



Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe

Activity Report 2018

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A new year, a new start

The year 2018 began with the election of the Bureau in January, completing the composition of the Standing Committee for 2018-2021 and thus allowing a "fresh start" (the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Thematic Commissions had been elected in June 2017).

The Standing Committee drafted the Three-Year Action Plan (2018-2021), adopted by the Conference of INGOs in June 2018. The Action Plan was developed in several stages.

Firstly, the thematic committees held a consultation meeting in January 2018 with the INGOs so as to identify the priority axes and the working groups attached to these priorities for each committee. The consultation allowed the thematic committees to finalize their road maps, adopted for most of them during the same session.

The experiences of previous years have shown that it seems desirable to limit the number of active working groups simultaneously, in order to propose a satisfactory framework and follow-up, and this, by ensuring the successive renewal of these groups according to new priorities. The formula consisting in 3 specific working groups +1 cross-cutting working group managed by each committee was adopted. The transversal working groups proposed by the Standing Committee in October 2017 are a novelty of this mandate aimed at strengthening the transversality between the thematic committees. In order to complete this structure, three integrated approaches (equality, youth and migration) have been identified in order to encourage or even oblige the Conference of INGOs to take these three perspectives into account in all its activities. With two sessions in the year, this structure seems to be ambitious, but we believe that it will help to drive coherent, readable and beneficial processes and results of work for civil society in Europe and for the Council of Europe.

The Action Plan has 5 priority objectives

- To protect and reinforce freedom of association and the related rights and to contribute to the democratic security in the Council of Europe member states.
- To observe and reinforce civil participation in the decision-making process within the Council of Europe and in its member states.
- To contribute to building an inclusive society and protect access to education and to social, cultural and economic rights for vulnerable groups
- To contribute to the blossoming of a modern European Cultural Identity
- To continue to develop the institutional strengthening process of the Conference of INGOs so as to meet in a relevant way the institutional evolution of the Council of Europe and the geopolitical challenges.

In order to put the integrated approaches into practice, two task forces were created, one on gender equality and one on migration. A road map for youth participation was also adopted by the Conference of INGOs, confirming that youth participation in the work of the Conference is crucial to ensure its representativeness and sustainability.

This activity report presents the activities carried out in 2018 in a non-exhaustive way. It is structured according to three areas of activity of the Council of Europe, in order to show the direct contribution of the Conference to certain priorities of the Council of Europe. It should be noted that some working groups only started meeting in April or June. The work is on-going and has therefore not yet yielded any concrete achievements.

The renewal capabilities of an organisation reflect its vitality and sustainability. In 2017, following the review of INGOs holding participatory status, about 50 organisations lost their status and 19 new INGOs acquired it. In 2018, 9 new INGOs joined the Conference. It is up

to all stakeholders to engage new members in the day-to-day activities of the Conference of INGOs. For this to happen, in addition to goodwill, we must always strengthen our efforts in internal and external communication.

The Standing Committee worked on [the objectives of internal and external communication](#) which the Bureau is in charge of. This year preparatory work started on developing a triennial newsletter directed to the members and partners of the Conference of INGOs and on setting up a pool of experts who may be solicited in the framework of Conference of INGOs activities. The Bureau, with the financial support of INGO Service, has been able to offer to all members of the Standing Committee a specific domain name allowing each member and each entity to have an e-mail address dedicated to the Conference of INGOs.

One last novelty: this year, the Conference of INGOs decided to reorganize the calendar of its sessions. In June 2018, the members decided to hold a session in April during the session of the Parliamentary Assembly and one session in October during the session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. This decision was motivated by the desire to strengthen horizontal collaboration with local and regional elected representatives on a given number of subjects. The April session replaces the winter session that usually took place in January which, for technical reasons related to the closure of the Council of Europe in December, was a very difficult session to organise.

I. Human rights

In January 2018, the Conference of INGOs adopted the [Resolution on the use of the term “Droits humains” \(Human Rights\) instead of “Droits de l'homme” within the Conference of INGOs](#). This change is part of a desire to adopt in French the most inclusive terminological approach which in fact reflects the general approach of the Conference of INGOs to equality. The change was welcomed, notably by the Minister of Justice of France who notified her interest in the correspondence established by the Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs.

1. Contribution to the reform of the implementation System of the European Convention on Human Rights

Since the initiation of this reform and throughout the various Intergovernmental High Level Conferences (Interlaken (2010), Izmir (2011), Brighton (2012), Oslo (2013), Brussels (2015), and this year in Copenhagen), the Conference of INGOs has actively participated and contributed to the declarations aimed at identifying the means to guarantee the long term effectiveness of the Convention System. On 6 February the Chair of the Human Rights Committee represented our Conference in a civil society consultation organized by the Danish Government. In March 2018, [a position paper was](#) published and sent to the members of the Steering Committee for Human Rights, as well as to the Danish Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers and to all Permanent Representations of the Member States. In April 2018, the [Conference of INGOs was represented](#) by its President and the Chair of the Human Rights Committee at the High Level Conference organised by Denmark during which the [Copenhagen Declaration](#) was adopted. In her [speech](#), the President stressed the importance of the right to individual petition, the indivisibility, interdependence and universality of fundamental rights in all situations and in all Member States.

The political dialogue continued when the Chair of the Human Rights Committee represented the Conference at the High Level Conference of Experts organised by the Danish Ministry of

Justice (31 October - 2 November 2018) in Kokkedal. He made a contribution about building a common culture of human rights and specifically regarding the position of NGOs in the implementation process.

2. Protection of human rights defenders

This year, the Human Rights Committee was particularly sensitive to questions related to the effectiveness of existing protection mechanisms for Human Rights Defenders, including those existing within the Council of Europe. To initiate a debate on this subject, a side event entitled "[Human Rights Defenders in the Council of Europe area: current challenges and new answers](#)" was organised by the Committee and sponsored by Egidijus Vareikis, Member of Parliament (LT, EPP), PACE Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders in the Council of Europe Member States. The reflection on current challenges and possible solutions continued at the end of the year when the President of the Conference and the President of the Expert Council on NGO Law were invited to contribute to the round table organised by the Commissioner for Human Rights in Helsinki in December 2018.

A more concrete debate, referring to the particular situations of defenders such as Afgan Mukhtarli, Mehman Huseynov, Intigam Aliyev, Lyudmyla Kozlovskaya, Oleg Sentsov, Oyub Titiev and Yuri Dmitriev, was supported by the Committee of Human Rights and the President of the Conference. This short [event on the shrinking civic space and the persecution of human rights defenders](#) was organised by the Institute of Reporter's Freedom and Safety, sponsored by the parliamentarian Olena Sotnyk, (Ukraine, ALDE), Rapporteur on the new restrictions on NGO activities in the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

The issue of democratic monitoring carried out by NGOs, guardians of the rule of law is one of the Human Rights Committee's themes. The aim is to train INGOs in the methodological tools allowing to implement this type of activity (analyse, observe and verify the situation). Two questions guide this debate: Do INGOs with participatory status within the Council of Europe have a moral obligation to report clear violations of human rights and the rule of law? If so, - what consequences should this obligation have on the programme of activities of the Conference of INGOs and the Council of Europe as a whole in order to create an enabling environment for INGOs to contribute to monitoring mechanisms within the Council of Europe.

According to the Council of Europe Platform for the Protection of Journalists (who can be considered to constitute a special branch of Human Rights Defenders), at the end of 2018, in the 47 Member States, 4 journalists have been killed for their professional activity, 128 journalists are currently detained, 17 impunity cases have been identified for the homicide of journalists and a total of 138 serious violations of media freedom have been reported. In this context the Working Group on [Freedom of Expression and Media](#) of the Human Rights Committee was asked to contribute to the synopsis and the reference guide on the basis of the legislative framework of media freedom and the general situation of the journalists of the Council of Europe. The contribution of this group will also be sought within the framework of the Conference of INGO's contribution to the World Forum for Democracy 2019, the theme of which will most probably be "Information and democracy".

3. Building an inclusive society and protecting vulnerable groups' access to social, cultural and economic rights

To mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October 2018, the INGO Conference's "Poverty" cross-cutting group organised a working session on Article 31 of the

European Social Charter, which stipulates that everyone has a right to housing. The seminar was opened by Eliane Chemla, General Rapporteur of the European Committee of Social Rights, who stressed that ["to preserve the lives of families and the future of children, to avoid making vulnerable populations more vulnerable, living in quality and adequate housing is a crucial condition"](#). The event was conducted with the support of the European Social Charter Department, represented by Odeta Kumbaro-Bianku. Given the very limited number of States that have ratified Article 31 of the Charter, the experts and participants insisted on the need that INGOs and national NGOs continue their advocacy and grassroots actions in favour of access to a decent housing for all. On the basis of the work and proposals that came out of this seminar, a draft recommendation on the right to decent housing for all is being prepared.

Access to social, cultural and economic rights for everyone is also a concern of the various working groups within [the Education and Culture Committee](#). The Education and Culture Committee is committed to cultural diversity through the work of the group "Intercultural Cities" (sub-groups: The City of Tomorrow, Combatting anxiety and exclusion in cities, Inclusive pedagogy in the heart intercultural cities, Inventing new paths) and of the group "Europe of heritage and creation". The "Lifelong Learning Group" is helping to promote access to education and training for all. The Committee met David Lopez, President of the Lifelong Learning Platform. This exchange helped to better define the issues of this theme. The working group also benefited from training on the use of the Council of Europe Toolbox for the Linguistic Integration of Migrants.

In October 2018, the Chair of the Education and Culture Committee participated, on behalf of the Conference of INGOs, in the seminar on Poverty and precariousness of students, organised by the European Network of Social Action (ESAN).

Following the EU Social Summit in Gothenburg, the [Coordinating Committee of the Conference of INGOs for the Turin Process for the European Social Charter](#) organised a working session on 29-30 November 2017 in Brussels. These exchanges led to a [Recommendation linked with the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights](#), adopted by the Conference of INGOs at its January 2018 session. This document commits the Conference of INGOs to see to the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights and to the strengthening of the links between the EU and the revised European Social Charter.

[A training course on the European Social Charter](#) was proposed to the INGOs by the Coordinating Committee during the June session with the participation of members of the European Social Charter Department and INGOs who had already submitted collective complaints. About 70 INGO representatives benefited from this training. At the same session, a presentation on the use of [the European Social Charter as a basis for equality between women and men](#), and more specifically to act against wage inequalities, was proposed by the Vice-President of the Conference in charge of Equality.

4. Situation of LGBTI persons in the Member States of the Council of Europe

Following the [communiqué issued in November 2017](#), expressing indignation in response to the ban of all events organised by lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and intersex rights groups (LGBTI) in Ankara, Turkey, the Vice-President in charge of Equality organised a debate on [the evolution of the situation of LGBTI persons in the Council of Europe member states](#). ILGA Europe and the European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Equality and Anti-Discrimination and the PACE General Rapporteur on LGBTI, as well as representatives of the Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights and the

General Secretariat contributed with their expertise. The discussions ended with the observation of a negative evolution of the situation in 23 European states. A strong conservative tendency, as well as a discriminating political discourse, lack of consideration regarding hate crimes, as those against LGBTI persons, were underlined as the main factors of the threats.

5. Contributions to the Steering committees and drafting groups¹

During this biennium, the Steering Committee for Human Rights created several drafting groups to which representatives of the Conference of INGOs actively contributed. The CCDH-INST group completed its mandate with a [Recommendation \(CM/Rec\(2018\)11\)](#) to the Member States, adopted by the Committee of Ministers last November. The Recommendation reiterates the need for effective measures to protect the space devoted to the civil society. The Member States and INGOs of the Conference are invited to ensure wide dissemination of this recommendation to the competent authorities and stakeholders, including, where appropriate, to realise a translation into their national language. During the seminar organised by the CDDH with a view to concluding this work, [the President of the Conference recalled](#) the need for follow-up and for practical implementation of this instrument, which legal value and scope are essential.

The Bioethics Committee of the Council of Europe requested from the President of the Conference of INGOs the opinion of the Conference on the merits of the Draft Additional Protocol to the Oviedo Convention concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorder with regard to involuntary placement and involuntary treatment. A consultation via an online questionnaire was set up. The 29 answers obtained from INGOs were analysed and followed-up by a feedback to the contributors and to the Steering Committee.

The coordinator of the Coordinating Committee of the Conference of INGOs for the Turin Process for the European Social Charter represents the Conference of INGOs to the CoE-FRA-ENHRI-EQUINET Collaborative Platform on Social and Economic Rights. This year, two platform meetings focused on the issue of the right to housing, which was included in the seminar organised by the Conference on the occasion of the anti-poverty day. During one of these meetings, the Conference, through its representative, made a contribution under the title "The voice of civil society in the fight against poverty".

II. Democracy

An innovative event was organised on 19 September 2018 by the Directorate General of Democracy and the Conference of INGOs on the occasion of the International Day of Democracy. The debate entitled: "[Democracy & "The People"](#)" with the tone set by Yascha Mounk² aimed to seek key remedies for anti-liberal trends that undermine democracy, democratic institutions based on individual human rights, civic participation in public decision-making and the rule of law. Special attention was paid to the recent mobilisation of civil

¹ Mention is only made of those committees or drafting groups where the participation has led to a specific contribution. To find all the committees at which the Conference of INGOs is represented, please refer to the list appended to this report.

² Yascha Mounk is an Associated Professor at Harvard University, author of the book "The People vs Democracy" Harvard University Press.

society in Hungary and Poland, in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, in Ireland and in Armenia.

The year 2018 was also marked by the major event aimed to implement the commitments of the States with regard to climate protection. The "Social Cohesion" cross-cutting working group coordinated by the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee (DSCGC) launched a [Recommendation on 'climate change and human rights'](#) for the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) to be held in Katowice, Poland, from 3 to 14 December 2018. The document was adopted by the Standing Committee and disseminated by the members of the group at the event.

1. Participation in decision-making and democratic life

In September 2018, the Conference of INGOs together with the Open Government Partnership (OGP)³ organised a thematic session entitled "[Citizens' Europe: how to promote full citizen participation in public affairs: Exploring the challenges of digital democracy and engaging polarized communities](#)" during the Fundamental Rights Forum, organised by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (EU FRA) in Vienna. It was an opportunity for the INGO Conference to strengthen its partnership with both OGP and FRA. In the context of the weakening of public trust in governments and in democratic institutions, representatives of the Council of Europe, the European Union, the Member States and civil society have identified the factors favouring inclusive participation in public affairs as well as the channels of civic participation that must be maintained through any political transition. The session also allowed practitioners and experts from different countries to share their experiences of developing initiatives that fostered civic participation.

The impact of the development of new technologies on democracy has already been proven by the experts, but also by positive and negative experiences that public opinion is currently impregnated with. Faced with this challenge, the cross-cutting working group "[Digital Citizenship](#)" coordinated by the Education and Culture Committee has chosen to address the digital challenges from the point of view of the citizen in terms of education, human rights and democracy, and take a proactive and forward-looking approach to the future.

The Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee's [Working Group on Participation in Democratic Decisions Making](#) was also involved in the activities of the Civil Society Division to promote the Guidelines on Civil Participation in Decision-Making. In this context, the specific contribution of the group is about participation of vulnerable groups, thus making it possible to link with other existing working groups within the Conference of INGOs, in particular the Poverty group or the working group on Prevention of Corruption, which focuses on access to information. The group wants to ensure close contact with neighbouring groups in order to avoid duplication and to promote synergy between the different topics.

The members of working group "[Preventing corruption by engaging civil society](#)" decided to work in complementarity with the Working Group on Public Ethics established within the European Committee for Governance and Democracy (CDDG), one of the Council of Europe's steering committees. The group wishes to contribute with concrete examples aimed at preventing corruption, establishing a culture of public ethics and implementing measures to ensure effective action. In 2018, the members of the Working Group established contacts with associations and experts working in the field of education for the prevention of

³ It is a multilateral organization, launched in 2011, bringing together Member States, experts and civil society to promote the transparency of public action, participation, rely on digital and new technologies.

corruption in Malta, Spain, Romania, Germany, Ukraine and Poland. This work will be continued in order to identify NGOs active in the field of education in each country to prevent corruption and to share the most successful examples with all the members of the Conference of INGOs.

In the light of the new Guidelines on Civil Participation adopted by the Committee of Ministers in September 2017, the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation needs to be updated. The Standing Committee adopted the terms of reference of the drafting group in charge of this work, coordinated by one of the Vice-Chairs of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee. Taking into account Resolution 385 (2015) entitled "Fostering active citizenship by building partnerships with civil society" adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on 30 September 2015, this updating should, according to the Standing Committee, be from the beginning done with the Congress. A first joint meeting was held at the end of the year, preparing a work plan and timetable for this updating. The content of the Code requires an editorial updating. The main task will be to provide a practical toolbox with 10 examples of good and bad practices so as to foster the implementation of the Code.

2. Promotion of a common desire for European citizenship

The Education and Culture Committee is working on the drafting of a modern multi-perspective definition of European cultural identity, taking the form of a White Paper, following the example of the Council of Europe White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue. A first [consultation](#) was organised in this sense during the June session with eight European experts and ambassadors. The dialogue with the INGOs will feed the work that has been undertaken.

The [Intercultural Cities](#) working group has created a sub-theme on the City of Tomorrow, in particular to design how cities can be organised for better involving citizens in democratic life. What kind of actions could civil society undertake in the context of the Council of Europe intercultural cities project to eradicate poverty, maintain social cohesion, privacy, be inclusive, promote the identity and values of Europe?

The working group "[Heritage and creation, shaping Europe](#)" wishes to highlight the interest of European heritage (tangible and intangible) in order to promote European values. It relies for so doing on the programme of cultural routes. In addition, a sub-working group will be responsible for reflecting on the teaching of history, thus respecting the priorities of the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP).

3. Women's contribution to peace and to democracy

["Women's contribution to Global Peace in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security"](#) was the subject of a side event organised on the margins of the PACE session by the Democracy Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee's [Working Group "Gender Perspectives in the Political and Democratic Process"](#) and the Finnish parliamentary delegation to the Council of Europe. The event was focused on the situation in Syria and Cyprus, two territories marked by conflict, even if of a different nature. Cyprus, Greece and Turkey are members of the Council of Europe. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe also deals with the situation in Syria through its Political Affairs Committee and its Middle East Subcommittee. The event aimed to introduce politicians to the contribution of Cypriot and Syrian women: their recommendations and expectations, their wishes, their demands and their priorities. With regard to Cyprus: in January 2017, Cypriot women throughout the island expressed in a declaration sent to the negotiators their will to see their wishes, demands and priorities included in the peace

agreement and in the new constitution in order to guarantee a sustainable solution of the conflict. With regard to Syria: Syrian women have been organised inside and outside Syria since the very beginning of the current conflict and have continuously called on the international community to include their voices in the peace efforts. With this event, the Conference of INGOs carried the voices of these women, whether parliamentarians or activists. This event was initiated and coordinated by Anje Wiersinga who ended her contribution as coordinator of the group. Our warm thanks go to her for her constant commitment to equality and democracy over the last few years.

During the reporting year, a second contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the challenge of equality was the Laboratory 7 of the World Forum of Democracy entitled "[Will closing the gender gap in the economy lead to greater political equality?](#)" This lab was sponsored by the Conference of INGOs, supported by the French Department of Bas-Rhin and moderated by the Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs in charge of Equality. The initiatives presented⁴ in the Lab aimed at raising awareness to equality issues in the labour market looking at three different perspectives,: firstly the State, , secondly a bottom up approach, and thirdly an initiative from a network of women who are executives in scientific and technological firms. The discussion showed the urgency of setting up efficient structures in companies to allow coaching and mentoring in an adapted framework, going beyond the usual divisions of labour relationships.

4. Contributions to the steering committees and drafting groups⁵

It should be noted that the activity of our representatives in the steering committees in the field of Democracy has been very strong this year. This may be explained in part by the thematic plurality, but also by the fact that the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG), which is central to our Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee (DSCGC), has modified its functioning by establishing several working groups. We also note that our representatives in these working groups are themselves in charge of collective work carried out within the DSCGC Committee as well as within the Education and Culture Committee.

- European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG)

One of the Vice-Chairs of the DSCGC is a member of the Enlarged Bureau of the CDDG under the Council of Europe's Platform of Actors on the Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level. The working group on participation in democratic decision-making of which he is the coordinator, contributed to the revision of the Recommendation of the Committee of Ministers (REC (98)12) on the control of the action of local and regional authorities. The new document identifies three forms of control: administrative control, financial control and democratic control. An entire chapter is devoted to the definition and implementation of democratic control exercised by citizens as well as by elected representatives. The focus has been on transparency, especially on access to information making that citizens can exercise democratic control. The document was approved by the

⁴ "Talent naar de top" presented by Talent to the Top Foundation, The Netherlands offers companies a charter to change working methods and internal rules. The second initiative, Fearless Futures, UK, addresses personal issues such as homophobia and racism, to raise awareness about inequality through training that builds a community of experiences, focused on the fight for equality. The third initiative "The Circle Inter'Elles", a network of networks, working the articulation private / professional life.

⁵Mention is made only of those committees or drafting groups where the participation has led to a specific contribution. To find all the committees at which the Conference of INGOs is represented, please refer to the list appended to this report.

plenary meeting of the CDDG in November and will be transmitted to the Committee of Ministers.

The Conference of INGOs also contributes to the CDDG Working Group on Public Ethics. The Conference is represented by the coordinator of the INGO working group entitled "Preventing corruption by engaging civil society". Likewise, for the CDDG's Digital Democracy Working Group, the coordinator of the cross-cutting group "Digital Citizenship" has been appointed to represent the Conference.

- Steering Committee for Educational Policies and Practices (CDPPE)

The Chair of the Education and Culture Committee represents the Conference of INGOs at this Committee. In order to reinforce the presence of the Conference, she was elected observer representing the NGOs to the Bureau of this Steering Committee, for a two-years term during which she will further defend the positions of civil society. Crucial and useful documents for the work of the Education and Culture Committee are distributed on the Loomio collaborative work platform. A general report on the activities of the CDPPE for the year 2018 is distributed to the INGOs by the Conference of INGOs. In October, the "Policies and Language Requirements for Migrants" survey of the CDPPE was distributed to all members of the Conference of INGOs.

- Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP)

The Conference of INGOs is represented by the Chair of the Education and Culture Committee, who participated in the annual meeting of the CDCPP, during which she promoted the activities of the Conference of INGOs and the Education and Culture Committee. Following her intervention, the French Ministry of Culture has included the Conference session of June 2018 in its official agenda, which has increased the visibility of the Conference. The priorities of the CDCPP have been incorporated into the activities of the working group European Heritage and Creation. A general report on the activities of the CDPPE for the year 2018 is distributed to the INGOs by the Conference of INGOs.

III. Freedom of association and rule of law

In April 2018, new members of the [Expert Council on NGO Law](#) were appointed by the Bureau of the Conference. The [call for applications](#) that was launched in February resulted in about 160 applications (all of very high quality) for 15 places. The members of the Bureau, assisted by the President of the Expert Council and the Secretariat, applied transparent criteria related to the required dual expertise (legal expertise and expertise in civil society sector), language skills in English, geographic diversity and as much as possible, gender equality⁶.

Cyril Ritchie, President of the Expert Council since its creation in 2008, completed his term of office and was appointed Honorary President. He remains involved in the activities of the Expert Council. We would like to express our warmest thanks to him for his contribution, guidance and expertise as President.

⁶ The members of the Expert Council, 6 women and 9 men, come from the following countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina (1), France (1), Ireland (1), Italy (1), Lithuania (1), Netherlands (1), Portugal (1), Romania (1), Russia (1), Serbia (2), "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (1) United Kingdom (3), but also residing in Belgium, Hungary and Ukraine.

In June, Jeremy McBride was appointed the new President of the Expert Council, succeeding Cyril Ritchie. The mandate of the Expert Council was slightly broadened to give the President of the Conference of INGOs the possibility, after consultation with the President of the Expert Council, to appoint a person to perform the functions of a member who has resigned for the remainder of his or her mandate. It also opened the possibility for the President of the Conference of INGOs to appoint, at the request of the President of the Expert Council, an ad hoc member for a term of up to one year when such an appointment would be beneficial for a particular activity undertaken by the Expert Council.

The [current Expert Council](#) had its first meeting in September 2018. It should be recalled that the Expert Council, during its previous mandate, had made a special commitment to Intigam Aliyev, Human Rights lawyer and founding President of the Azerbaijan Legal Education NGO, who was imprisoned during his mandate as member of the Expert Council. Recognising this and the new candidacy proposed on his behalf by the Human Rights House Foundation, the Bureau of the Conference has appointed Intigam Aliyev (who remains under a travel ban and cannot leave the country) a special observer status in the Expert Council. We were very pleased to hear that Intigam Aliyev accepted this function. This new development provides the opportunity for sustained collaboration.

1. [Legal opinions and studies](#)

The Expert Council on NGO Law prepared one opinion on NGO legislation, which concerned the compatibility of the [draft amendments to the Law on Access to Information of Public Utility of Serbia](#) with international standards and best practices pertinent to freedom of association. The principal concern of the opinion was the disclosure obligations that would arise for NGOs which were established to pursue activities deemed of “public interest” or of “general interest”. This was the formulation of certain provisions that would have the effect of bringing them within the notion of “public authority” (i.e. a legal person which pursues activities deemed of “general interest”) notwithstanding that they were not recipients of public funds. As a result, it was recommended that there should be some clarification of certain provisions so that (a) the notion of “legal persons which pursue activities deemed of general interests” pertained only to legal persons which are otherwise subject to the Law on Public Enterprises and (b) the notion of a “legal person which is predominantly funded by public authorities” pertained only to a narrow range of associations and other NGOs which were established by virtue of a separate law and are directly funded by the public authorities referenced in the draft Law.

In addition, together with the President of the Conference of INGOs, the President of the Expert Council wrote to the Permanent Representative of Romania to the Council of Europe, expressing [concern about the impact on NGOs of provisions of the Draft Law seeking to transpose Directive \(EU\) 2015/849 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 May 2015 on the prevention of the use of the financial system for the purposes of money laundering or of terrorist financing](#). The concern arose from the fact that NGOs would be made subject to significant reporting obligations which were not necessary to comply with the Directive but which would result in associations and foundations having to devote their energy to reporting rather than to fulfilling their objectives. The President took the opportunity to recall that the Committee of Ministers in its CM/Rec(2007)14 has clearly indicated that the activities of NGOs are an essential contribution to the development and realisation of democracy, human rights, cultural life and social well-being.

The Expert Council also published [a compendium of the practice of Council of Europe bodies](#) – other than the European Court of Human Rights - whose activities have in some way dealt with aspects of the enjoyment of the right to freedom of association and/or the position of

NGOs. It is evident from the compendium that there is a good deal of consistency in the approach followed by different Council of Europe bodies in the way that they deal with issues affecting associations and NGOs. Furthermore, it shows that the activities and role of associations and NGOs continues to be valued and vital. At the same time, despite their existence and operation being both a particular manifestation of the values of the Council of Europe and a means through which those values can be realised, it is also evident that associations and NGOs continue to face many challenges and obstacles.

A second study was published in December on [European standards for reporting requirements for NGOs](#). The study was published with the aim of recalling standards in the context where some Member States tend to impose onerous reporting requirements on NGOs. The Conference of INGOs hopes that the study will provide Member States, NGOs and other interested parties with useful information on the permissible scope of State interference in this regard.

2. Information visits to the Member States

The right to participate in public policy decision-making is a right associated with freedom of association. As stated in Recommendation CM/Rec (2007)14 in its Chapter VIII, paragraph 76, "Governmental and quasi-governmental mechanisms at all levels should ensure the effective participation of NGOs without any discrimination in dialogue and consultation on public policy, objectives and decisions. Such participation should ensure the free expression of the diversity of people's opinions as to the functioning of the society. This participation and cooperation should be facilitated by ensuring appropriate disclosure or access to official information." The mandate of the Conference of INGOs with regard to the information visits to Member States stems from this Recommendation.

In 2018, the Conference carried out three visits, under the responsibility of the President of the Conference of INGOs with the participation of a member of the Expert Council on NGO Law and a member of the Conference. The delegation is accompanied during each visit by the Secretariat which prepares the visit with both a national partner NGO and the Permanent Representation of the State concerned. In March 2018, the delegation visited "[the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#)", which in 2017 entered a new political dynamic, characterized by openness and democratic dialogue between public authorities and independent civil society. The report of the visit identified a set of challenges. It has been sent to the Permanent Representation for the Government's comments and will be presented at the April 2019 session. A visit to the United Kingdom was organised in May and [to Romania in December](#), the latter being a follow-up visit to the first one which took place in 2016.

Each of these visits provides an opportunity to address the challenges and achievements regarding NGO participation in decision-making. The choice of countries is obviously dictated by the events in political and public life that have occurred, but above all a variety of practices is sought. It should be noted also that when the situation requires more clarification than the established programme has been able to provide, the visit can be followed by in-depth meetings with the stakeholders concerned. This was the case of the visit to the United Kingdom where the President had to make an additional one-day visit to gather more information for the preparation of the report. Such follow-up meetings are carried out through collaborations established with national NGOs or by informal meetings with national NGOs organised in the Council of Europe. Exchanges may lead to strong positions, sometimes in an emergency context, sometimes in the absence of other Council of Europe bodies taking a timely position, such as the [statement of the President of the Conference](#), regarding "The Hungarian government's legislative package T/333 "2018 STOP Soros Act".

IV. Integrated approaches

1. Equality

In addition to the previously mentioned events on gender equality, the Conference of INGOs was represented by the Vice-President in charge of Equality at several events. One of them should be underlined specifically: "Policy for Progress: Ending FGM and Forced Marriage" - a ministerial conference which was held in London in November, closing the drafting group of a Good Practice Toolkit to Combat Female Genital Mutilation and Forced Marriage. This Toolkit was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 July 2017 and provides an overview of existing legislation and practices to combat and eradicate such practices.

In order to strengthen and facilitate the integration of the gender perspective into the work of the Conference, the working group "Gender Perspectives in the Political and Democratic Process" coordinates the rapporteurs on gender equality for all working groups of the Conference of INGOs. In accordance with her mandate, the Vice-President in charge of Equality coordinates a task force which should collect information on good practices and alerts, particularly from the INGO networks operating in the field of gender equality. The task force will propose an analysis of the information received in the light of the work carried out at the Council of Europe and in other international and European organisations, in particular on the basis of international legal instruments applying to gender equality.

This work is supported by three bodies in which the Conference of INGOs is represented: the Gender Equality Commission of the Council of Europe, the Equality and Non-Discrimination Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention. Above all, the work aims to contribute to the Council of Europe's Strategy for Equality between Women and Men 2018-2023.

2. Youth

Until this year, the Conference of INGOs had only one representative to the two Council of Europe bodies dealing with youth policies: the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council on Youth, which come together as the Joint Council on Youth. Taking into account the increased collaboration with the youth sector and the fact that the meetings of these committees are held simultaneously, the Standing Committee validated the Bureau proposal to have two representatives.. The priority is to establish cooperation between the bodies of the Conference of INGOs leading the thematic work and the priority working groups of the Youth Advisory on Council, which are: Access to Rights; Youth participation and youth work; Inclusive and peaceful society.

[The roadmap for youth participation in the Conference of INGOs](#) has been incorporated into the Action Plan 2018-2021 of the Conference of INGOs. It presents very concrete objectives to be realised and coordinated by three persons in the Bureau in charge of this approach. For this purpose, the first of a series of working meetings was held in Brussels with youth organisations holding participatory status. This year, the Vice-President and the Rapporteur in charge of Youth participated as advisors in the consultation organised by the Youth Department on the 2030 Agenda of the Council of Europe for Youth.

The collaboration already well underway for the past four years has made the partnership with the Council of Europe's youth department strong and operational. This was demonstrated by the fact that the Conference of INGOs was invited for the first time to be a partner with the European Youth Forum in the organisation of a [consultative meeting on the impact of shrinking civic space on young people and their organisations](#). The debate was

conducted with representatives of States, other Council of Europe institutions, experts and relevant NGOs. In addition to the Rapporteur's involvement in the organisation of the event and the [speech by the President of the Conference](#) at the opening session, the Conference of INGOs supported the event financially.

3. Migration

To strengthen its advocacy on the measures needed to tackle the migration and post-migration crises, the Conference of INGOs is engaged in supporting the work of NGOs and to become more open to their concerns. To this end, the Standing Committee has set up a task force whose objective is to feed into the work of all the structures of the Conference, particularly through the analysis of information collected by the INGOs. The concerns of NGOs working with migrants will thus be included in the work of the Conference. All NGOs active in the field of protection and reception of migrants in the Member States, whether it is a principal activity or part of a specialised field of action, may contribute and submit questions to the Conference of INGO via the task force. Being particularly concerned with the limited conditions of NGOs assisting migrants, the task force has launched a consultation with INGOs in order to know their needs and get advice on what future action should be taken. The Vice-President of the Conference in charge of migration and the coordinator of the task force follow this work.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, taking into account the tensions and restrictions in some Member States, is preparing two reports on a Code of Conduct for NGOs assisting migrants. The President of the Conference of INGOs, accompanied by the coordinator of the task force, was invited for an exchange of views with the PACE Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons Committee. The taskforce is committed to following progress of the work on these reports.

The European Heritage and Creation working group of the Education and Culture Committee supports a reflection on culture, art and migration. In June 2018, a first event was organised with the migration task force, in partnership with the Makers for Change association. Many INGOs attended the concert given by a Syrian musician established in France, whose artistic aim was to convey a melodic harmony between European and Syrian music. This was followed by a discussion on the importance of the Conference's involvement in migration issues. The Lifelong Learning working group is responsible for disseminating the Council of Europe's educational tools for migrants to the INGOs and will make practices emanating from the civil society known.

The Conference also contributes through its representatives (Doctors of the World and the International Detention Coalition) to two drafting groups, each subordinated to different steering committees: The CDDH-MIG (under the authority of the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) aims to build a tool of good practice to promote alternatives to the detention of migrants. The Committee of Experts on Administrative Detention of Migrants (CJ-DAM), under the authority of the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ) is responsible for codifying existing international standards on the conditions of detention of migrants in closed administrative residential centres and, where appropriate, in other non-criminal detention institutions.

V. Internal governance

In order to prevent the risks of corruption and conflict of interests and to strengthen the integrity of the Conference of INGOs vis-à-vis its members and its partners, the President of the Conference of INGOs requested the expertise of the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO). On the basis of the replies to the questionnaire sent by the GRECO Secretariat to the INGOs, the GRECO produced a specific report for the Conference of INGOs. A group of experts, whose terms of reference were validated by the Standing Committee, was subsequently set up and started work at the end of 2017 on drafting a Code of Conduct. The work on this document was spread out throughout the year 2018 with 4 meetings and sustained work between the meetings. The Secretariat also sought the opinions of GRECO and the Legal Affairs Department of the Council of Europe on the draft. This first draft of the Code was discussed in the Standing Committee and at the plenary session of the Conference of INGOs in June. Opinions were divided, both in the Standing Committee and among the INGOs present during the session. This led the Bureau to propose a consultation of the members of the Conference of INGOs between July and September 2018. Over 100 proposals were received from around 20 INGOs. In order to respect the legal character of the document, the drafting group examined all the proposals. The draft code was then discussed by the Bureau in December and will be presented to the Standing Committee in January 2019. This work which is nearly completed should show that the Conference of INGOs can act in a transparent and responsible way, above all vis-à-vis its members and partners and therefore be a learning organisation.

The need for change within the Conference of INGOs follows from the general inner context of the Council of Europe. Facing serious financial difficulties, the Secretary General is engaged in a process of budgetary reform with a restructuring of all sectors of activities of the Organisation. The different steps of this reform will take place during two chairmanships of the Committee of Ministers (Finland, November 2018 - May 2019 and France, May 2019 – November 2019). During his exchange of views with the President of the Conference of INGOs, the Secretary General insisted on the necessity to improve the functioning of the Conference by reinforcing its effectiveness and operability.

In April 2018, the Standing Committee adopted the terms of reference of the "Drafting Group in charge of proposals related to the Rules of procedure or other statutory provisions of the Conference of INGOs. In so doing it wishes to "strengthen effective and ethical governance, the efficiency and effectiveness of the Conference of INGOs, its governing bodies (Bureau and the Standing Committee) and subordinate bodies (Thematic Committees, Working Groups, Verification and Dispute Committee, Expert Council on NGO Law)". The group is responsible for drafting proposals for revising or amending the Regulations in order to strengthen:

- The good and ethical governance of the Conference of INGOs (adapting the structure to meet its objectives, elections, procedure, code of conduct, etc.)
- Operational efficiency (resources, participatory meetings / sessions / working methods, decision-making process, etc.)

From April until the end of the year, the Drafting Group held three meetings. It launched the consultation by means of a questionnaire which was addressed personally to the members of the Standing Committee, the former presidents and by publishing the questionnaire on the website the drafting group made it available to all members of the Conference of INGOs.

Through this consultation, the drafting group sought clarification on the main directions to be taken before undertaking detailed work on the rules of procedure. The replies to the questionnaires show a need for in-depth analysis of the different possibilities of the reorganisation to enable the Conference of INGOs to better achieve its objectives.”. The Preliminary Report 2018 of this activity is available on the Conference website.

VI. Interaction with other Council of Europe institutions

Reinforcing its interaction with the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is one of the priorities of the second mandate of the President of the Conference of INGOs, following the example of the interaction established with the Committee of Ministers during her first mandate. A delegation of the Conference of INGOs met the newly elected President of the Assembly. The President of the Conference was also invited to hold an exchange of views with the Standing Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly at its meeting in Helsinki. This was an opportunity to recall that the strength of the Council of Europe lies in the plurality of its organs, which all act for the same purpose. The Parliamentary Assembly and the Conference of INGOs could coordinate their action programmes on issues of common interest such as gender equality, protection of the civic space and human rights defenders, education and culture, migration and youth policies. The accessibility of parliamentary committee meetings to elected representatives of the Conference of INGOs remains a priority that must be practiced and maintained by regular working relations. This is already the case of the Equality and Anti-Discrimination Committee and the Health and Social Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly.

[An excellent example](#) of institutional synergy has been shown through the PACE [Resolution 2226 \(2018\)](#) and the [Recommendation 2134 \(2018\)](#) on New restrictions on NGO activities in Council of Europe Member States and the [Recommendation CM/Rec\(2018\)11](#) of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe. These documents underline the importance of the thematic debates organised by the Conference of INGOs with the Committee of Ministers on the role and functioning of NGOs in the Council of Europe and the importance of the Committee of Ministers exchanges with the Conference of INGOs on a regular basis. The Recommendation stresses the need to establish a mechanism aimed at receiving, analysing and reacting to alerts on possible new restrictions on the right to freedom of association in Council of Europe member States. In this respect, the Conference is working closely with the Secretariat of the Directorate General of Democracy on a similar idea allowing to respond to this need and to put in place a project which will seek, inter alia, to benefit from the expertise of the Expert Council of NGO Law of the Conference of INGOs. The project is open to voluntary financial contributions from Member States.

A delegation of the Conference held an exchange of views with the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The joint work begun with the Congress to update the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation and the holding of a future session of the Conference in parallel to that of the Congress should allow moving forward together in the same direction.

With regard to the Committee of Ministers, regular exchanges of views between the President of the Conference and the Ministers' Deputies (once a year) and its Rapporteur Group on Democracy (twice a year) continue. The exchanges show that we must move on and strengthen this interaction by making it more dynamic, more timely with regard to

political priorities in order to highlight and share the expertise of the INGOs. To this end, the Permanent Representation of Poland announced the holding of a seminar inviting the Permanent Representations of the Member States, the Conference of INGOs as well as experts, to reflect on the needs and possible solutions in this matter.

At the very beginning of the year, the newly elected Commissioner for Human Rights held an exchange of views with the INGOs during the plenary session of the Conference of INGOs. An exchange of views between the Secretary General and the President of the Conference took place in June. Similarly, a delegation of the Education and Culture Committee met with the Deputy Secretary General to present the priorities of this committee.

The Conference of INGOs participated in the Europe - North America Consultation on Sustainable Development Goal 4 - Education at the Council of Europe. The Europe and North America consultation provided a platform for reviewing progress towards the implementation of the SDG4-Education 2030 commitments of the Europe and North America region. The Chair of the Education and Culture Committee spoke on behalf of the Conference of INGOs to make all partners aware of the commitment of civil society to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

VII. Interaction with other intergovernmental organisations

Since 2017, the President of the Conference of INGOs participates as an observer in the Advisory Civil Society Panel of the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. This collaboration has resulted this year in concrete projects, such as the holding of a thematic session organised by the members of the Standing Committee in September at the Fundamental Rights Forum in Vienna. The President was invited to take the floor during the opening session of this Forum. In November, the Directorate of Justice of the European Commission invited the President of the Conference to give an impulse statement at the EU annual Colloquium on Fundamental Rights.

As part of the preparation by the INGOs of the White Paper on European Cultural Identity, the Education and Culture Committee maintains relations with UNESCO, in particular its Director General Audrey Azoulay, as well as several of its ambassadors (Albania, France and Switzerland). These exchanges should be multiplied in the framework of the planned organisation in 2019 of a consultation on European cultural identity with UNESCO.

A Final word from the President

This activity report, which presents in a non-exhaustive way the actions carried out in 2018, shows above all the dynamism of the Standing Committee which proposed a framework and work content fed by the interest expressed by the INGOs members. The democratic structure of the Conference, the active involvement of INGOs in working groups and thematic committees, the openness to national NGOs that can feed the work of the Conference of INGOs are the indispensable factors, determining the success of the Conference of INGOs.

We have many reasons to be proud of the achievements made by the Conference of INGOs for more than 40 years. These successes and experiences give us the strength and motivation to continue to bring the voice of national and international civil society and to represent it in the Council of Europe. This cannot be done without the Council of Europe Civil

Society Division, the persons devoted to reinforce the presence of INGOs in the Council of Europe.

However, we must also take into account the context that is constantly changing. The year 2018 has not been easy for the Council of Europe, including for the Conference of INGOs. Uncertainties as to the functioning of the Organisation related to the decision of the Russian Federation to suspend its financial contribution to the Council of Europe budget, as well as Turkey's decision to reduce its contribution, placed the Council of Europe in an unprecedented situation. The various proposals negotiated between the Parliamentary Assembly, the Secretary General and the Russian Federation are still the subject of high-level discussions. Faced with this, the Standing Committee sent a letter to the Member States urging them to show greater solidarity with the Council of Europe. Political solutions have not been found yet. As for the financial difficulties, they led the Secretary General to undertake a budgetary reform and propose an institutional reorganisation.

The Conference of INGOs must seize this moment, and consider it not as inevitable but as an opportunity to strengthen its mandate within the Council of Europe, to strengthen the articulation between its short and long-term goals and its institutional structure and operational functioning. Our functioning must always be at the service of action and action at the service of the INGOs and the citizens we represent.

I am particularly proud and grateful that we have been able to start this new 2018-2021 Action Plan with a dynamic development of the new partnership both within the Council of Europe and with other intergovernmental organisations. I would therefore like to thank the members of the Standing Committee for their unwavering commitment. My thanks also go to the INGO-Service whose Board was elected this year. The budget of the INGO-Service complements that of the Council of Europe allocated to the Conference of INGOs. These means enable the Conference of INGOs to fulfil its mission, enabling it to meet at the Council of Europe, to be reactive and be represented at the various events and meetings of about 20 steering committees.

We all have an obligation towards our members of producing results. Only together can we strengthen human rights, democracy and the rule of law and at the same time contribute to the priorities of the Council of Europe.

Anna Rurka

President of the Conference of INGOs

Activity Report of the Human Rights Committee

Chair: Simon Matthijssen

Vice-chairs: Iamvi Totsi and Miguel Cabral

Iamvi Totsi

The working group Intercultural Cities is particularly concerned with the question of the megalopolis and the place of the citizen in the city of tomorrow; the megalopolis or world city may become a place of economic importance and social conflicts where services are mainly based on personal data management. What kind of actions can civil society initiate, as part of the Council of Europe intercultural cities project, to eradicate poverty, maintain social cohesion and privacy, to be inclusive, to defend European identity and values? The group is organising an event for the next session.

Miguel Cabral

The transversal Working Group on Poverty has three different focuses: for the Human Rights Committee the focus is on social rights; from the perspective of the Education and Culture Committee the focus is on how education can protect people from falling into a state of poverty, and the democracy and social cohesion and global challenges committee will look into the topic of social cohesion and poverty.

In October, there was a recruitment effort and collection of relevant documents for the Working Group on Poverty. During the year the Working Group on Poverty consisted of 56 members. Also, thanks to the fine work of the members of the group and the Council of Europe secretariat, the group organised an event on the topic of “Decent Housing for all” to mark the 17th of October. It attracted around 50 participants in Strasbourg where the Vice-Chair of the HRC, Miguel Cabral, was present.

Regarding the HRC sessions during the INGO Conference meetings, the committee has tried to interact more with participants by using digital tools such as links displayed in the slides of the session to grant people with all the materials being addressed at the session but it was used by fewer than 10 people.

Simon Matthijssen

The working group on Freedom of Expression (coordinated by Gulnara Akhundova):

- Preparations for the 2019 World Forum of Democracy.
- Evelyn Basin appointed as Gender Rapporteur.
- A side event on the issue of safety of journalists is being developed. It will be aimed at scrutinising the apparent failure to investigate crimes against journalists and media workers in countries like Azerbaijan, Turkey and Russia. Key note speakers: Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights and possibly Harlem Desir.
- Developing a synopsis and/or a reference guide based on legislative framework for freedom of the media and overall situation for journalists in the Council of Europe
- Work on Turkey:
 - Developing projects with focus on the protection of human rights defenders, the defence and promotion of freedom of expression and freedom of the media and

the massive human rights violations against human rights defenders and journalists in Turkey.

- Organising a visit to Strasbourg of a delegation of Turkish journalists and representatives of human rights NGOs recently released from prison in order to highlight the impact of human rights violations on Turkish society and the principles of the Council of Europe.
- Developing a one-Day-Seminar to create more awareness to the dramatic rise in human rights violations in Turkey. Considering a mission to Turkey to visit incarcerated mayors, writers, journalists, and politicians.

Think Tank Monitoring

NGOs are probably the first to see what goes wrong at grass-root level. Regrettably, it is shown time and again that the monitoring function of NGOs is not recognised by other bodies within the Council of Europe. Denying this important function of INGOs jeopardises the INGO credibility. It is a denial of the fact that NGOs emerge where public bodies fail to see a need for help, and enterprises do not see profitable opportunities.

In various states, third-party monitoring is considered “unnecessary” or even “undesirable” because the state provides its own “inspections”, or there are mechanisms of “self-reporting”. In the long run all these systems appear to be susceptible to undesirable government influence or are witness to a naïve assumption that public institutions / states will give sincere, timely and complete openness about cases where they have failed.

We notice that NGOs that actively engage in monitoring are sometimes hindered and intimidated, possibly because they are seen as unwelcome (self-proclaimed) countervailing powers.

We want NGOs that do monitoring to be heard by the responsible authorities. The information given to relevant organisations by monitoring NGOs should be impeccable: concise, complete and relevant. Effective monitoring is a skill that needs to be developed. Not only for the sake of NGOs themselves but primarily for the protection of vulnerable groups whose well-being may depend on mature and realistic monitoring capabilities.

The HRC is preparing a transversal event in autumn 2019.

List of activities 2018

January

- 22nd Standing Committee (all)

February

- 6th Copenhagen, preparatory meeting for Copenhagen Declaration (Simon Matthijssen)
- 8th/9th Meeting of the drafting group on the Code of Conduct (Simon Matthijssen)

April

- 11th/12th/ 13th Copenhagen High Level Conference resulting in the so-called Copenhagen Declaration (Simon Matthijssen)
- 23rd Standing Committee (all)

May

- 14th/15th Meeting of the Expert Council on NGO Law (Simon Matthijssen)

June

- 20th/21st European Implementation Network (EIN) Course on the involvement of NGOs in the execution of ECHR-Judgements (Simon Matthijssen)
- 22nd-29th INGO conference (all)

August:

- Meeting with a local Portuguese NGO that runs a very successful housing project (about 95% success rate), with a view to it participating in the Conference's 17th October event, (Miguel Cabral)

September

- 11th and 12th, Meeting of the drafting group on the Code of Conduct (Simon Matthijssen)
- 13th and 14th, EOI Board meeting, planning for next year (Simon Matthijssen)
- Preparatory meeting with lawyer and member of Turkish Civil Society (Simon Matthijssen)

October

- 4th and 5th, at the European Parliament in Strasbourg under the patronage of the European Parliament and of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, a symposium called "The Spring of Europe". Iamvi Totsi moderated a round-table on the theme "The contribution of Civil Society to the building of a new Europe closer to Citizens"
- 8th and 9th; Standing Committee meeting (all)
8th, Side Event "Shrinking space for Civil Society and Persecution of Human Rights Activists" sponsored by Ms. Olena Sotnyk (Ukraine, ALDE), Rapporteur on the restrictions of the NGO activities (Simon Matthijssen)
- 9th, 2nd meeting of the drafting group on the revision of the rules of procedure, Strasbourg (Miguel Cabral);
- Postponed the participation of the above-mentioned Portuguese NGO for another conference meeting in order to make better use of the vast experience in social inclusion of homeless people. (Miguel Cabral)
- 17th, Participation in the event "Decent Housing for All" from the Poverty Transversal Working Group in Strasbourg with 50 participants (Miguel Cabral);
- Re-launching of the work of the Poverty WG in order to recruit new members and collect relevant materials for the working group (Miguel Cabral);
- 25th to 28th, International Cultural Heritage Fair: the 24th edition of the exhibition with the theme "European Cultural Heritage" which aims to promote cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue. Iamvi Totsi sponsored the "Proud of EU ... Let's Make It Beautiful" award ceremony.
- 31st Oct - 2nd Nov: On invitation of the Danish ministry of Justice, High-Level Expert Conference in Kokkedal (Denmark) on the topics:
 1. Building a Common Human Rights Culture (*Political dialogue post-Copenhagen: anchoring the development of human rights more solidly in European democracies; Judicial dialogue: interaction between the Court and the highest domestic courts; Supporting dialogue through third-party interventions*).
 2. Caseload (A framework for the analysis of a balanced caseload).
 3. European Supervision (Developments in the fourth instance principle and the doctrine of evolutionary interpretation: Finding the proper balance) (Simon Matthijssen)

November

- 5th, Meeting of the drafting group on the Code of Conduct (Simon Matthijssen)
- 21st, University of Utrecht Uglobal expert seminar "Civil space under attack" (Simon Matthijssen)
- 26th, 3rd meeting of the drafting group on the revision of the rules of procedure, Strasbourg (Miguel Cabral).
- 29th, "CDDC Workshop civil society" (Iamvi Totsi)

December

- 6th and 7th, Consultation Meeting with representatives of civil society facing increasingly restricted civic space (Current state of freedom of association and main concerns of civil society in Azerbaijan, Belarus, Hungary, Moldova, Poland, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine) (Simon Matthijssen)
- 12th, Participating panellist in a meeting on "Implementation of the Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) in France" (Iamvi Totsi)

Activity Report of the Education and Culture Committee

Chair: Claude Vivier Le Got

Vice-Chairs: Julianne Lagadec, Karl Donert

The Education and Culture Committee's activity report for 2018 will be appended to the 2018 activity report of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe.

The Education and Culture Committee helps implement the Conference of INGOs' strategic priorities and action plan through the activities of its four working groups:

- Intercultural cities;
- Lifelong learning;
- Europe of heritage and creation;
- Digital citizenship (transversal group headed by the Education and Culture Committee).

1. Consultation on European cultural identity

European identity is the guiding strand of the Education and Culture Committee's discussions. The committee seized the opportunity of the 10th anniversary of the White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue to invite civil society to take up the issue again.

The committee held an initial debate on the subject on 27 June 2018. Eight leading European figures shared their views of European cultural identity with the INGOs and engaged in dialogue with the many participants.

- Aurélie Filippetti, French Minister of Culture and Communication from 2012 to 2014, writer;
- Christophe Girard, Deputy Mayor of Paris (part of the Council of Europe's network of Intercultural Cities), and founder of the Nuit Blanche festival in Paris;
- Catherine Lalumière, Secretary General of the Council of Europe from 1989 to 1994 and current President of La Maison de l'Europe;
- Jean-Baptiste Mattei, Permanent Representative of France to the Council of Europe;
- Joanna Nowicki, university professor specialising in cultural areas and the movement and history of ideas;
- Miroslav Papa, Permanent Representative of Croatia to the Council of Europe;
- Philippe Potentini, Council of Europe Directorate of Communication, representing the Intercultural Cities section;
- Paolo Rudelli, Permanent Observer of the Holy See to the Council of Europe.

Cultural Europe encompasses the affirmation of identity and the affirmation of diversity. Identity is rooted in heritages that are themselves diverse and sometimes contradictory; they are mobile and feed on the movement of knowledge. The **EUROPE OF HERITAGE AND CREATION** working group deals with this aspect of our work.

Democracy first came into being in the cities of Ancient Greece, where citizens played an active part in politics. The **INTERCULTURAL CITIES** working group is going to champion the role of cities as democratic agoras and the opportunity they offer of being leading centres of cosmopolitanism.

The emancipation born of dialogue requires cultural openness, which itself demands learning. The last component of our approach therefore involves education in the form of **LIFELONG LEARNING**, so the committee has set up a working group on the subject. Education is intrinsically linked to integration in society and to dignity. It is also crucial for striking a balance between identity and diversity.

The Conference of INGOs' transversal group on **DIGITAL CITIZENSHIP**, which is headed by the Education and Culture Committee, will, among other things, look into the new forms of exchange and transmission made possible by new technologies.

2. Working groups

2.1. Intercultural cities

In January 2018, Ivana Alessandro and Francesca Lionetti presented the Intercultural Cities section to the members of the Education and Culture Committee. The aim was to share the work of this Council of Europe unit with civil society representatives, who have a key part to play in persuading local and national authorities to make changes for the benefit of all. The Education and Culture Committee had already been in contact with the Intercultural Cities section, in particular concerning diaspora issues and religious issues.

At the January 2018 session, it was suggested that the working group's terms of reference should be as follows: (...) to reflect on the civilizational, societal, environmental and cultural aspects inherent in the integration of groups from various backgrounds, and also to reflect on town planning, as well as on public policies and private initiatives in terms of education. The Intercultural Cities network of the Council of Europe will be involved in the reflections in order to gather good practices and identify obstacles to proper cultural integration in all of our cities, particularly regarding refugees, migrants and vulnerable groups.

The working group has identified three sub-themes:

- Cities of the future;
- Combating anxiety and exclusion in cities;
- Inclusive education in intercultural cities: devising new pathways.

2.2. Lifelong learning

This working group ties in with the strategy of the Council of Europe, which champions two ideas through its education policies:

- High-quality education that prepares people not only for economic and social integration but also to be active citizens in democratic societies, while ensuring their personal development and knowledge development;
- Education systems based on competencies that contribute to the development of a democratic culture in Europe's societies (values, attitudes, skills and critical thinking).

Adult education must be addressed in a way that does not only take account of an employment dimension. The activities of this working group tie in with the first two strands of the Council of Europe's education policies:

- Competencies for democratic life;
- Inclusive approaches in education designed to make sure that nobody, including migrants, is left by the wayside.

David Lopez, President of the Lifelong Learning Platform, exchanged views with the members of the committee on 27 June 2018 with a view to identifying the key challenges in lifelong learning.

In June 2018, Elisabeth Marie also presented the Council of Europe's Toolkit for the Linguistic Integration of Adult Migrants to the INGOs.

2.3. Europe of heritage and integration

Eladio Fernández Galiano, Head of the Culture, Nature and Heritage Department, presented the Council of Europe's activities connected with the working group's theme. In particular, he referred to the European Cultural Convention, the Faro Heritage Convention, sustainable development in the cultural sector and the digitisation of culture.

The Cultural Routes programme is of particular interest to the Education and Culture Committee. Noël Orsat therefore gave a detailed presentation of the programme in June 2018, drawing on the example of the Via Charlemagne, which had recently joined the list of cultural routes recognised by the Council of Europe.

In June 2018, the Education and Culture Committee also joined forces with the Taskforce on Migration to put culture to work as a factor in social cohesion. A musical performance was staged for the INGOs in partnership with the Strasbourg association, Makers for Change. The event met its objectives in that it:

- was accessible to everyone, whatever their language;
- fostered human encounters and sharing;
- combined youth, education, migration and culture.

The working group is going to address various issues:

- Reflection on European identity and heritage;
- History teaching, in connection with the cultural routes;
- Europe, culture, art and migration.

It is closely involved in the discussions about European cultural identity.

2.4. Digital citizenship

The Council of Europe is focusing on digital citizenship and digital citizenship education. Ahmet Murat Kilic gave the INGOs details of the digital citizenship education programme launched by the Steering Committee for Education Policy and Practice. There is also a Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI) in which NGOs can take part as observers.

Various objectives have been identified for this transversal working group that has input from the Conference of INGOs' three committees:

- Dealing with digital issues from the viewpoint of citizens: in terms of education (and culture), human rights and democracy;
- Developing a proactive, forward-looking approach instead of the reactive approach of the past;
- Looking at the question of the future we want for citizens of the digital era;
- Devising measures to initiate or implement so as to support our vision.

Activity Report of the Democracy Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee

Chair: Thierry Mathieu

Vice-Chairs: Gerhard Ermischer, Luminita Petrescu

The Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee represents the Conference of INGOs in various steering committees, especially the Steering Committee for Democracy and Good Governance (CDDG). In accordance with the priorities of the Conference of INGOs in this period it has participated in leading functions in strengthening the contacts with the intergovernmental steering committees of the Council of Europe, the Congress Local and Regional Authorities and other Council of Europe bodies. Most of the work was done through the working groups, which were specifically set up to assist the intergovernmental steering committees and their working groups in charge of drafting recommendations and legal documents in line with the priorities formulated by the Committee of Ministers.

The Working Group “Participation in Democratic Decision Making Processes” assisted the representative of the Conference of INGOs in his work in the CDDG Working Group on the revision of Recommendation No. R (98) 12 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on supervision of local authorities’ action. Supervision by citizens was only mentioned in passing in the old recommendation with an impetus to strengthen it in future. In the new recommendation three forms of supervision have been defined, administrative, financial, and democratic and a whole chapter is dedicated to define and implement democratic supervision by citizens as well as by elected representatives. A strong focus was placed on transparency, especially access to information to allow citizens to carry out democratic supervision. The document was already approved by the CDDG plenary meeting in November and was forwarded to the Committee of Ministers for adoption. The close co-operation developed with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities was also a good starting point in our efforts to re-establish and strengthen our relations with the Congress.

At the meeting of the Working Group during the June Session of the Conference, 20 persons were present, including new participants who showed interest and 38 persons have now signed up to be a member of the group. We had one invited guest, Mr Ivan Nikoltchev, Senior Programme Manager in the Civil Society Division of the Council of Europe. Unfortunately he left the division in October due to the restructuring of the administration under the current budget cuts. He has organized an informal network working on the implementation of the Guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. This network consists of big INGOs, organizations like the Open Government Partnership, but also grass-root NGOs. The network published a call for developing a logo, signet or symbol for the participation of citizens and civil society in the democratic decision making processes.

Mr Nikoltchev presented the strategy for participation at local / regional level developed in Kiev in Ukraine in a project financed with EU-funding. Out of this programme the network has developed an “Academy”, which is a group of experts who can offer training in similar participation processes and have developed guidelines for such a process. The concept for the platform was forwarded to us by Mr. Nikoltchev and distributed to the members of the working group. We want to work closely with the network and can see many synergy effects here. Mr Nikoltchev for example presented the Balkan Civil Society Development Network (BCSDN) which has developed a monitoring tool to evaluate the functioning of the civil participation in the Western Balkan and Turkey. The Balkan Network has many members in all these states working on a grass-root level and would be a perfect partner for our working group in the field. We have invited them for co-operation.

In the ensuing discussion we decided to set a special focus on the participation of vulnerable groups. These can include questions of gender equality, age discrimination, poverty, questions of citizenship (when the passport decides if you can participate or not) etc. We see here overlapping issues with other working groups, like the transversal working group on poverty. Another important aspect of participation is the access to information, as only an informed public can make valid contributions. There also overlapping aspects with the working group on ethics and corruption. So we will ensure a close contact with neighbouring groups to avoid double work and ensure positive synergy effects wherever possible.

Within our WG we also discussed the current situation in the Council of Europe and how to make the Council of Europe and especially our Conference more visible. The Conference is currently not presented in the promotional film of the Council of Europe shown to all visitors (according to the latest information this shall be remedied in the next version) and the brochure of the Conference is out of date. We want to use the capacities that many of our members can offer as journalists, designers, authors, etc. to create something up to date to present the Conference. The new web page the Conference wants to set up will hopefully be a great help in this process. For the visibility of the Conference inside the Council of Europe we will use all our contacts, meetings and communications with members of the PACE, country representations etc. to stress the roll of the Conference and to demand that it must be made more visible in the presentations of the CoE.

Another theme brought up was the state of minority religions in Europe, how they can register with governments and administration, their formal recognition as religious groups and their status in comparison with established religious groups. Many people participate in democratic processes through their religious groups – which also raises questions of the adherence of these groups to fundamental principles of human and civil rights, like gender equality inter alia.

The main task for the working group in the time coming will be to identify NGOs on a grass-root-level to test the impact of the new Guidelines for Citizen Participation in Democratic Decision Making Processes drafted in the CDDG with a great impact of Civil Society and the Conference of INGOs and to collect good and bad practice examples to see how well they work in reality. NGOs in Romania, the Balkans and Turkey have already been identified and approached. The contacts established with the Open Government Platform (OGP) will help to find additional partners for this project.

In preparation of the Fundamental Rights Forum of the Fundamental Rights Agency of the EU (FRA) we established a working relationship with the OGP. In this preparation as well as during the Forum, it became clear that we need to shift our focus from just looking at the most vulnerable groups and “minorities” to looking at the “majorities”, establishing what majorities are, how the relation is with visible citizens movements and to ensure that real or perceived majorities do not feel left out, marginalized and lose trust and interest in democracy. This aspect of inclusiveness was stressed also by the Director General of the DG II during the CDDG plenary meeting in November as a new priority of the Council of Europe.

The Working Group “Preventing corruption by engaging Civil Society” was created in January 2018 as a response to the concerns expressed by participants about the negative impact that corruption has on the democratic process in their countries. They highlighted the pressures put on the justice, or on critical NGOs and the shrinking space for civil society’s actions and freedom of expression in many countries in Europe.

At the second meeting which was organized in June 2018, the eleven participants representing ten NGOs decided to focus on “educate citizens to prevent corruption” in order to have specific, effective results.

Participants emphasized the importance of grass roots activities aimed at raising citizens’ awareness, starting from an early age, with school education programmes, taking into account that there are other structures which work with official local and national institutions to fight corruption. They mentioned that there is a strong need to develop a civic culture based on transparency and honesty which rejects corruption practices. This renewed civic-mindedness in public affairs also requires a search for truth and transparency and “educate citizens to ask questions, is one of the building blocks required if we want to develop a culture of honesty and access to information is a prerequisite”. Education should represent the foundation of the Working Group actions and civic education activities and campaigns are needed to start from an early age in order to form generations which will not accept corruption.

The members of the Working Group “Preventing corruption by Engaging Civil Society” will work in complementarity with the Working Group on Public Ethics established by CDDG and will contribute with examples of education for the prevention of corruption and illustrate this with examples of the culture of public ethics and the implementation of measures to ensure effective actions.

Before the next meeting in 2019, participants also decided to identify NGOs in each of their countries that were active in the field of education to prevent corruption and share the most successful examples with all members of the INGO Conference.

In 2018, members of the Working Group have established contacts with associations and experts working in the field of education to prevent corruption in Malta, Spain, Romania, Germany, Ukraine and Poland.

The Working Group “Gender-perspectives in Political and Democratic Processes” is based on a long series of very successful working groups dedicated to gender issues. It was re-established under a new leadership during the June Session of the Conference. It is in charge of ensuring gender mainstreaming in all aspects of the Conference work and helps to foster this issue in all our working groups and relations with the other bodies of the CoE. The main activity of the Working Group in 2018 was the highly successful side event “Women’s contribution to Global Peace in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security” which was organized during the PACE Session in June in co-operation with the Parliamentary Delegation of Finland to the PACE.

In the work with the intergovernmental steering committees the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee also participated in the first meeting of the Working Group on E-Governance. This Working Group shall be covered in future by our Transversal Working Group on E-Democracy.

Another aspect is the participation in the Stakeholders Platform for good local governance in September 2017: The Platform is part of the enlarged bureau of the CDDG and responsible for certifying the national institutes to award good practice communities under the rules of the 12 Principles for Good Government. It also has the final word on awarding communities as best practice examples. The INGO Conference is a full member and no decisions can be taken without a representative of the INGO Conference present.

The Committee was also represented in the plenary meeting of the Steering Committee for Culture, Cultural Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) as a secondary to our Committee of Education and Culture.

The Drafting Group for the Revision of the Code of Good Practice in Participation in Democratic Decision Making Processes is a corner stone in strengthening our relations with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. This Code of the INGO Conference shall be revised, a revision asked for by the Congress. A first internal meeting with members of the INGO Conference was held in June 2018 and a first joint meeting with representatives of the Congress was held in November 2018. The work will be a joint venture of the Conference and the Congress. The text itself needs some editorial updating and the main task will be to provide a practical toolkit with 10 good and bad practice examples to help the practical implementation of the Code. This again binds nicely into the work of our Working Group on Participation in Democratic Decision Making Processes.

The Committee also participated in the International Day of Democracy event at the Council of Europe on 19 September 2018 organised by the Conference of INGOs together with the Directorate General of Democracy with a presentation of the view of organized civil society on participation processes and the challenges to democracy in Europe today. This binds in nicely with the major theme of the rise of populism and shrinking civil space in Europe, which is our main concern and has to be seen in line with all the other activities in the working groups, at the FRA-Forum, the Forum for Democracy etc. which all focused on this issue.

The Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee is also active in the reform of the inner working of the Conference of INGOs. For example, it is represented in the Drafting Group for the Revision of the Rules of Procedure of the INGO Conference, which is preparing an in depth reform of the Conference structures.

Activity Report of the Vice-President of the Conference of INGO in charge of Equality

The Council of Europe is working hard to ensure that the long-proclaimed principle of gender equality becomes a reality within this intergovernmental organisation itself, in the texts adopted and the policies pursued, as part of a paradigm shift.

Accordingly, not only people working at the Council of Europe but also the equality rapporteur(s) of the various institutions attached to it are now receiving training in gender equality issues, and these efforts are paying off.

The INGO Conference needs to be part of this same movement. It now has a team of gender equality rapporteurs in each working group, and a task force is being set up. The men and women concerned will be given training in these issues because gender equality is something that cuts across all areas of our work and cannot be ignored.

That is particularly true as regards violence against women. The main instrument in this area, the Istanbul Convention, has now been ratified by 33 countries. The facts are brutal: a woman is killed every three days in Europe, usually by her husband or partner. Combating these killings is clearly a matter of urgency. Not everyone supports the Istanbul Convention or indeed gender equality. What is new is that this opposition is increasingly organised and linked to populist or religious movements.

It will be observed that, in various countries, funding is now being set aside to promote gender equality, thus providing an indication of whether national and/or regional policy makers take these issues seriously. Only a handful of countries have managed to determine the actual cost of violence against women. The governments concerned have realised that not only does prevention help to avoid destroying the lives of individuals and families but also it can lead to substantial savings.

In 2018, it was observed that the gender wage gap was such that on average, female employees effectively worked for free from 3 November to 31 December, and that this loss of earnings has obvious knock-on effects on women's living standards and retirement pensions, and the welfare of their children.

If the INGO Conference is to be relevant in every area it covers, therefore, it needs to look at how its discussions and proposals impact gender equality.

1. Representation of the INGO Conference on Council of Europe commissions and committees or follow-up of work

1.1. Council of Europe's Gender Equality Commission

The Gender Equality Commission consists mainly of members appointed by states. On 7 December 2018, Charles Ramsden, UK, was elected as Chair and Kira Appel, Denmark, as Vice-Chair. Set up in 2012 to help ensure gender mainstreaming in Council of Europe member states, the commission takes stock of progress on legislation and public policy and work has been done in various areas.

The Gender Equality Commission's various publications draw on the subjects that have been studied and followed up: gender equality, combating gender stereotypes and sexism,

preventing and combating violence against women, ensuring women's access to justice, balanced participation in decision-making and gender mainstreaming. There is also a [glossary](#).

- At its 13th meeting on 11,12 and 13 April 2018 at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, attention focused on the gender equality strategy 2014-2017 and its implementation as well as on co-operation with international organisations. The six points of the [Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023](#) were mentioned and the Committee of Ministers adopted it on 7 March 2018. Statistics on women migrants, refugees and asylum seekers are to be collected by states.
- The launch of the Gender Equality Strategy "Paving the Way" took place on 3 and 4 May 2018 in Copenhagen. As a member of the select group which drafted it, I was invited to take part. If there is to be progress towards greater equality, we need to have more women in decision-making posts, and action must be taken to combat ambient sexism and ensure that all women enjoy human rights.
- At its 14th meeting, on 5, 6 and 7 December 2018 at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, participants took stock of the situation as regards the Istanbul Convention. It was observed that there is a parallel between states' refusal to sign the convention and a lack of gender equality or even a human rights deficit in the countries concerned.

The Chair of the Rapporteur Group on Human Rights (GR-H) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, Ambassador Keith McBean, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe, came along to explain that gender equality was a key concern.

Gianluca Esposito, Executive Secretary of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO), explained that the gender perspective was part of their integrated approach. GRECO was anxious to know whether states incorporated it into their public policy making. He spoke of the need to have more women in the police because gender had an impact on crime. In his view, women were less susceptible to corruption than men. GRECO was working on economic crime (other than organised crime) with the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL).

Dalia Leinarte, Chairperson, United Nations Committee on the elimination of discrimination against women (CEDAW), explained the two complex general recommendations, one on trafficking in women and girls with the major problem of traffickers going unpunished, and the other on the gender stereotyping of indigenous women. She expressed concern about the growing problem of organ trafficking, with demand for girls with disabilities, forced marriage for the purposes of sexual exploitation and bride kidnapping. She also mentioned the CEDAW recommendation against corruption. She used a business card written in Braille.

In Serbia, "gender responsive budgeting", i.e. the practice of setting aside funding for policies to promote gender equality, had been introduced in 2017 and had now been

adopted by 40 national institutions, towns and municipalities. Gender responsive budgeting was an effective means of moving beyond political rhetoric.

Successful field work was being carried out with perpetrators of violence against women by the [Red Cross in Luxembourg](#). Some individuals attended the programme as an early-intervention measure while others were referred after committing an offence. In this last case, the time needed for participants to develop awareness of their behaviour tended to be longer. [Link to the Luxembourg gender equality portal](#).

The 14th meeting also included a presentation of the [mobile phone app “GenMob”](#), used in Portugal, and created by the research and pedagogical facility IGOT/CEG at Lisbon University. The app tracks men’s and women’s mobility patterns in an effort to aid public policy makers. It has been observed that while, for economic reasons, the patterns are similar for everyone during working hours, they differ outside those periods. Also, men tend to use their cars more than women, who are more likely to walk or use public transport. The app also clearly shows that family commitments are more important for women.

Some GEC publications:

- [Compilation of good practices to prevent and combat sexism](#)
- [Questions and answers to the Istanbul Convention](#)
- [Migrant women](#)
- [2018 annual report on implementation of the strategy](#)
- [Handbook for gender equality rapporteurs](#), <https://rm.coe.int/council-of-europe-gers-handbook-oct-2018-2-/16808ee74b>

Also worth noting is the UNESCO publication [International technical guidance on sexuality education](#)

- **Recommendation against sexism:** in the equality strategy, the number one objective is to prevent and combat sexism and stereotypes. This work undertaken at the request of the Committee of Ministers in 2017 centres on producing a specific, practical recommendation for member states and has continued with the select group of which I am part. There has been much discussion about the definitions used in, and the scope of, the recommendation. It is an innovative and bold instrument and I hope that the French version will employ the phrase “droits humains” [human rights] rather than “droits de l’homme” [rights of man].
- Two meetings took place in 2018:
- 3rd meeting: on 2 and 3 March 2018 at the Council of Europe in Paris;

- 4th meeting: on 20 and 21 September 2018 at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg.
- The recommendation was reviewed at the GEC plenary then forwarded to the Committee of Ministers. It contains a compilation of international and European standards.

- Training seminar on mapping support services for victims of violence, 8 November 2018, Council of Europe, Strasbourg,
<https://www.coe.int/en/web/genderequality/training-seminar-vaw-8-nov-2018>;
<https://rm.coe.int/mapping-support-services-vaw/16808ec66b>

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

Elvira Kovacs, Serbia, chaired the committee in 2018. A general rapporteur on violence against women co-ordinates the Parliamentary Network “Women Free from Violence”.

The Interparliamentary Union and the PACE conducted a survey which found that 85% of women MPs have been subjected to psychological violence and 46% to death or rape threats. 58% have been the target of sexist attacks on the internet and 67% - comments about their physical appearance or remarks based on gender stereotypes. 25% have suffered sexual harassment and 14% - physical violence.

The level of reporting is low, possibly because very few parliaments have systems in place for conducting investigations. The level of impunity is also very high therefore. The best way to curb sexism of this kind is to have more female elected representatives. A scandal recently erupted in Iceland involving 6 male MPs.

[The committee supports the Istanbul Convention, and its members are actively engaged within their national parliaments.](#)

Some examples of topics covered this year:

- Promoting the rights of persons belonging to national minorities;
- Inclusion of persons with disabilities in the labour market: changing mindsets;
- Empowering intersex people: a crucial means of guaranteeing their rights;
- Moving on from outdated approaches to gender identity;
- No to discrimination in access to employment;
- Recognising sign languages as official languages;
- Ending discrimination against rainbow families.

For some months now, I have been unable to obtain copies of meeting files, even though I represent one of the pillars of the Council of Europe. Meetings took place:

- on 22, 23, 24, 25 January 2018, Council of Europe, Strasbourg

- 23, 24, 25, 26 April 2018, Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- 5 June 2018, Council of Europe, Paris
- 25, 26, 27, 28 June 2018, Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- 19 September 2019, Council of Europe, Paris
- 8, 9, 10, 11 October 2018, Council of Europe, Strasbourg
- 3 December 2018, Council of Europe, Paris

This committee has been asked for its opinion on the compatibility of the European Convention on Human Rights, which Council of Europe members are required to observe and uphold, and the Cairo Declaration which applies to members of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, and proclaims inequality between men and women in its preamble and, in the main body of the text, equality in terms of human dignity but not in terms of law.

Through this committee, we once again took part in the campaign against breast cancer in October 2018.

1.3. **The Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention, meetings on 30 January and 24 May 2018**

The Committee of the Parties met on 30 January 2018 at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg. The bureau elections saw Elisabeth Walaas, Representative of Norway, elected as Chair, with Gilles Heyvaert, Representative of Belgium, as First Vice-Chair and João Maria Cabral, Representative of Portugal, as Second Vice-Chair.

The number of ratifications having risen to 33, GREVIO elected a further five experts at its 5th meeting on 24 May 2018.

The European Union's signature of the Istanbul Convention will help to step up the fight against violence against women and pave the way for a code of conduct. Numerous countries outside the Council of Europe are interested in the Convention, such as Japan and the Maghreb countries, and Tunisia and Morocco have enacted new legislation.

On 25 October 2018, the President of Grevio told the Committee of Ministers that the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention showed that it was already having a positive impact on the lives of women across Europe: laws were being changed and protection and support services stepped up, specific criminal offences of forced marriage, stalking and female genital mutilation were being introduced and rape provisions were changing, resulting in important public debate around consent to sexual acts.

Visits took place to Austria, Monaco, Albania, Denmark, Montenegro, Tunisia, Portugal, Sweden, Finland, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Serbia, Spain, Andorra and Belgium. The first six countries visited were all pleased with the work done with GREVIO and facilitated the visits. The governments concerned learn a great deal from the visits and feel empowered by them. The role of INGOs is recognised as being crucial.

The contacts with CEDAW, particularly as regards data collection and forms of co-operation, have proven useful. Finland is preparing its report for CEDAW at the same time, which should help to ease the workload.

1.4. **The Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)** – ministerial conference in London, 15 and 16 November 2018

Having taken part in the drafting group which produced the [Guide to good and promising practices aimed at preventing and combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage](#) for states, which was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 July 2017 and provides an overview of current legislation and practice in combating and eradicating these practices, I was invited to participate in the ministerial conference held in London on 15 and 16 November 2018 “*Policy for Progress: Ending FGM and Forced Marriage*”.

The aim is to raise the Committee of Ministers’ awareness of the efforts to prevent [female genital mutilation and to combat forced marriage, in particular child marriage, as such practices amount to rape](#).

1.5. **World Forum for Democracy**, Strasbourg, 19, 20 and 21 November 2018

The Council of Europe’s World Forum for Democracy which took place from 19 to 21 November 2018 on the theme “gender equality and women’s rights” attracted numerous speakers. Their statements showed that, while there had clearly been progress, obstacles remained.

On the website, you will find details of the programmes, statements, Labs and their podcasts. [Lab 7](#), sponsored by the INGO Conference, asked the question “Will closing the gender gap in the economy lead to greater political equality?”

Moderating this Lab was a pleasure, with three initiatives also supported by the *département* of Bas-Rhin. The aim is to raise awareness of equality issues in the work environment in three different ways, one created by the State, the other from the bottom up and the third by enlisting the help of women managers in science and technology companies.

“*Talent naar de top*” was presented by the Dutch *Talent to the Top Foundation*. It offers companies a charter and help with changing their working methods and internal rules.

The second initiative, *Fearless Futures*, from the United Kingdom, addresses personal issues such as homophobia and racism, in order to raise awareness of inequality through training that helps build a community centred around real-life experiences of the struggle for equality.

The third and last initiative, sponsored by the Conference of INGOs, “Le Cercle Inter'Elles”, a network of networks, started with women in technology and science companies, describing

the stumbling blocks in terms of careers and wages, and the problems facing women in decision-making positions, with a link between private and professional life. The discussions include men and everyone involved in the initiative works to bring about change within companies. A meeting of these networks takes place once a year around March 8.

It was considered essential to create effective structures in companies to allow coaching and mentoring in an appropriate setting, and in a way that transcends the divisions typical of labour relations.

[During the Conference, participants enjoyed a number of artistic interludes.](#)

2. Active participation in the INGO Conference

Being responsible for Gender Equality, I attended all the INGO Conference meetings held in 2018, as well as the Standing Committee and Bureau meetings and, whenever possible, meetings of the migration task force, which is doing sterling work.

- 24 January 2018: preparation of the arguments and [Resolution adopted relating to the use of the term "Droits humains" \(Human Rights\) instead of "Droits de l'homme" within the Conference of INGOs;](#)
- 25 January 2018: training/information session “LGBTI in Europe, think together”, in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly, at which the following persons spoke:
 - Piet de Bryun, Belgian MP, Rapporteur for the PACE’s Equality Committee on the rights of LGBTI persons
 - Manuel Tornare, Swiss MP, former mayor of Geneva
 - Nils Warner, United Kingdom, ILGA Europe
 - Wielie Elhorst, Netherlands, and Misha Cherniak, Poland, European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups
 - Eleni Tsetsekou, Head of the Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit, Anti-discrimination Department
 - Evgenia Giakoumopoulou, Programme Adviser, Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Unit of the Anti-discrimination Department
 - Géraldine Mattioli-Zeltner, Office of the Commissioner for Human Rights

All the speakers talked about the worrying situation in various countries where the rights of LGBTI people are being denied. The proceedings are attached and will be available at <https://www.annenegre.com/>.

- 21 to 23 May 2018, visit by a delegation with Anna Rurka, focusing on the role of civil society in the process of developing democratic thought in the UK;
- 26 June 2018: statement to the INGO Conference’s Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges, on women’s participation in political and public life;

- Participation in the working group chaired by Anje Wiesinga until June 2018 and in the side event on 27 June 2018, "[Women's contribution to Global Peace in implementing UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women and Peace and Security](#)";
- 28 June 2018: "The European Social Charter, a point of support for equality between women and men" with Jean-Michel Belorgey, outgoing Chair of the European Committee of Social Rights. Anne Nègre, barrister at the Bar of Versailles, explained the background to, and proceedings surrounding, 15 collective complaints lodged by University Women of Europe concerning two violations of the Social Charter based on non-compliance with the equal-pay-for-equal-work rule and the under-representation of women in decision-making posts in private companies;
- Setting-up of the gender equality task force, which is being run by Farouk Alloush, Eurodoc, under my supervision;
- The "Gender Perspectives" working group has been chaired since June 2018 by Bettina Hahne from *Soroptim International of Europe*, the primary task being to co-ordinate the work of the equality rapporteurs. The group reports to the Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges and also to myself as head of equality within the NGO Conference.

3. Representation, lobbying activities

Various representation missions including:

- 16, 17, 18 April 2018, Commonwealth Women's Forum, London;
- 23 April 2018, as part of the Study Days on "Migration in and to Europe from a woman's perspective" held by the European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations, I was asked to speak about "Migration – the Council of Europe's gender perspective and the Istanbul Convention";
- 24 April 2018: Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, met with Katarzyna Sokolowska, rapporteur for the Bureau, and Gerhard Ermisher, Vice-Chair of the Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges. The aim was to re-establish a dynamic relationship with this other pillar of the Council of Europe;
- 3 and 4 May 2018: invitation from the Council of Europe to take part in the launch of the Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 in Copenhagen;
- 7 and 8 May 2018: invitation from the *European Trade Union Committee for Education* to speak about "*Enhancing gender equality in and through education*" in Baku, Azerbaijan. It was interesting to talk to trade union representatives working in education in countries in eastern Europe and beyond and to see that the programmes presented during the conference gave due attention to the issue of equality;
- 27 to 31 August 2018: invitation to address the 8th International Congress of French-speaking feminist research, Paris X Nanterre University, France
- 4 and 5 October 2018: represented the INGO Conference at *l'Académie européenne du Grand Est*, European Parliament;

- 15 December 2018: jury member at a public speaking competition, Paris City Hall, on the theme “Human rights for all”.

Extensive lobbying and advocacy in support of women’s fundamental rights.

Numerous meetings to raise awareness of the INGO Conference and its efforts to promote equality

Team work is vital and allows us to move further down the path to equality. I wish to express my sincere thanks to the members of the INGOs which make up our Conference and are moving towards greater equality, and of course to the elected representatives and leaders of the Conference and its President, to the members of the Conference committees and working groups and INGO-Services.

The various Council of Europe departments are always open and receptive to requests for assistance and/or information. *University Women of Europe* (UWE) which elected me as its President in June 2018 has been an invaluable source of support, as indeed have all the INGOs involved in equality, Sonia Bressler, a philosopher who runs my blog, Bettina Hahne, Gabriela Frey, Farouk Allouche, Maritchu Rall, Hugo Charles Castelli Eyre, James Barnett and of course Thierry Mathieu who has supported us tirelessly, and many others too numerous to mention by name. I also wish to thank the ever-faithful “Réussir l’égalité entre les femmes et les hommes”, all the friends of the *Association française des femmes diplômées des universités* which is the French branch of *University Women of Europe* and *Graduate Women International*, the international federation which will be celebrating its centenary in 2019.

Activity Report related to the integrated approach on Youth

Integrated Approach « Youth » - Report 2018

- January 2018: Election of a Bureau with 1/3 of its members from Youth organisations.
- February 2018: **Meeting with new President of the Advisory Council on Youth (AC), Anja Olin Pape**, and Secretary to the AC, Joanne Hunting, to set up a concrete line of mutual cooperation, aiming at a real partnership in the preparation and organisation of meaningful common actions, following SG priorities.
- April 2018: **Meeting with the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities** in order to set a line **to define first possible concrete lines** for a real cooperation **with the Conference**:

Knowing the commitment of the Congress and all the work that has been done towards youth, the following questions were raised:

- How could NGOs (specifically Youth NGOs and “non- formal education NGOs”) support the Congress in monitoring the application of its revised Charter?
 - Where would the Congress see a possible support from the Conference, knowing that its member NGOs are spread throughout all member states and ready to play an active role?
 - Could the INGO Conference play an **active** role during the “Youth Programme” of the Congress sessions?
- April 2018: Elaboration of a **Youth Road Map**, attached to the Conference of INGOs’ Action Plan 2018- 2021 and **unanimously validated by all member INGOs** at the June Session 2018
 - Follow up with Youth NGOs that had participated to the interactive market place “Digital Citizenship” in June 2017, in cooperation with the transversal working group on digital citizenship.
 - **Partnership with Youth Department and European Youth Forum** for the consultation meeting on shrinking civic space, European Youth Centre, 7 November 2018
 - Participation in the preparatory meeting hosted by the CoE Youth Department with the 3 partners in August (3 days)
 - Participation as facilitator and co-organiser of the consultation meeting on shrinking civic space, European Youth Centre, 7 November 2018
 - Participation of the President of the Conference in the opening session
 - participation of 5 member INGOs
 - presentation by the President of the Expert Council
 - **Participation as advisor in the consultation** organised by the Youth Department on the Council of Europe **Youth Agenda 2030**
 - Raising the Conference’s participation with **2** official representatives to the 40th meeting of the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) / 39th meeting of the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ) with the aim to set up a more systematic cooperation on real mutual actions
 - Motivating member INGOs at each session, to support (financially) their younger members to participate to the sessions!

- **Meeting with the President of the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)** to discuss specific co-operation with PACE on Youth matters
- Starting a cooperation with CoE-EU Youth Partnership with a project for the April 2019 session of the INGO Conference
- **Working on the feasibility of a special « youth » link on the Conference's website**
- **Working on parallels of priority dossiers of the CCJ/CMJ and Conference priorities** and raising awareness for Youth concerns amongst the 3 INGO thematic committees:
 - Trying to establish a meaningful cooperation between AC/CMJ Gender Equality Rapporteur and the Vice- President for Gender Equality of the Conference of INGOs
 - Trying to establish a meaningful cooperation between the Working Groups of the Conference of INGOs and the AC Priority focus Groups:
 - ❖ Priority Focus Group 1 - Access to Rights:
 - Human Rights Education with Young People / Education for Democratic Citizenship
 - Implementation CM Recommendation on young people's access to rights
 - Follow up NHS & media literacy
 - Shrinking space for civil society
 - ❖ Priority Focus Group 2 - Youth participation & youth work
 - Internet Governance Strategy
 - ❖ Priority Focus Group - Inclusive and peaceful societies
 - Peace building, Intercultural dialogue and combating violent extremism
 - Young refugees and migrants transitioning to adulthood
 - Inclusion of young refugees
 - Equality and human dignity
 - Establishing a list of youth organisations which could support each working group.
- Organisation of a first Conference of INGOS' information meeting in Brussels with youth INGO members
- Communication and building steady collaboration relations with the CoE Youth Department, European Youth Forum or other youth INGOs members or non-members

The active participation of young citizens in the work of the Conference is decisive in guaranteeing its representativeness and would help to raise awareness for youth concerns as well as help to raise the conference's effectiveness

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

Intergovernmental committees

Type	Acronyme	Name of the Committee
Steering Committee	CDDH	Steering Committee on Human Rights
Subordinated body	CDDH-MIG	Drafting group on migration and human rights
Subordinated body	CDDH-EXP	Drafting group on freedom of expression and links to other human rights
Subordinated body	DH-SYSC	Committee of experts on the system of ECHR
Subordinated body	DH-SYSC-II	Drafting group on the follow-up to the CDDH report on the longer term future of the Convention
Subordinated body	DH-SOC	Drafting Group on social rights
Subordinated body	DH-GDR	Committee of expert on the reform of the ECHR
Subordinated body	DH-BIO	Comité de bioéthique / Committee of Bioethics
Steering Committee	GEC	Gender Equality Commission
Steering Committee	CDCJ	European Committee on Legal Co-operation
Subordinated body	CJ-DAM	Committee of Experts on Administrative Detention of Migrant
Steering Committee	CDMSI	Steering Committee on Media and Information Society
Steering Committee	CDDG	European Committee on Democracy and Governance
Enlarged Bureau	CDDG	Enlarged Bureau
Working group	CDDG/GT-EP	Working group on public ethics
Working group	CDDG/GT-ED	Working group on e-democracy
Steering Committee	CDPPE	Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice
Steering Committee	CDEJ	European Steering Committee for Youth
Ad hoc Committee	CCJ	Advisory Council on Youth
Ad hoc Committee	CMJ	Joint Council on Youth
Steering Committee	CDCPP	Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape
Groupe de travail	CPP-ESA	WG on gender equality in the audiovisual sector
Steering Committee	PECS	Platform of social cohesion
Steering Committee		Thematic Platform on Social and economic Rights COE-FRA-ENNHRI-EQUINET

Committee of the parties

Name of the Committee
Committee of the Parties to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence

Governemental committee

Name of the Committee
European committee of social rights (at the invitation of the Committee only)

Partial agreements

Structure	Name of the Committee
Venise Commission	Plenary meeting (at the invitation of the Committee only)
North South Center	Executive committee

Others

Structure
Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
World Forum for Democracy Steering Group