

## UWE GENERAL ASSEMBLY 2009

### COUNCIL of EUROPE

Report of the vice president  
Vera JOHN-MIKOLAJEWSKI

This report is the first one; I am presenting as vice president to the General Assembly since my election in Kyrenia, North Cyprus, last year.  
Two vice presidents have been elected.

Part of my duties is the representation of UWE at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg by active participation in the Conference of INGO's (International Non-Governmental Organisations).

The Conference of INGO's is the collective body of meanwhile 417 INGO's enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe and has become the 4<sup>th</sup> pillar of the Council of Europe Institutions.

During the last year, the Conference of INGO's has undergone a radical structural reorganisation with the purpose to organise activities and partnerships with the other pillars of the Council of Europe more effectively.

It has resulted in the establishment of five new committees:

- Human Rights Committee;
- Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty Committee;
- Culture, Science and Education Committee;
- Sustainable Territorial Development Committee;
- Civil Society and Democracy Committee;

in addition, two transversal groups:

- Gender Equality Transversal Group;
- Europe and Global Challenges Transversal Group;

and the adoption of new Rules of Procedure (June session).

The Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the committees and transversal groups have been elected for a term of three years. The two last elections took place during the Summer Session, June 2009.

The new president of the Conference of INGO's is Jean-Marie Heydt having been elected in January 2009.

The Conference of INGO's, its Standing Committee, the five thematic Committees and the two transversal Groups meet four times a year in January, April, June and September/October. These sessions allow the INGO's to maintain a dialogue with the Council of Europe representatives and to implement their programme of activities.

### **Activities of the Conference of INGO's 2008-2009**

My first contact with the Council of Europe happened to be at the INGO autumn session, 2008, just two weeks after my election as vice president, at Cyprus.

Being introduced into my new working field by my kind and experienced predecessor Renée Gérard was very helpful to me. It was much easier for me getting familiar with the structures and the working procedures of the thematic groups within the conference of INGO's. so that I

could contribute to the Round table discussion on the proposal for a convention to combat violence against women, including domestic violence.

The Gender Equality Transversal Group had initiated this Round table meeting on 1 October 2008 to exchange views with the Ambassador of Latvia to the Council of Europe, Committee of Ministers' Thematic Co-ordinator on Equality between Women and Men, on the monitoring mechanism of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) moreover, with the Deputy Secretary General on the proposal for a convention to combat violence against women, including domestic violence. A Declaration to support the proposal for a Convention to combat violence against women can be seen as a first outcome of the newly established Gender Equality Transversal Group. The Declaration was adopted on 3 October 2008 by the Standing Committee and was sent to the Committee of Ministers. This Declaration will have an impact on the terms of reference in the elaboration process of the proposed Convention.

On the initiative of the Gender Equality Transversal Group a letter had been sent to UNMIK and other International Organisations including the Special Envoy of the European Union to Kosovo requesting to include women in the negotiations on the future of Kosovo in accordance with the UN Security Resolution 1325.

In regard to education and human rights NGOs organised a second forum on the topic of 'Civic Partnerships for Citizenship and Human Rights Education', in October 2008

NGOs are involved in the project on 'The Image of the Other in History Teaching', which will be finished in 2009; it forms part of strengthening of the intercultural dialogue. The subjects that it covers include the place of civil society in the globalisation process.

A draft declaration on media education has been presented.

The first Council of Europe exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue had taken place on 8 April 2008.

The Conference of INGO has played an important part in the preparation and actual holding of this meeting on teaching about religions and beliefs, which was attended by representatives of religious communities, media experts and professionals, and a delegation of INGO's particularly active in this field.

A Round table meeting on the rule of law and intercultural dialogue, organised on the initiative of the Chair of the Conference of INGO's, allowed closer study of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue (especially its implications for education and law) and the work of the European Court of Human Rights (particularly regarding the balance between freedom of expression and conscience and the proper functioning of democracy).

The Conference of INGO's participates in the programme 'Building a Europe for and with children: towards a strategy for 2009-2011, i.e. Promotion of children's rights and Combat of Violence against Children.

The programme's aim is to incorporate children's issues in Council of Europe activities through a three-year action plan based on the four P's.: protection of children, prevention of violence, prosecution of criminals and participation of children. Respective websites are available: one for children, introducing the Council of Europe, and the other for information on Children's Rights and case-law involving children.

NGOs participated in the Conference on “State budgets: a key factor in real equality between women and men”, Athens, 5-6 May 2009. Final goal is a gender-sensitive approach to all aspects of the budgetary processes in order to promote gender equality. A handbook on “Gender budgeting: practical implementation”, published by the Directorate General of Human Rights and Legal Affairs, Council of Europe, April 2009 is available.

This is not a complete list of all INGOS’ activities during the last twelve months but rather a selection of the variety of important and /or impressive events.

UWE is participating in the work of most groupings with special attention to the

- Culture, Science and Education Committee,
- Human Rights Committee,
- Gender Equality Transversal Group.

UWE follows also the meetings of the Parliamentary Commission on Equality between women and men.

This means an intensive activity. I am thinking and hoping that it also will be a rewarding one with regard to the implementation of UWE’s goals – which are our goals – into the procedures of decision-making.

Vera John-Mikolajewski