

Information Centre on the Council of Europe in Sofia

Since its establishment at the Center for the Study of Democracy in 1993, the Information Centre on the Council of Europe in Sofia has become a focal point for the Council activities in Bulgaria. Five years later the Information Centre is a proactive facilitator of cooperation between local institutions and the Council of Europe and a partner to many government agencies involved in Council activities. Below are some of the highlights of 1998.

In 1998, the increasing number of cases brought against Bulgaria in the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg necessitated that government agents be

properly trained to deal with litigation issues in the Court. In February, in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, the Information Centre organized a training session for the office of the agent of the Bulgarian government before the organs of the European Convention on Human Rights. Guests included representatives of these offices in France, Germany, Italy and the Human Rights Directorate of the Council of Europe.

In April, the Information Centre held a seminar on the case law of the European Convention on Human Rights, with representatives of the judiciary, the prosecution and other legal experts. It was a follow-up

1998 Print Releases

Translations

- Human Rights and Their Protection under International Law - A Pamphlet for Police.
- Resolution (97) 10 Rules Adopted by The Committee of Ministers on the Monitoring Arrangements under Articles 24 to 26 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- Outline for Reports to be submitted pursuant Article 25 of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- Introduction to the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities
- Ethical Review of biomedical Research in Europe
- Gender Mainstreaming: Conceptual Framework, Methodology and Presentation of Good Practice
- 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men (Istanbul, 13-14 November 1997). Declarations and Resolutions.
- Convention for the Protection of the Architectural Heritage of Europe and Explanatory Report. European Treaty Series No 121
- European Convention for the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (revised) and Explanatory Report. European Treaty Series No 143
- European Charter for the Architectural Heritage

Publications

- Murdoc, J.L. Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights - The protection of liberty and security of person. Council of Europe Human Rights Files No.12
- Grotrean, A. Article 6 of the European Convention on Human Rights - The right to a fair trial. Council of Europe Human Rights Files No.13
- Eissen, M.-A. The length of civil and criminal proceedings in the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights. Council of Europe Human Rights Files No.16
- "The Council of Europe - Activities and Achievements"

of a conference held earlier in December 1997 which reviewed the legal practice in Bulgaria since the ratification of the Convention.

The Information Centre facilitated the input of the Council of Europe Secretariat to the workshop organized by the Law Reform Program in May on establishing the Ombudsman in Bulgaria. In coordination with the Human Rights Directorate of the Council of Europe, representatives of the Ombudsman offices of Hungary and Denmark were invited to and participated in the conference. The Council of Europe has considerable experience in facilitating the cooperation among member states' Ombudsmen as an instrument of encouraging democratic stability, particularly in the countries in transition.

Traditionally, the Information Centre is involved in the *Europe in School* competitions in Bulgaria. In May, in cooperation with the Portuguese Embassy in Sofia, the Information Centre held a meeting for

school teachers and students and presented the awards to the winners in the national competition *Europe in School* which aims to promote European values in school.

In May, Helsinki hosted the Human Dignity and Social Exclusion (HDSE) Project Conference of the Council of Europe. HDSE Project was launched by the Council of Europe in 1995, inviting governments and non-governmental organizations, other international organizations, both sides of industry, and foundations to work together in order to establish concrete principles for successful action to combat poverty and social exclusion. The Helsinki Conference provided a platform to present the first Pan-European Report on Poverty and Social Exclusion. Bulgaria was represented at the conference by MPs, officials from the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy and the Information Centre on the Council of Europe in Sofia.



The visit in late July of Ms. Leni Fischer, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe was a good opportunity to discuss the priorities in the work of the Information Centre.



Mr. Guy De Vel, Director of Legal Affairs of the Council of Europe was guest speaker at a breakfast meeting organized jointly by the Information Centre and the Center for the Study of Democracy.

The Council of Europe Information Centre in Sofia was one of the coorganizers of the conference *Human Rights in Bulgaria 1998*, organized jointly with the mission of the United Nations Development Programme, the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, and the Human Rights Committee of the National Assembly. The conference discussed a comprehensive agenda of human rights from the role of the Ombudsman to corruption as a violation of human rights.

In 1998, Bulgaria was still under a monitoring procedure by the Committee on Honoring the Obligations by the member states of the Council of Europe, which monitors compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights. The mission of Mr. Atkinson, British MP and Mr. Gjelerod, Danish MP, co-rapporteurs for Bulgaria to the Committee took place in June. The Information Centre facilitated the input of non-governmental organiza-

tions to the report prepared by the rapporteurs. The report by the co-rapporteurs was published in September and generated considerable media interest.

In November, the Information Centre on the Council of Europe, Sofia cooperated with Centre Européen d'Aide à la Vie Associative (CEAVA) in organizing a training session for Bulgarian NGOs on Council of Europe and European Union assistance and cooperation programs for the non-profit sector. Due to the considerable interest among NGOs in the country, this training session will be followed up in 1999 by a training seminar in another Bulgarian city.

From the very beginning of the establishment of *Coalition 2000* (see Section I), the Information Centre on the Council of Europe in Sofia was invited to participate and provide liaison with the Council of Europe.