



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## SUMMER SESSION CONF/PLE(2018)SYN3

### MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs SYNOPSIS Friday, 29 June 2018

1. The President, Anna Rurka, opened the meeting.
2. Nomination of the rapporteur of the meeting: Richard Pirolt was nominated rapporteur.
3. [Agenda](#): adopted
4. Report of the meeting of 24 January 2018 [[CONF/PLE\(2018\)SYN1](#)]: adopted
5. How to restore people's confidence in public institutions? Presentation of the [2018 report of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe «Role of institutions, Threats to institutions»](#) by Matjaz Gruden, Director of Democratic Participation

Matjaz Gruden presented the 2018 report of the Secretary General regarding the role of democratic institutions. A question and answer session followed which focused on how to reinforce the public trust and increase public accountability.

6. How to prevent inappropriate restrictions on NGO activities in Europe? Report under preparation in the Parliamentary Assembly – exchange of views with the Rapporteur Mr Yves Cruchten (Luxembourg)

The Conference of INGOs, welcomed the new [Resolution 2226 \(2018\)](#) condemning new restrictions on NGO activities in Council of Europe member States that was adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) on 27 June 2018. The resolution calls on member States to ensure full observance of freedom of association and repeal or amend legislation that impedes the free and independent work of NGOs, and to ensure that NGOs can receive and use transparent funding, whether domestic or foreign, without undue impediments. Member States must ensure an enabling environment for civil society, by refraining from harassment (judicial, administrative or tax-related), smear campaigns and intimidation of civil society activists.

Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs, and Cyril Ritchie, President of the Expert Council on NGO Law, expressed their appreciation to Yves Cruchten, rapporteur of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (PACE) who drafted the report on new restrictions on NGO activities in Council of Europe, which forms the basis of this resolution. They particularly highlighted the proposals in the adopted [Recommendation 2134 \(2018\)](#) to reinforce the dialogue of the Council of Europe with NGOs and welcomed the PACE call to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe 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”. The Conference of INGOs is already developing a project to create such mechanism and calls on all Member States of the Council of Europe to support it in this endeavour.

7. Commitment to strengthening civil society: New strategy for civil society in the Republic of Moldova and the draft law on non-commercial organisations - Sorina Macrinici, Civil Society and Democracy Programme Director, Legal Resources Centre, Moldova

Sorina Macrinici presented the situation of civil society in Republic of Moldova in the light of the recent modification of the Law on Associations and Foundations. With Anna Rurka, she highlighted the role of civil society, at national and international level, which discouraged the Moldovan Ministry of Justice to introduce the restrictive modification regarding political activities of the NGOs. The President of the Conference of INGOs as well as the Expert Council had given their support to national NGOs during this reform. For the moment the negative trends had stopped but nevertheless, according to Sorina Macrinici, civil society in Moldova does not feel secure.

8. Expert Council on NGO Law of the Conference of INGOs – end of mandate, nomination of new experts, nomination of the President, revision of the terms of reference of the Expert Council – for adoption – Cyril Ritchie (President of the Expert Council), Anna Rurka

Cyril Ritchie first looked back into the history of the Expert Council on NGO Law, its mission and recognition acquired during the years. Thanks to the efforts of Annelise Oeschger, the Expert Council was founded in January 2008 and started its work on producing legal opinions and reports. The Bureau of the Conference of INGOs has just renewed 3 members and appointed 12 new members out of 116 applications for the Expert Council on NGO Law, of which 9 are male and 6 female. Cyril Ritchie pointed out that this is heading in the right direction. Cyril Ritchie thanked all stakeholders, who during his 10 year presidency, contributed to the successful work of the Expert Council.

Anna Rurka thanked Cyril Ritchie on behalf of the Conference of INGOs for his long lasting and highly professional work; she also underlined the continued importance of the Expert Council as a legal body of the Conference of INGOs. She proposed, with the agreement of the Bureau, giving Cyril Ritchie an honorary title, “Honorary President of the Expert Council of NGO Law”: unanimously adopted with a standing ovation from the plenary to thank Cyril Ritchie.

Regarding the composition of the new Expert Council, Anna Rurka presented the application and selection process. All the applications were of extraordinary quality, all did not correspond to the criterion and the profile sought (NGO law). She also thanked the INGOs for the high number of applications received.

Anna Rurka proposed Jeremy McBride as President of the Expert Council on NGO Law. The Conference of INGO approved this candidacy, no reservations were presented.

The new [composition of the Expert Council](#) was the following:

Jeremy McBride - President

Srdjan Blagovcanin, Antoine Buyse, Pavel Chikov, Simona Constantinescu, Hugues de Suremain, Carla Ferstman, Cathal Gilbert, Jade Glenister, Dragan Golubovic, Katerina Hadzi-Miceva Evans, Rytis Jokubauskas, Goran Miletic, Rita Patrício, Loredana Tassone

Cyril Ritchie – Honorary President

The new President of the Expert Council, Jeremy McBride, first thanked Cyril Ritchie for all his efforts in the past. He then gave an outlook on the topics of the Expert Council (the challenges of unfriendly legislation, terrorism and the consequences for the funding of NGOs, the lobbying against NGO work, to explain the importance of legislation to NGOs, country visits). The [terms of reference of the Expert Council](#) needed some improvement, e.g. the

question of obligation, as there had been a significant number of experts who could not attend the meetings in the past. He proposed introducing a means to replace members after 2 absences and who did not contribute to the work – unanimously adopted.

The modifications of the term of reference of the Expert Council were approved by the Conference of INGOs.

#### 9. Conclusions of the meetings of the thematic committees – Chairs of the committees

- Human Rights Committee – Simon Matthijssen, Chairperson

Simon Matthijssen reported on the issue regarding the “Draft Additional Protocol concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with mental disorder with regard to involuntary placement and involuntary treatment”. The Steering Committee on Bio-ethics had sent a request to the President of the Conference for consultation. The Standing Committee agreed to organise a consultation within the Conference of INGOs members. A questionnaire would be sent out during the summer 2018 to give input in time for their autumn meeting.

The Chair of the Committee went over the process which led to the Copenhagen Declaration approved in April 2018 by the Member States. The Conference of INGOs had contributed actively to this process. The Chair underlined the role of the European Implementation Network whose work focused on the implementation of judgements. The decisions of the European Court of Human Rights have to be executed and the Committee of Ministers relies on civil society comments on the implementation.

- Education and Culture Committee – Claude Vivier Le Got, Chairperson

Claude Vivier Le Got reported on the debate on cultural identity with high level representatives on the panel. She had also received letter of support from French Ministers. The debate would continue with UNESCO representatives who would be invited to the next meeting of the Committee at the Council of Europe. She also mentioned the event of the migrations group and the possibility of INGOs focusing on education to take part in the Life Long Learning Platform.

- Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee – Thierry Mathieu, Chairperson

The Chair gave the floor to the two Vice-Chairs in charge of the two main working groups. Luminita Petrescu underlined that the corruption WG would focus on the education of citizens to fight against corruption and on reducing corruption at both national and international level.

Gerhard Ermischer underlined that that guidelines for civil participation in political decision making were spot on. The European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) now needed to reach out at the grassroots level to learn if the measures had an impact. For that the WG on civil participation would need the INGOs' contribution

#### 10. Information on the new Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 - Anne NEGRE (VP Gender Equality)

The main topics in the Strategy were austerity, migration, hate speech and cybercrime but foremost equality in the Council of Europe and its member states. The legislation in place was generally good but needed extra efforts in order to be implemented.

Within the Conference of INGOs, the task force on Equality was chaired by Gabriela Frey and the WG Gender Perspective in political and democratic processes was chaired by Bettina Hahn. Both invited INGOs for cooperation and contributions.

## 11. Code of Conduct of the Conference of INGOs

President Anna Rurka maintained that the Conference of INGOs, like all the other CoE bodies, needed a code of conduct regarding the risk of corruption. The text prepared by the drafting group was presented for discussion and adoption. Some members still found inconsistencies and problematic aspects that needed further improvement. The President proposed to consult all the INGO members. The modalities of the consultation would be decided by the Bureau. The drafting group would then analyse the proposals received. No vote was taken.

12. [Recommendation of the Conference of INGOs to the Committee of Ministers on the suspension of activities of the Committee of experts on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)  
The text was adopted with 1 vote against and 1 abstention.

## 13. Action Plan of the Conference of INGOs 2018-2021

The [Action Plan](#) was unanimously adopted.

### 13.1 Operationalisation of the integrated approach of the Conference of INGOs

Anne Kraus (VP) and Katarzyna Sokolowska (Rapp) presented the [roadmap for youth participation](#) within the Conference of INGOs. The document was unanimously adopted.

Anne Negre (VP Gender Equality) presented the task force on gender equality.

Robert Bergougnan (VP), Daniel Guery (coordinator) presented the task force on migration.

### 13.2 Internal and external communication of the Conference of INGOs – Richard Pirolt (Rapp), Rares Craiut (Rapp)

Richard Pirolt presented the work plan on the communication.

## 14. Information on the drafting group in charge of proposals regarding the Rules of Procedure and other statutory provisions of the Conference of INGOs - Christoph Spreng (VP)

Christoph Spreng presented the work plan for the drafting group and announced that a fact finding questionnaire would be sent out to receive ideas.

## 15. Rules decided by the Parliamentary Assembly concerning access by third parties to the meetings of the PACE Committees

The rules would be sent out by e-mail.

## 16. Discussion on the dates of the sessions of the Conference of INGOs

Two scenarios were presented to the Conference of INGOs regarding the calendar:

1. Two sessions organised during the PACE sessions in April and October;
2. One session organised during the PACE session in April and the other during the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities session in October.

The second option was voted by majority of the participants for the year 2019

## 17. Forthcoming events: (not evoked)

- World Forum for Democracy «Women's participation in public and political affairs and combating violence against women» (Strasbourg, 19-21 November 2018)

- contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the 5th Global Summit of the Open Government Partnership (Georgia, July 2018)

- contribution to the Fundamental Rights Forum of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (Vienna, September 2018,)
- Event to mark International Democracy Day (15 September 2018)

#### 18. Information on INGO-Service

The Ordinary General Assembly of INGO-Service elected its new Board on 27 June. Anna Rurka thanked Maritchu Rall for her long lasting and highly engaged Presidency. She also welcomed Annelise Oeschger as the new President of INGO Service.

#### 19. Date of the next meeting

The next plenary meeting would be held during the week 8-12 April, 2019