

# Information Centre on the Council of Europe in Sofia

The Center for the Study of Democracy has been hosting the Information Centre on the Council of Europe in Sofia since 1993. The Information Centre provides the Bulgarian public and institutions with information on the activities and supports Council activities in priority areas. Below are some of the highlights for the year 2000. Additional information is available at [www.cid.bg](http://www.cid.bg)

## Releases in 2000

### Translations

- Short guide to the European Social Charter
- European Code for Social Security
- Cultural Policy - A Short Guide by Simon Mundy

### Publications

- The Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities – information package
- Europe is More Than You Think: Educational Package for Secondary School
- A visit by the CPT – What's it all about? 15 Questions and Answers for the Police - a reference brochure
- Police Practice and Human Rights - A European Introduction - a reference brochure
- The Council of Europe and Human Rights – a leaflet
- The Council of Europe Open to Voluntary Organizations – a leaflet

## Data protection

The increasing use of automated processing of personal data over the past few decades has exacerbated the risk of illegal use of personal data and facilitated their transfer across frontiers between countries with great differences in the level of protection provided to personal data. Faced with the need to reconcile the two fundamental rights - the right to privacy and the right to information - and ensure the same level of protection of these rights beyond national borders, the Council of Europe elaborated the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with

regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data which was opened for signature on January 28, 1981. To this day, it still remains the world's only binding international legal instrument in this field, open to signature by any country, including countries, which are not members of the Council of Europe.

As part of the assistance provided to members states in this respect, a seminar on the protection of individuals with regard to the personal data processing was organized on September 25 and

26, 2000 at the Information Centre on the Council of Europe in Sofia with the assistance of its host institution, the Center for the Study of Democracy. The seminar was organized jointly with the Council of Ministers in the framework of Council of Europe's Program on assistance for the development and consolidation of democratic stability on the occasion of the drafting of a new law on data protection in Bulgaria.

This law is intended to regulate the collection and processing of information related to individuals by public and private entities, individuals or companies. It is aimed to protect all individuals with regard to the risks related to the increasing computerization of activities in society and constant technological progress while at the same time enabling Bulgaria to face the new challenges of the information society in a modern and competitive economy.

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Continuing its work, started in 1999, on facilitating the process of ratification of the European Social Charter, in 2000 the Information Centre continued with assistance to the ratification of the European Social Security Code by Bulgaria. On November 6, the Centre organized, in cooperation with Council of Europe - Directorate General III "Social Cohesion" and the Committee on the European Social Charter with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy of Bulgaria, an international conference on promoting the ratification. The Conference was the closing event of the implementation phase of Project COE#P-PG/ADACS(98)9 financed and launched by Directorate General III "Social Cohesion, and the Bulgarian Committee on the European Social Charter in response to a request on behalf of the Bulgarian Government.



*The experts of the Council of Europe (from left to right): Joern Arnesen, Graham Sutton, Diana Alonso-Blas and Spyros Tsovilis during the seminar on September 25 and 26, 2000*

The concluding report, designed by Prof. Dr. Bernd Schulte, Max-Planck Institute for Foreign and International Social Insurance Law in München reflects the research carried out in cooperation with the Bulgarian authorities under this particular, and other projects on related matters. The conference provided key Bulgarian institutions, and interested non-governmental organizations with motivated conclusions concerning the prospective for Bulgaria to join the contracting parties to the European Social Security Code.

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The Information Centre is increasingly targeting young people in its work. In 2000, this was exemplified by its publications for the secondary education institutions. Among those, the translation and publication in Bulgarian of *Europe is More than you Think*, an information pack aimed at students at teachers in secondary level schools in Bulgaria.

The publication is both a practical guide for teaching on European issues and a reference resource about available training programs and other tutorial materials. Topics include human rights, the history of modern Europe, multicultural societies, the environment, public health care, and others.



Cover of the edition "Europe is More Than You Think" in Bulgarian



Minister of Labor and Social Policy Ivan Neikov and Mrs. Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni Director of Social Affairs and Health, Directorate General III - Social Cohesion, Council of Europe at the opening of the conference.