**Revision of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe**

(adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 24 June 2016)

**FEEDBACK FORM**

**for consultation of the members of the Standing Committee**

**and willing members of the Conference of INGOs**

**proposed by the Drafting Group on the revision of the**

**Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs (DGRR)**

At its meeting of Tuesday 9 October 2018, the Drafting Group concluded that the Rules of Procedure should be fundamentally restructured. Below is an outline of the ideas and the way forward. We would now like you to take a little time to comment on these ideas to ensure that, as we continue our work, we go in the right direction. This is your chance to influence the process, which is important for the future functioning of our Conference. We will circulate a draft version of the new Rules after taking account of your comments and ideas. At a later stage we will only discuss possible amendments on points of details and not on the fundamental structure otherwise there would be no end to the process. So please react now and make use of this opportunity to have an input into the future structure.

The Rules of Procedure should be the constitution of the Conference of INGOs and therefore clearly state who we are, what we are, what we want to achieve and how we organise ourselves. It should therefore consist of four parts:

1. **Preamble**: Who we are, what we are, our position within the Council of Europe
2. **Organisation**: Membership of the Conference, how the Conference is organised, its relationship with the Secretariat of the Council of Europe, its elected organs and other bodies.
3. **The elected representatives/functionaries**, requirements, modalities of nomination, relationship to their INGO, appointment process for non-elected functionaries.
4. **The election process, modus operandi**, remote voting, “vote no” option.

What should be changed?

1. **Preamble**: This is a new element to be added

The Conference of INGOs is the representative self-organised body of all the INGOs enjoying participatory status in the Council of Europe. It represents civil society in the Council of Europe and promotes participatory democracy. As part of the “quadrilogue” alongside the Committee of Ministers, Parliamentary Assembly, and the Congress or Local and Regional Authorities, the Conference of INGOs operates under the rules and mission of the CoE according to CM/Res(2016)3.

YOUR COMMENTS to 1) PLEASE:

1. **Organisation**: more clarity is needed

2.1 There needs to be a distinction between the Conference as a body and the Conference as a meeting.

The Conference of INGOs consists of all the INGOs with participatory status represented by their delegates.

Other NGOs can be invited to participate in specific actions and programs.

2.2 The role of the plenary meeting:

The Conference has two different sorts of subsidiary bodies: elected organs and other bodies nominated and approved by the Conference of INGOs.

*2.3 Organs*:

Is there a need, beside the President, for a Bureau and a Standing Committee? Is a more streamlined structure feasible? Are they adapted to the functioning of the Conference? Is the membership of these bodies too large? Does the composition of these bodies make for efficient decision-making?

2.4 Do we stay with the current set up of the thematic committees or is there a better way to organise the work of the Conference (currently one Chair and two Vice-chairs who are members of the Standing Committee and meetings are open to all INGOs)?

2.5 Do the Working Groups constitute the appropriate medium for substantial impact?

*Bodies*:

2.6 INGO-Service – is there a need for a definition (independent association under Alsatian Law) and regulation of the relationship with the Conference of INGOs? INGO-Service has its own internal regulations but they are not in the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs.

2.7 Verification and Dispute Committee – does the composition of the Verification and Dispute Committee need to be enlarged (especially in the light of the pending Code of Conduct, which will enlarge its duties)? Is there any better way than appointment of its members to secure its independence?

2.8 The role of the Secretariat of the Council of Europe is not mentioned in the current rules. It aids the Conference in administrative matters and is a communicator with the administration of the CoE. It also advises the Conference and its members on matters concerning the CoE, its rules and mission and helps to ensure that these rules and mission are respected and fully integrated in all actions of the Conference. Should the role of the Secretariat be clarified in the Rules of Procedure?

YOUR COMMENTS to points under 2) PLEASE:

1. **Elected representatives**

3.1 Elected representatives need to be nominated by a member of the INGO Conference to be a candidate for election, as the Conference consists of INGOs (legal persons) who are represented by their delegates. But they have to represent the INGO Conference and must be independent from any other influence, even of the INGO that nominated them. In the current rules they lose their mandate when they lose their connection with the nominating INGO. But, as they are elected as persons and have to act independently, should the relationship between them and the nominating INGO be irrelevant once they have been elected until the end of their term?

3.2 All candidates have to be nominated by an INGO in order to be candidate for election. Some (e.g., candidates running to become President of the Conference) have to present ten letters of support from other INGOs who are member of the Conference. Should this rule (or something similar) apply to all candidates?

YOUR COMMENTS to 3) PLEASE:

1. **Election process**

4.1 Currently the chairs of the thematic committees are elected at the plenary meeting of the Conference which taking place before the one at which the President and Vice-Presidents are elected. Would it not be logical to first vote for the highest offices, as they govern the Conference as a whole and are responsible for the major strategic decisions, and then the officers of the subsequent ranks, who shall implement the strategy?

4.2 In the current rules there are different rules for the election of different office holders. Should they be harmonised? In the current rules there are limited possibilities to present the ideas of the candidates. Should there be a hearing of candidates? Should this take place before a specific body (e.g. a nomination committee) or should it be public (in which case time should be set aside in the actual meetings of the Conference)?

4.3 To improve the percentage of member organisations actually voting, should we allow remote voting through the internet if an appropriate technical solution can be found?

4.4 In many cases there is only one candidate for a single post or just the exact number of candidates for the different posts available (e.g., Vice-Presidents). This has led to criticism because it seems to make voting pointless. But this is not a case of bad-will but simply a consequence of the difficulty in finding more candidates on account of the high demands placed on those filling these voluntary positions, which are unpaid, time-consuming and carry a lot of responsibility. To ensure that votes still are democratic and offer a real choice we could introduce the “Vote-Against-Option”, as used by the UN. Every voter still has only one vote (or as many votes as there are candidates) but can use that vote either as a YES or a NO, a vote against a candidate. Contrary to abstentions, which are just dismissed, the No-votes count and influence the result in a visible and practical way, which even would allow for a single candidate to lose an election. This could improve the democratic character of the Conference and insure a greater interest and turn-out at actual elections. So should we introduce the right to vote against?

YOUR COMMENTS to 4) PLEASE:

**Deadline: Kindly send your reply by 20 November 2018 at the latest to**

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**Useful Links**

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/rules-of-procedure>

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/texts-adopted>