



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe

# Activity report 2016

Adopted on 27 January 2017

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## Introduction

This activity report provides an analytical and non-exhaustive account of the thematic activities carried out by the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe from January to December 2016. It takes account of the strategic priorities set out in the Action Plan adopted by the Conference of INGOs in June 2015, across the three areas covered by the Council of Europe: human rights, democracy and rule of law. Mention is also made of the activities conducted in certain member states, and the Conference of INGOs' co-operation with other Council of Europe institutions or pillars as well as international partner institutions.

The present report is not intended to replace the more detailed ones submitted by the thematic committees ([human rights](#), [education and culture](#), [democracy, social cohesion and global challenges](#)) and by the [Gender Equality Expert](#). Its aim is threefold: to provide an overview of the action undertaken by the Conference of INGOs, to show and summarise the Conference's contribution to the work done within the Council of Europe, and to identify those all-important transversal aspects that are part and parcel of a robust civil society.

The Conference of INGOs is a political body but it is also an institution that has developed in a dynamic fashion, supporting INGOs and organising their work within the Council of Europe.

Forty years have passed since the INGO Liaison Committee was set up in 1976. In 1977, it organised the first gathering of INGOs at the Council of Europe in the form of a plenary conference. This year, following a suggestion from Claude-Laurent Genty, Chair of the Liaison Committee, the honorary presidents were eager to pay tribute to the work of the INGOs and bear witness to the long process which led in 2005 to the plenary conference being renamed the "Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe" and officially recognised as one of the four pillars of the Council of Europe alongside the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. As well as being of historical and political interest, their testimony is a valuable source of information for INGOs joining the Conference.

On 24 June 2016, following discussions conducted by the Standing Committee and the amendment procedure which was open to all the INGOs, the Conference revised its Rules of Procedure to reflect the needs identified.

The Conference of INGOs is anxious to become more inclusive for INGOs enjoying participatory status. To that end, in 2016, the Bureau of the Conference stepped up its briefings for new representatives of INGOs to make them feel more welcome and facilitate their work at the Council of Europe. At the instigation of the Bureau, an ad hoc committee was set up to facilitate the participation of INGOs and the day-to-day running of the Conference during and between sessions. The basic principles governing internal and external communication were formally set out in a [Communication Charter](#) adopted by the Conference of INGOs in January 2016. The efforts to improve internal communication within the Conference led to Didier Schretter being given responsibility for this area, in addition to his duties as Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee and representative of the Conference of INGOs on the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI).

Part of the activities were organised with the support of INGO Service.

# 1. Rule of law

## 1.1. Structured interaction between the Conference of INGOs and other Council of Europe institutions – a contribution to the rule of law and democracy within the Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is the only intergovernmental institution to have granted INGOs participatory status, under Resolution 2003(8) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. This status governs and facilitates the contribution made by INGOs to the Council of Europe's activities and requires them to comply with and promote the Council's legal instruments. The process which led to the Committee of Ministers adopting consultative status in 1952 and to the introduction of participatory status in 2003 took a new turn in 2016 when Committee of Ministers Resolution 2003(8) was revised, as recommended by the Secretary General in his 2015 report entitled "State of Democracy, Human Rights and the Rule of Law in Europe". The revision was carried out in consultation with the Conference of INGOs and led to the Committee of Ministers adopting [Resolution 2016\(3\)](#). This new legal instrument sets out in greater detail the criteria for granting or refusing participatory status and aims to improve the relevance and quality of the work done by NGOs enjoying this status within the four pillars of the Council of Europe, its various institutions and divisions.

Two highlights of the winter session which ushered in 2016 were an exchange of views with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and another with the Committee of Ministers, in the person of Ambassador Astrid Helle, Permanent Representative of Norway to the Council of Europe and Chair of the Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM). Since June 2015, the Committee of Ministers (the Ambassadors and the representatives of the diplomatic delegations) has been invited to the plenary meeting of the Conference to talk to the INGOs. Since the January 2015 meeting, these discussions have centred on topical issues suggested both by the Standing Committee of the Conference of INGOs and by GR-DEM. The dialogue with the Committee of Ministers begun in June 2014 is now firmly established. The President of the Conference of INGOs is invited once a year to an exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies and twice a year to brief GR-DEM on the work done at each session of the Conference. In addition, an exchange of views took place between the President of the Conference and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe regarding the Secretary General's political priorities and what was expected from the Conference of INGOs in terms of input.

Representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers are invited to attend meetings of the thematic committees, the plenary meeting and events organised by the Conference of INGOs. Representatives of the Conference of INGOs are invited to take part in events organised by the other Council of Europe pillars and divisions, as well as meetings of the steering committees, intergovernmental committees and committees of the parties (see list appended hereto).

## 1.2. The right to freedom of association and participation in Council of Europe member states

[The Expert Council on NGO Law](#), which is an expert, political body of the Conference of INGOs, played a prominent role in the event entitled "*Only a matter for politicians? Civil society, money and political activities*" hosted by the Conference of INGOs in June. This gathering of national and international NGOs, donors, institutions and prominent figures from the Council of Europe as well as the international partner institutions (OSCE, EU) was a major event on the right to freedom of association, as demonstrated by the [report](#) published in English, French and Russian. The joint visit to Moscow by the President of the Conference and Claudia Luciani, Director of Democratic Governance in DG II, provided an opportunity to discuss various possible courses of action with NGOs affected by the legislative restrictions imposed by the Russian government. The invitation extended to the President of the Conference of INGOs by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), to open the session on freedom of association at the "[Human Dimension Implementation Meeting](#)", was a chance to pursue in greater depth the rewarding discussions begun earlier, thanks to the wide range of actors present and the multiple viewpoints expressed.

The visits carried out this year by the President of the Conference to Council of Europe member states focused on freedom of association through the lens of NGO participation in the decision-making process. In each instance, the delegation consisted of one member of the Expert Council on NGO Law, a representative from one of the INGOs belonging to the Conference and a member of the secretariat of the Civil Society Division. In 2016, the delegation travelled to [Poland \(June\)](#), [Romania \(September\)](#), [Germany \(October\)](#), and [Hungary \(November\)](#). The first three reports will be presented at the 2017 winter session, and the report on Hungary in June 2017.

The situation as regards NGOs in Turkey is a matter of concern for the Council of Europe and, more specifically, the Conference of INGOs. In order to discuss what should be done, around twenty NGOs based in Turkey were invited to Strasbourg for a 2-day meeting (1 and 2 December). As well as affording an opportunity to find out about one another's needs and methods of operation, the meeting provided a framework for fresh discussions with the Turkish authorities and NGOs on the state of civil society in Turkey and the country's future co-operation with the Conference of INGOs.

Civil participation in political decision making is also one of the priorities mentioned by the Secretary General in his report "[State of democracy, human rights and the rule of law](#)" (2015). As recommended in the report, the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDDG) decided to set up a joint drafting group (GT-SC), made up of governmental experts and others representing civil society, chosen by the Conference of INGOs to draft the guidelines for civil participation in political decision making. Anne-Marie Chavanon, Chair of the Committee on Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges, is co-chairing this group with Paul-Henri Philips, representative of the Belgium Government and Vice-Chair of the European Committee on Democracy and Governance. Based on the group's work, the CDDG will submit the guidelines on full civil participation in political decision making to the Committee of Ministers for approval.

The expertise developed by the Council of Experts on NGO Law, along with the action taken by the Conference of INGOs to address the issue of shrinking civil space, which is having a direct, negative impact on freedom of association and civil participation, has met with interest from the EU Fundamental Rights Agency, with which the Conference has established constructive co-operation. The meeting between the President of the Conference and the Director of the Agency, in December 2016, opened up new avenues for consolidating and pooling the mutual efforts to develop respect for the rights to freedom of association and participation.

## 2. Human rights

The Council of Europe's activities in the field of human rights are informed by the work of the Conference of INGOs in a variety of ways. Besides the thematic approach used at meetings of the Human Rights Committee, the Conference also plays a special part in the work carried out by the [Steering Committee for Human Rights](#) (CDDH). This year the steering committee has widened the thematic scope of its work, with the result that the Conference of INGOs has had to assign several of its experts to contribute to various newly created drafting groups: human rights and migration (CDDH-MIG), civil society and national human rights institutions (CDDH-INST), freedom of expression and links with other human rights (CDDH-EXP), female genital mutilation and forced marriage (CDDH-MF) and social rights (CDDH-SOC). The input provided by our experts is being co-ordinated by Jean Bernard Marie, Permanent Representative of the Conference of INGOs to the CCDH.

### **2.1. Protection of human rights defenders**

Human rights defenders in eastern Europe continue to face considerable challenges. Through its committees and Expert Council on NGO Law, the Conference of INGOs is making active efforts to continue its support. This year our attention focused more especially on the on-going support for Intigam Aliyev, member of the Expert Council, who is still banned from leaving Azerbaijan territory and facing hefty fines. Following a request from the President to the Public Prosecutor and the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Azerbaijan, supported by other prominent figures from the Council of Europe, Mr Aliyev was allowed to travel to Strasbourg to give his opening address at the event on freedom of association and the plight of NGOs whose activities are regarded by the authorities as political, and on how being designated or labelled a “foreign agent” affects the foreign funding received by NGOs. We are sorry to say that on his return, Mr Aliyev found himself the subject of expedited enforcement proceedings and was unable to travel to Strasbourg for the meeting of the Expert Council in October.

The President published [a statement expressing support for Valentina Cherevatenko](#), Chair of the Co-ordination Council of Women of the Don Union, Chair of the Board of the Women of the Don Foundation for Civil Society Development and women's rights defender, whom the Russian government had charged under Article 330.1 of the Criminal Code with “malicious evasion of duties imposed by the law on non-profit organisations performing the functions of a foreign agent”. The Conference of INGOs, along with other Council of Europe institutions, has condemned the various laws enacted in the Russian Federation, penalising NGOs and designating them as “undesirable” or foreign agents. The President of the Conference of INGOs made a point of expressing the Conference's support during her meeting with Valentina Cherevatenko in Moscow, at which Mikhail Fedotov, Chair of Russia's Human Rights Council, was also present. During this joint visit with Claudia Luciani, Director of Democratic Governance, a meeting was also held with human rights NGOs.

In June 2016, the Human Rights Committee of the Conference of INGOs and then the Conference itself adopted a [Recommendation to protect human rights defenders in the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova](#) published in English, French and Russian. Also present at the meeting was Ion Manole, Executive Director of the association “Promo Lex”, against whom “special investigation measures” and criminal proceedings have been instituted by the Committee of State Security (KGB) of the Transnistrian region of the Republic of Moldova.

### **2.2. Commitment to the indivisibility of human rights**

The Conference of INGOs takes every opportunity to reiterate the importance of the indivisibility of human rights and the detrimental effects arising from any hierarchy between civil, social, economic and cultural rights. Upholding rights requires special vigilance in detecting new threats. Of particular relevance in this context is the [Oviedo Convention](#) which focuses on the challenges presented by emerging technologies and biotechnologies. Not wishing to ignore this area of human rights, therefore, Ms Lwoff from the Council of Europe's Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee had sought to sensitise the Conference of INGOs's Human Rights Committee to these challenges. She thanked the Conference of INGOs for its contribution to the work of the [Bioethics Committee](#) (DH-BIO) through the active participation of Michel Aguilar, Chair of the Human Rights Committee, in the working group “Digital technology and human rights” and in the event hosted by the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee on social and medical care for elderly persons in Europe.

The indivisibility of human rights being one of its guiding principles, the Conference is actively involved in promoting social rights alongside the Social Charter Division of the Council of Europe. This year, the INGOs decided to co-ordinate their action and to work harder to secure ratifications of the protocol on the collective complaints procedure. To this end, [a call for action](#) was issued. As underlined by the Special Rapporteur for the Turin process, Michele Nicoletti, in his general report on the Turin Conference, enhancing the collective complaints procedure, which leads to sustained and independent dialogue between NGOs and the authorities, makes for a much more dynamic, democratic, transparent and open monitoring of the implementation of social rights.

The Human Rights Committee's new working group on children's rights is to prepare the Conference of INGOs's contribution to the [Council of Europe Strategy for the Rights of the Child \(2016-2021\)](#). This contribution will be based on the compendium of good practice (according to the rules laid down in the said Strategy), and will seek to critically assess, from the perspective of project developers, the barriers that make it difficult for them to innovate. The group's two co-ordinators represent the Conference of INGOs on the [Ad Hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child and its working groups](#) (CAHENF). One of them represented the President of the Conference at the training course on Council of Europe working methods and instruments relating to children's rights - social rights and violence against children -, in connection with the work done by the national networks on children's rights (*National Partner Network Group and ChildPact* meeting in co-operation with the Council of Europe, 15-16 December).

[International Day for the Eradication of Poverty](#) organised at the Council of Europe on 17 October 2016 by the Conference of INGOs, with the support of INGO-Service, brought together representatives of states, people working on the ground and young people from Greece, Poland and France to look at poverty among the young. Foreign youngsters living in care presented videos which they had made with their care providers, and were able to learn about and discuss the recommendations made by the Committee of Ministers to Council of Europe member states regarding access to rights for vulnerable youngsters. Local councillors from Greece, together with NGOs and young people themselves, described the various steps taken to counter the negative impact of the austerity measures imposed on them, practices that are often overlooked by policy makers. It is hoped that by publishing the proceedings of the roundtable, these practices will become available to a wider audience.

## 3. Democracy

### 3.1. *Building inclusive societies*<sup>1</sup>

Inclusive societies are founded on equal rights and equality before the law. They have been defined by the Council of Europe, in accordance with the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development of 1995 in Copenhagen, which stressed that “the aim of social integration is to create “a society for all”, in which every individual, each with rights and responsibilities, has an active role to play.” They are societies where individuals maintain their own identities while accepting each other’s differences, “united by a set of shared, democratic values”. That means respecting cultural and religious diversity, social justice and the specific needs of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups.

In 2016, the Conference of INGOs organised several events to showcase specific initiatives and highlight the potential benefits of inclusive practices for project developers and target groups in Council of Europe member states. The conclusions reached at the end of event also raised some queries which remain to be addressed on the ground, in the work with the communities concerned.

Firstly, on 23 June 2016, the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee staged an event entitled [Ageing and Health: a challenge to public health and social cohesion](#). This gathering, which was chaired first by Anne-Marie Chavanon, Chair of the Committee, and then Thierry Mathieu, Vice-Chair, attracted a wide range of actors with an interest in issues such as preventing ageism, elder abuse, adapting care and services and social inclusion. These themes are referred to both in Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec2014(2) and in the report being prepared by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe entitled: “*Guaranteeing the rights of the elderly, their full support, a European social commitment*”. The committee particularly welcomed the active participation of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe Gabriella Battaini-Dragni, the Deputy Head of delegation of the European Union to the Council of Europe José Mendes Bota, and also Lord Georges Foulkes, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (UK), who is in charge of the aforementioned report. The event gave rise to the adoption by the NGO Conference of the [Recommendation to member states of the Council of Europe on health care and socio-medical conditions and respect of human rights of older persons in Europe](#).

The Conference of INGOs was actively involved in framing the new [Council of Europe Disability Strategy \(2017-2023\)](#) adopted on 30 November 2016 under the heading “*Human rights: a reality for all*”. Protection against exploitation, violence and abuse is essential in order to promote access to community living. The aim, however, is to go a step further. Future activities of the Conference of INGOs will focus on recognition of the legal personality of people with disabilities, in line with Article 12 of the UN Convention. The Conference of INGOs is to present a paper on this subject at the seminar to launch the Strategy under the Cypriot Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers.

Various events were held to promote intergenerational ties while others focused directly on young people (e.g. the day-long event staged on 17 October), the idea being to bring together the young and the not-so-young, two groups whose paths do not usually cross. “Get inspired together to imagine tomorrow” was the slogan of the intergenerational [“Speed Dating Forum”](#) which took place during the June 2016 session (organised with the support of INGO-Service and the European Commission). The event drew representatives of 24 associations, NGOs, INGOs and informal youth groups involved in specific initiatives at local, national or international level, in areas such as intercultural dialogue, action against racism, xenophobia and anti-Semitism, the rights of minorities (Roma, IGLYO), reception arrangements for young refugees, peace education, civic participation and gender equality. Events of this kind help to boost the number of young people attending sessions of the Conference of INGOs, so

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<sup>1</sup> Although the transversal activities “Building inclusive societies” are part of the Council of Europe Action Plan to combat violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism, fostering understanding and the activities to create more inclusive societies carried out by the Conference of INGOs go beyond the goals stated in this Plan. Hence our decision to present these activities in two separate sections.



that it becomes an intergenerational structure, and a forum for discussion that is open, innovative and modern. The forum did much to raise the Conference's profile among the young and the Council of Europe's youth department. It also enabled elected representatives with positions of responsibility in the Conference to identify important messages for youngsters and showed how the Conference can be of benefit to young activists.

### **3.2 Conference of INGOs's contribution to the Council of Europe Action Plan against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism (2015-2017)**

The European Convention on Human Rights forms the basis of any action proposed and/or conducted by the Council of Europe. The fight against violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism is also predicated on respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. There are several strands to the Council of Europe Action Plan to combat violent extremism and radicalisation leading to terrorism. They include: 1) transversal initiatives on "Building inclusive societies", 2) developing the necessary competences for a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue, 3) freedom of expression on the internet and the "No hate speech" campaign, 4) the Council of Europe Annual Exchange on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue as a forum for discussion on issues relating to preventing radicalisation.

### **3.3 Developing competences for a democratic culture and intercultural dialogue – the key role of education**

In co-operation with the Rhineland-Palatinate Educational Institute, the In-Service Teacher Training Institute in Thuringia (both in Germany) and the EUNET network (INGOs enjoying participatory status), the Conference of INGOs's Education and Culture Committee supported the [Competences for Democratic Culture](#) developed by Directorate General II of the Council of Europe. Sabine Rohmann, Chair of the Committee, attended the meetings of the group set up to discuss reorganising the work of the Education Department in DGII, especially in the field of capacity building. She also represents the Conference of INGOs on the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE).

To support the Competences for Democratic Culture, the Education and Culture Committee stepped up its efforts to produce a vade-mecum to guide INGOs in their work on the ground and encourage them to introduce practical initiatives and action plans and initiate public debate with ordinary people, civil society, policy makers and all stakeholders in order to promote inclusive, democratic, sustainable development. The other thematic committees have agreed to contribute to this publication which will cut across the different activities of the Conference of INGOs.

Alongside the link with education for democracy, there is also the one between culture and democracy. Roseline Moreau, Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee, attended the [launch event for the Indicator Framework on Culture and Democracy](#) (CICD) held in Brussels in October. This project is aimed at "investigating the link between culture and a democratic, open and trusting society". The Indicator Framework, developed in consultation with the European Union, the Hertie School of Governance (Germany), the European Cultural Foundation, member states and the Council of Europe, will be published in 2017.

### **3.4 Freedom of speech on the internet, the "No Hate Speech" campaign and media literacy**

The growth of digital technology is a force for emancipation as much as a threat and an instrument of exclusion and discrimination. In order to examine the impact of digital technology on young people, the Education and Culture Committee's working group "education in digital media" is trying to identify the challenges currently facing formal and non-formal education to promote active citizenship.

Social media have provided fertile ground for hate speech. The working group, whose aim is to support the fight against hate speech, is working with the Council of Europe's ["No Hate Speech" movement](#). Gilles Bloch who co-ordinates the working group, together with Anne Kraus, member of the Conference Bureau, helped launch the campaign in their respective countries, France and Luxembourg.

### **3.5. *Inter-faith and intercultural dialogue – cornerstones of the effort to prevent the radicalisation of young people and combat violent extremism***

On 7 December 2016, the President of the Conference, together with Jean Michel Caudron, Bureau member, and the Council of Europe representative in charge of the [Intercultural Cities](#) programme, travelled to Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, Forest and Schaerbeek in the Brussels-Capital Region. The visit, organised in partnership with the FMDO ([Federatie marokkaanse democratische organisaties](#)) and Khadija Qesmoun, researcher and member of the Board of the CERSS, was intended to provide an insight into the experiences of local stakeholders in the immediate aftermath of the attacks and a year or so later, and to discover what had been done in these towns to improve prevention. The delegation spoke to Ahmed El Khannouss, first deputy mayor of Molenbeek-Saint-Jean, about how the atrocities committed in Belgium and France had affected local policy making, and to Mohamed Allaf, secretary general of the Muslim Schools Association in Belgium, about how the attacks had affected Belgium's Muslim community. The delegation also visited "La Vertu", a school in Schaerbeek which is leading the way when it comes to translating the basic principles of intercultural and inter-faith dialogue into the everyday life of the school. Through their meeting with Saliha Ben Ali, founder of [S.A.V.E. Belgium - Society Against Violent Extremism](#), the delegation was able to learn about the association's approach to prevention and training, with its emphasis on strengthening family and social bonds to protect young people at risk of radicalisation.

Despite all the attention given to "radicalisation" proper, this multi-faceted phenomenon has been gaining ground for several years now, leading to the emergence of new trajectories that often slip through the net of agencies operating in the member states. Policies to prevent and stop radicalisation will tend to be guided by the dominant explanatory models which, unfortunately, are not immune to prejudice. This year, the [annual Council of Europe Exchange on the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue](#) decided to look at the role of education in preventing radicalisation. A gender and gender relations perspective is clearly vital in this context. The issue of young girls carrying out attacks or heading off to war zones raises fresh questions about public outreach programmes and professional practices.

On the subject of inter-faith dialogue, the side event on 21 June 2016, entitled "[Are religions a place of emancipation for women? Progress and setbacks](#)", was jointly organised by the Human Rights Committee and the Gender Equality Expert. Throughout the year, a group of representatives from the INGOs had worked on a questionnaire, received around 1,000 replies and put considerable effort into planning the event.

### **3.6. *Conference of INGOs's contribution to the World Forum for Democracy***

For years, the Conference of INGOs has been actively involved in the steering committee for the World Forum for Democracy, as well as the event itself. In 2016, the focus was on education and democracy, with members of the Standing Committee and INGOs from the Conference leading two workshops: [Lab 8 - "Digital education for democracy"](#), which considered how digital resources and applications can be productively used in citizens education, and [Lab 16 "Learning respect"](#), which assessed initiatives that focus on intercultural learning initiatives which foster understanding and respect and prevent radicalisation. The cross-sectoral activity ["Towards an inclusive Europe: learning to live better together with our different convictions"](#), centred on training in interconvictional dialogue, was presented by Michel Aguilar, Lilia Bensedrine-Thabet and Roseline Moreau with the help of Julianne Lagadec, in the "Pop-Up Agora".

Anne Kraus was invited by Tina Mulcahy, Director of the European Youth Centre, to join the team organising the "WFD 2016 Youth Programme". The Conference of INGOs also provided funding to enable young people to attend the Forum.

## 4. Transversal lines of action

The Conference of INGOs has a number of lines of action which cut across several sectors: structural gender equality, migration and North-South relations and youth. They were established under the current Bureau, to improve transversal action both within and outside the Conference to address the current challenges.

### 4.1. Gender equality

At the instigation of the Gender Equality expert Anne Nègre, first the Standing Committee and then the Conference of INGOs were asked to establish a joint position on surrogacy to support the work being carried out by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The Standing Committee had approved this project with the proviso that any such position must be adopted in a consensual manner and not by a majority of votes. A consultation process involving all the INGOs from the Conference was launched, with Michel Aguilar, Chair of the Human Rights Committee, and Thierry Mathieu, Vice-Chair of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Issues Committee, acting as co-ordinators. Following a lively but inconclusive debate within the Conference on this subject, conducted in accordance with democratic rules, the Standing Committee proposed that formal note be taken of the fact that the Conference of INGOs was not ready to issue a statement, resolution or recommendation on this issue at present.

Apart from the initiatives already mentioned in this report, Anne Nègre is active on a number of fronts: representing the Conference, attending meetings of the thematic committees, organising events in consultation with the committees or INGOs from the Conference and other experts, and engaging in dissemination and advocacy work to heighten the impact of what the Council of Europe does.

Ms Nègre represents the Conference of INGOs on various Council of Europe commissions and committees: [Gender Equality Commission](#), [PACE Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination](#), the ad hoc working group on gender equality in the audiovisual sector (CPP-ESA), a sub-committee of the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) which is preparing a Recommendation on gender equality in the audiovisual sector. This rather novel activity is being carried out with the participation of Eurimages and the Conference of INGOs. The Steering Committee for Human Rights, furthermore, has set up a drafting group to prepare a good practice guide aimed at combating female genital mutilation and forced marriage, in which Anne Nègre is also involved. A side event entitled "[Are religions a place of emancipation for women? Progress and setbacks](#)", was jointly organised by the Human Rights Committee. See page 9 for details.

Close attention is being given to the [Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention](#). Ratifications of this convention by national governments are continuing, with the European Union due to follow shortly. The triggering of the evaluation procedure with Austria and Monaco marks the start of the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. In March 2016, a comprehensive questionnaire was compiled for governments, although it is also very useful for any NGOs wishing to contribute to the "shadow report" when their country is being evaluated. In January 2016, the Gender Equality Expert held a briefing to encourage NGOs to participate in the monitoring of the Convention. Among those present at the meeting was Carolina Lasen Diaz, Head of the Gender Equality Unit, and Cécile Greboval, Programme Advisor, Gender Equality Unit, and Johan Friestedt, an administrative officer in the Violence against Women Division – secretariat of the Istanbul Convention monitoring mechanism. INGOs enjoying participatory status are strongly encouraged to take part in this work through their national members.

The Gender Equality Expert sought to promote the Convention during events staged by INGOs belonging to the Conference (Conference of European Churches from 30 May to 3 June 2016), the "Sexism and Racism" event held in Strasbourg with the participation of young people, the International Conference on Men and Equal Opportunities held in Luxembourg (October 2016), and in the special statement on the Istanbul Convention made at the event hosted by the Prefecture of Rouen to mark International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

### 4.2 North-South – migration: the issues at stake and potential consequences

The day-to-day task of representing the Conference of INGOs on the Bureau and Executive Committee of the Council of Europe's North-South Centre is performed by Jean-Michel Caudron. In

2016 it involved nominating Professor Abdallah Saaf for the North-South Prize, participating in the planning and proceedings of the [Lisbon Forum 2016](#), with a speech on the possibility of introducing “climate refugee” status, and examining the “Neighbourhood partnership 2015-2017” agreements with Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan in order to establish the Conference of INGOs as a proactive partner in the agreements and their monitoring.

In addition, through the “Europe-Mediterranean” working group and the INGOs MIAMSI (International Movement of Apostolate in the Independent Social Milieus) and the FIAPA (International Federation of Associations for the Elderly), the Conference of INGOs provided significant support for the activities of the working group on migrants, asylum seekers and refugees as part of the major hazard management and prevention effort and under the [European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement](#) (EUR-OPA). This follow-up work, comprising several stages, led to participation in the training course on “reducing the vulnerability of migrants in emergency situations” held in Ravello (Italy), participation in the drafting of the working group’s conclusions and, lastly, to co-organising the closing conference in Lisbon in October 2016. The President of the Conference also took part in the closing conference, at which she commended the group on its work.

The Conference of INGOs’s work on North-South issues centred on migration in 2016, in view of the crisis facing Europe in this area. We contribute on an ongoing basis to the Committee of Experts on Administrative Detention of Migrants (CJ-DAM) and to the drafting committee of the Steering Committee on Human Rights and Migration (CDDH-MIG), which is looking at practical and legal alternatives to detaining migrants.

Given the major efforts made by Germany when it comes to taking in refugees, the Conference of INGOs decided to take a closer look at the situation there. On 23 April, a team from the Education and Culture Committee and the heads of the committee’s working groups meet in Trier (Germany) with unaccompanied minor refugees to hear about their experiences of integration in German society. In addition, as part of the visits undertaken by the President of the Conference with the focus on NGO participation in the decision-making process, the visit to Germany (in October 2016) centred on the participation of NGOs working to integrate migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in that country. The relevant report contains the findings made during the visit and the questions thrown up by it.

Again with the aim of aligning the Conference of INGOs as closely as possible to the needs of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in the member states, it was considered important to gain at least some idea of the discrimination and inequality suffered by these people, who are facing considerable hardship as it is. To this end, Iamvi Totsi, Vice-Chair of the Conference’s Human Rights Committee, visited a Greek port where refugees have been arriving.

During the January 2016 session, the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee expressed its support for the [Open letter from the President of the Conference of INGOs to the Ministers’ Deputies of the Council of Europe](#), published in September 2015. It did so via hearings during a debate entitled “Migration towards and through Europe, an intolerable humanitarian crisis”.<sup>2</sup> This debate led to the publication of a [press release](#) clearly underlining civil society’s opposition to the dilution of our values, based on the observations and experiences of a large part of civil society which no longer felt that its views were reflected in several of the political decisions taken by governments to deal with the influx of migrants. In addition, in May 2016, the [Conference of INGOs expressed its indignation over the pact signed between the EU and Turkey on 18 March 2016](#), under which for each Syrian refugee returned from the Greek islands to Turkey, another refugee staying in Turkey would be sent to a European country. We condemned the pact, which was signed before any attempt had been made to ascertain its feasibility. The Conference of INGOs called on all EU governments to make the necessary efforts to ensure decent conditions for migrants, refugees and asylum seekers so as to facilitate their integration or return to their country of origin, in accordance with the Convention of 28 July 1951 relating to the status of refugees, known as the Geneva Convention.

In June 2016, a thematic debate entitled ["The treatment of migrants, refugees and NGOs defending their rights. From findings to action"](#) was held during the plenary meeting of the Conference of INGOs,

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<sup>2</sup> This event followed on from three earlier activities conducted by the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee: the call for action issued to local authorities during European Local Democracy Week in October 2013, following a tragedy off the coast of Lampedusa; the hearing in January 2014 with researchers and NGOs on the situation at the gates to Europe, and the dangers facing those who set off across the Mediterranean, fleeing conflict and poverty; a side event on the link between migration and climate, held in September 2015 in partnership with the Directorate of Human Rights (DGI) of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and which was awarded the official COP21 label.

with contributions from Ambassador Astrid Helle, Chair of the GR-DEM of the Committee of Ministers, Tomáš Boček, the Secretary General's Special Representative on Migration and Refugees, Sahiba Gafarova, Chair of the PACE Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, Greek NGOs and INGOs belonging to the Conference.

Our work on the migration crisis has highlighted the urgency with which government policy in Council of Europe member states and other countries involved in the Neighbourhood Policy must address the needs and expectations of these uprooted people, irrespective of whether migration was forced on them or something they chose to do as part of their life plan. The efforts of citizens and local civil society in these holding areas on the edge of Europe should be seen as evidence of genuine European civic solidarity, and not sanctioned or criminalised through legislation, enabling such acts to be treated as an offence.

### **4.3. Youth dimension: “Together, make the voice of civil society heard!”**

In addition to the activities already mentioned, aimed at giving young representatives of INGOs and NGOs a major say in shaping current and future government policy in Council of Europe member states (Intergenerational Forum – Focus on Youth, World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty, European youth movement's contribution to the campaign against hate speech), the Chair of the Education and Culture Committee opened the event held in Trier (Germany) in December 2016 to provide young people with an opportunity to discuss democracy. The Vice-Chair of the Human Rights Committee, Iamvi Totsi, spoke at the Human Rights Day event held at the European Youth Centre, underlining the on-going concern to protect and promote human rights and the need to educate young people about this subject and enlist their support.

In an effort to make the Conference of INGOs's activities more appealing to young INGO officials, the Conference has adopted a roadmap for developing the “youth” dimension and pledged to adopt more interactive, dynamic working methods. This year, the Conference of INGOs was very pleased to welcome representatives from the Council of Europe's [Advisory Council on Youth](#) (CCJ). Thanks to the involvement of Anne Kraus, Bureau member, in charge of co-operation with the CCJ, the [European Steering Committee for Youth](#) (CDEJ) and the Joint Council on Youth (CMJ), and tasked with suggesting activities to be undertaken with young people, we held a policy meeting with the Chair and Vice-Chair of the CCJ and our respective secretariats. As well as information on both organisations' political priorities, it was proposed that joint CMJ/Conference of INGOs thematic discussions be held on topics of common interest (migration, access to rights) or that common positions be established on topical issues. We also expressed an interest in stepping up the work of the No Hate Speech Movement in protecting human rights defenders. It was likewise suggested that the Gender Expert from the CDEJ/CCJ/CMJ and her team might like to work more closely with the Conference's Gender Equality Expert, with a view, for example, to raising awareness about the need to observe the rights of LGBTI people.

This year the CCJ appointed representatives to participate in and follow the activities of the Conference of INGOs on a regular basis. Anne Kraus, for the Conference of INGOs, also manages the “Youth” Facebook page (1,124 “likes”) and the “Youth” twitter account (835 followers), through which she seeks to share and spread information about our respective activities.

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

It is not easy to write conclusions about work that is still going on. Drafting an activity report is a very instructive exercise for the author, however. I am delighted to see that, thanks to everyone's hard work, the drive to expand the Conference's activities is producing visible, consistent results which respect the distinctive features of each component of the Conference yet are interlinked in a dialogical and transversal fashion. To end on a positive note, therefore, we have managed to demonstrate that what we do represents a substantive and unique complement to the work of, and the co-operation established by, other Council of Europe pillars and institutions. What's more, as in previous years, we have shown that we can support and enhance the rights and activities of national NGOs in Council of Europe member states.

My congratulations to each and every one of you and a big thank you for all your work over the past twelve months.

Anna Rurka, President of the Conference of INGOs

## Activity report of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee



### DEMOCRACY, SOCIAL COHESION AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES COMMITTEE CONF/DEM(2016)RAPACT

#### ACTIVITY REPORT FOR 2016

In 2016, the Committee focused on three issues:

- migration and the call for dialogue in the host countries
- the new public health and human rights challenges relating to demographic transition
- citizen participation in all levels of governance.

#### 1. MIGRATION

At the January session, the Committee mobilised in support of the Open Letter from the President of the Conference of INGOs to the Ministers' Deputies.

Its action included hearings during a debate entitled "*Migration towards and through Europe, an intolerable humanitarian crisis*", which carried on from three previous activities:

- the call for action issued to local authorities during European Local Democracy Week in October 2013 following a tragic event off the coast of Lampedusa;
- the subsequent hearing (in January 2014) of researchers and NGOs on the particular situation at the gateway to Europe and the risks faced in the Mediterranean by those fleeing from conflicts and poverty;
- a side event on *Migration and Climate* held in September 2015 in partnership with the Directorate of Human Rights, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). This was a COP21 event.

The Committee wholeheartedly and unreservedly supported Anna Rurka's position that the proper reception of migrants should be a priority, regardless of their status. It did so under the impetus of the co-ordinator of the Europe-Mediterranean working group, Jean-Claude Gonon (AEDE), and his belief that all departures into exile are forced departures and only a European response based on the Council of Europe's founding values is appropriate and capable of preserving peace in Europe.

Among the participants, Daniel Guéry, representative of MIAMSI (International Movement of the Apostolate in the Independent Social Categories) and active member of the working group, called on everyone to overcome their fears and speak out about the situation of

migrants, calling on voluntary sector leaders and local, national and European elected representatives to foster integration, especially of the poorest.

The committee heard statements by Françoise Poujoulet from CIMADE, an association involved in welcoming and defending the rights of refugees and migrants, which caters for over 1 500 rejected asylum seekers in Strasbourg, and Zinah, a Christian refugee from Iraq, whose only option to escape sexual slavery or death had been exile ([link to website](#)).

## 2. DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION, HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS

Given the abuses in healthcare and welfare for elderly persons in Council of Europe member states, the Committee held a side event entitled “*Ageing and health: a challenge to public health and social cohesion – a strong need for common action*” on 23 June 2016, with Anne-Marie Chavanon and then Thierry Mathieu in the chair.

It brought together a large group of players concerning the prevention of ageism and abuse, the adaptation of care and services and also social inclusion, all issues covered by Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2 of the Committee of Ministers and the report being prepared by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on “*Guaranteeing the rights of the elderly, their full support, a European social commitment*”.

The event, which was organised by the working group headed by Dr Thierry Mathieu, Vice-Chair of the Committee, and opened by Anna Rurka, received high-level support, including from John Beard, Director, Ageing and Life Course, at WHO. The committee was particularly pleased by the active participation of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Gabriella Battaini-Dragnoni, the Deputy Head of the EU Delegation to the Council of Europe, José Mendes Bota, and Lord George Foulkes, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (UK) and rapporteur of the above-mentioned report.

Other contributors were Radek Malý, Head of the Modernisation of Social Protection Systems Unit, DG for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion at the European Commission, Christine de la Maisonneuve from the OECD, Professor Finbarr Martin, President of the EU Geriatric Medicine Society, Professor Heins Raat of Rotterdam Medical Faculty, Jozseph Gabanyi, founder of the first geriatric hospital in Hungary, sociologists and heads of healthcare institutions involved in pilot schemes with local authorities and NGOs active in the field, such as FIAPA. The keynote speakers included Dominique Predali and Markus Breitscheidel, investigative journalists who have produced reference works and reports in France and Germany.

The Committee adopted a declaration based on the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter and the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention). The aim was to draw the attention of member states and their governments to the crucial challenge of social cohesion and respect for the human rights of elderly persons and the public health challenge of ageing in good health.

To contribute to its implementation, the Committee:

- started work on drawing up reference standards for the quality of medical practices (working group headed by Dr Thierry Mathieu and Dr Michel Ballereau, AIRHH);

- started co-operation at European level with the Age Europe platform through ELISAN (European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network) and the ENSA network (European Network of Social Authorities);
- started co-operative projects at national level;
- took part in several colloquies and study visits on the issues addressed:
  - o contribution by Anne-Marie Chavanon at the opening session of the Conference on Innovation in Care: Better Chances and Opportunities for All Citizens held in Rotterdam on 27 and 28 June 2016;
  - o participation by Thierry Mathieu and Anne-Marie Chavanon in the boards of these networks;

Study visits in France.

### **3. PARTICIPATORY DEMOCRACY**

- Co-chairing by Anne-Marie Chavanon of the joint working group (NGOs/government representatives) set up with a view to drawing up guidelines on civil participation in political decision-making on the instruction of the Committee of Ministers to the CDDG (18 May, 29 September and 14-15 November 2016).
- Participation in the work of the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) and the Democracy and Landscape working group (Gerhard Ermischer, Civilscape, and Luc-Emile Bouche-Florin, European Council of Spatial Planners)
- Landscape workshops: addresses by the Committee Chair, Anne-Marie Chavanon:
  - o Address at the opening session of the 17th Landscape Workshops and presentation of the Council of Europe Landscape Award, for which the Committee Chair is a panel member (9-10 June 2016, Budapest, Hungary)
  - o Address at the opening session of the 18th Landscape Workshops (5-6 October 2016, Yerevan, Armenia)
- Participation by the Vice-Chair, Thierry Mathieu, in the meeting of the Bioethics Committee (5 December 2016, Council of Europe)

### **4. WORKING GROUPS**

*Women's and Men's Participation in Political and Democratic Processes*, co-ordinated by Anje Wiersinga: work focused on implementation of the conventions, recommendations and resolutions adopted at the Council of Europe and the Conference of INGOs. Particular focus on the inclusion of women in Tunisia, Syria and Kosovo.

*Climate and Human Rights*, co-ordinated by Karl Donert (European Association of Geographers, EUROGEO) and Edith Wenger (European Environmental Bureau). Follow-up to the work of COP21 and handover to Jean-Michel Caudron, Conference representative for COP22.



*Europe-Mediterranean*, co-ordinated by Jean-Claude Gonon (European Association of Teachers, AEDE): January session preparation and follow-up.

*Social Cohesion and Shared Territories*, co-ordinated by Gerhard Ermischer: contributions to the work of the CDCPP and the European Landscape Convention.

*European Citizenship*, co-ordinated by H  l  ne Pichon (Centre for Long-Term Strategic Studies, CEPS): feasibility study on the establishment of a network of European intercultural alliances; work completed.

*Inclusive Societies*, co-ordinated by Anne-Marie Chavanon (International Federation for Housing and Planning, IFHP) and Lorene Spielevoy (Coexister): creating and running a Facebook page on inclusive initiatives.

## **5. DISSEMINATION OF WORK**

Committee websites: [www.democracy-coe.org](http://www.democracy-coe.org)

Committee Facebook pages: [Commission DCSEM](#) - [Let's build Cohesion together](#)

Twitter (AM Chavanon): <https://twitter.com/cdcsem>

## Activity report of the Education and Culture Committee



### EDUCATION AND CULTURE COMMITTEE CONF/EDUC(2016)RAPACT

#### Activity report for 2016

The Education and Culture Committee supports the action plan and the strategic priorities of the Conference of INGOs through the work of its four working groups:

1. **The teacher in interaction with his environment** – a shared responsibility for European values
2. **Education for the digital media** – a challenge for formal and non-formal education for democratic citizenship and participation
3. **Teaching history** - an education to an active democratic citizenship
4. **The transformation of cultures and living together** in a heterogenic and digital society – to an inclusive society

#### THE STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Education and Culture Committee is focusing its work on the following items of the strategic priorities of the Conference of INGOs:

3. Combatting radicalisation and the types of extremism that lead to terrorism
7. Combatting discrimination and violence against vulnerable persons and groups
8. Active citizenship in an inclusive society

The following activities underpin the priorities:

#### THE VADEMECUM

In the light of the massive changes in our societies and the pluri-crises – political, economic, financial, armed conflicts, refugees, emergence of populism, radicalisation, extremism, discrimination, etc. – the working groups of the Education and Culture Committee strengthened in 2016 the preparation of the **vademecum**. The editing of the vademecum is one of the major goals of the Committee. The vademecum will support our INGOs in their grassroots-work and will encourage and stimulate them to launch concrete actions, action plans and public debates with the wider public, civil society, the political decision makers and all stakeholders in order to promote the development of sustainable democratic and inclusive societies. Together with the other committees, the Education and Culture Committee agreed to edit a common vademecum.

On the 22 and 23 April, the chair team and the leaders of the working groups of the Committee had a meeting that aimed to outline the contents of the vademecum.

On the 23 April, the chair team and the leaders of the working groups had a meeting in Trier (Germany) with **UNACCOMPANIED MINOR REFUGEES** in order to discuss with them their situation, their experiences and their integration in German society.

In co-operation with the Pedagogical Institute of Rhineland-Palatinate and the Institute for Teacher-in-Service-Training in Thuringia (both Germany) and EUNET (member of the Education and Culture Committee) the Committee has supported the piloting of the **EUROPEAN FRAMEWORK OF COMPETENCES FOR A DEMOCRATIC CULTURE** developed by the Directorate General of Democracy of the Council of Europe (DGII).

On 17 December, keynote speaker at the meeting of young people “Youth discusses democracy” in Trier.

## **COLLABORATION AND INTERACTION OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOS WITH OTHER PILLARS, INSTITUTIONS AND BODIES OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

### **Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDPPE)**

Participation in the two plenary meetings (Sabine Rohmann)

Participation in the 25<sup>th</sup> Standing Conference of the Minister of Education, Brussels, 11-12 April (Sabine Rohmann and Roseline Moreau)

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

Participation in the plenary meeting of the CDMSI (Didier Schretter)

Participation in the Conference “Launching of the Framework of Indicators for Culture and Democracy (CICD), Brussels, 14 October (Roseline Moreau)

### **DGII Reflection group**

Participation in the two meetings of the reflection group set up to discuss the re-organisation of the work of the DGII education department, especially in the area of capacity building.

### **Participation in the World Forum of Democracy**

1. Moderation of the LAB 8 “Digital education for democracy”
2. Moderation of a Pop-up AGORA meeting “Interconvictionnel dialogue” (Michel Aguilar, Lilia Bensedrine-Thabet, Roseline Moreau with the help of Julianne Lagadec).

## Activity report of the Human Rights Committee



### HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

### CONF/HR(2016)RAPACT

### 2016 ACTIVITY REPORT

Mindful of the need for balance between the specificity of the thematic committees and the kind of cross-cutting approach that is part and parcel of a robust civil society, we began our start-of-year meeting by giving the floor to the chairs of the “education and culture” and “democracy, social cohesion and global challenges” committees.

Achieving inclusiveness and the broad aims set out in the action plans of the Human Rights Committee (protection of rights and non-discrimination) and the Conference (participation in the decision-making process) were the focus of our committee’s work throughout 2016.

Rights protection:

- Human rights defenders in eastern Europe continue to face considerable challenges. The situation in Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, Azerbaijan, the Russian Federation, Poland and Hungary is troubling. Since the outlook remains bleak, the committee will submit a recommendation to member states during the 2017 summer session.
- The situation in Turkey is, to say the least, unfavourable to civil society and local NGO officials are in a vulnerable position. There is little room for manoeuvre at present owing to the pressure being exerted by the authorities. Extensive discussions with senior officials from Turkish NGOs provided an opportunity to find out about one another’s needs and methods of operation and, most importantly, to get to know one another so as to build trust and maintain relations over the long term.
- The Conference is endeavouring to do away with any hierarchy between civil and social rights. Human rights, however, also include the Oviedo Convention focusing on the challenges arising from emerging technologies and biotechnologies. Upholding rights requires us to be alert to possible new threats. Not wishing to ignore this area of human rights, Ms Lwoff from the Council of Europe’s Intergovernmental Bioethics Committee has sought to sensitise our committee to these issues and we have begun attending Bioethics Committee meetings on a regular basis (DH-BIO).

- Increasingly, technological developments are prompting citizens to assert individual rights as opposed to general ones. This clash is particularly evident in start- and end-of-life issues, hence the Conference's decision to ask its members about surrogacy, the question being whether the right of individuals to make free choices about their own bodies is more important than the prohibition against instrumentalising or commodifying the human body. The majority of civil society organisations are still undecided on this issue.
- The statement made by the Vice-Chair Iamvi Totsi at the European Youth Centre on World Human Rights Day testified to the on-going concern regarding the protection and promotion of rights and the role of young people in our work.

#### Non-discrimination:

Discrimination can take many forms and is often insidious. In 2016, therefore, the committee tackled the issue from several angles:

- An exchange of views with Ms Bodil Høyer Damsgaard who spoke about how social workers are trained and what they do, with particular reference to Finland.
- The annual celebrations to mark World Day to Overcome Extreme Poverty (17 October), in which three delegations took part.
- Since discrimination predominantly affects women, we sought to take stock of the role, if any, assigned to them within religions.
- The visit by the Vice-Chair Iamvi Totsi to a Greek port where refugees were arriving provided an opportunity to physically take stock of the situation and to form at least some idea of the extent of the discrimination and inequality suffered by these people who were experiencing enough hardship as it was.

#### Decision-making:

- Regular participation in the work of the CDDH is seen as a significant contribution to the decision-making process. Civil society gets to have a say and the results produced permeate both the case law and the recommendations of other Council of Europe bodies.

#### Inclusive societies:

- The annual Exchanges on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue afford an opportunity to discuss the process of building a more inclusive society, in which the major philosophical and religious movements can play a part. In 2016, the event focused specifically on education as a means of preventing radicalisation.
- The Conference's participation in the World Forum for Democracy showed once again the importance of a cross-cutting approach if we are to move towards a more inclusive society. The presentation on the training course, which received Conference of INGOs accreditation in 2015, provided a practical example of civil society action in this area.
- The continuing efforts of the working group against hate speech, from a complementary perspective, are an indication of the committee's total commitment to this major cause, which is garnering considerable attention at the Council of Europe.

At the nexus between rights, discrimination and inclusion:

- Child protection: the decline of social services and pressure from migration are putting children in a particularly vulnerable position. In partnership with the relevant Council of Europe bodies, our committee has therefore set up a dedicated working group.
- Digital technology is a tool for emancipation as much as an instrument of exclusion and discrimination. Being skilled at using the internet is no guard against discrimination and inequality via digital technology. An ad hoc working group has been set up to explore this topic.

To conclude:

Civil society has a clear awareness of the changes under way in many areas. These changes take place over a long period and pose a threat to the protection of the rights that attach unconditionally to all human beings.

With the philosopher Jürgen Habermas fearful that democracy's days may be numbered, and a senior manager at Google hopeful that privacy will soon come to be seen as a mere parenthesis in history, civil society is waking up to the magnitude of the task that lies before it and what needs to be achieved. The Conference, which is in good working order, has a powerful stimulus effect to which the various Council of Europe bodies regularly pay tribute.

It is with clear-sightedness and determination, therefore, that the Human Rights Committee bids farewell to 2016 and looks forward to 2017.

Michel Aguilar

Chair of the Human Rights Committee

## Report of the Expert on Equality between Women and Men



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU  
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Gender Equality Expert

CONF/GEE(2016)RAPACT

### **2016 ACTIVITY REPORT**

Gender equality is still a main priority for states, but budgets do not seem to be keeping up so as to permit the transition from *de jure* to *de facto* equality.

Having adopted a gender equality strategy for the period 2014 to 2017 with the unanimous support of its 47 member states, the Council of Europe is currently working on a new strategy to be implemented from 2018. This focus for the Council of Europe entails the participation of the Gender Equality Expert in the work of various decision-making and discussion bodies on this subject. The Council and its member states are confronted with challenges following the influx of displaced persons, and equality issues are key in looking after these refugees. The rise of populism in various member states is a concern for human rights and gender equality.

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

**1.1. The Gender Equality Commission** of the Council of Europe. It is mainly composed of members appointed by states and was chaired until 31 December 2016 by Sergiy Kyslytsya, Ukraine. It was set up in 2012 to help to ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality in Council of Europe member states and to honour international commitments in the interests of European women and men, because everyone benefits from measures to promote equality. Genuine equality cannot come about in any other way. States take stock of the progress of their legislation and public policies and work has been done in various areas.

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, combating and preventing violence against women, guaranteeing women's access to justice, balanced participation in decision-making, and gender mainstreaming. ([link to the publications](#))

- 10-12 February 2016 in Strasbourg, seminar on "combating sexist hate speech" ([link to the report – English only](#))
- 27-29 April 2016 in Strasbourg, 9th meeting of the Commission ([link to the meeting report](#))

- 30 June–1 July 2016: Conference “Are we there yet? Assessing progress, inspiring action - the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy 2014-2017”. The aims of this thematic [conference](#), organised by the Gender Equality Commission in partnership with the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs, were to discuss the implementation of the Council of Europe Gender Equality Strategy, highlight progress and results, and exchange ideas for the preparation of the next Strategy
- 16–18 November 2016, Strasbourg: On the occasion of the Commission’s 10th meeting, an exchange of views took place with the Council of Europe’s Commissioner for Human Rights ([link to the Commissioner’s work in this area – English only](#))

### 1.2. [Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly](#)

- 11 March 2016, Council of Europe, Paris
- 9 September 2016, Senate, Paris
- 13 October 2016, Strasbourg
- 6 December 2016, Council of Europe, Paris

Outside personalities are frequently asked to speak, and the parliamentarians present the various reports to be found on the website, such as those on the role of women in the armed forces, cyberdiscrimination and online hate speech, the inclusion of people with disabilities, discrimination and violence against women refugees, migration from a gender perspective: empowering women as key actors for integration, the fight against female genital mutilation, putting an end to sexual violence and the harassment of women in public, the promotion of human rights and the elimination of discrimination against intersex persons, etc.

### 1.3. **The Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention met on 26 April 2016 for the third time.**

States are continuing to ratify the [Convention](#) and they will soon be joined by the European Union. Parliaments are playing a key role. Ms Acar, President of the Group of Experts on Action against Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (GREVIO), said the evaluation procedure had begun with Austria and Monaco, marking the start of the implementation of the [Convention](#). In March 2016, a very extensive questionnaire had been developed, which was addressed to states but was also very useful for NGOs wishing to contribute to the shadow report that they could draw up when their country was assessed.

The Gender Equality Expert, who represents the Council of Europe Conference of INGOs, informed the Committee about a future event to be organised by University Women of Europe and supported by the network Women Against Violence Europe. It is due to be held on 20 May 2016 at the ancient theatre in Syracuse, Italy.



#### **1.4. The Steering Committee for Human Rights, whose Conference of INGOs representative is Jean-Bernard Marie**

Following the sending out of a questionnaire on genital mutilation and forced marriages, which the Gender Equality Expert passed on to the Conference of INGOs, a drafting group responsible for drawing up a best practices tool for states to combat female genital mutilation and forced marriages, chaired by Rob Linham, United Kingdom, met on 21 to 23 September 2016.

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

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

## **2. Active involvement in the Conference of INGOs**

The Gender Equality Expert was present at all the meetings of the Conference of INGOs held in 2016. She proposed a strategic plan.

- 28 January 2016: organisation, at the Council of Europe, of a meeting on equality and on the contribution of the Istanbul Convention with Carolina Lasén Diaz and Cécile Gréboval, respectively Head and Programme Advisor of the Gender Equality Unit; Johan Friestedt, Administrator in the Violence against Women Unit and Secretariat member responsible for monitoring the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Ms Lasén Diaz described the dynamics of public communications without gender stereotyping. She gave the floor to two INGOs to enable them to describe their work, Bettina Hahne on behalf of Soroptimist International of Europe, and Evgenia Giakoumopoulou on behalf of ACCESS.

Various contacts were established with the Congress of the Regions.

21 June 2016: throughout the year, the Human Rights and Religions working group worked on a questionnaire to which about 1,000 replies were received. It resulted in a side event on the subject of [\*Are religions a place of emancipation for women? Progress and setbacks\*](#), which met with a lively response.

The Expert also carried out various representation missions, including:

- 30 May-3 June 2016, speech at the Conference of European Churches
- 20 June 2016, *Sexism and Racism* in Strasbourg with the participation of young people, with animations on sexism and stereotypes.
- 17-18 October 2016, 3rd International Conference on Men & Equal Opportunities (ICMEO)
- 25 November 2016, International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, speech on the Istanbul Convention at the Rouen Prefecture.

### **3. Lobbying activities**

- On the Istanbul Convention
- On the presence of women on boards
- In connection with COP 22
- On the CEDAW
- On equal pay for women and men

I wish to thank the following for their invaluable help and support: all the INGOs members of the Conference and those in the process of joining us, the Conference staff and President, the members of the Conference's committees and working groups and the various Council of Europe departments and INGO-Services, and everyone involved in our work, including Marion Minis, Edith Lommerse, Renée Gérard, Sonia Bressler, a philosopher who runs my blog, Anje Wiersinga with the members of her group, and all the friends of AFFDU, of University Women of Europe, of Graduate Women International, and of Réussir l'Egalite entre les Femmes et les Hommes.

Dr Anne Nègre  
Gender Equality Expert

## List of working groups that contributed to the activities presented in this report

### Working groups of the Human Rights Committee

- [Disability;](#)
- [Extreme Poverty and Human Rights](#)
- [Human Rights, co-development, Migrations;](#)
- [Fight against hate speech](#)
- [Childrens' Rights](#)
- [Human Rights and Digital Technology](#)
- [Human Rights defenders](#)

### Working groups of the Education and Culture Committee

- [The teacher in interaction with his environment: a shared responsibility for the European values](#)
- [Education for the digital media - a challenge in formal and non-formal education for democratic citizenship and participation](#)
- [Teaching history: an education to an active democratic citizenship](#)
- [The transformation of cultures and the living together in a heterogenic and digital society to an inclusive society](#)

### Working groups of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee

- Gender Perspectives in political and democratic processes
- Climate change and human Rights
- Europe Mediterranean
- Social Cohesion and Shared Territories
- European Citizenship (Work completed)
- Inclusive Societies

**List of representatives of the Conference to the various Steering Committees, Parliamentary Committees and Committee of the Parties within the Council of Europe**

**Intergovernmental committees**

Type	Acronyme	Name	Representative of the Conference of INGOs
<b>Steering Committee</b>	<b>CDDH</b>	<b>Steering Committee on Human Rights</b>	Jean-Bernard Marie
Subordinate body	CDDH-SOC	Drafting group on social rights	Jean-Bernard Marie/Marie-José Schmitt
Subordinate body	CDDH-MF	Drafting group on female genital mutilation and forced marriage	Jean-Bernard Marie Anne Nègre
Subordinate body	CDDH-MIG	Groupe de rédaction sur les migrations et les droits de l'homme / Drafting group on migration and human rights (	Jean-Bernard Marie, Jean-Michel Caudron
Subordinate body	CDDH-INST	Drafting group on civil society and other human rights institutions	Jean-Bernard Marie et Maria Pomazkova
Subordinate body	CDDH-EXP	Drafting group on freedom of expression and links to other human rights	Jean Bernard Marie et C Ritchie
Subordinate body	DH-SYSC	Committee of experts on the system of ECHR	Jean-Bernard Marie
Subordinate body	DH-SYSC-II	Drafting group on the follow-up to the CDDh report on the longer term future of the Convention	Jean Bernard Marie
Subordinate body	DH-GDR	Committee of expert on the reform of the ECHR	Jean-Bernard Marie
Subordinate body	DH-BIO	Committee of Bioethics	Michel Aguilar, Thierry Mathieu
Steering Committee	GEC	Gender Equality Commission	Anne Nègre
Ad hoc Committee	CAHDPH	Ad hoc Committee of experts on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	Marie-José Schmitt
Ad hoc Committee	CAHENF	Ad hoc Committee for the Rights of the Child	Hélène Garrigues, EUROCEF Geert Priem, CESP
Steering	<b>CDCJ</b>	<b>European Committee on Legal Co-operation</b>	Cyril Ritchie

Committee			
Subordinate body	CJ-DAM	Committee of Experts on Administrative Detention of Migrant	Eiri Ohtani (PICUM)
Steering Committee	CDMSI	Steering Committee on Media and Information Society	Didier Schretter
Steering Committee	CDDG	European Committee on Democracy and Governance	Anne-Marie Chavanon
Enlarged Bureau	CDDG	Enlarged Bureau	Anne-Marie Chavanon + Elena Curtopassi (Elisan)
Subordinate body	CDDG	Drafting group on the guidelines on civil participation in political decision making	Anne Marie Chavanon
Steering Committee	CDPPE	Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice	Sabine Rohmann
Co-management youth			Anne Kraus
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	Anne-Marie Chavanon
Working group	CPP-ESA	WG on gender equality in the audiovisual sector	Anne Negre
Steering Committee	PECS	European Plateform of social cohesion	Gérard Schaefer (ICSW Europe – alternate: Robert Bergougnan (EASSW)

### Committee of the parties

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

### Governemental committee

Name	Representative of the Conference of INGOs
Comité européen des droits sociaux (sur invitation uniquement) / European committee of social rights	Marie-José Schmitt

### Partial agreements

Structure	Name	Representative of the Conference of INGOs
Venise Commission	Plenary meeting (only by invitation)	Cyril Ritchie
North South Center	Executive committee	Jean Marie Heydt, Jean-Michel Caudron
EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement	Working group on migrants with disabilities	Jean Michel Caudron et Daniel Guery

### Others

Structure	Representative of the Conference of INGOs
Commission on Health and Social Affairs from the Parliamentary Assembly	Thierry Mathieu