



## **Minutes of the meeting of the European ACATs Strasbourg – 19 to 21 February 2016**

### **I. Report on the action plan**

Cf. Powerpoint presentation 'Presentation of Action Plan'

### **II. Presentation of the ACATs**

#### **ACAT Germany:**

- Members: almost 500 individual members, about 200 church communities and 130 supporters. About 15 active groups in parishes (often multifaith).
- Administrative council: made up of 10 members.
- Main activities: prayers for peace once a month in the parishes / letters for urgent action / campaigns / member of the Human Rights Forum and the Human Rights Institute / annual two-day seminar on a specific topic / participation in the Deutsche Evangelische Kirchentag and the Deutsche Katholikentag.

#### **ACAT in francophone Belgium:**

- Members: about 225 members (mostly Catholics but also some Protestants).
- Main activities: ACAT quarterly info / advocacy on the country's situation (for the last year) particularly on ratification of the OPCAT and establishment of a national prevention mechanism / compiling a report for the UPR / participation in an NGO network / working more closely with church authorities.

#### **ACAT Spain (Catalonia):**

- Members: about 220 members – 200 Catalan-speaking, 20 Spanish-speaking.
- Main activities: producing a monthly bulletin / urgent appeals / participation in coordination for the prevention of torture (monthly meeting for the Catalan region) / raising public awareness / leading schools workshops on the death penalty, in cooperation with Barcelona Town Hall.

#### **ACAT France:**

- Members: about 7500 traditional members (including 3000 members in the groups) but nearly 30 000 people who work alongside them without actually being members (on a mailing list, donors, etc).
- Paid staff: 22 salaried employees.
- Main activities: support for human rights defenders / action on Morocco / appeals of the month / reception center for assistance to asylum-seekers / communication with the media / drawing up enquiries and reports.

### **ACAT Italy:**

- Members: 80 permanent members and 250 supporters on social networks.
- Paid staff: one salaried employee in charge of the website and the annual prize (3 days per week).
- Main activities: annual prize for a thesis on combating torture in partnership with the Waldensian Church / awareness-raising video / fortnightly newsletter / contacts with other NGOs.

### **ACAT Luxembourg:**

- Members: 139 members and 2 parishes and religious communities, including 12 members who are active to varying extents.
- Main activities: ACAT Luxembourg decided last year to reduce and concentrate its activities: main success: a petition to the Luxembourg Government in the run-up to its presidency of the Council of the European Union.

### **ACAT United Kingdom:**

- Members: between 300 and 350 members.
- Main activities: mailshot every two to three months on cases of victims of torture or people condemned to death / Christmas letters campaign (will be repeated for Easter).
- Clarification: ACAT United Kingdom, because of its status as a charity, is unable to campaign for a change in the law in the United Kingdom or other countries.

### **ACAT Sweden:**

- Members: 6 people in the office (lawyers, treasurer, prison chaplain, etc) and about 15 supporters.
- Main activities: visits to detention centres / meeting with the CPT last year/ cooperation with other NGOs / meeting with the authorities every quarter / various other activities relating to prisons and detention centres.

### **ACAT Switzerland:**

- Members: about 1500 members (including 250 supporting members and about a hundred parishes).
- Paid staff: 5 people in the secretariat sharing 2.7 posts (working part-time)
- Main activities: annual campaigns (particularly on 10 December) / urgent appeals / SOS death penalty (finished in 2015) / presence in the churches.

## **III. Suggestions for the future action plan**

Discussions about the future action plan focused on three main topics:

### **1. 10 December Campaign**

**Context:** Four key periods have been approved around significant days: Good Friday, 26 June, 10 October, 10 December. FIACAT, with the help of one ACAT, decided to concentrate on International Human Rights Day (10 December).

**Objective:** To mobilise the whole network around a common theme to achieve greater visibility and effectiveness.

The ACAT members were divided into three groups to consider the following questions:

- Which ACAT would like to lead this campaign?
- Which tasks will be allocated to FIACAT and which to the ACAT that is leading the campaign?
- What should be the theme of this campaign?
- What form should this campaign take?

**Suggestions:** After the groups had taken time to consider the questions, the following proposals emerged from a joint discussion:

The theme should be access to medical care in prisons.

Several activities could be undertaken:

- Sending Christmas cards (as an act of solidarity) to sick prisoners in European countries.
- Advocacy: It would be possible to place this campaign in the context of implementing recommendations that have already been made: FIACAT would analyse the existing recommendations on this topic at European and international level, and the ACATs would draw up an inventory of current practice in their respective countries and the way in which these mechanisms are applied.
  - National advocacy by the ACATs to call for reforms in this area (the targeted authorities have still to be identified but could be: political or prison authorities, etc )
  - International advocacy by FIACAT (the precise bodies have still to be identified: UN, Council of Europe or European Union).

In view of the ACATs' different sizes and also different ways of working, it was decided that all the ACATs would not necessarily have to do all the activities, but that each one would be able to choose to participate to different degrees depending on its capacity.

As soon as possible, FIACAT will draw up a count-down schedule from the key date so that each ACAT can organise itself in advance. It will be necessary to establish the exact dates when the ACATs must send information on the situation in their countries and the cases and contact details of the sick prisoners to whom it would be possible to send Christmas cards. FIACAT will also be responsible for translation into English and French.

The aim is to complete the campaign by the end of September / mid-October at the latest to enable the ACATs to send all the documents to their members and to translate them into German, Spanish and Italian.

## 2. Appeals of the Month

**Context:** Appeals of the Month are an important way in which ACATs can mobilise their members. In view of the amount of work involved in writing the Appeals of the Month, FIACAT and the ACATs decided to go back to the suggestion made at the last meeting to draw up a calendar of monthly appeals so that each ACAT would be in charge of writing an appeal one month in the year (or two for the ACATs with greater human resources: ACAT France and ACAT Switzerland).

**Objective:** To cooperate on monthly appeals to relieve the burden on some ACATs and pass on 'first hand' cases.

**Suggestions:**

- A calendar to be established stating which ACAT is in charge of the appeal for which month, taking account of the time the ACATs need for translation and adaptation.
- FIACAT proposed promoting collaboration between the European and African ACATs by asking the African ACATs if they could provide cases of human rights violations. This would also improve follow-up of cases.

- Allocation of tasks:
  - FIACAT: FIACAT would be responsible for sending an e-mail every month to the African ACATs in the network to find out if they knew of any cases in their country which could be used for the appeal of the month. A questionnaire would be attached to the e-mail with all the information that the ACATs would need in order to write an appeal of the month (at the meeting the ACATs worked in two groups on this questionnaire, FIACAT will send it to them once it has been finalised).  
FIACAT could if necessary be responsible for French/English translation of the monthly appeals.
  - The ACAT responsible for that month's appeal: it is important that it makes an effort to do the necessary research for writing the monthly appeal and does not rely solely on cases from the African ACATs since it might happen that no case is passed on that month.  
The ACAT would then be able to choose between cases that it had documented itself and those forwarded by the African ACATs, if any.  
Once the ACAT has formulated the appeal, it should submit it in the form of raw text so that each ACAT can keep to its own style (editing, layout, design etc.) when it takes up the appeal.

### 3. Advocacy work at national level

**Context:** In parallel with the international advocacy that FIACAT does with international organisations that promote and protect human rights, the ACATs should carry out advocacy work at national level to achieve the objectives that the ACATs have adopted: the abolition of torture and the death penalty. Training in national advocacy work was given at the meeting.

**Objective:** To mobilise the ACATs on a topic for national advocacy in the various countries.

**Suggestions:** FIACAT proposed that the ACATs should seek to involve the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) through advocacy with the Assembly members. The idea is to take action ahead of a report to be drawn up by the PACE and also afterwards to follow up any recommendations put forward.

This task would not be carried out only over a year; it would therefore not be possible to show immediate results at the next meeting of European ACATs, apart from the possibility of the chosen topic being placed on the agenda of the PACE.

The topic of this advocacy which was suggested at the meeting is police brutality (various aspects were then put forward by FIACAT: impunity, training, private security services, etc). Nonetheless, the point was raised in the course of the discussion that attention would need to be paid to ACAT members' perception of the subject.

The procedure for this action would be as follows:

- FIACAT would need to find an Assembly member who will be willing to support the chosen topic. It would also need to approach the PACE secretariat. The ACATs would need to contact their country's Assembly members so that the topic would be supported by 10 to 12 members to ensure that it is placed on the PACE agenda.
- If the topic is chosen: FIACAT would be responsible for collecting the recommendations and texts published by human rights mechanisms. The ACATs would aim to draw up a summary (3 or 4 pages) on the chosen topic (national laws, difficulties encountered, significant cases, etc).
- Once the report was published, the ACATs and FIACAT would follow it up, respectively with their national authorities and with international and regional human rights mechanisms.

In the context of these activities, FIACAT offered to the ACATs to provide them with individual training in writing reports and communications to European authorities and the United Nations, and in international and national advocacy. This training still has to be organised.

**All the above activities are subject to the agreement of the ACATs' administrative councils.**