



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**CONF/2014/RAPACT**

# **2014 ACTIVITY REPORT OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs**

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# I. THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs

## Introduction

The activity report is an important moment in the life of an organisation, especially one with a wide range of members like our Conference of INGOs and given our diversity and multiple backgrounds, if only in geographical terms.

It is the time to take stock of and review what we have done together so as to assess and evaluate it in qualitative and quantitative terms, focusing on the successes, advances or areas where there has been no progress or there have even been reverses, and draw analyses and consequences, both immediate and for the future with a view to ensuring continuity and further development.

It is not therefore a time for more or less expected ritual self-satisfaction about what we are and what we do, but a vital stage of identification in our ongoing and renewed work in the various sectors in which we operate and exert influence.

Although part of a continuing process, it is also an ideal opportunity for showing clearly to those around us, whether at local, regional, national or, of course, European level, in the context of the Council of Europe, our abilities, our demands and our desire for progress, as shared by European citizens and the organised civil society which we represent.

It is in this way – and quite naturally and legitimately – that “internal” observers here and outside observers in other places and institutions find out about our work, see what we do, and sometimes even what we represent, and discover new and innovative aspects of our activities and our practical commitment to the universal fundamental values that unite us.

We embody and represent organised civil society, which is a key element in the tandem of “participatory democracy and representative democracy” that together form *democracy*, its values and its practices which we subscribe to passionately and for which we work everywhere, as must be reiterated emphatically.

Like the other Council of Europe bodies, namely the Committee of Ministers, Parliamentary Assembly, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, European Court of Human Rights and Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights, we are accountable for democratic advances and the efforts and commitments made for peace, freedom, progress and “living together”.

Our work, both here - and on the ground -, is clearly “political” in the original sense of that noble term, i.e. everything related to life in society and to states, the organisation of powers and, above all, the rights of European citizens.

The work of our Conference and its component entities is clearly political, practical and concrete, and this report seeks to fit in with that.

This activity report therefore covers the work done by all the players in our organisation: the Bureau, the Standing Committee, the three committees (Human Rights; Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges; and Education and Culture), the work of the Secretariat

and our various bodies, the Expert Council on NGO Law, the various other committees and obviously, above all, all those working on the ground, the many members of the working groups and all the volunteers and anonymous members of our organisations to whom thanks are due.

We form a big working team, which once again in 2014 demonstrated its active and thorough approach, from which we need to learn so as to further improve our effectiveness as requested by the Bureau and the Standing Committee at their institutional meetings. In particular, they stressed the need for streamlining and greater synergy between the work of all the various bodies – committees, working groups, of which there are currently 28 – that come under the three committees, as well as the need to increase the number and the work of cross-cutting groups because of the emerging needs for discussion and co-ordinated proposals concerning the major issues in society. The aim here is to make the analyses and proposals more cross-cutting. Especially since current developments further magnify this need for a more all-encompassing approach: how could we ignore, at present, the issues of “living together” and “intercultural dialogue”?

2014 once again showed that all this work done by the various players in Strasbourg, in countries throughout Europe and on the ground clearly demands greater pooling of efforts and synergy and accordingly more effective structural and functional links between the committees and the working groups which do most of our Conference’s general work.

The year’s streamlining efforts were confirmed in particular by the Standing Committee meeting on 29 September.

### ***The election of the heads of the three committees***

At the June session, the terms of office of the chairs and vice-chairs of the three committees were renewed. The elections saw both change and continuity – renewed confidence – regarding these important posts: your participation yesterday and the day before in the three committees’ meetings gave you an idea of the commitment and work of those concerned.

### ***Key events***

The aim here is not to give a detailed list and timeline of all the activities carried out in the three committees – the meeting reports are available for that. Instead, the idea is to draw our joint attention to key events or specific or cross-cutting activities which reflect our activist identity, the Conference’s commitments and the activities which have kept us busy throughout the year. While they appear on our website, although not in enough detail, it is well worth finding out more so as to obtain further details and pass on information about decisions taken, including, in particular, our participation in events such as the Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue in Azerbaijan, the European Local Democracy Week, the continued work on the Dialogue Toolkit in Tunisia and in Bucharest, the meeting of the Expert Council on NGO Law and that of the Venice Commission and, of course, our efforts to combat torture and degrading treatment.

### ***Texts that commit us***

This is true of the texts adopted this year again, including recommendations, resolutions, appeals and some comments on various other texts (see end of this report).

These texts all bear witness to the way we address the major concerns of our societies and to our responsiveness.

There is a further growing need in terms of publicising and building on our analyses and our demands more effectively and more widely, with each INGO having to champion the achievements, aspirations and requests of our Conference.

### ***Place and role of INGOs and NGOs***

Reference should be made here to the thematic debate held by the Ministers' Deputies, at which our President spoke about "the role and functioning of NGOs in the Council of Europe", and also to the participation by INGOs in the meetings of Council bodies (Parliamentary Assembly, Congress) and, of course, the participation by the representatives of those other bodies in our own meetings – as requested by the Standing Committee, that is a practice to be stepped up further.

Other meetings such as that held by eastern European NGOs in Chisinau in June on "Civil society participation in decision-making", the one held in Warsaw in October on "Keeping society civil – Securing space for NGOs", the Committee of Ministers' session in Vienna in May and, of course, the activities of the Expert Council all showed the increased need in Europe to expand relations and work with NGOs: all that is worth saying because it is a very major, enhanced opportunity for us all and hence for the Conference.

### ***International situation and neighbourhood countries***

The Conference of INGOs, its bodies and the Standing Committee devoted a lot of energy to the international situation, above all the serious human rights violations committed against Ukraine. The Conference was active throughout the year: it adopted a resolution on the situation in the country on 30 January 2014, it invited and welcomed a delegation of Ukrainian civil society representatives to a debate, thereby demonstrating its outrage about the events in Kyiv and then in Crimea and, of course, it followed and backed up the Council of Europe's initiatives in this area.

With regard to the neighbourhood countries, the Conference expanded and continued its relationships of mutual support, in particular with Tunisia and Morocco.

### ***Women's rights and gender equality***

While the activities carried out in 2014 were part of an ongoing process, some are particularly topical at present. This is true of the work done in the field of gender equality which focuses on the issue of women's role, their rights and the violence they suffer in many countries because of the rise in religious fundamentalism or simply also because they voice aspirations for greater rights and equality, in particular in the countries in the Mediterranean neighbourhood.

Reference should be made here to the outrage expressed by the Standing Committee of the Conference of INGOs on 1 July at the assassination of Salwa Bugaighis, a Libyan equal rights activist, just after the roundtable held in Strasbourg by our Conference on "Gender perspectives – Peace and security". A working group is still dealing actively with preventing and combating violence against women and human trafficking.

Attention should also be drawn to the progress made with the implementation of the Istanbul Convention through a monitoring mechanism.

### ***Children's rights***

The representatives of the Conference of INGOs are active contributors to and participants in the Council of Europe's activities on children's rights; the Council adopted a Strategy for the Rights of the Child for 2012-2015 and is going to develop a fresh strategy for the period from 2016 to 2019.

The Lanzarote Convention has been ratified by 34 countries and signed by a further 13. It seeks to protect children against sexual abuse and exploitation; a monitoring centre on children free from violence has been set up in Lisbon.

Reference should also be made to the Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation on “Ending child poverty in Europe” and the involvement of the Conference’s working group on the issue, which presented a questionnaire to study the feasibility of this campaign for children’s rights at our June session.

### ***Conference on education***

The Conference on the Professional Image and Ethos of Teachers was a great success, with 1 200 people applying to participate; it resulted in the drafting of a manifesto entitled Education for Change – Change for Education.

Among the topics discussed, which all showed the vital importance of education in all our countries, attention should be drawn to human rights education and the prevention of violence, dealing with difficult situations in schools and the challenges involved in education for ‘living together’.

### ***Combating poverty***

For many years, every 17 October, the Conference has vigorously marked its commitment to combating inequality, especially poverty. This year the event was held in Turin on 17 and 18 October alongside a Conference on the European Social Charter held by the Council of Europe.

People living in poverty drew up a strong message there, which was presented to the Council of Europe conference. It describes the expectations of people living in poverty and hardship and calls for the early adoption of legal and practical measures, or their ratification in close conjunction with all human rights.

The Conference is very involved here and I would urge you also to consult the interview which Jean-Marie Heydt gave on the “Right to protection against poverty and social exclusion” at this conference on the Social Charter.

### ***The World Forum for Democracy***

The World Forum for Democracy is a major event and challenge into which the Conference of INGOs puts a lot of effort, in view of the annual topics and the way in which it raises the profile of our organisations and what we represent.

This year the theme was ‘From participation to influence: can youth revitalise democracy?’ The Conference was involved in the preparation of the forum through a steering committee and sponsored three labs and three topics:

- Influencing minds: understanding democracy
- Influencing minds: in from the margin
- Influencing policies: young city changers

### ***Intergovernmental committees***

Our representatives appointed to represent the Conference of INGOs on the intergovernmental committees do much work in terms of representation, analysis and making proposals, although this is not always sufficiently recognised or capitalised on, including in-house.

Their involvement is a positive consequence of the granting of participatory status in 2003. The details are as follows:

The steering committees cover many different areas: human rights, crime problems, co-operation, legal affairs, media, democracy, heritage, education, social cohesion, gender equality, children's rights, people with disabilities and young people.

These committees held several meetings in 2014 and we need to raise awareness about their activities and take on board and build on their work, as it is representative of our Conference and the capacities of organised civil society.

### ***Participatory status***

The importance of participatory status for the member organisations, the Conference and Council of Europe bodies needs to be underlined. It was granted in 2003 and remains a unique example at international level of recognition of the role and place of organised civil society in our societies.

Five organisations are due to be accepted this year. As you are aware, however, the status was withdrawn from a number of organisations in 2014. Some have kept the status thanks to the intervention of the Standing Committee.

The working group on participatory status which has already begun its analyses of the state of play and developments in the status is therefore continuing the work it started in 2013-2014.

### ***Conclusions***

Naturally, an annual activity report does not cover all activities in detail. To gain a comprehensive, consolidated overview, it is necessary also to include the meeting reports and the reports on the activities conducted in all the bodies of the Conference (the three committees, the working groups and the Expert Council on NGO Law) and of the Council of Europe through our representation in the various committees, which needs to be publicised more effectively and built on.

That makes it possible for everybody to gauge everything that has been decided, approved, implemented, achieved, put up for discussion or carried forward. We should therefore consider all of the Conference's activities so as to make qualitative and quantitative assessments and, above all, draw encouragement for continuing, improving and supplementing our activities so as to keep on making progress.

This year, even more than before, the activity report is particularly topical because of the insights gained, commitments made and decisions taken in 2014. Our Conference and organised civil society have rightly anticipated the risks and threats that will face our societies if they do not make robust efforts to combat all forms of extremism, exclusion and discrimination.

This very topical conclusion gives us cause to show still more determination in what we are and what we do.

How can we fail to think at present about everything we have all done to defend and promote human rights everywhere, to promote education for citizenship and to combat violence and hatred throughout Europe and the world and, of course, everything we have done, proposed, called for or achieved for interfaith and intercultural dialogue, all for the sake of "living together".

Clearly, for all of us, we must raise awareness around us of our analyses, our proposals and our work, in other words, the efforts of the Conference of INGOs, and thereby boost our joint effectiveness for bringing about progress for everybody.

We must keep on promoting universal, fundamental values and must do still more to persuade those around us, other institutions and public opinion to work together more effectively and with a higher profile.

Let us come together, join forces for democracy and create synergies so that we are not just a "*vox clamantis in deserto*" (voice crying in the desert).

Our common future is:

**LIVING TOGETHER FOR EVER!!!**

Alain Mouchoux



## II. THE THEME-BASED COMMITTEES AND THE GENDER EQUALITY EXPERT

### 1. The Human Rights Committee

Chair: Michel Aguilar, Vice-Chairs: Gérard Greneron and Iamvi Totsi, Rapporteur: Maritchu Rall

In 2014, the Human Rights Committee's work was, of course, closely related to topical developments.

Human rights are being challenged in all respects, both from the point of view of the legitimacy of their universalism and with regard to the "demands" of the economy. Recognising this change in situation, which is being reflected dramatically in a wide range of areas, the Human Rights Committee has worked in many different but nevertheless converging directions to promote human rights effectively.

Points worth noting in 2014 included:

- The side event, "*A Europe without torture: what is today's reality?*", with contributions by the CPT and the European Court of Human Rights regarding the legal aspects and the CESP regarding the policing aspects;
- The adoption by the Conference of the latest documents from the *Working Group on Human Rights and Religions*: 'Proposed avenues of approach and action for members and leaders of religions' and 'An appeal to the citizens of Europe and International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs)';
- The steadfast efforts of Jean-Bernard Marie, representative on the CDDH, and the warnings he issued to the Human Rights Committee and also to the Conference plenaries concerning the process of reform both of the Court and of the Convention system, a process due to be completed by the end of 2015;
- The Decision by the Conference of INGOs to conduct a project to combat hate speech and the establishment of the Working Group on Hate Speech in liaison with ECRI. We are deeply saddened by the sudden death of Marc Leyenberger. However, given the spread of hate speech, the Human Rights Committee is continuing the work he started in co-operation with ECRI;
- The Recommendation on combating anti-Semitism in Europe adopted by the Conference;
- The International Day for the Eradication of Poverty event (17 October) organised by the Working Group on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty in Turin on the occasion of the High-Level Conference on the European Social Charter, which was attended by a delegation from the INGO Conference. This carried on from the commitment made on 17 October 2012 by the four pillars of the Council of Europe;
- Welcoming the release of an opposition figure in Belarus but remaining concerned about cases of imprisonment in various states, the committee proposed the adoption by the Conference of a Declaration on the protection of human rights defenders in Europe prepared by the Working Group on Human Rights Defenders;

- Preventing child sex abuse and exploitation remains a priority, especially when both in the North and in the South violent organisations are subverting religions and exploiting for criminal purposes people who have no land, resources or futures;
- The Working Group on Human Rights, Co-Development and Migration is continuing its work;
- At the request of Mr Spielmann, President of the European Court of Human Rights, the Human Rights Committee is co-operating with the groups supporting the poorest and most vulnerable applicants (seminar at the Court on 21 November 2014);

Being particularly concerned about the clear threats to universal economic, social and cultural rights, the Human Rights Committee focuses its commitment and its work on the acutest issues. The report by *Médecins du Monde* at its June session was a moving account of some of the issues on which the committee focuses its efforts. It intends keeping fully abreast of topical issues and being a driving force for proposals in a number of areas:

- Monitoring closely the way in which under 35-year-olds perceive and view human rights;
- Developing clearer understanding and accordingly making proposals to the pillars and organs of the Council of Europe for the benefit of Roma and minorities in general;
- Identifying and disseminating good practices concerning hate speech and populist discourse on the Internet;
- Following the process of reform of the European Court of Human Rights closely and being a more active partner of that invaluable institution;
- Continuing the cycle of annual activities concerning the Social Charter;
- Following up the commitments made by the four pillars of the Council of Europe concerning the eradication of poverty;
- Taking practical action against hate speech of all kinds.

In carrying out political action in all these areas, the Human Rights Committee is working in line with the seven priorities for the Secretary General's second term as set out on 16 September 2014.

Being convinced that its efforts will be consistent with the priorities of the new Bureau of the Conference of INGOs, the Human Rights Committee hopes to make a distinct contribution by civil society within the Quadrilogue.

## **2. Education and Culture Committee**

Chair: Sabine Rohmann, Vice-Chairs: Harry Rogge and Yosanne Vella, Rapporteur: Roseline Moreau

### **2.1 Conference on the Professional Image and Ethos of Teachers**

Together with DGII, in particular the Pestalozzi Programme, the Education and Culture Committee organised a *Conference on the Professional Image and Ethos of Teachers*, which was held on 25 and 26 April 2014.

Some 1 200 teachers and education experts from all over Europe, as well as Africa, the United States and Asia, registered for the conference.

200 participants came together at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg to discuss teachers' role in the 21st century in various workshops and plenary sessions.

To ensure broad participation, the conference was streamed live and contributions could also be made via Twitter.

The participants approved a manifesto called Education for Change – Change for Education drafted by a small group of authors, including Sabine Rohmann and Brigitte Besson representing the Education and Culture Committee, which reflects the conference discussions and the outcomes of the Teacher 21 report.

The Bureau of the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice has endorsed the project.

### **2.2 Working groups**

#### **Teachers' Profession in the 21st Century**

Person in charge: Roseline Moreau; following the 2014 elections: François Debrowolska

Following the survey on the teaching profession in the 21st century conducted in 2013, the working group in 2014 drew up and drafted the Teacher 21 report. The report is based on the data collected in the survey and analysis of the replies. It identified key problems relating to education and training for pupils and teachers in Europe today. The Pestalozzi community has identified teaching materials.

The report provided input for the drafting of the Education for Change – Change for Education manifesto.

#### **Access to the Digital Media for All**

Person in charge: Harry Rogge; following the 2014 elections: Didier Schretter

The working group is seeking to develop an approach that is beneficial to users in the current context of the global Internet governance strategy. In particular, the working group followed the Committee of Ministers' recent work in this area. Particular emphasis was placed on education and culture. The working group underlined the importance of the Council of Europe's activities in the area of protecting and defending Internet users' fundamental rights.

Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)6 of the Committee of Ministers to member states on a Guide to human rights for Internet users adopted on 16 April 2014 covers areas which are also of great concern to the Conference of INGOs such as:

- Access to media use for all and non-discrimination;
- Freedom of expression and information;
- Privacy and data protection;
- Education and general knowledge in a digital world;
- Children and young people and the digital media;
- Legal remedies for users in disputes linked to the use of digital media.

#### Proposals for the Education and Culture Committee:

- Arrange assessments of all these issues through our organisations;
- Analyse Internet uses from users' point of view;
- Compile practical examples of good practices;
- Devise new programmes for digital media education and training;
- Set priorities and draw up an action plan;
- Consider holding international meetings with civil society stakeholders and set up international expert groups.

The working group drew up a document as a basis for its activities in the coming years.

#### **Teaching history**

Person in charge: Yosanne Vella; following the 2014 elections: NN

The working group continued its work on the following issues:

- Preparing for democracy
- Women's history
- How to eliminate prejudice
- Misuse of history.

The group assessed two major projects, "Navigate", by the Council of Europe, and "Historiana", by Euroclio, and drafted a report which was submitted to the project leaders. The working group co-operates with the Education Policy Division and its head, Tatiana Milko.

#### **Living together**

Person in charge: Karl Donert; following the 2014 elections: Roseline Moreau

The working group is aware of the importance of this area for the future of societies in Europe and worldwide. The idea is to analyse what really is happening. What are we witnessing? For January 2014, the aim was to provide a contribution on achievements focused on the development of active citizenship in Europe today.

Account has to be taken of what has already been done (the White Paper and the Living Together report) and of what we want to do next.

A background document was drawn up. It serves as the starting point for producing a compendium of good practices on implementing active citizenship within the INGOs in the working group. This should help produce recommendations on education so as to promote "living together" in different contexts.

In October 2014, Roseline Moreau had a meeting with the rapporteur of the Current Affairs Committee of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Ms Nawel Rafik-Elmrini. They discussed the Current Affairs Committee's report on "Promoting diversity through intercultural education and communication strategies". Co-operation on this topic between the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Education and Culture Committee was agreed.

## **The Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue**

Person in charge: James Barnett

The group drew up a major report on this issue. It is now necessary to ensure the dissemination and use of the report, which has a strong link with the “living together” workshop.

### **2.3 Activities in intergovernmental committees**

- **Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE)**

At the CDPPE’s plenary meeting in March 2014, Sabine Rohmann was re-elected to the Bureau of the CDPPE. At that meeting, Richard Stock, President of EUNET, was invited by the CDPPE Secretariat to speak on the subject of digital culture, a crucial challenge for education.

- **Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)**

Didier Schretter represented the Education and Culture Committee at the CDMSI’s meeting in November 2014.

### **2.4 Regional Support for Inclusive Education (DGII joint project)**

The Education and Culture Committee represented by its Chair, in co-operation with the Rhineland-Palatinate Educational Institute and the Education and Training Working Group of the Summit of the Greater Region (Luxembourg, Saarland, Rhineland-Palatinate, Lorraine, Wallonia and French and German-speaking Communities of Belgium), developed a co-operation project with DGII as part of the Regional Support for Inclusive Education project.

In March 2014, a delegation from the project from south-eastern Europe (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia and “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”) comprising seven education teams and seven representatives of the countries’ education ministries visited ministries, educational institutes and schools in the Greater Region.

In October 2014, Sabine Rohmann, Chair of the Education and Culture Committee, took part in a conference on Inclusive Education in Practice in Zagreb and gave a keynote address.

In December 2014, a peer-review meeting was held in Belgrade. Head teachers and teachers from the two regions met to continue their exchanges and build a partnership and genuine co-operation between the various institutions.

### **2.5 Prospects**

Since the elections of chairs and vice-chairs in June 2014, the Education and Culture Committee has been represented by its Chair, Sabine Rohmann, and Vice-Chairs, Roseline Moreau and Didier Schretter. The rapporteur is François Debrowolska and the moderator of the working groups is Alain Mouchoux.

The four working groups:

- Teachers interacting with their environment: a shared responsibility for education in European values;
- Proper use of digital media in educational practice – a challenge for formal and non-formal education in democratic citizenship and participation;

- History teaching – moving towards a European narrative for genuine education for democratic citizenship;
- Education in intercultural dialogue – Living together in Europe: There can be no denying the multicultural makeup of European societies, which is being reinforced by globalisation. The simultaneous presence of diverse cultures is a great asset when the meeting between these different cultures is seen as a source of mutual enrichment.

### 3. Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee

Chair: Anne-Marie Chavanon, Vice-Chairs: Vera John-Mikolajewski and Israël Mensah, Rapporteur: Edith Wenger

In 2014, the Committee has focused on democracy, dialogue and the protection of human rights in the development of the territories and societies of Europe and in the Mediterranean. It has taken into account human rights in the migration of people and the consequences of climate challenges. These rights are now being considered by several Member States of the Council of Europe and by the United Nations.

#### 3.1. The promotion of democracy

Its advocacy on participation has been expressed through eight commitments:

- the search for a “*démocratie d’élaboration*” (democracy for building together) with Jo Spiegel, Vice President of the community of the Greater Mulhouse conurbation, pioneering Mayor of Kingersheim, co-author of the work : *Making the (re)birth of democracy happen* and Giulia Maci (FIHUAT), urban planner, initiator of new land use structures for the engagement of young citizens, whose mobilization is crucial for the democratic development of cities of the future.
- contribution to the work of CEMAT (the European Conference of Ministers in charge of spatial planning), on the theme : 'Promoting participatory democracy in land use planning', a text of prime importance to the European continent. Its members have in particular contributed to the creation of a draft charter on territorial democracy (Luc-Emile Bouche Florin, Patrice Collignon et Anne-Marie Chavanon)
- collaboration on the actions of the European Landscape Convention, exemplary in the field of participatory democracy. It invited the NGO *LIBERA Names and Numbers against the Mafia*, acknowledged by receiving the European Landscape Award from the Council of Europe, for the revival of the region of Haut-Belice Corleonese from lands confiscated from Mafia organisations. Presentations took place at workshops on the theme Sustainable landscape and economy in Turkey (Gerhard Ermischer, Patrice Collignon)
- Chairmanship of the Good Governance Strategy Platform, which brings together representatives of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of local authorities and the Conference of INGOS by the Chairperson of the committee.
- participation in the work of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) (Thierry Mathieu) and the continuation of the production of a Code of good practice for the participation of civil society in the decision-making processes for elected officials, established by the Congress of local authorities in connection with the Conference of INGOS (Antonella Valmorbida, Thierry Mathieu and Anne-Marie Chavanon).
- contribution to the World Forum For Democracy, for the 2014 session, the proposal of speakers and moderation of a workshop as well as the participation in the Steering Committee for future events (Israël Mensah).
- participation in the European week of local democracy: the Commission effectively disseminated information to its members, encouraged them to take initiatives on the proposed theme « *Share, propose, decide* », in conjunction with the event coordinator at the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

- The commission has supported and strongly encouraged the development of pioneering laws at global level. This was the case with the involvement of organised civil society in decision-making and legislative processes in Morocco and Romania, the Constitution adopted by Tunisia, a pioneer in the Muslim Arab world and the Prize for urban Innovation in Guangzhou (China).

### **3.2. The global challenge of climate change**

The Commission has advocated the inclusion of a Human Rights dimension in the new Treaty to be signed in Paris, from November 30 to December 11, 2015, at the COP21 meeting. This replaces the Kyoto Protocol. Its contribution to the work of the United Nations framework convention on climate change (UNFCCC - United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change) took place in two stages:

- the development, adoption and dissemination of the text of the Declaration to the bodies of the Council of Europe, the European Union, the United Nations, member States and relevant civil society organizations.
- the elaboration, adoption and wide dissemination of a position paper entitled "Climate change and human rights".

In this framework, the Commission heard from Serge Lepeltier, former French Minister of the Environment, President of the French Water Academy, former French Ambassador responsible for negotiations on climate change and Sébastien Duyck, researcher at the University of Lapland (Finland), an environmental law specialist, co-responsible for the Working Group "Climate Change and Human Rights" of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

### **3.3. The causes and consequences of migration**

Faced with recurring tragedies occurring at the borders of Europe and with countries at war, the Committee devoted its first session in 2014 to the theme of migration in the Mediterranean, the dangers faced by migrants fleeing conflicts and poverty, and the urgency of dialogue in the host countries.

Supporting the conclusions of a report by Jean-Marie Bockel, Member of the Commission for migrants, refugees and displaced persons from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, presented by Agnès Nollinger, NGO members of the commission are committed to contributing international assistance deployed to assist migrants gathered in Syrian refugee camps in Turkey, Lebanon and Iraq.

Support for the community of Lampedusa, as a European symbol and responsibility, witnessed the testimony of Gilles Reckinger, Professor of Anthropology at the University of Innsbruck, author of the publication *Lampedusa, meeting at the borders of Europe (Begegnungen am Rande Europas)*, at the invitation of the ad hoc working group led by Silvano Marseglia and Jean-Claude Gonon, (AEDE)

Working groups led by Israël Mensah and François Becker were engaged in a reflection on development aid in Southern countries and the development of interculturalism in Europe.

### **3.4. The use of violence based on gender in period of conflict**

Proposal of Anje Wiersinga, head of the ad hoc working group, the commission has supported the approach of Zeynab Hibaaq Osman, founder and Director of *KARAMA*, an NGO present in North Africa and the Middle East, formed of men and women, of various



denominations and lay people - came to ask the support of the NGOs of the Council of Europe on the one hand against gender-based violence used as a political weapon in conflicts or periods of democratic transition, and on the other hand against the side-lining of women in the process of reconciliation policy.

### **Related working group activities:**

An analysis of policy developments of the countries of the South and East of the Mediterranean and the preparation of a report on possible of NGO actions there by Jean-Pierre Estival (AEC), head of the ad hoc working group

Presentation of the introductory report "*The cultural city as social city, finding the social link and give a new breath of democracy*" by the "social cohesion and intercultural dialogue" Working Group (Israël Mensah, Emanuela Cavalieri)

The implementation of a European cultural alliance project by the European Citizenship Working Group (Hélène Pichon)

Identifying and making contact with organisations dealing with civil society in the European Union with which the Council of Europe civil society should establish relationships (Claude-Laurent Genty).

### **Speakers**

Lilia Bensedrine, lawyer, Foreign Affairs councillor of Tunisia,

Sebastian Duyck, researcher at the University of Lapland (Finland), an environmental law specialist, co-head of the Working Group "Climate Change and Human Rights" in the framework Convention of the United Nations on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Eladio Fernandez-Galiano, Head of the Department of democratic initiatives and responsible for the World Forum For Democracy.

Serge Lepeltier, former French Minister for the Environment, President of the French Water Academy, former French Ambassador responsible for climate change negotiations

Giulia Maci, urban planner (International Federation for housing and land use planning).

Agnès Nollinger, Head of the Secretariat of the commission on Migrants, refugees and displaced persons, from the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Zeynab Hibaaq Osman, founder and Director of KARAMA, an NGO present in North Africa and the Middle East

Gilles Reckinger, anthropologist, Professor at the University of Innsbruck, author of Lampedusa: *Begegnungen am Rande Europas (Lampedusa, meeting at the frontier of Europe)*

Jo Spiegel, counsellor for the Upper Rhine, Mayor of Kingersheim and Vice President of the Greater Mulhouse agglomeration, co-author of the publication *Making the (re)birth of democracy happen*

Alfonso Zardi, Head of the Department of Institutions and Democratic Governance at the Council of Europe.

#### **4. The Gender Equality Expert**

Betty Doornenbal, Gender Equality Expert

##### **Priority 2013 & 2014**

Our main priority has been the ratification of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention), adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2011.

“It is the first legally binding instrument in the world creating a comprehensive legal framework to prevent violence, to protect victims and to end with the impunity of perpetrators. It defines and criminalises various forms of violence against women – including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, stalking, physical and psychological violence and sexual violence.” (CoE press release, April 2011)

##### **Good news!**

The Istanbul Convention entered into force on 1 August 2014.

##### **Main Activities in 2014**

- Powerpoint presentation at the meeting of the Conference of INGOs in January on: “Highlights of gender equality activities 2013 and priorities 2014” – [Link to the Webpage of the Gender Equality Expert](#)
- Round table organised by the Conference of INGOs in June on: “Gender perspectives – Peace and Security: Including gender perspectives in conflict resolution and peace building”
- Working Group on preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings of the INGO Conference.
  - Lobby activities such as: writing letters to governments to promote the ratification of the Istanbul Convention and to discuss the importance of the ratification with Members of Parliament at a national and international level;
  - Exchange of views on preventing trafficking in human beings;
  - Exchange of views on different prostitution policies in the member States especially Sweden, France, Germany and the Netherlands.
- Freely Constituted Equality Group:
  - Exchange of views on gender equality;
  - Lobbied for gender equality and parity by talking with members of the Parliamentary Assembly and drafting amendments for their reports;
  - Worked together with the Working Group on preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings.
- Working Group Gender perspectives in political and democratic processes
  - Endorsed the round table organized by the INGO Conference during the June session on “Gender perspectives – Peace and Security: including gender perspectives in conflict resolution and peace building;
  - Lobbied for gender equality for women in the South-Mediterranean Region.
- Participated in the Parliamentary Network women free from violence.
  - Worked together especially on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention.

- Represented the Conference of INGOs in the Gender Equality Commission (GEC)

The Gender Equality Commission (GEC) was established in 2012 to help ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality into all Council of Europe policies and to bridge the gap between commitments made at international level and the reality of women in Europe.

#### **Major subjects 2014:**

- Media and the image of women  
Council of Europe publication: [“gender equality and the media at national level; compilations of good practices from member states”](#)
- The ratification and entry into force of the Istanbul Convention  
Council of Europe publication: [“Domestic and sexual violence perpetrator programmes: article 16 of the Istanbul Convention”](#)  
Council of Europe publication: [“Council of Europe gender equality strategy 2014-2017”](#)

#### **Quadrilogue**

In conclusion, the cooperation within the quadrilogue has been effective. A good example is the promotion of the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Without the cooperation within the quadrilogue and the pressure of INGOs it would have taken much longer to implement this Convention and to diminish violence against women and domestic violence as soon as possible.

#### **End of term**

Hereby I thank everybody with whom I have had the pleasure to work with during this 3-years period.

### III. ADOPTED TEXTS

In 2014 the Conference of INGOs adopted several texts related to its main areas of activity

- CONF/PLE(2014)DEC1  
[Declaration adopted on 26 June 2014 on "Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Europe"](#)
- CONF/PLE(2014)REC1  
[Recommendation adopted on 26 June 2014 on "Gender based violence as a political weapon"](#)
- CONF/PLE(2014)REC2  
[Recommendation adopted on 26 June 2014 on "combating anti-Semitism in Europe"](#)
- CONF/PLE(2014)DECI2  
[Decision adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 30 January 2014 "Human Rights and Religions: proposed avenues of approach and action for members and leaders of religions"](#)
- CONF/PLE(2014)APP1  
[Appeal adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 30 January 2014 "Human Rights and Religions: an appeal to the citizens of Europe and International Non-Governmental Organisations \(INGOs\)"](#)
- CONF/PLE(2014)DECI1  
[Decision adopted on 30 January 2014 on "hate speech"](#)
- CONF/PLE(2014)RES1  
[Resolution adopted on 30 January 2014 on "the situation in Ukraine"](#)
- [Position paper of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe on "Climate Change and Human Rights"](#)