



Doc. 12070

27 October 2009

The future of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (“North-South Centre”)

Committee Opinion¹

Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Rapporteur: Ms Maria Manuela de MELO, Portugal, Socialist Group

A. Conclusions of the committee

The Committee on Culture, Science and Education has been following with interest the activities of the North-South Centre since its foundation in 1989. It agrees with the draft recommendation presented by the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development and wishes to emphasise three points in particular:

- the accession of Morocco on 1 July 2009, the first non-European state to become a member of the North-South Centre, as called for by our committee in its report on “Cultural co-operation between Europe and the south Mediterranean countries” ([Doc. 9626](#));
- the regrettable fact that only 19 of the 47 member states of the Council of Europe are members of the North-South Centre;
- the need to change the current status of the North-South Centre.

B. Explanatory memorandum

1. In the context of the draft recommendation on the future of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (“North-South Centre”) presented by the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development, the opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education has been sought. This opinion is based on a contribution from the North-South Centre, which I wish to thank.

2. My colleague and compatriot António Braga had already presented the committee’s opinion in 2003 on the report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development on the Council of Europe’s North-South Centre and its contribution to development co-operation in the 21st century.²

3. On the eve of its 20th anniversary celebrations, the North-South Centre attaches great importance to the draft recommendation, which proposes the adoption by the Committee of Ministers of a new statutory resolution. This resolution would enable the relevance of the Centre to be reaffirmed and its structures and mandate to be adapted to a political situation and an international environment which have changed a great deal since the date of its foundation.

4. Drawing on its past achievements and its expertise and aware of the difficulties and challenges encountered, the Centre – through its statutory bodies – adopted a new strategy of consolidation and development in 2008. This strategy is already bearing fruit: the definition of political and strategic priorities in

1. See [Doc. 12069](#).

2. Recommendation 1616 (2003) on the Council of Europe’s North-South Centre and its contribution to development co-operation in the 21st century, [Doc. 9893](#), opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, rapporteur: Mr Braga.



the light of the international context, greater recognition within the Council of Europe and at international level of its expertise in North-South dialogue, stronger co-operation with key international partners (including the European Union) and the accession of four member states (one of them non-European) have been achieved over a short period of time. This new strategy, still being implemented, draws greatly on co-operation with the “parent organisation”, and particularly its Parliamentary Assembly.³

5. In this context, the Committee on Culture, Science and Education considers that its co-operation with the North-South Centre is of particular importance because of the subjects and priorities that they have in common. The latest and most productive example of this co-operation was the joint holding of the Conference on Education and Intercultural Dialogue – Educating for Diversity and Global Citizenship (Praia, Cape Verde, October 2008).

6. It is proposed hereunder: i. to list instances of co-operation between the North-South Centre and the committee; ii. to put forward some ideas for future co-operation; iii. to highlight, in order to support and/or supplement them, certain recommendations made in the report of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development on the future of the North-South Centre.

1. List of instances of co-operation between the North-South Centre and the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

7. Co-operation between the North-South Centre and the Committee on Culture, Science and Education gives rise to:

– references to the North-South Centre in the most recent documents adopted by the committee

8. Our committee has, on several occasions, referred to the work and relevance of the Centre in the documents it has adopted, particularly in the youth field. It has also called for the accession to the North-South Centre of the countries of the south Mediterranean,⁴ a call reiterated in [Resolution 1598 \(2008\)](#) on strengthening co-operation with the Maghreb countries (Political Affairs Committee). These calls helped to bring about the accession of the Kingdom of Morocco to the North-South Centre in July 2009;

– participation by committee members in the activities organised by the North-South Centre

9. Our committee has taken part in certain of the Centre’s activities connected with the dialogue with the countries of the south Mediterranean⁵ and education.⁶ It has also taken part in meetings of the Lisbon Forum;

– participation by the North-South Centre in activities of the committee

10. The Centre has actively co-operated in some of our meetings and colloquies connected with the Middle East peace process, intercultural dialogue⁷ and relations between the Council of Europe and the countries of the south Mediterranean;⁸

3. Particularly under the co-operation agreement between the Parliamentary Assembly and the North-South Centre signed in 2005.

4. Report and [Resolution 1313 \(2003\)](#) on cultural co-operation between Europe and the south Mediterranean countries: “It seems desirable that all these countries (that is, those of the southern Mediterranean) be encouraged to participate more fully, in particular by joining the North-South Centre”, Mr Lluís Maria de Puig.

[Doc. 9893](#), opinion of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education on the report entitled “The Council of Europe’s North-South Centre and its contribution to development co-operation in the 21st century”: “The Assembly regrets even more so that over the same decade not one country from the South has joined the Partial Agreement and considers that this situation must be changed. It calls on the North-South Centre to encourage the accession of countries from the South and in particular those from the south Mediterranean”, Mr António Braga.

5. Euro-Mediterranean Conference From Poverty to Dignity: Strategies for Social Development and Social Cohesion in the Euro-Mediterranean Region (Alexandria, 28 June-1 July 2002).

6. Europe-wide Education and Global Citizenship Congress (Maastricht, 15-17 November 2002).

7. Hearing on freedom of expression and respect for religious beliefs (Paris, May 2006).

8. Colloquy on Cultural Co-operation between Europe and South Mediterranean Countries, “Meeting points in culture” (Rabat, 8-9 April 2002).

– *the organisation of joint activities*

11. The Conference on Education and Intercultural Dialogue – Educating for Diversity and Global Citizenship (Praia, Cape Verde, October 2008) was organised by our committee and the North-South Centre, in co-operation with the National Assembly of Cape Verde, with the support of the Cape Verde Government and under the auspices of the Portuguese Presidency of the Community of Portuguese Language Countries. The aim of this meeting was to facilitate dialogue in the sense of a sharing of viewpoints and good practices between the parliamentarians and experts of Europe and sub-Saharan Africa on priority questions connected with education and intercultural dialogue.

2. Ideas for future co-operation between the North-South Centre and the Committee on Culture, Science and Education

12. On the basis of the co-operation already established with our committee and in the context of the new strategy adopted by the North-South Centre's statutory bodies, the Centre considers that the following subjects seem to present particular interest for future co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly, and with our committee in particular:

– *education and youth*

13. The general objective of the North-South Centre's Education and Youth programme is to increase awareness among Europeans of interdependence and solidarity issues through education and youth activities and to promote relations and human contact between Europe, the south shore of the Mediterranean and Africa;

– *education*

14. More specifically, the objective in terms of education for world citizenship (EWC) is to support the development and strengthening of EWC strategies and capacities by targeting the different EWC institutions and players in the formal and non-formal sector;

15. The North-South Centre is working on the following projects:

a. adoption by the Committee of Ministers of a recommendation to member states of the Council of Europe on education for world citizenship:⁹ this process, started in March 2008 under the auspices of the Council of Europe Steering Committee for Education (CDED), should come to fruition in the spring of 2010;

Our committee is participating in the preparation of the draft recommendation. This preparation could be stepped up, and support for the draft confirmed;

b. implementation of the 2009-2011 programme for promoting global development education in the new European Union member states (in the framework of the Joint Management Agreement signed with the European Commission) through national and regional seminars and the publication of EWC profiles for individual countries;

Some members of our committee could participate in the national and regional seminars, as well as in the pan-European seminar which is due to close the programme in 2011;

c. the DG IV and North-South Centre joint project on A History of Interactions within the Mediterranean and between the Mediterranean and Other Cultures and Regions of the World, with the objective of developing, with historians and experts from Europe and the south shore of the Mediterranean, an action plan on history teaching;

Our committee could take part in the project;

– *youth*

16. In the youth sphere, the objective is to train, and increase the capacities of, young people and youth organisations and to facilitate political action centred on youth in development policies, by increasing the role of young people as vital players in North-South interdependence. This activity takes place particularly in the framework of follow-up to the Africa-Europe Youth Summit held in Lisbon in December 2007 at the initiative of the North-South Centre;

9. This recommendation supports and recognises the work of the North-South Centre in the global citizenship field.

17. The following activities, carried out in the context of the Joint Management Agreement signed with the European Commission and the Youth Partnership between the European Commission and the Council of Europe, are considered to be priorities:

a. consolidation of the African University for Youth and Development, held for the first time in 2009. The annual university session brings together approximately 100 leaders of youth organisations from Africa and Europe, who work together to develop training activities and political participation by young people in the context of Euro-African co-operation;

b. organisation of the global University on Youth and Development, a unique forum for dialogue bringing together almost 300 representatives of youth organisations and movements from across the world to discuss, provide and receive training, and define political activities on the major issues on the global agenda;

Our committee could take part in these two activities;

– *intercultural dialogue*

18. The objectives and priorities of the North-South Centre's intercultural dialogue programme are to contribute, through dialogue, to the development of knowledge, mutual understanding and links between the different players of societies in Europe and on the south shore of the Mediterranean. The Centre draws on the concept of intercultural dialogue advocated by the White Paper and the political commitments made by the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean (July 2008). The Centre also draws on the partnership developed with some key players in intercultural dialogue, such as the Alliance of Civilizations and the Anna Lindh Foundation;

19. The following subjects are central to the Centre's intercultural dialogue programme:

a. setting up of a Euro-Mediterranean dialogue platform on migration, comprising representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, and co-ordinated by the North-South Centre;

The North-South Centre co-operates with the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population;

b. co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly on the promotion of the Israeli-Palestinian dialogue, particularly in the form of an inter-parliamentary forum involving the Parliamentary Assembly, the Knesset and the Palestinian Legislative Council;

The North-South Centre co-operates with the Parliamentary Assembly's Political Affairs Committee;

c. awareness-raising seminars in the Maghreb countries on the subject of the Council of Europe and its North-South Centre, in order to provide information about the Organisation's work, encourage greater participation by Maghreb countries in the Centre's activities and explore the scope for greater co-operation between these countries and the Council of Europe;

The Parliamentary Assembly and/or its relevant committees could participate in these seminars;

d. conferences on women as agents of change in Mediterranean societies, bringing together policy makers and participants from all Euro-Mediterranean countries;

The North-South Centre co-operates with the Parliamentary Assembly's Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men;

e. inter-parliamentary co-operation between Africa and Europe: follow-up to the Conference on Education and Intercultural Dialogue – Educating for Diversity and Global Citizenship (Cape Verde, 2008);

Our committee could co-operate in this activity;

f. Euro-Mediterranean University (EMUNI) set up at the initiative of the Slovenian Government and under the auspices of the European Union: the Centre is a founder member and is endeavouring to create synergies between EMUNI's programmes and the work of the Council of Europe;

Our committee could co-operate in this activity.

3. Highlighting of certain recommendations made in the report on the future of the North-South Centre

– change in the current status of the North-South Centre

20. The new strategy introduced by the North-South Centre and the results achieved further strengthen the Centre's role as a special instrument of the Council of Europe in its relations with neighbouring countries and other continents;

21. The proposal to change the Centre's status from that of an enlarged partial agreement of the Council of Europe to that of an enlarged agreement is vital in this respect: this change would correspond to the North-South Centre's new priorities and developments, in line with the Council of Europe's strategic and political priorities, and would enable the Centre to be given financial resources commensurate with these priorities. This change would also enable states which are not members of the Council of Europe to continue to join the Centre;

– updating of the North-South Centre's role

22. It would be an important step to bring the Centre's role into line with its current remit, as referred to at the Warsaw Summit and strengthened by its new strategy. In this respect, it is proposed that the following paragraph be added to its role: "provide a framework for dialogue and co-operation between the Council of Europe and its neighbouring non-European countries and regions, particularly through education, youth co-operation and intercultural dialogue";

– co-operation with the European Union

23. The involvement of the European Union in the operation and activities of the North-South Centre, on the basis of the fact that both the European Commission and European Parliament have seats on its Executive Council, is vital. It should, in so far as is possible, be further strengthened, particularly through the inclusion of the Committee of the Regions of the European Union among the stakeholders. The 20th anniversary should also be the occasion for raising the question of the accession of the European Union as such to the North-South Centre, as provided for when the Centre was founded but not yet realised.

Reporting committee: Committee on Economic Affairs and Development ([Doc. 12069](#))

Committee for opinion: Committee on Culture, Science and Education

Reference to committee: Reference 3451 of 23 June 2008

Opinion approved by the committee on 29 September 2009

Secretariat of the committee: Mr Ary, Mr Dossow and Mr Fuchs