



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe

# Activity report 2017

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## The Conference of INGOs: constant progress and renewal

This activity report presents an overview of the Conference of INGOs' activities in 2017. It is analytical and does not claim to be exhaustive. It takes account of the strategic priorities set out in the Action Plan adopted by the INGO Conference in June 2015, across the three areas covered by the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and rule of law. It highlights the Conference of INGOs' presence and contribution in certain Council of Europe member states, as well as interaction with other Council of Europe bodies and the development of the partnership with other international institutions.

The Conference of INGOs celebrated its 40th anniversary in June 2017. In 1977, the INGOs came together for a plenary conference during the Parliamentary Assembly session. That meeting was arranged and facilitated by the Liaison Committee between the INGOs and the Council of Europe set up in 1976. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary, Claude Laurent Genty and the other honorary presidents proposed that the history of the Conference be [described and illustrated](#) so that new INGOs joining the organisation were aware of it. The Mayor of Strasbourg hosted a reception in honour of the Conference of INGOs, highlighting the importance of the support which the City of Strasbourg provides for NGOs and the great impact of the work done by the Council of Europe at national and local level.

An organisation's ability to renew itself demonstrates its vitality and its permanency. To keep participatory status with the Council of Europe and thereby retain their places as members of the Conference, INGOs must submit four-yearly reports presenting their contribution to the Organisation's work. This review process is a means of assessing the state of co-operation and the ties maintained. Unfortunately, this leads to formal breaks with INGOs which are unable to meet the conditions laid down in Resolution (2016)3 of the Committee of Ministers setting out the arrangements for co-operation and the commitments made by the INGOs holding participatory status. In this connection in 2017, the Conference of INGOs lost some 50 members<sup>1</sup> and gained 19 new ones.<sup>2</sup> The welcoming of new INGOs during the sessions is constantly improving, with specific meetings arranged by Anne Kraus (member of the Bureau of the Conference of INGOs). We have started preparing a guide to make it easier for new representatives to find their way about in the Conference itself and the Council of Europe Secretariat. The profile of our work is continuing to be raised thanks to improvements on the website and our presence on the social media (some 2 000 followers of the Conference's Twitter account and 4 800 on Facebook). With the new blog created by Didier Schretter (communication adviser), information about the Conference's activities is sent directly to the subscribers. This is the first step towards the communication strategy being developed. These various media tools have increased the number of visits to the Conference of INGOs' website, which remains the official source on the activities carried out.

We are also pleased to note that the Council of Europe's activity report for 2016 included a section on the Conference of INGOs' activities and priorities.

The renewal of the various figures in the Conference of INGOs was also reflected in the election of new Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the thematic committees, including some elected for the first time. The elections (June 2017) saw the partial renewal of the Standing Committee, which subsequently held a two-day meeting<sup>3</sup> (October 2017) to prepare new roadmaps to be submitted to the INGOs for adoption in January 2018. Between October and January, the Conference President wrote to the INGOs asking them to contribute to the roadmaps. A consultation meeting with the INGOs concerned will be held right at the beginning of the session. During the relevant few months, the committee chairs and vice-chairs were also able to establish contacts with the Council of Europe divisions and the experts whose areas of activity are in line with the proposed thematic priorities.

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<sup>1</sup> For more details, see the synopsis of the Standing Committee meeting on 24 January 2017, <https://rm.coe.int/conf-sc-2017-syn1-24january-en/16807105e8>

<sup>2</sup> Participatory status awarded in December 2016 and December 2017.

<sup>3</sup> Seminar held with financial contributions from INGO-Service and the Civil Society Division budget.

The thematic committees play a key part in organising the work done by the INGOs at the Council of Europe, thereby shaping the results and impact of the work of the Conference of INGOs as a whole.

## 1. Human rights

In 2016, in liaison with the Private Office of the Secretary General, the Standing Committee decided to focus on two issues identified as priorities by the Secretary General, namely the death penalty and national development of the No Hate Speech campaign. In the latter case, the Human Rights Committee working group of the same name co-ordinated by Gilles Bloch (LICRA representative) helped to launch the campaign in France. In addition, the work by Anne Kraus (CISV International) in her home country of Luxembourg contributed to the national authorities' efforts to launch the No Hate Speech campaign at national level.

### 1.1. Return of the death penalty in Europe: genuine threat or populist fiction?

In 2017, the Conference of INGOs' main annual event focused on the death penalty in Europe. Under the heading, "[Return of the death penalty in Europe: genuine threat or populist fiction?](#)", the event held<sup>4</sup> to mark the European and World Day against the Death Penalty, in co-operation with the International Federation of Action by Christians for the Abolition of Torture (FIACAT), placed the debate about the threat of the return of the death penalty in context. The threat is fed by populist discourse with a pseudo-security focus that has emerged in connection with the fight against terrorism. The Conference and the FIACAT decided to focus on the issue given that such discourse, which would have triggered strong reactions in the past, no longer seems to meet with much opposition, even including among some sections of society in European countries. In this context, on the occasion of the 20th anniversary of the ending of executions throughout the Council of Europe, it seemed vital to reiterate a number of principles agreed and commitments made by the member states. The event brought together leading figures such as Sister Helen Prejean (founder of the Ministry against the Death Penalty in the United States), Marc Bossuyt (Commissioner, International Commission against the Death Penalty) and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe. Many permanent delegations of the member states addressed messages, alongside academic experts and non-governmental organisations with relevant expertise. A poster exhibition dealing with abolition produced by young people supported by the INGO, Together against the Death Penalty (ECPM), at the invitation of the Conference of INGOs, was staged during the parliamentary session, with a PACE representative and the Ambassador of Portugal, representing the EU, at the reception for participants hosted by the latter. Once again, the event held by the Conference of INGOs became an event of the Council of Europe as a whole, serving a common cause that is one of the priorities of the organisation and one of the key causes in the eyes of its Secretary General. NGOs and representatives of the public authorities in Belarus, who were invited by the Civil Society Division, took an active part in the event.

### 1.2. Protecting human rights defenders

For several years, the Conference of INGOs has been active in helping to protect human rights defenders both through general measures and through specific support for individuals exposed to risks and threats. In terms of collective action, it should be noted that on 27 January 2017 the Conference adopted a recommendation on "[Surveillance of lawyers: the need for standards safeguarding client confidentiality](#)". Lawyers play a key part in protecting defenders and the exercise of their profession therefore needs to be protected. The Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights is currently studying a draft international convention on the profession of lawyer ([see report](#)).

#### *Support for Valentina Cherevatenko*

The situation of human rights defenders in the Russian Federation was addressed in press releases and in exchanges of correspondence between the President of the Conference of INGOs and the Ambassador of the Russian Federation to the Council of Europe. In 2016, [the Conference President voiced her concern](#) about the criminal proceedings brought against Valentina Cherevatenko, Chair of the Women of the Don NGO based in Novochoerkassk in Russia and winner of the Anna Politkovskaya Prize in 2016. She was charged under Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code with alleged "malicious evasion of duties imposed by the law on non-profit organisations performing the functions of a foreign agent." The meeting with Valentina

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<sup>4</sup> Funded from the budget of the Council of Europe's Civil Society Division.

Cherevatenko and the Conference President in Moscow confirmed the illegitimacy of the charges concerning her alleged failure to place her NGO on the register of foreign agents. Given the criminal proceedings brought by the Russian authorities and the prospect of her going to prison, an exchange of letters with the Ambassador of the Russian Federation took place in 2017. In the end, the proceedings were dropped in July 2017.

### *Protecting defenders in Turkey*

In the light of the developments in Turkey following the attempted coup and the meeting with Turkish INGOs invited to the Council of Europe by the President of the Conference of INGOs, several declarations were made condemning the arbitrary detention of human rights defenders in Turkey. The Conference President expressed her serious concern regarding [the detention of Mr Taner Kiliç](#), Chair of Amnesty International Turkey. Subsequently, the Conference expressed its consternation following the [detention of a group of human rights defenders](#) in Turkey on 5 July 2017, some of whom had worked with the Conference. Their arrest led to a declaration by the President during her exchange of views with the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM) and the suspension of the planned visit to Turkey. Following proceedings, the group of defenders were released from prison but the charges against them were maintained. However, the Chair of Amnesty International has not been released.

Again in Turkey, the Conference President, the Chair of the Human Rights Committee and the Gender Equality Expert issued a strong statement of condemnation following [the ban on all lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex rights groups \(LGBTI\) events](#) in Ankara.

No significant improvements have taken place here. The whole Conference of INGOs must work to ensure respect for fundamental rights in Turkey.

#### 1.3. Business and human rights

The Migration, Human Rights and Co-development working group worked for several years under the authority of the Human Rights Committee to prepare a recommendation on Business and Human Rights, which was adopted by the Conference on 29 June 2017. This followed on from [Recommendation\(2016\)3 of the Committee of Ministers to member States](#). The adoption of the text was preceded by an event held by the same Human Rights Committee working group in January 2017. This was attended by Ambassador Guido Bellatti Ceccoli, outgoing Chair of the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Human Rights, Claire O'Brien from the Danish Institute for Human Rights, Pierre Yves le Borgn, member of the French National Assembly representing the French living abroad and member of the Parliamentary Assembly, Amnesty International Switzerland, the European Lawyers Union (UAE) and the counsellor to the Spanish Ambassador to the Council of Europe. Discussion focused on European and international standards concerning corporate civil and criminal liability and due diligence.

The President of the Conference of INGOs was also invited to take part in the high-level seminar held by Directorate General I of the Council of Europe on follow-up to Recommendation(2016)3. Co-operation was established with the Danish Institute for Human Rights (which had held a previous seminar) in order to follow developments in this area in international institutions. Responsibility here was assigned to Christoph Spreng (representing the INGO, Initiatives of Change), who joined with Claire O'Brien in proposing a motion which was subsequently adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE). A parliamentary rapporteur was appointed on the subject in December 2017. Christoph Spreng also represented the Conference of INGOs at the [UN Forum on Business and Human Rights](#) in Geneva in November 2017, the focus of which was on access to effective remedy. The head of the organising body (UNWG), Professor Michael K Addo, warmly welcomed the fact that the Conference of INGOs had joined the global effort for better human rights practices in business.

#### 1.4. Poverty: a violation of human rights

[On the 30th International Day for the Eradication of Poverty \(17 October 2017\)](#),<sup>5</sup> the Conference held an exchange of views about crosscutting action taken by Council of Europe bodies following the joint

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<sup>5</sup> Event funded by the Council of Europe's Social Charter Department and the INGO-Service association.

declaration made by the four pillars of the Council of Europe in 2012 on “Acting together to eradicate extreme poverty in Europe”. The event was opened by Ambassador Emil Ruffer, Chair of the Ministers’ Deputies of the Council of Europe, and Permanent Representative of the Czech Republic, Gabriella Battaini-Dragoni, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, and Giuseppe Palmisano, President of the European Committee of Social Rights. We were also honoured to welcome Monica Oltra, Vice-President of the Regional Government of Valencia (Spain), Regional Minister for Equality and Inclusive Policies and Vice-President of the European Network for Social Inclusion (ELISAN), as well as Ambassador Božidarka Krnić, Chair of the Ministers’ Deputies’ Rapporteur Group on Social Questions and Permanent Representative of Montenegro, Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Guido Raimondi, President of the European Court of Human Rights, and Alain Fontanel, first Deputy Mayor of Strasbourg. They contributed to the day with addresses at the ceremony held every year on the forecourt of the Council of Europe in memory of the victims of extreme poverty. The Council of Europe choir and pupils from Lixenbuhl school also took part in the event. [As in 2016](#), the event enabled people with no direct links with the European NGOs and national and European institutions to share their experiences and make recommendations to policymakers. These organisations included Young Christian Workers (JOC), Caritas Alsace and Youth Express Network (REJ).

### 1.5. Emerging technologies and human rights

In addressing this subject at one of its meetings, the Human Rights Committee sought to draw INGOs’ attention to the issues and challenges of the information society which are reflected in tension between data use and ethics. In this connection, the committee heard statements by Sonia Bressler, doctor of philosophy and epistemology, and André Reinald, software engineer and developer, who pointed out the importance of using digital shareware to counter the use of personal data by multinationals, which he saw as threatening democracy.

The operation of NGOs in the information society era is a further concern of the Conference of INGOs that is discussed by the [Steering Committee on Media and Information Society](#) (CDMSI), on which the Conference is represented by Didier Schretter. The government representatives on the committee were very interested in the conclusions of the Conference’s visit to Estonia, a country which operates according to the rules of e-government and e-governance.

### 1.6. Populism

At the interface between human rights and democracy is populism, a long-standing phenomenon which is currently, however, on the rise in some Council of Europe member states and observer states and is affecting, firstly, the efficiency, impartiality and independence of judiciaries, secondly, freedom of expression, thirdly, freedom of assembly and freedom of association, fourthly, democratic institutions and, fifthly, inclusive societies. This is also one reason why the Secretary General of the Council of Europe chose to focus his most recent report on analysis of the problem and its impact on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The Human Rights Committee held [a short debate](#) during its meeting to urge INGOs to combat the negative effects of populism, underlining civil society’s role in maintaining democratic checks and balances. A talk was given by Guido Bellati Ceccoli, Ambassador of the Republic of San Marino to the Council of Europe (whose address was appended to the meeting report),<sup>6</sup> Chair of the Committee of Ministers’ Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H) at the time, and the [Secretary General’s report](#) was presented by Matjaz Gruden, Council of Europe Director of Policy Planning. He urged the Conference to make a greater contribution to chapter 3 of the report (freedom of assembly and freedom of association).

The discussion provided key input for the lab held by the Standing Committee during the [World Forum for Democracy](#), which focused this year on populism. This lab entitled “[Participatory democracy: an antidote to populism?](#)” concluded with [two major recommendations](#):<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Ambassador Guido Bellati Ceccoli passed away during 2017. With his death, the world lost a great humanist and the Conference a great friend. Many tributes were paid to him at the Council of Europe.

<sup>7</sup> Our gratitude goes to Maritchu Rall for representing us on the Forum steering committee throughout the year.

- To boost people to practice active citizenship through popular education, so that they seize the tools of participatory democracy and make them live, in order to get involved in political decision-making processes.
- To educate citizens on the best use of participatory tools and on strategic and effective ways to lobby for their opinions to be heard.

### 1.7. Significant contributions to steering committees<sup>8</sup>

A substantial proportion of the Human Rights Committee's meetings was given over to discussing issues where the Conference of INGOs had made contributions through its representatives on the Council of Europe's steering committees, committees of parties and intergovernmental committees. Much work was done on the [Steering Committee for Human Rights](#) (CDDH), which has set up several drafting groups to which we contributed.<sup>9</sup> Given that these groups covered specialised areas, Jean-Bernard Marie, Conference representative on the CDDH, co-ordinated the contributions of several of our experts selected on the basis of their particular fields (Didier Schretter, Anne Nègre, Jean-Michel Caudron and Marie-José Schmitt).

Referring to the [Recommendation adopted by the Conference of INGOs in 2015](#) concerning persons with disabilities, Marie-José Schmitt contributed to the preparation of the new strategy entitled "[Human rights: a reality for all](#)" for the period from 2017 to 2023. The Conference of INGOs moderated the panel on equal recognition before the law of persons with disabilities at the high-level conference held in Cyprus in March 2017.

Participation in the Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child by the co-ordinators of the Human Rights Committee's relevant working group led to a call being made to INGOs to take action to promote the [European Day on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#) held every year on 18 November. In many countries, this is not yet a national cause. Several INGOs responded to the call.

## 2. Democracy

### 2.1. Situation of NGOs in Council of Europe member states

While the right to freedom of association and assembly is a human right, the operation of NGOs in the member states is a good indicator of the state of democracy in European countries. The Conference is continuing its fact-finding visits to countries,<sup>10</sup> focusing on NGO participation in the decision-making process. In 2017, the Conference delegation visited [Estonia](#), [Ireland](#), and [Serbia](#), while the visit to Turkey was suspended for the reasons explained above. The Conference President also met NGOs during her visit to Cyprus. During each official visit, the delegation meets national NGOs and the public authorities. The reports drawn up after each visit are sent to the governments for comment. Political debates are then held during the plenary meetings with the participation of the ambassador from the member state concerned and a national NGO. This activity initiated in 2015 has played a major part in raising awareness of the Conference of INGOs in the member states and has enabled the Conference to become more useful in defending and supporting NGOs' contributions to public policies.

Following [the initial meeting](#) held with Turkish NGOs at the Council of Europe in December 2016 and the [Resolution](#) adopted by the Conference, the President invited the same NGOs to a second meeting in June 2017. During the two days of exchanges, we analysed with the Council of Europe's various discussion partners the situation in Turkey following the attempted coup and some of the decrees issued following the declaration of the state of emergency. Given the scale of the violations of fundamental rights, a wide range

<sup>8</sup> In this case, the term "steering committee" covers all the committees set up by the Council of Europe Secretariat. These include committees of parties to conventions and intergovernmental committees. The Conference of INGOs is represented on 29 such committees (including drafting groups under those committees) and two parliamentary committees (see appended table).

<sup>9</sup> Drafting Group on Social Rights (CDDH-SOC), Drafting Group on Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage (CDDH-MF), Drafting Group on Civil Society and National Human Rights Institutions (CDDH-INST), Drafting Group on Migration and Human Rights (CDDH-MIG) and Drafting Group on freedom of expression and links to other human rights (CDDH-EXP).

<sup>10</sup> Visits funded in full by the Council of Europe Civil Society Division budget.

of findings were shared and great efforts were made to find solutions. The temporary reduction in financial resources caused by the requirement to help cover the Council of Europe's budgetary shortfall resulting from the Russian Federation's failure to pay part of its annual contributions prevented the Conference from arranging a third meeting.

Given its specific structure and position, the core mission of the Conference of INGOs is to promote civil society and an environment conducive to it, on which the exercise of democracy, human rights and the rule of law depends.

## 2.2. Civil participation in political decision-making

In his 2015 report, the Secretary General expressed a desire to help improve full and effective civil participation in decision-making processes. In this connection, the [European Committee on Democracy and Governance \(CDDG\)](#) and the Conference of INGOs were asked to work together to draw up guidelines on such full and effective participation. A working group, comprised on a proposal from the Conference of INGOs of an equal number of civil society experts and government experts, drew up initial draft guidelines. [These](#) were amended several times before being adopted by the CDDG and then the Committee of Ministers in September 2017. On the Conference side, the work was co-ordinated by Anne-Marie Chavanon, who was Chair of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges (DSCGC) Committee until June 2017. Throughout 2017, the committee also considered Romania's experience in connection with the Open Government Partnership in terms of increasing the transparency of government and opening up effective dialogue with civil society. The OGP International Platform was presented by Paul Maassen.

Article 33 of the guidelines for civil participation in political decision-making provides as follows: *"In order to evaluate member States' experience in the practical application of these guidelines, the Committee of Ministers may ask the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), together with the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe to ensure regular follow-up and provide feedback to the Committee of Ministers"*.

In the second half of the year, initial meetings were held to try and identify strategic partners and phases for disseminating and implementing the guidelines. A working group co-ordinated by Gerhard Ermisher, Vice-Chair of the DSCGC Committee, will have more specific responsibility for this task over the next three years.

For her part, the Conference's Gender Equality Expert drew the Conference's attention several times to the need to ensure balanced participation of women and men in political and public decision-making.<sup>11</sup> This dimension will also have to be taken into account.

## 2.3. Contributions aimed at boosting gender equality policies

"Women's mobilization in Europe: What impact on policies?" was the heading of a short [event](#) held in June 2017 by Anne Nègre, Conference Gender Equality Expert, in partnership with the Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination following the wave of demonstrations staged by women in several Council of Europe member countries. The focus was on the situation in Poland, Ireland, Turkey and Iceland. The event highlighted the processes through which advances for women's rights are achieved and efforts to defend human rights and democracy take place. The countries chosen were represented by members of parliament and activists to show the need to move forward together both in parliaments and through large-scale civil campaigns on our city streets.

In 2017, gender equality was a crosscutting theme of the Conference's activities. Anne Nègre, [Gender Equality Expert of the Conference of INGOs](#), represents the Conference on the various committees and at meetings held on the subject at the Council of Europe. She also helps to raise INGOs' awareness of the issues and challenges relating to equality policies today.

The Council of Europe is in the process of drawing up a new Gender Equality Strategy, which will be launched in Copenhagen in March 2018 during the Danish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

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<sup>11</sup> See the work done by the Council of Europe on this subject: <https://rm.coe.int/rapport-analytique-donnees-2016-/1680751a3e>



The Gender Equality Expert consulted the INGOs in the Conference with a view to contributing to the [Recommendation on Combating Sexism](#) being prepared by the [Council of Europe's Gender Equality Commission](#). The drafting group in which she took part (March and June 2017) also considered the shortcomings to be dealt with in the various Council of Europe documents on gender mainstreaming.

A training session for the INGOs was held in June 2017 under the heading “NGOs as allies in gender mainstreaming” with the relevant Council Europe departments and, in particular, Carlien Scheele, Senior Gender Equality Adviser, Carolina Lasen Diaz, Head of the Gender Equality Unit, and Cécile Gréboval, Programme Adviser.

The Gender Equality Expert also represented the Conference at the meetings of the [Parliamentary Assembly Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination](#), the [Committee of the Parties of the Istanbul Convention](#), the CDDH drafting group on a best practices tool for combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage and the ad hoc working group set up by [Eurimages](#) to draft a recommendation on the position of women in the audiovisual sector.

#### 2.4. Inclusive societies dealing with migration and intercultural dialogue

The migration crisis presents many challenges and the Conference of INGOs has been active in this area for several years. In order to get its member organisations more closely involved, the Conference in 2017 adopted a [migration roadmap](#) as a basis for the common commitment to respond to the needs and expectations of persons forced to migrate, take account of the experience and expertise of NGOs working on the ground and consider migration as a potential asset. The work here was co-ordinated by Jean-Michel Caudron, who is responsible for the crosscutting migration and North-South theme.

In this connection, the Conference joined with the Euro-Institute in Kehl (Germany) and the INGO, Europa, in holding a colloquy in June 2017 on “[Reception of refugees and migrants in European societies: challenges and solutions](#)”. The organisers focused on the French and German context in order to analyse the two reception systems and the respective role and contribution of public institutions and civil society. The very wide-ranging debate included contributions from the Conference President, the Secretary General of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Andreas Kiefer, many academic experts (Greece, Madrid, Bulgaria, France and Germany), representatives of local public authorities (city of Freiburg), Council of Europe bodies (EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, European Social Charter Department), professionals (Minkowska Centre) and representatives of NGOs and INGOs (Doctors of the World (MDM), Réseau Eurosocietal, Europa, Fondation citoyenne). The event was co-ordinated by Jean-Michel Caudron (Conference of INGOs) and Margot Bonnafous (Euro-Institute), with strong support from the Secretariat.<sup>12</sup>

The Conference contributed<sup>13</sup> to the [Secretary General's report on the state of citizenship and human rights education](#), which reviews progress in implementing the [Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education](#). In June 2017, a conference on “Learning to Live Together – A Shared Commitment to Democracy” was held at the Council of Europe as part of the Czech Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. On that occasion, the Conference President moderated a [workshop focusing on Article 10 of the Charter](#), highlighting the “Role of NGOs, youth organisations and other stakeholders”.

The Education and Culture Committee's working group on “Education in intercultural dialogue – Living together in Europe” co-ordinated by Roselyne Moreau held a consultation aimed at drawing up a set of recommendations and innovative ideas for formal, non-formal and informal education as a means of contributing to the development of an inclusive society. The report (and the relevant [summary](#)) highlights the need to guarantee fundamental rights before initiating dialogue between different social groups, the importance of the local environment for properly establishing practices for living together and local and regional policies in line with people's needs at local and regional level and the significance of interdependence between democratic culture and intercultural dialogue, for which education in democracy is necessary in order to shape our attitudes regarding living together.

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<sup>12</sup> It was funded by INGO-Service and grants obtained by the INGO, Europa.

<sup>13</sup> Contribution by Anna Rurka, Sabine Rohman and Michel Aguilar.

In April 2017, the [Nicosia NGO Support Centre \(Cyprus\)](#), in collaboration with the Anna Lindh Foundation (Cyprus National Network), held an 8-hour experiential training course on intercultural dialogue. The training was primarily based on the guidelines for conducting Intercultural Dialogue. 15 people from Cyprus, Bulgaria, Hungary, Germany, Greece, the United States, Italy, Poland and the Czech Republic attended.

The Conference of INGOs also took part in the opening session of the [2017 Council of Europe Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue](#), at which it was represented by Jean-Michel Caudron.

## 2.5. Significant contributions to steering committees

The [European Committee on Democracy and Governance](#) (CDDG) is the steering committee central to the activities of the DSCGC Committee. The Conference is also represented on the European Stakeholders' Platform linked to that committee. It is represented by Gerhard Ermisher, with Luminata Petrescu as substitute (two vice-chairs of the DSCGC Committee). The DSCGC Committee also contributed to the revision of Recommendation Rec(2001)19 of the Committee of Ministers on the participation of citizens in local public life.

Through its two representatives, Robert Bergougnan (EASSW) and Gérard Schaefer (ICSW), the Conference contributes to the work of the [European Social Cohesion Platform](#), the aim of which is to reinforce the intergovernmental component of the Secretary General's strategy aimed at developing the Council of Europe's action in the field of social cohesion, in particular by promoting the European Social Charter and the collective complaints procedure, with a view to ensuring equal and effective access to social rights. The Conference contributed to the four working groups and was mentioned through four examples of activities submitted by the INGOs (July 2017), namely the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, the collective complaint by ERTF against the exclusion of Roma children from school, the report of the Global Agenda for Social Work Observatory and a compendium of 30 examples of good practices for promoting dignity and combating age discrimination for those aged over 60 years.

The Conference of INGOs also contributes to the [Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice](#) (CDPPE), where Sabine Rohman, outgoing Chair of the Education and Culture Committee, held a position in the Bureau. For 2018 and 2019, the committee's main objectives will involve three sub-programmes: (i) competences and qualifications, (ii) inclusive approaches in education and (iii) ethics, transparency and integrity in education. The Conference will be represented by the Claude Vivier Le Got, current Chair of the Education and Culture Committee.

The Conference is actively represented by Anne Kraus (Bureau member responsible for youth) on the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ). The latter works in close co-operation with the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ), and together they form the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ).<sup>14</sup> Over the last three years, many representatives of youth organisations (which hold participatory status and are members of the CCJ) have re-established contact with the Conference of INGOs and attended the sessions. The commitment to stepping up exchanges and co-operation with the Conference's thematic committees and working groups is still valid, in particular regarding issues that affect civil society as a whole.

While the narrowing of the civic space is a concern in many Council of Europe bodies, it mainly affects the Conference of INGOs, which works directly to promote the fundamental freedoms inherent in the operation of NGOs. At the CCJ meetings in March and October 2017, Anne Kraus urged the Advisory Council on Youth to join in the efforts made by the Conference to support NGOs in member states. In this connection, she drew attention to the Conference's key role in terms of:

- defending the right to freedom of expression, association and participation,
- encouraging dialogue between civil society and the public authorities,
- raising political stakeholders' awareness of the challenges facing some NGOs (through events such as "NGOs under pressure" held by the Conference in 2016).

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<sup>14</sup> These committees' meetings are linked and are sometimes held jointly.

She explained the role of the Expert Council in working practically for the release of human rights defenders and issuing joint declarations with the President, Anna Rurka, concerning the restrictions imposed on NGOs in various parts of Europe.

### 3. Rule of law

#### 3.1. Legal opinions of the Expert Council on NGO Law and the dialogue initiated by the Conference President

10 years ago (on 10 October 2007) the 1006th meeting of the Committee of Ministers adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe. To mark the anniversary, the Conference of INGOs expressed its gratitude to the Committee of Ministers for that innovative move and reasserted its desire to help implement the recommendation. The [declaration](#) adopted by the Standing Committee also underlined civil society's notable role in our democracies.

The Expert Council on INGO Law is a political and legal body of the Conference of INGOs, which makes a major contribution to the rule of law. It met twice during 2017. Representatives of the Council take part in all the visits by the Conference to member states and contribute to the ensuing reports.

The harmful legislative changes in some member states in 2017 kept the Expert Council very busy. It and the Conference of INGOs were the first Council of Europe bodies to publish a legal opinion ([CONF/EXP\(2017\)1](#)) on the Hungarian Act on the Transparency of Organisations supported from Abroad.<sup>15</sup> This provided useful input for the call by the PACE and the Venice Commission's opinion. The Expert Council's opinion was preceded by several letters from the Conference President to the Hungarian Ambassador to the Council of Europe and a [joint statement](#) with Cyril Ritchie, President of the Expert Council, expressing concern about the accusations against INGOs labelled as foreign agents.

To back up the Conference's commitment to Turkish NGOs (described above), the Expert Council also published an excellent legal opinion concerning the impact of the state of emergency on freedom of association in Turkey ([CONF/EXP\(2017\)2](#)), which is available in English and Turkish.

The bill establishing the Centre for the Development of Civil Society in Poland was also the subject of an [exchange of correspondence between the President and the Ambassador of Poland to the Council of Europe](#), while a communiqué was issued and co-operation was established with the OSCE/ODHIR concerning its legal opinion.

The Conference President followed the mass demonstrations in Romania against corruption. The initial legislative changes led to an exchange of correspondence with the Romanian Ambassador to the Council of Europe (July-September 2017). Recent developments involving a bill aimed at restricting the civic space or even imposing penalties on NGOs critical of the authorities triggered action by the Expert Council which, in co-operation with our local partners, produced a legal opinion criticising the proposed changes ([CONF/EXP\(2017\)3](#)). The Conference of INGOs can be proud of the responsiveness of its main legal body, which demonstrates the added value and importance of early action or warnings.

#### 3.2. Significant contributions to steering committees

In the spirit of the rule of law, the Conference represented by Cyril Ritchie contributes to the [European Committee on Legal Co-operation](#), which is responsible for various key documents, including [Recommendation CM/REC\(2017\)2](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member states on the legal regulation of lobbying activities in the context of public decision-making. The Conference President and Cyril Ritchie, the Conference's representative on the committee, worked to ensure that lobbying activities and related regulations do not in any circumstances restrict the legitimate public-interest advocacy activities conducted by NGOs (non-profit organisations and associations, whether structured or non-structured) that shape civil participation in political decision-making. Our concerns were reflected in Article 4 of the recommendation, which provides as follows: *"Legal regulation of lobbying activities should not, in any form or manner whatsoever, infringe the democratic right of individuals to: express their opinions and petition public officials,*

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<sup>15</sup> Act on the Transparency of Organisations Supported from Abroad (Hungarian Parliament Bill T/14967)1

*bodies and institutions, whether individually or collectively; campaign for political change and change in legislation, policy or practice within the framework of legitimate political activities, individually or collectively.”*

Another key instrument being drawn up by the same committee involves the codification of a set of detailed rules on the detention of migrants based on international and regional human rights standards applicable to the conditions in which migrants are held in administrative detention.

#### **4. Interaction with the other pillars and institutions of the Council of Europe**

At the end of 2016, Pedro Agramunt, who was President of the Parliamentary Assembly at the time, requested a meeting with the Conference President. At the meeting held in January 2017, the [Conference President](#) was able to directly express her concerns about the situation of civil society and political prisoners in Azerbaijan and raise the issue of the allegations of corruption in the Assembly which had come to light several weeks earlier. A number of INGOs in the Conference called for an outside investigation into the PACE. In the subsequent discussions, proposals were made for either a single anti-corruption mechanism for all Council of Europe institutions or specific instruments geared to the operation of each individual body. In this connection and to pre-empt any questioning of the integrity of the INGOs in the Conference, [the President asked](#) the Council of Europe’s Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) to provide recommendations on preventing risks of corruption and conflicts of interest and strengthening the legal framework and rules of procedure of the Conference. On the basis of the replies to the questionnaire sent by the Secretariat to the member INGOs, GRECO produced a [specific report for the Conference of INGOs](#). A group of experts, whose terms of reference were approved by the Standing Committee, was set up and met at the end of 2017 to propose a code of conduct which will be discussed by the Conference with a view to adoption.

The Conference is actively represented on two parliamentary committees (Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, Anne Nègre, and Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, Thierry Matthieu). The President wrote to all Assembly committee chairs notifying them of the new composition of the Standing Committee. We hope to be able to step up our contribution to the reports prepared by the PACE.

With regard to interaction with the Committee of Ministers, the Conference of INGOs is most satisfied with the exchanges of views (regular since 2015) between the Conference President and the [Ministers’ Deputies](#) (once a year) and the Committee of Ministers’ [Rapporteur Group on Democracy](#) (GR-DEM) (twice a year). These political exchanges are opportunities for discussing current issues of concern to INGOs and also reporting on the Conference of INGOs’ activities. The permanent delegations are regularly invited to take part in the INGO Conference meetings open to the public and to make more specific contributions to the political debate that takes place during the Conference plenary session.

This year, the Conference put forward the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement for the Council of Europe’s North-South Prize. Kristiina Kumpula, Secretary General of the Finnish Red Cross, and Dr Abbas Gullet, Vice-President of the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and Secretary General of the Kenya Red Cross, were the two winners of the Council of Europe’s 2017 North-South Prize.

#### **5. Interaction with other international partners**

In addition to ad hoc interaction with the representatives of partner institutions as speakers at thematic committee meetings (see the meeting agendas), one important development should be noted concerning the partnership with the EU Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA).

Following regular exchanges with the organisation concerning the narrowing of the civic space and an official meeting between the FRA Director and the President of the Conference of INGOs, it was proposed that the Conference be involved in the civil society panel which advises the FRA. This is put into practice by the participation of the Conference President as an observer. The first meeting of the panel was held in November 2017 and Anne Kraus represented the President who was busy in Strasbourg at the World Forum for Democracy.

In the case of relations with the EU, it should be noted that the adoption of the European Pillar of Social Rights by the European Commission mobilised the INGOs working to support this process and placed the European Social Charter in a central role. This led to a declaration adopted by the Conference ([CONF/PLE\(2017\)DEC2](#)) and [a communiqué](#). A liaison meeting was held with the representatives of the INGOs based in Brussels. It was initiated by the [Co-ordinating Committee for the Turin Process](#), which issued a call for action to support the Turin Process in January 2016.

## **A final word from the President**

As last year, the activities of the Conference of INGOs have shown its diversity and its ability to choose its priorities against a sometimes difficult background as regards the timing of its meetings and its financial resources.<sup>16</sup> I am delighted to see that the drive to expand the Conference's activities is producing visible, consistent results, optimising and using the expertise of its various bodies.

I conclude this last report of my first term of office with great satisfaction. It demonstrates the relevance of our substantial contribution to the Council of Europe's three areas of activity and the impact of our work on the ground with NGOs and public and private institutions. We have a duty to encourage the expression of the public will in its diverse forms. We have an opportunity and the ability to help to protect freedoms of association, assembly, expression and participation, without which NGOs and their contributions to public policies would not be taken into account. Only civil society as expressed through the INGOs' representatives in the Conference is capable of encouraging responsible governance which defends the most vulnerable members of society and puts forward new policies or alternative solutions for the global challenges we are experiencing in Europe.

For all these reasons, we must therefore strengthen our position and role at the Council of Europe. That can be done primarily through the ties which we maintain with civil society in the member states and with international organisations. We can be proud that the Conference is the spokesperson of civil society in Europe.

My congratulations to each and every one of you and a big thank you for all your work this year.

Anna Rurka

President of the Conference of INGOs

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<sup>16</sup> In this connection, I would extend particular thanks to the INGOs in the INGO-Service Association chaired by Maritchu Rall, which provides additional funding for the work and activities of the INGO Conference.

## **2017 activity report of the Gender Equality Expert**

The outlook of the world in which European men and women currently live is still, as ever, exclusively masculine.

No single European country meets the requirements of the Social Charter, particularly those relating to equal pay for women and men for equal, similar or comparable work and to proper representation of women in decision-making posts, giving rise to colossal losses of billions of euros of receipts for the economies of the Council of Europe member states.

In 2017, the average pay gap for a woman employee was the equivalent of her wages from 3 November to 31 December, with the ever serious impact that this has on the empowerment of women, on the upbringing of children and on these despoiled women's living standards and pensions. Femicide – the scourge of murders of women in the privacy of their own families – ravages our countries, engendering major costs for states.

States tell women that they have all the rights that they need but they refuse to defend them in court so it is their fault if their pay is lower than their male counterparts. This is a ruthless syllogism. However, women refuse to be treated as victims. It is for states to create the conditions in which women can enjoy their equal rights in law and in daily practice in all the spheres of life in the community for the sake of all human beings.

Having adopted a gender equality strategy for the period 2014 to 2017 with the unanimous support of its 47 member states, the Council of Europe is currently working on a new strategy to be implemented from 2018. This major focus for the Council of Europe entails the participation of the Gender Equality Expert in the work of various decision-making and discussion bodies on this subject. The Council and its member states are confronted with challenges following the influx of displaced persons, and equality issues are key in looking after these refugees. The rise of populism in various member states is inimical to human rights and gender equality. The Council is active in its own sphere but civil society must also act in its field for women's fundamental rights to be respected.

### **1. Representation of the Conference of INGOs on Council of Europe commissions and committees or in follow-up activities**

#### **1.1. Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe**

This Commission is mainly composed of members appointed by states and was chaired until 31 December 2017 by Ms Eva Fehringer, Austria. It was set up in 2012 to help to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality in Council of Europe member states and to honour international commitments in the interests of European women and men, because everyone benefits from measures to promote equality. Genuine equality cannot come about in any other way. States take stock of the progress of their legislation and public policies and work has been done in various areas: <https://www.coe.int/fr/web/genderequality>; <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality>.

The Gender Equality Commission's various publications draw on the subjects that have been studied and followed up including gender equality, combating gender stereotypes and sexism, combating and preventing violence against women, guaranteeing women's access to justice, balanced participation in decision-making, and gender mainstreaming. There is also a glossary.

<https://www.coe.int/fr/web/genderequality/publications>  
<http://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/publications>

At its 11<sup>th</sup> meeting, at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg from 5 to 7 April 2017, it discussed the gender equality strategy for 2014-2017 and its implementation, along with co-operation with international organisations: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/gender-equality-strategy>

At its 12<sup>th</sup> meeting, in Prague from 14 to 16 November 2017, discussions focused on:

. A Conference on “Data Collection and Research on Violence against Women and Domestic Violence: Precondition for Efficient Policy” held by the Czech authorities. States have recently conducted surveys to calculate the costs of violence against women, which are very high. These data are crucial to enable policies to create the optimum conditions for this type of violence to be stopped, along with education from the earliest age in equality and respect for women, empowerment of women, immediate care for victims and appropriate penalties for perpetrators.

. The finalisation of the equality strategy to be applied from 2018 onwards: After validation by the Committee of Ministers, it will be launched under the Danish Chairmanship, in Copenhagen in March 2018.

. Violence against women: presentations on individual countries were made, some of which included assessments of the cost of such violence (Czech Republic, France, Serbia) and others of which focused on the impact of such violence on society (Spain, Norway):

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/prague-conference-14-november-2017>

- **Recommendation on the fight against sexism:** Objective 1 of the gender equality strategy is to combat sexism and stereotypes. Accordingly, the Committee of Ministers asked for a recommendation to be drawn up, which it expected to be specific, practical and workable and to make a real contribution to the fight against sexism, and a working group was set up, in which the Equality Expert was invited to participate. After the specialists had made their statements, the Equality Expert was asked to question the INGOs of the Conference on the subject and she presented a summary of their answers at the working group meeting in June 2017. Other focuses of the group’s work were to discuss the gaps to be filled in various Council documents in terms of gender mainstreaming, to understand the origins of sexism and its impact in the public and private spheres, to look into sexist language, to consider how to deal with this matter without differentiating between ordinary sexism and violent sexism, to identify good practices in the member states and to investigate intersectionality and the links between sexism and other forms of discrimination.

Two highly productive meetings were held:

- 2 and 3 March 2017, Council of Europe, Paris;
- 22 and 23 June 2017, Council of Europe, Paris.

## **1.2. Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly**

Regular reports are drawn up based on visits to the countries concerned and the input of external contributors. However, nobody other than parliamentarians is authorised to speak. The Italian member of parliament, Elena Centemero, was the chair of the Committee in 2017.

The various texts adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly are as follows:

- **Recommendations** contain proposals addressed to the Committee of Ministers, the implementation of which is within the competence of governments.
- **Resolutions** embody decisions by the Assembly on questions, which it is empowered to put into effect, or expressions of view, for which it alone is responsible.

- **Opinions** are expressed by the Assembly on questions put to it by the Committee of Ministers, such as the admission of new member States to the Council of Europe, draft conventions, or the budget of the Organisation.

The Assembly's various Committees propose reports approved by their members for discussion by the Assembly. In 2017, the main reports discussed by the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination were as follows:

- Protecting refugee women from gender-based violence
- Women's empowerment in the economy
- Migrations in a gender perspective: empowering women for their role as key-actors for integration
- Promoting the inclusion of Roma and Travellers
- Putting an end to sexual violence and harassment of women in public space
- Ending cyberdiscrimination and online hate
- Detainees with severe disabilities in Europe
- Women in the economy
- Forced marriage in Europe
- Promoting the human rights of and eliminating discrimination against intersex people

Speakers often shed light on the subjects being discussed at meetings held:

- at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg on 23-26 January 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Paris, on 20 March 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, on 24 April 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, on 26-28 June 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Paris, on 18 September 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Strasbourg, on 9 October 2017;
- at the Council of Europe, Paris, on 7 December 2017.

<http://website-pace.net/fr/web/as-ega/main>

[http://website-pace.net/en\\_GB/web/as-ega/main](http://website-pace.net/en_GB/web/as-ega/main)

With this Committee, the Gender Equality Expert took part in the campaign against breast cancer in October 2017.

### **1.3. The Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention**

The Committee of the Parties, on which the Gender Equality Expert represents the Conference of INGOs, did not meet in 2017. The next meeting will be in January 2018. Ratifications continued, including the much anticipated ratification by the European Union.

Feride Acar was re-elected President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women, GREVIO.

A questionnaire was addressed to states but was also very useful for NGOs wishing to contribute to the shadow report that they could draw up when their country was assessed. The next countries due for assessment are Finland, France and Italy. These alternative reports by associations were much anticipated by GREVIO.



#### **1.4. The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH), with Jean-Bernard Marie**

A questionnaire on genital mutilation and forced marriages drawn up by the CDDH was sent out in 2016 and passed onto the INGOs by the Gender Equality Expert. The Expert also participated in a drafting group responsible for drawing up a best practices tool for states to combat female genital mutilation and forced marriages, chaired by Rob Linham, United Kingdom, which met from September 2016 and held the following meetings in 2017:

- Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 25-27 January 2017
- Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 28 and 29 March 2017

On 13 July 2017 the Committee of Ministers adopted this best practices tool, which makes it possible to gain an overview of the legislation in force and the measures to combat and eradicate these practices:

<https://rm.coe.int/steering-committee-for-human-rights-cddh-guide-to-good-and-promising-p/168073418d>

The following resolutions also provide useful information:

[Resolution 2135\(2016\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “Female genital mutilation in Europe”](#)

[Resolution 1468\(2005\) of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “Forced marriages and child marriages”](#)

[Resolution 69/150 of the United Nations General Assembly on intensifying global efforts for the elimination of female genital mutilations](#)

[Resolution 69/156 on child, early and forced marriage](#)

[European Parliament resolution of 6 February 2014 on the Commission communication entitled ‘Towards the elimination of female genital mutilation’](#)

#### **1.5. Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape**

Eurimages has set up an ad hoc working group to draw up a recommendation on the presence of women in the audiovisual industry. The first meeting was held on 1 and 2 December 2016 at the OECD in Paris with a mixed panel of female directors, video games specialists and journalists. The Equality Expert represented the Conference of INGOs at this meeting and at the following working meetings in 2017:

- Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 30 and 31 March 2017
- Council of Europe, Strasbourg, 8 April 2017

On 27 September 2017, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted its recommendation on gender equality in the audiovisual sector:

[https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result\\_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509e6](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807509e6)

It recommended that the governments of member States:

“1. adopt policies to promote gender equality in the audiovisual sector as a fundamental principle of its activities and in those of its institutional organisations, duly taking into account the guidelines as provided in Appendix I;

2. encourage European, national and regional film funds, public and commercial broadcasters and other key stakeholders in the audiovisual sector to monitor the situation with regards to gender

equality, drawing on monitoring methods and performance indicators such as those proposed in Appendix II;

3. encourage European supranational film and audiovisual funds, such as Eurimages and Creative Europe, as well as broadcasters and other key audiovisual sector stakeholders, to address gender equality issues in all their policies, measures and support programmes, such as training, production, distribution, festivals and media literacy initiatives;

4. encourage the relevant audiovisual sector organisations (including public and private financing bodies, sectoral employers, trade unions and professional organisations, training and education providers and industry professionals, as well as the relevant regulatory authorities) to prepare, or revise, regulatory and self-regulatory strategies, collective bargaining agreements and codes of conduct or other frameworks for implementation, taking into account a gender equality perspective;

5. disseminate this recommendation together with its appendices and raise awareness among the relevant stakeholders and those active in the audiovisual sector, in particular about the central role of gender equality as an enabling factor for fully-functioning democracy and the full enjoyment of human rights;

6. monitor and evaluate progress in achieving gender equality in the audiovisual sector, and report on a five-year basis to the Committee of Ministers on the measures taken and progress made in implementing this recommendation”.

## **2. Active participation in the work of the Conference of INGOs**

The Gender Equality Expert attended all of the meetings of the Conference of INGOs in 2017 and the Standing Committee meetings.

- 27 June 2017 Side event, Palais, “Women’s mobilisation in Europe in 2016 and its impact on policies?”. Recent cases of women’s mobilisation in Europe have been very powerful when what they regard as their fundamental rights have been challenged. These peaceful activities have met with genuine success and had an immediate impact on government decisions in various areas. In the four selected countries, a representative of an association was asked to outline the views of the women concerned while a member of parliament was asked to describe the government’s reaction. Elena Centemero, Chair of the PACE’s Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, opened the extremely interesting discussion on the following movements:

### **1. “Czarny Protest” – Poland**

**Barbara Nowacka**, Isabela Jurga Nowacka Foundation

**Agnieszka Pomaska** Polish member of parliament, member of the Parliamentary Assembly, CoE, Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

### **2. “Repeal the 8<sup>th</sup>” - Ireland**

**Ailbhe Smyth** Organiser, Coalition to Repeal the Eighth Amendment

**Maura Hopkins** Irish member of parliament, member of the Parliamentary Assembly, CoE, Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media

### **3. Protecting girls from forced marriages - Turkey**

**Irem Mirzai** Turkish Association of University Women

**Gülsün Bilgehan** Turkish member of parliament, member of the Parliamentary Assembly, CoE Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Media and Information Society, member of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, of which she was the chairperson until January 2016

### **4. Women’s march for equal pay - Iceland**

**Dagný Ósk Aradóttir Pind** Women’s Rights Association of Iceland

**Pórhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir** Member of Icelandic Parliament, Chairperson of Icelandic Delegation to PACE

- 29 June 2017, Training session on “INGO support for parity between women and men” with the Council of Europe secretariat, Carlien Scheele, Gender Equality Adviser, Carolina Lasen Diaz, Head of the Gender Equality Unit, Cécile Gréboval, Programme Adviser
- Participation in the assessment of the activities of the Conference
- Various contacts were established with the Congress
- Participation in the working group chaired by Anje Wiersinga

#### **4. Representation, lobbying activities**

Various representative assignments including:

- 8-10 May 2017, invitation and contribution to the conference held by the Institut Français in Skopje on gender equality from the Council of Europe’s viewpoint
- 21 and 27 May 2017, Ecoles de Commerce, Paris
- 31 October to 3 November 2017, invitation and contribution to the conference for women of the French-speaking countries (La Francophonie), in Bucharest, 16 years after the first conference.

The importance of the conference’s work was highlighted by Mr Klaus Werner Iohannis, President of Romania, and by Ms Michaëlle Jean, Secretary General of la Francophonie, <https://www.francophonie.org/conference-des-femmes-bucarest>

The three main themes of the Conference were:

- . women’s rights and access to the labour market: women’s empowerment begins with the establishment of a legal environment furthering gender equality, the promotion of women’s rights and access to the labour market, along with a decent wage, equal to that of men for equal work, and the same rights as men to economic resources and credit;
- . women’s innovation and entrepreneurship: the capacity to innovate and invest in businesses is a major asset for women wishing to gain the economic empowerment which is indissociable from innovation and entrepreneurship, the aim being to improve competitiveness and galvanise economic activity by opening new growth prospects to women;
- . Women’s leadership in economic governance: the economic empowerment of women is dependent on equal access for women to decision-making posts. Participation in economic governance can have an influence on local, national and global development.

The Conference resulted in the Bucharest Women’s Appeal [https://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/appel\\_de\\_bucarest\\_final.pdf](https://www.francophonie.org/IMG/pdf/appel_de_bucarest_final.pdf)

#### **Various lobbying or human rights activities including work:**

- on the Istanbul Convention;
- on the presence of women on boards;
- on surrogacy;
- in connection with COP 22;
- on the term “Droits Humains” (as opposed to “Droits de l’Homme”);
- on the CEDAW;
- on equal pay for women and men;
- on the treatment of LGBTI people in Turkey with Anne Rurka and Simon Matthijssen;
- interviews with various media outlets;

**Many meetings to raise awareness of the Conference and its work on equality:** I would like to thank all the member INGOs of the Conference and all those which are in the process of joining us, the leading figures in the Conference and its President, the members of its committees and working groups, the various Council of Europe departments and INGO Service and all those who contribute to our campaigns such as Marion Minis, Edith Lommerse, Renée Gérard, Sonia Bressler, the philosopher who runs my blog, Anje Wiersinga, and the members of her group, and all my fellow campaigners in the French Association of Women Graduates, AFFDU, which is the French branch of University Women of Europe and Graduate Women International, for their indispensable help and support.

Dr. Anne Nègre, Gender Equality Expert

**List of intergovernmental committees and other structures where the Conference of INGOs is represented**

Intergovernmental committees

Type	Acronyme	Nom du comité / Name
Comité directeur	<b>CDDH</b>	<b>Comité directeur pour les droits de l'homme / Steering Committee on Human Rights</b>
Organe subordonné (	CDDH-SOC	Groupe de rédaction sur les droits sociaux / Drafting group on social rights
Organe subordonné	CDDH-MF	Groupe de rédaction sur les mutilations génitales féminines et le mariage forcé / Drafting group on female genital mutilation and forced marriage
Organe subordonné	CDDH-MIG	Groupe de rédaction sur les migrations et les droits de l'homme / Drafting group on migration and human rights (
Organe subordonné	CDDH-INST	Groupe de rédaction du CDDH sur la société civile et les institutions nationales de droits de l'homme / Drafting group on civil society and other human rights institutions
Organe subordonné	CDDH-EXP	Groupe de rédaction du CDDH sur la liberté d'expression / Drafting group on freedom of expression and links to other human rights
Organe subordonné	DH-SYSC	Comité d'experts sur le système de la Convention européenne des droits de l'homme / Committee of experts on the system of ECHR
Organe subordonné	DH-SYSC-II	Drafting group on the follow-up to the CDDH report on the longer term future of the Convention
Organe subordonné	DH-GDR	Comité d'experts sur la réforme de la Cour européenne des droits de l'homme / Committee of expert on the reform of the ECHR
Organe subordonné	DH-BIO	Comité de bioéthique / Committee of Bioethics
Comité directeur	GEC	Commission pour l'égalité de genre / Gender Equality Commission
Comité ad hoc	CAHDPH	Comité ad hoc sur les droits des personnes handicapées / Ad hoc Committee of experts on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities
Comité ad hoc	CAHENF	Comité ad hoc sur les droits des enfants /Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child
	<b>CAHENF Safeguards</b>	
Comité directeur	<b>CDCJ</b>	<b>Comité européen de coopération juridique / European Committee on Legal Co-operation</b>
Organe subordonné	<b>CJ-DAM</b>	<b>Comité d'experts sur la rétention administrative des migrants / Committee of Experts on Administrative Detention of Migrant</b>
Comité directeur	<b>CDMSI</b>	<b>Comité directeur sur les médias et la société de l'information / Steering Committee on Media and Information Society</b>
Comité directeur	<b>CDDG</b>	<b>Comité européen sur la démocratie et la gouvernance / European Committee on Democracy and Governance</b>
Bureau élargi	CDDG	Bureau élargi
Comité directeur	<b>CDPPE</b>	<b>Comité directeur pour les politiques et pratiques éducatives / Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice</b>
Co-gestion jeunesse		
Comité directeur	<b>CDEJ</b>	<b>Comité Directeur Européen pour la Jeunesse / European Steering Committee for Youth</b>

Comité ad hoc	<b>CCJ</b>	<b>Conseil consultatif pour la jeunesse / Advisory Council on Youth</b>
Comité ad hoc	<b>CMJ</b>	<b>Comité mixte pour la jeunesse / Joint Council on Youth</b>
Comité directeur	<b>CDCPP</b>	<b>Comité directeur de la culture, du patrimoine et du paysage / Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape</b>
Groupe de travail	<b>CPP-ESA</b>	<b>Groupe de travail sur l'égalité entre les femmes et les hommes dans le secteur audiovisuel / WG on gender equality in the audiovisual sector</b>
Comité directeur	PECS	Plateforme européenne de cohésion sociale / European Platform of social cohesion
Comité directeur		Plateforme thématique sur les droits sociaux et économique / COE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET / Thematic Platform on Social and economic Rights

#### Committee of the parties

Nom du Comité
Comité des Parties à la Convention du Conseil de l'Europe sur la Convention du Conseil de l'Europe sur la prévention et la lutte contre la violence à l'égard des femmes et la violence domestique / Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

#### Governmental committee

Nom du comité
Comité européen des droits sociaux (sur invitation uniquement) / European committee of social rights

#### Partial agreements

Structure	Nom du comité
Commission de Venise / Venice Commission	Réunion plénière (sur invitation uniquement) / Plenary meeting
Centre Nord-Sud / North South Center	Comité exécutif / Executif committee
Accord Européen et Méditerranéen sur les risques majeurs (EUR-OPA) EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement	Groupe de travail sur les migrants en situation de handicap / Working group on migrants with disabilities

#### Others

Structure
Commission parlementaire santé affaires sociales APCE /