

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 23 September 1983

DH/Inf-Co (83) 2

European Co-ordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation

5th meeting, 27 June 1983
Council of Europe Headquarters, Strasbourg.

Summary report

1. Introduction

The European Committee on Human Rights Documentation held its 5th meeting in Strasbourg (Council of Europe headquarters) on 27 June 1983. The meeting was opened by the representative of the Convenor, Mr Frits Hondius, Deputy to the Director of Human Rights, who welcomed participants and expressed the wish that the Committee would be able to reach some form of consensus on the more important items appearing on the agenda.

The agenda of the meeting is reproduced in Appendix I to this report; the list of participants is set out in Appendix II.

At the close of the meeting, the Committee in particular:

- agreed to hold the next meeting in Strasbourg (Council of Europe headquarters) at the end of January 1984 when the Parliamentary Assembly would be in session;
- noted with interest that the International Council of Huridocs envisaged appointing Mr Bjørn STORMORKEN as Huridocs' representative, temporarily based in Utrecht;

- noted with concern Mrs Knabe's remark that since progress was rather slow, Huridocs should seriously consider its future structure;
- welcomed any initiative towards co-ordination between human rights centres and institutes in the same geographical areas and asked Mr Toth to approach the Geneva-based centres and institutes on its behalf;
- decided to issue a European bulletin on human rights documentation exclusively containing Huridocs news entitled "European Information Co-ordination Bulletin";
- decided to ask Mr Bjørn Stormorken to look into the question of how the bulletin should be distributed;
- took note with interest of Mr Lottje's blueprint for a European Consultation meeting;
- decided to ask MM Ennals, Lottje and Premont to prepare the Conference to be held in February/March 1984 in Strasbourg;
- noted with regret that the updating of the Directory of Western European Collections would take more time than expected;
- noted with satisfaction that IDOC had now taken on the project of entering the keywords of the Thesaurus (the parts which are ready) into a data base and of elaborating proposals for criteria for structuring these keywords;
- noted with satisfaction that the preliminary version of the abridged 150 Terms Thesaurus would be ready by the end of 1983;
- recommended that in order to find the right solution to the question of what structure should be used for the final version of the Thesaurus one should experiment with a number of structures and ask the institutions and centres which were going to use it, for their comments;
- urged that the International Expert Group on Human Rights Thesaurus should meet as soon as possible, since a number of organisations were already setting up documentation centres;
- suggested that Huridocs should take an active role in the field of the training of documentalists;
- suggested that the idea be activated to organise training courses on a European level in the framework of the UN Advisory Services sub-programme;
- noted with satisfaction that IDOC would organise a trial training course on the OASIS system;
- recommended that suggestions be made to the Council of the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg to introduce the handling of documentation into their next year's summer programme;
- decided to ask Mr de Smet to prepare a report on questions of working out a budget for Huridocs and of fundraising.

2. Developments concerning Huridocs

The Committee was informed that the Huridocs meeting in Utrecht in May 1983 had been very successful. Plans were being made to organise a regional meeting for Arab States and another in Cameroon or Botswana. Several meetings had already been held in Asia. It was also envisaged to organise an IDOC training programme in Italy in the autumn of 1983, specialising in human rights and documentation.

Mrs Knabe mentioned that the International Council of Huridocs envisaged appointing Bjørn Stormorken as the representative of Huridocs to be based in Utrecht and later on elsewhere, if the network of information systems develops. Generally speaking, she was of the opinion that since progress was rather slow, Huridocs should seriously consider its future structure.

It was further said that the concrete programme of the Permanent Unit in Utrecht had not been established yet, but that inter alia Human Rights documentation courses were being envisaged.

3. Mr Daniel Premont informed the meeting that SIM was in the process of publishing the francophone Newsletter.

Ms Corinne Mertens of the Human Rights Documentation Centre of the Council of Europe explained that, although presently there were few data and not all functions were operational, the SIFT system worked and would be fully operational in the autumn of 1983.

Mr Hondius suggested that the SIFT should be used for the stocking of the Digest of Caselaw (containing extracts of all decisions and reports of the European Commission of Human Rights and of the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights) currently prepared for publication as had been done inter alia with the Collection of Council of Europe Conventions.

Mr Janos TOTH mentioned the work which had been done by the UN libraries in New York and Geneva in respect of UN instruments. Moreover, in Geneva, the Federal Institute of Comparative Law was now stocking all its own material and it was envisaged to establish shortly a local circuit. However, so far no progress had been made. Informal concertation and co-operation between libraries might be a possibility. At least a minimum of co-operation may be necessary in Geneva in order to avoid the duplication of work and undesirable developments. As to the progress regarding the updating of the Directory of Western European Collections, Mr Toth informed the meeting that in order to collect all necessary addresses, he needed some more time.

The Committee agreed with Mr Toth that the situation in Geneva was a problematic one which could only be solved by a systematic approach and co-ordination.

It therefore welcomed any initiative towards co-ordination between centres and institutes located in one geographical area and asked Mr Toth to approach on its behalf the Geneva-based institutes and centres.

As to the situation in London, Mrs Knabe informed the meeting that there was slow development. A meeting of the UK Human Rights institutes and organisations had taken place in London, but had not been very successful. Problems existed at co-ordination and documentation level. Amnesty International had some contacts with other organisations, but not on an institutionalised basis.

Mr Hondius mentioned that Mr Pettiti was interested to know what could be done for the Paris area.

Mr Jean-Bernard-Marie said that the CNRS had installed a terminal in Strasbourg, while the National Library was being automated. The system would be operational in the autumn. The Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg could serve as co-ordinator, but did not intend to set up an automatised Documentation Centre.

Mr de Smet mentioned that the IPIS had recently held a meeting where 40 human rights organisations had been present. A follow-up meeting was envisaged.

Mr Tegmo informed the Committee that Defence for Children International was setting up a documentation centre on children's rights.

3. Advisability of a European Bulletin on developments in Human Rights Documentation

Mr Stormorken said that at the last meeting it appeared that there was a need for an information bulletin. His ideas on such a bulletin were laid down in his outline of "Eurotech Bulletin" (Appendix III). He proposed to be the co-ordinator and editor.

Mrs Knabe explained that the idea behind the bulletin was to allow people to briefly report on local and regional co-ordination.

The Committee agreed that the bulletin should exclusively contain Huridocs news (new ideas, dates of meetings, suggestions on standard information, questions, etc) and be published every 6 months. The bulletin would contain between 20 and 25 pages and articles should be written in English or French. Feature articles could, if necessary, be translated or, otherwise, summaries in the other language could be provided. Furthermore, it should give a small description of its purpose and of Huridocs. The first issue (intended for September/October 1983) could give guidelines about articles, spacing, etc. As to the copyright, suggestions were made that either everyone could use the contents, but should disclose the source, or that everyone whose article would be published in the bulletin should waive copyright automatically. A further solution could be to consider this question on a case to case basis.

The bulletin (if possible to be reproduced by the Council of Europe services) would be called the European Information Co-ordination Bulletin. Mr Stormorken was charged with looking into the question of how the bulletin could be best distributed (through regular mailing lists of the Council of Europe, to members of Huridocs and other interested parties). The Committee thanked him for offering his services as editor of the bulletin.

4. Advisability of a European Consultation Meeting

The Committee thanked Mr Lottje for having prepared a paper containing proposals for such a Conference (see Appendix IV). It was generally felt that the main purpose of the consultation meeting should be to bring together human rights activists, ie those who need and use human rights information, and documentalists, ie, those who collect and classify such information. Some members considered that, since activist organisations had realised that education as preventive protection of human rights, was also action, education of human rights should be included in the list of items for the Conference. Teachers and other educators should be involved.

Although it realised that the items mentioned (torture victims, migrant workers, asylum seekers, political refugees and ethnic, cultural and religious minorities) were already being dealt with at UN level, the Committee felt that there was still a need to discuss these problems at a European level, where one did not sufficiently realise the existing problems. It was suggested that the Conference could identify areas where future co-ordination with other regions could be carried out.

Since it was felt that the Huridocs European Co-ordination Committee was a body not fit to prepare the Conference, suggestions were made to ask the Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists, which was to celebrate its 10th anniversary next year, to do so in their country. However, most members were of the opinion that Strasbourg was a much better place to hold such a Conference (direct contact with interested organisations, easier possibility of conference rooms and interpretation). This idea should therefore be further explored with the competent services of the Council of Europe.

The Committee decided to ask MM Ennals, Lottje and Premont to prepare the Conference to be held in February/March 1984.

5. Thesaurus

The Thesaurus had been updated since the inaugural conference of Huridocs. IDOC had taken on the project of entering the terms into a database and of elaborating proposals for criteria for structuring them. The institute had added other terms drawn from international instruments and treaties. It had used the clock-index, ie every single word, forming part of keywords, appears.

At the Huridocs Council meeting in Utrecht it had appeared that, since the work on a structure would take some time and the structure itself would be too complex to be used by small organisations and documentation centres, it was most important to have the abridged 150 Terms Thesaurus. A preliminary version thereof was now being elaborated and would be ready at the end of 1983.

The second list which the Institute had now established also gave the structure which was built around the rights guaranteed. The discussion was still going on whether or not to adopt the UN structure which covered more the words at large, legal systems and political parties. It would therefore be interesting to get some feedback from people who were going to use it.

It was felt that in order to find the right solution, experiments with a number of structures would be necessary.

The Committee agreed that the International Expert Group should meet urgently, since a number of organisations were already setting up documentation centres and were not prepared to wait until the Thesaurus would be ready. In this connection, it stressed once more the urgency of a short list of terms.

6. Training of documentalists

It was suggested that Huridocs should take an active role in the training of documentalists on the international or regional level. It should also be considered whether the idea to organise training courses on a European level in the framework of the UN Advisory Services sub-programme could be activated. Moreover, since IDOC was organising a trial training course on the OASIS system in the autumn of 1983, the experience of this first course might be helpful for other courses.

It was further suggested that the International Institute of Human Rights in Strasbourg could envisage introducing in its next year's summer course, the handling of documentation by way of an optional programme or a short session or seminar for specialists.

The Committee agreed that both ideas should be brought to the attention of the Institute's Council.

7. Fundraising

The question was asked whether it should not be necessary to have a budget in order to be able to raise funds.

It was agreed that this question and the one on how to approach the funding agencies in a professional way should be dealt with at the next meeting. Mr de Smet was asked to prepare a report on these questions.

8. Other business

The Committee agreed to hold its next meeting in Strasbourg during the January 1984 meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

APPENDIX I/ANNEXE I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS/LISTE DES PARTICIPANTS

Mr José de FARIA, Chief, Documentation and Publications Unit, United Nations Centre for Human Rights, GENEVA

Ms Friederike KNABE, Head of Informations Systems, Amnesty International, LONDON

Mr Werner LOTTJE, Secretary for Human Rights and Refugees, Diakonisches Werk des Evangelischen Kirche in Deutschland, STUTTGART

Mr Daniel PREMONT, Consultants Internationaux en droits de l'homme (CID), GENEVE
(SIM, c/o Hans THOOLEN, UTRECHT)

Mr Marco FALORNI, Istituto per la Documentazione Giuridica di Firenze - CVR - FLORENCE

Mr Bjørn STORMORKEN, Project Collaborator, Norwegian Human Rights Project, OSLO

Mr Janos TOTH, Legal Counsellor, Ecole instrument de paix, GENEVA

Ms Anne-Lise PERRIER, Institut International des Droits de l'Homme, STRASBOURG

Mr Martin ENNALS, Head of the Police Committee, Support Unit of GLC, LONDON

Mr Fernando AVILA, Ligue International des droits et liberation des peuples, STRASBOURG

Mr Christian WILHELM, CIAS (Centre International des Avocats de Strasbourg pour les droits de l'homme et la droit communautaire européen), STRASBOURG

Mr Luc DE SMET, IPIS, ANTWERP

Ms Loriani SERROTTI, Istituto per la Documentazione Guiridica Firenze, FLORENCE

Mr Nils Per Jonas TEGMO, Defence for Children International, GENEVA-THONEX

APPENDIX II

AGENDA

1. Opening of the meeting
2. Adoption of the agenda
3. Developments since the 4th meeting of the Committee
4. Progress in the elaboration of the Human Rights Thesaurus
5. Advisability of a European Bulletin on developments in Human Rights Documentation (Feasibility study by Bjørn Stormorken)
6. Advisability of a European Consultation Meeting (Feasibility study by Werner Lottje)
7. Training of documentalists
8. Any other business

Working document

Report of the 4th meeting of the European Co-ordination Committee
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APPENDIX III

OUTLINE OF "EUROTECH - BULLETIN"

by Bjørn STORMORKEN

A. General

The bulletin will be produced approximately every six months, and it is implied that the participants in the European Co-ordination Committee of HURIDOCs will provide material and write articles and in other ways contribute, while Bjørn Stormorken, in co-operation with Friederike Knabe, takes on the responsibility of administrating the bulletin.

B. Proposed main headings

These will be the regular main headings/topics that the bulletin will cover, without necessarily having to be included every time.

1. NEWS FROM THE HURIDOCs NETWORK

i. Europe

ii. Other regions

2. FEATURE

3. DOCUMENTATION TECHNIQUES

4. TRAINING

5. OTHER NETWORKS AND DATABASES

C. Proposed content for the first two issues

No. 1

NEWS FROM THE HURIDOCs NETWORK

Europe:

- IDOC - a short outline of its new system (ie time schedule for implementation, capacity, users, future plans
- SIM - a short note on progress
- Amnesty International - a short note on current plans/activities
- Council of Europe - a short note on the new Human Rights Documentation Centre
- CEDIA - Institute de formation en droit de l'homme de barreau de Paris; - a short note on the holdings and access.

Other regions:

- INTERNET - short note on the new computer system and progress
- News from Gabriel (Chile)

FEATURE

Full text retrieval systems

DOCUMENTATION TECHNIQUES

Micro-polydoc - a system for small micro-computers

The use of Thesauri in information retrieval

TRAINING

The IDOC training course

OTHER NETWORKS AND DATABASES

Up-date on INTERDOC

The "Droits des Peuples" network

No. 2

NEWS FROM THE HURIDOCs NETWORK

Europe:

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Other regions:

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FEATURE

Data protection and human rights information networks

DOCUMENTATION TECHNIQUES

OASIS-system as an intermediate technique. A practical adoption:
The Amnesty OASIS system

TRAINING

Further news on the IDOC - HURIDOCs training course

The effects of introducing micro-computers in small and medium-sized organisations

OTHER NETWORKS AND DATABASES

EURONET; DIANE

APPENDIX IV

Draft Proposal for a European Human Rights Conference on
Information and action on Human Rights
(feasibility study by Werner Lottje)

1. In the member states of the Council of Europe, a great number and variety of organisations and groups exist, who work in the field of Human Rights.
2. They can - in a simplified way - be divided into groups and Organisations
 - who work on Human Rights in Third World Countries
 - who work on Human Rights in Europe itself
 - who work on Human Rights related issues in their own countries both on a national and international level. Such issues are for example Migrant Workers, Asylum Seekers and Political Refugees, Ethnic, Cultural and Religious Minorities
3. Further elements to distinguish these groups could be the following:
 - Groups and Organisations who mainly react upon information they do receive from other sources
 - Groups and Organisations who collect information on Human Rights violations abroad both for their own use and for documentation and information purposes
 - Groups and Organisations who work for the promotion and protection of the rights of marginalized people in European countries. They are or should be - because of their practical involvement - sources of Human Rights information themselves, but very often for practical reasons have not yet developed the use of documentation and information as a tool to further their goals by improving their methods of work and their range of public influence by using information and documentation.
4. It has been widely observed by activists, researchers and experts in the field of Human Rights that little coordination among Human Rights Groups and Organisations exist in Europe, with the exception of some international nongovernmental organisations and intergovernmental organisations based in Europe, mainly in Geneva. Much overlapping seems to exist in action as well as in information.

gathering, storing of information and in publication work.

5. Considering the limited human and financial resources available to Human Rights groups and organisations and also considering the increasing need for protection of Human Rights worldwide any means of avoiding unproductive work in the field of Human Rights should be welcome and further developed.

6. Having this in mind the European Coordination Committee on Human Rights Documentation proposes a European Human Rights Conference that should bring together representatives of the above mentioned sectors of the Human Rights Movements in Europe, where HURIDOCS would be most beneficial, this means to bring together:

activists

researchers

documentalists

representatives of intergovernmental organisations (IGO) and nongovernmental organisations (NGO), both on a national and international level.

7. As there is a great variety of subjects that could be dealt with on such an occasion the conference should concentrate on such topics where coordination of action, documentation and information would be of greatest importance.

a) in the defense and protection of torture victims

b) in the defense of the rights of migrant workers

c) in the defense of the rights of asylum seekers and political refugees

d) in the defense of ethnic, cultural and religious minorities.

8. All four topics are interrelated, thus a rather homogeneous group could be brought together. This would be supportive to achieve reasonable results, both in the interest of the participants as well as in the interest of HURIDOCS.

(Of course the European Coordination Committee can change the above mentioned topics or add other topics to the list. The author of this feasibility study considers these topics at present as those burning issues where Human Rights documentation and information methods would be most appropriate.

Lawyers groups, civil rights groups and action groups are all to be found in relation with the above mentioned subjects.)

9. Participants should come from relevant organisations from all member states of the Council of Europe. In addition experts from the UN-Center for Human Rights, UNHCR, Council of Europe, UNESCO and from the European Parliament should participate at the meeting.

10. The purpose of the Conference would be:

- a) Get to know each other and to achieve a better knowledge and understanding of each others activities, work methods and interests
- b) To discuss possible combined research and action in certain areas
- c) To plan networking of information, especially networking of information and documentation centres in the field of Human Rights, networking of action and support groups in specified areas, such as anti-torture campaign, training of fieldworkers in the skill of documentation.

11. The convenor of the conference should be the HURIDOCSS European Coordination Committee. For organisational and practical purposes the actual preparation and implementation of the conference should be done by a national Human Rights organisation. It is herewith being suggested that the Dutch Section of the International Commission of Jurists should be asked to serve as project carrier. The venue in that case would be a conference center in Holland.

12. Working languages should be at the minimum English, French and Spanish. The necessity for such facilities might call for a conference center where conference services such as interpretation could be provided. This would be more likely to be available in Geneva or in Strasbourg.

13. The costs for such a Conference should be calculated separately; To do an exact calculation I have no means at hand to do it. The budget would include the following items:

Coordinator for preparation of the conference (three to four months)
Travel expenses for coordinator and participants of the conference who cannot cover the travel expenses themselves or by their organisations.

Secretarial, mailing and related expenses for the preparation of the conference.

Secretarial, interpretation and other expenses during the conference

Travel and accomodation for participants who are unable to cover their own costs.

Report on the conference, printing and translation

14. As for the financial support there should be a variety of sources approached. As there would be a variety of organisations whose Human Rights work would benefit from the outcome of such a conference these organisations should make their own contributions. Such organisations would be national Amnesty International sections, national sections of ICJ, Church organisations, especially Church funding organisations for development aid, because much of their work is being Human Rights related. There should be funds available from Government sources and from Political Foundations. The Trade Unions on the national and on the international level should not be neglected.

Stuttgart, 16 June 1983

(Werner Lottje)