working on. Among other things, it will have country pages providing one-point access to national initiatives, national specialized bodies, country reports from intergovernmental organisations, hate crime statistics etc., thematic pages and pages with official OSCE decisions, relevant international standards and legislation. The website links to the full text of documents on the author website and provides metadata, and it will be possible to perform field searches. Relevant HURIDOCS index terms have been incorporated and the team is working on adding some hierarchy to the indexing system in the database.

A partnership has been established with HURIDOCS in order to integrate HuriSearch on the website to provide users with the best way of finding NGO materials. Hanne is expecting comments on the website from test users and the website is expected to be launched online in October 2006.

<http://www.osce.org/odihhr/16431.html>

Demonstration of OSCE-ODIHRs contacts/activities database in MySQL / Hanne Stemann and Piotr Stepien

This database is used by ODIHR to manage contact and activity information. It records areas of expertise and activities. The database uses the same HURIDOCS terms as for the bibliographic database. The team is also investigating the possibility of using MySQL as well for the bibliographic database. ODIHR is working on a search interface to the contacts/activities database and will then be willing to share the template with anyone who's interested.

14. Any other matters / Report back from working groups

- Torture Thesaurus – The first draft will be available in Autumn 2006.
- Training – It was suggested that we use the ECCHR discussion list to post information about our training needs, resources and experiences. It would also be a good place for HURIDOCS to advertise for more trainers.

It was suggested that we add a long lunch hour on the next agenda to facilitate working groups

15. Report back from ECCHR secretariat

The secretariat encouraged participants to use the discussion list on the ECCHR website and particularly asked for suggested topics for next year's agenda. ([http://sim.law.uu.nl/sim/library/discussion.nsf/\\$\\$ViewTemplate%20for%20\(Date\)?OpenForm&BaseTarget=Main&AutoFramed](http://sim.law.uu.nl/sim/library/discussion.nsf/$$ViewTemplate%20for%20(Date)?OpenForm&BaseTarget=Main&AutoFramed)). Any comments on how to improve the website are appreciated.

16. Date and place of the next meeting and closing

Fiona Bolt and Iris Reiss-Golumbeck (Amnesty International, London) kindly offered to be the ECCHR Secretariat for one more year but pointed out that the participants should already start thinking of who could take over the ECCHR secretariat after the meeting in 2007.

Lena Olsson from the Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law in Lund, Sweden offered to host the meeting in 2007.

After thanking the Secretariat and emphasising the importance of meeting colleagues and keeping in contact, Patrick Müller closed the 29th ECCHR meeting.