

Council of Europe Civil Society Summit

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Speaking points

1. Nature of CoE – UN- or OSCE-type roundtable or a club with clear criteria for membership?

2. Activities: focus on statutory goals. Unique system: ECtHR, conventions, treaty-based and non-treaty-based bodies.

ECtHR: focus on execution, now executions rather than backlog is a bottleneck.

Particularly given the scarcity of resources, concentrate on key areas where CoE has legal framework, experience, and expertise and limit other activities not directly related, even if sexy for politicians and attracting media attention.

Interests and priorities of presidencies. Clear priorities needed, consistency.

3. Geographic area: limit “foreign affairs” activities. AS/Pol – a foreign affairs committee, the most prestigious, mirrors EP? New approaches to European states outside the CoE?

4. Relations with other IGOs: coordination and synergy. CoE – unique legal framework and mechanisms. EU – of special importance, has ambitions to develop; its own framework for democracy, rule of law, and HR. Originally – compliance checked at the time of accession negotiations, the very fact of membership is an evidence. Even terminological difference (HR vs fundamental rights). Had to reconsider (Poland and Hungary), limiting EU funds as an effective tool. PACE: avoiding duplication with FRA. Forum-shopping? Coordination – at the working rather than institutional level. Joint programmes – the best results (EU funding, CoE expertise).

5. Civil society. Increase status, prestige, and influence of INGO conference. Actively involved as experts in PACE but again not institutionally. Permanent observers with the PACE bodies or/and human rights monitoring mechanisms? Example: election of judges, often very useful. A problem: GONGOs, NGOs working against CoE values, black PR methods. Need some respectful body to evaluate and pre-screen NGOs.