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Granting of participatory status to the international non-governmental organisation ANDANTE

Report[1]
Committee on Culture, Science and Education
Rapporteur: Ms Francine JOHN-CALAME, Switzerland

Summary

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe referred to the Parliamentary Assembly the matter of whether or not to grant participatory status to the European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations, ANDANTE.

The report concludes that this association meets all the conditions listed in paragraph 2 of the appendix to Committee of Ministers Resolution Res(2003)8 and that the Committee of Ministers should therefore grant participatory status to the ANDANTE Association.

1. Reference to committee: Reference 3749 of 11 March 2011.

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A. Draft recommendation[2]

1. The European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations, ANDANTE, applied for participatory status with the Council of Europe in 2008. In March 2010, at the end of the two-year observation period, the Chairperson of the association renewed the application in a letter to the Division of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Civil Society of the Directorate General of Democracy and Political Affairs of the Council of Europe.

2. In her reply of 9 July 2010, while noting that the ANDANTE Association had participated in the work of the Council of Europe's Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs), the Head of the Division of NGOs and Civil Society stated that she was not aware of any concrete co-operation that ANDANTE had had with the Council of Europe during the observation period. She referred to the ongoing reform of the Council of Europe and the rationalisation of its activities. She also mentioned the evaluation of relations between the Council of Europe and the INGOs and the possible changes to the criteria for granting participatory status to them. In conclusion, she indicated she was hesitant about the possibility of any concrete co-operation between ANDANTE and the Council of Europe.

3. On 29 September 2010, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe communicated to the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe the names of the INGOs to which he had decided not to grant participatory status with the Council of Europe. The European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations, ANDANTE, was one of those organisations.

4. Following the objections to this decision from several members of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers referred the matter to the Assembly, with a view to deciding whether or not to grant participatory status to the ANDANTE Association, in accordance with paragraph 15 of the Appendix to Committee of Ministers Resolution Res(2003)8 on participatory status for international non-governmental organisations with the Council of Europe.

5. The Assembly recalls that the conditions to be met by INGOs in order to obtain participatory status are listed in paragraph 2 of the Appendix to Resolution Res(2003)8:

> *"2. Participatory status may be granted by the Council of Europe to INGOs:*
>
> *a. which are particularly representative in the field(s) of their competence, fields of action shared by the Council of Europe;*
>
> *b. which are represented at European level, that is to say which have members in a significant number of countries throughout greater Europe;*
>
> *c. which are able, through their work, to support the achievement of that closer unity mentioned in Article 1 of the Council of Europe's Statute;*
>
> *d. are capable of contributing to and participating actively in Council of Europe deliberations and activities;*
>
> *e. which are able to make known the work of the Council of Europe among European citizens."*

6. The Assembly observes that the ANDANTE Association:

6.1. is one of the few women's associations that have applied for participatory status with the Council of Europe, and it is particularly representative of Catholic convictions in the field of promoting women's rights and the role of women in society, which are also important fields of action of the Council of Europe;

6.2. is particularly representative of Catholic convictions at the European level, given that it has members in 13 countries of the Greater Europe;

6.3. advocates recognition of values shared by the various cultures and commitment to the common good from a female perspective and, accordingly, supports the achievement of a greater unity as set out in Article 1 of the Statute of the Council of Europe;

6.4. has regularly and actively participated in the activities of three committees of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe – namely the Human Rights Committee, the Culture, Science and Education Committee and the Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty Committee – as well as the

2. Draft recommendation approved unanimously by the committee on 3 October 2011.

Gender Equality Transversal Group, by making a contribution, for example, in the context of the preparation of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, the 2010 questionnaire on the implementation of the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163) and the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210);

6.5. helps, particularly through its electronic newsletter, to disseminate information on Council of Europe activities among the members of its network.

7. In these circumstances, the Assembly does not share the doubts expressed with regard to the ANDANTE Association's ability to work together in a fruitful manner with Council of Europe bodies. The Assembly also believes that the refusal to grant this association participatory status cannot reasonably be based on possible changes to the criteria for granting participatory status to them. This argument is both illegal, because the only applicable criteria are those in force, set out in Committee of Ministers Resolution Res(2003)8, and illogical, because it is impossible to predict the conclusions of the current debate and therefore to know how the ANDANTE Association might be affected by any change to the current criteria.

8. The Assembly therefore considers that the European Alliance of Catholic Women’s Organisations, ANDANTE, fully meets all the conditions listed in paragraph 2 of the Appendix to Committee of Ministers Resolution Res(2003)8 and accordingly recommends that the Committee of Ministers grant it participatory status.

B. Explanatory memorandum by Ms John-Calame, rapporteur

1. Introduction

1. The European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations, ANDANTE, applied for participatory status with the Council of Europe after its General Assembly expressed the wish to obtain such status in April 2008. In August 2008, the association was informed that consideration of its application had been suspended and that the association would be permitted to attend sessions of the Conference of International Non-governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe for a two-year observation period, in order to assess its capacity to actively participate in the Council of Europe's activities.

2. In March 2010, in a letter to the Civil Society/NGO Division of the Directorate General of Political Affairs of the Council of Europe, Ms Marie-Louise van Wijk-van de Ven, Chairperson of the ANDANTE Association, renewed the application. A negative reply was sent to her on 9 July 2010.

3. While noting that the ANDANTE Association had participated in the work of the Conference of INGOs, the Head of the Civil Society/NGO Division stated in her reply that she was not aware of any concrete co-operation that ANDANTE had had with the Council of Europe during the observation period. She referred to the ongoing reform of the Council of Europe and the rationalisation of its activities. She also mentioned the evaluation of relations between the Council of Europe and the INGOs and the possible changes to the criteria for granting participatory status to them. In conclusion, she indicated that she was hesitant about the possibility of any concrete co-operation between ANDANTE and the Council of Europe.

4. Further to this negative assessment, on 29 September 2010, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe transmitted to the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe the names of the INGOs to which he had decided not to grant participatory status (document SG/Inf(2010)17). Paragraph 6.i of this document reads:

> *"i. The Secretary General rejected ex officio the applications for participatory status from the following NGOs and INGOs which did not meet the conditions set out in paragraph 2 of the appendix to Committee of Ministers' Resolution (2003) 8. Some of these INGOs are not representative enough at European level; in other cases their activities do not currently appear in the Programme of Activities of the Council of Europe, the INGO is a member of an INGO already enjoying participatory status or the NGO is not an international but a national or local NGO. They are as follows:*
>
> *…*
>
> *ANDANTE Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations*
>
> *…".*

5. Paragraph 15 of the appendix to Committee of Ministers Resolution Res(2003)8 on participatory status for international non-governmental organisations with the Council of Europe lays down that "ten members of the Parliamentary Assembly from five different national delegations … may request that an examination be made of the file of any applicant INGO".

6. Pursuant to this provision, more than 10 members of the Assembly belonging to over five national delegations objected to the decision not to grant participatory status to the ANDANTE Association. The Committee of Ministers therefore referred the matter to the Assembly for opinion. It was then referred for report to the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, which appointed me rapporteur in April 2011.

7. I have read the information set out in the file transmitted by the ANDANTE Association on submitting its application and consulted the association's website.[3] During the Assembly's June 2011 part-session, I had an opportunity to meet the chairperson of the association, Ms Marie-Louise van Wijk-van de Ven, and Mr Gabriel Nissim, who was, during the observation period, the Chairperson of the Human Rights Committee of the Council of Europe Conference of INGOs.

3. www.andante-europa.net/.

2. Conditions for granting participatory status and co-operation procedure

8. The conditions to be met by INGOs in order to obtain participatory status are listed in paragraph 2 of the appendix to Resolution Res(2003)8:

> *"2. Participatory status may be granted by the Council of Europe to INGOs:*
>
> *a. which are particularly representative in the field(s) of their competence, fields of action shared by the Council of Europe;*
>
> *b. which are represented at European level, that is to say which have members in a significant number of countries throughout greater Europe;*
>
> *c. which are able, through their work, to support the achievement of that closer unity mentioned in Article 1 of the Council of Europe's Statute;*
>
> *d. are capable of contributing to and participating actively in Council of Europe deliberations and activities;*
>
> *e. which are able to make known the work of the Council of Europe among European citizens."*

9. In practice, co-operation with INGOs enjoying participatory status takes a wide variety of forms, ranging from straightforward consultation to full-scale co-operation on specific projects. The INGO experts may participate in various projects as consultants; they can, for example, contribute to the work of the intergovernmental committees on an institutionalised or an ad hoc basis, address memoranda to the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, present oral or written statements before Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities committees and address seminars and other meetings organised by the Council of Europe.

10. The INGOs enjoying participatory status make up the Conference of INGOs, which meets twice a year in Strasbourg contextually with the January and June part-sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly.[4] The work of the conference is conducted via thematic commissions and transversal groups.

11. Paragraph 9 of the appendix to Resolution Res(2003)8 lays down certain obligations on INGOs enjoying participatory status. They must undertake to:

> *"a. keep themselves regularly informed of Council of Europe activities and developments in standards by means of the numerous sources of information available, including the Internet;*
>
> *b. furnish, either spontaneously or at the request of the Council of Europe's different bodies, information, documents or opinions relating to their own field(s) of competence on matters which are under consideration or which could be addressed by the Council of Europe;*
>
> *c. work to promote the respect of the Council of Europe's standards, conventions and legal instruments in the member states, and assist in the implementation of these standards, and this in close contact with local, regional and national NGOs;*
>
> *d. give maximum publicity to the initiatives and achievements of the Council of Europe in their own field(s) of competence;*
>
> *e. disseminate information on Council of Europe standards, instruments and activities, as well as information from the INGO thematic groupings, to their members, on a regular basis, and ensure that they too work actively to fulfil the requirements of the participatory status."*

12. Paragraph 9.*f* concludes this list of undertakings with the obligation to submit every four years a report to the Secretary General which should specify the INGO's actual contribution to the work of the Council of Europe and its efforts to publicise its work and promote its values and standards.

3. Basic information on the ANDANTE Association

13. The ANDANTE Association is a network of national Catholic women's associations which was set up in May 2006. The association is governed by German law and is based in Düsseldorf (Germany). According to its statutes, the objectives of the association are "to promote the presence, participation and co-responsibility

4. The Conference of INGOs met three times a year in 2009 and 2010.

of Catholic women in European society and in the Church" (Article 2.1), advocating recognition of common values across the different cultures, working for the common good from a female perspective and promoting just participation of women in society and the church (Article 2.2).

14. Membership of the association is open to Catholic women's organisations in Europe, as well as mixed Catholic organisations of women and men in Europe, provided that their delegates to the General Assembly of the association are women.

15. ANDANTE currently comprises 22 organisations in 13 European countries. The table below sets out the names and (approximate) number of members.

Organisation	**Country**	**Number of members**
Action Catholique des Femmes du Luxembourg	Luxembourg	14 500
Action Catholique des Femmes	France	10 000
Institute of our Lady of Mercy, English Branch	United Kingdom	300
Katholische Frauengemeinschaft Deutschlands	Germany	620 000
Katholiek Vrouwen Dispuut	Netherlands	310
Katholische Frauenbewegung Österreichs	Austria	150 000
Katholischer Deutscher Frauenbund	Germany	220 000
Katolicke hnutie žien Slovenska	Slovak Republic	80 000
KAV-Fraueninitiative	Austria	not indicated
Keresztény Nöi Felnöttkepzési Egyesület	Hungary	100
Konferentie Nederlandse Religieuzen	Netherlands	9 500
Latvijas Katolu sieviešu apvieniba	Latvia	50
National Board of Catholic Women	United Kingdom	45 000
Newman Association	United Kingdom	800
Norges Katolske Kvinneforbund	Norway	200
Schweizerischer Katholischer Frauenbund	Switzerland	200 000
Society of the Holy Child Jesus – Province européenne	United Kingdom	150
Teresa Ry	Finland	100
Unie Katolických Žen Republique	Czech Republic	150
Unie Nederlandse Katholieke Vrouwenbeweging	Netherlands	28 500
Vie et Foi – Action catholique générale de la Suisse Romande	Switzerland	300
ZijActief Nederland	Netherlands	8 000

4. Rapporteur's analysis

16. The rapporteur notes from the outset that the ANDANTE Association:

– is one of the few women's associations that have applied for participatory status with the Council of Europe, and it is particularly representative in the field of promoting women's rights and the role of women in society, which are also important fields of action of the Council of Europe;

– is particularly representative at the European level, given that it has members in 13 countries of the greater Europe;

– advocates recognition of values shared by the various cultures and commitment to the common good from a female perspective and, accordingly, participates in the achievement of a greater unity as set out in Article 1 of the Statute of the Council of Europe.

17. The grounds for refusing to grant participatory status to this association, as they emerge from the reply sent to Ms Marie-Louise van Wijk-van de Ven on 9 July 2010, would appear to be, firstly, a negative assessment of the ANDANTE Association's capacity to develop practical co-operation with the Council of Europe and, secondly, possible changes to the criteria for granting participatory status under the reform of the Council of Europe and the rationalisation of its activities.

18. For the rapporteur, the ANDANTE Association has shown, during the observation period, dynamism in taking part in the work of the Conference of INGOs. This is the way in which most INGOs work with the various Council of Europe bodies

19. In this connection, Mr Nissim confirmed that the association took an active part in all the meetings of the Human Rights Committee (it was one of the rare associations systematically represented by its president). He stressed that the association had also made a greater contribution to activities during the observation period than many other associations which had already been granted participatory status.

20. The application file shows that the association has also taken part in the activities of the Human Rights Committee, the Culture, Science and Education Committee and the Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty Committee, as well as of the Gender Equality Transversal Group. The association has provided contributions to the preparation of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, the 2010 questionnaire on the implementation of the revised European Social Charter (ETS No. 163) and the drafting of the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210).

21. Finally, the rapporteur notes that the association develops concrete projects (such as the January 2009 training seminar on “good governance” and the July 2009 summer school at which Catholic women came together to discus the media challenge for Catholic women), which are consistent with the Council of Europe’s values and the aim of promoting women’s role in society, and that it helps, particularly through its electronic newsletter, to disseminate information on Council of Europe activities among the members of its network.

22. Therefore, for the rapporteur, the balance is clearly positive and to demand more of ANDANTE during the observation period would be tantamount to discriminatory treatment, as the association would be placed in a less favourable situation than the associations which already enjoy participatory status but which do not show the same dynamism.

23. As regards the impact of the possible changes to the criteria for granting participatory status, the rapporteur considers that a decision based on this argument would be:

– illegal, because the only applicable criteria are those set out in Committee of Ministers Resolution Res(2003)8;

– illogical, because it is impossible to predict the conclusions of the current debate in the Council of Europe and therefore to know how the ANDANTE Association might be affected by any change to the current criteria.

5. Conclusions

24. Drawing on the information at my disposal, the refusal to grant participatory status to the European Alliance of Catholic Women’s Organisations, ANDANTE, would appear unjustified, and the Parliamentary Assembly should advise the Committee of Ministers to reply favourably to the application submitted by this association.