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(2005-2006) Swedish Presidency of the WGDI: Activity Plan

COUNCIL OF THE BALTIC SEA STATES Working Group on Democratic Institutions

Aim

With support of the Terms of Reference for WGDI the Swedish Chairmanship will mainly focus on promoting democratic values and principles in the region through sharing and exchange of experiences within relevant fields. Further, Sweden will initiate and collect information about concrete projects in this area to promote regional discussions about democratic values and principles. During the Swedish Chairmanship cooperation with other regional and international institutions will be a priority. The Swedish Chairmanship will also consider the recommendations elaborated by the 3rd Council of Europe Summit, held in Warsaw on 16-17 May 2005.

Thematic focus

During the Swedish Chairmanship the following themes will be discussed. The proposed themes are suggested to include a gender and equal opportunities perspective.

- **Citizens' participation** (locally, nationally, internationally and on EU-level)
- **Civil society**
- **Fundamental rights**
- **Good governance**

Meetings and seminars

The Swedish Chairmanship intends to continue the existing tradition of arranging study-visits in conjunction with WGDI meetings. Sweden proposes the following meetings and seminars.

The 12-13th of October 2005, Stockholm (meeting+ workshop)

During this first meeting Sweden would like to present its democracy policy and the Activity plan for the Swedish Chairmanship. Sweden proposes that WGDI shall carry out a smaller comparative study in the Baltic Sea States which can focus on democratic values and principles in the region and include good examples of concrete projects in the field of citizen participation, civil society, local democracy, fundamental rights etc. The question of what this study should contain will be further discussed in a workshop during the first meeting.

December 2005, Kaliningrad (meeting + study-visit)

This meeting will focus on good governance. The meeting will be held in cooperation with the CBSS EuroFaculty programme at Kaliningrad State University. The meeting will also include a study visit to the University and/or a public authority.

The 20-21st of January 2006, Stockholm (meeting)

This meeting will focus on the exchange of experiences in the field of Citizens' participation, Local Self-Government and Civil society emphasising the impact of the EU and the Council of Europe. A draft version of the abovementioned comparative study will also be presented and discussed during the meeting. Further, a representative from the European Commission and/or the Council of Europe will attend the meeting, and the Working Group will pay study-visits to the Swedish Parliament, the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) and the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR).

March- April 2006, Stockholm (meeting + seminar)

This meeting and seminar will focus on fundamental rights and equal opportunities including gender equality. During the meeting the WGDI Activity report for 2005-2006 and the WGDI activities for 2006-2007 will be discussed. The meeting would be held back-to-back with the Committee of Senior Officials and a shorter joint session with the CSO is foreseen.

Related activities and events

Autumn of 2005 and spring of 2006:

- 28-30 August 2005, **14th Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference (BSPC)** in Vilnius, Lithuania. (The WGDI Secretary will be present)
- **First CSO meeting** during the Icelandic CBSS Presidency, **Turku, Finland 28-29 September 2005** (The WGDI Chair will present the activity plan of the WGDI).
- 6-8 October 2005 – conference **“Women and Democracy”** in St. Petersburg, Russia. (The WGDI Chair and/or the WGDI Secretary will attend the conference).
- 16-18 October 2005, **7th Baltic Development Forum (BDF) Summit** in Stockholm, Sweden (The WGDI Chair will probably be present).
- **5th Baltic Sea Ombudsman Institution Meeting** - probably in Reykjavik. **Date to be decided.** (WGDI Chair and/or WGDI Secretary will be present)
- 7-8 June 2006, **6th Baltic Sea States Summit** in Reykjavik, Iceland. (The WGDI will consider preparing input for this meeting in advance but the Chair will not attend)
- **6th Baltic Sea NGO Forum 2006** – in Stockholm, Sweden in the beginning of September 2006. Precise date to be decided.

In addition, the WGDI Chair and/or WGDI Secretary is usually invited to speak at or to attend 1-2 regional meetings, and 1-2 international meetings (in the framework of the Council of Europe, OSCE or the like).