



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe CONF/PRES/SPEECH(2015)1

“Our strength is at once in the collective aspect and in the specificity of each INGO making up this Conference”

The Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) of the Council of Europe elects a new President, 29 January 2015

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues

I have the honour to offer you my candidacy for the post of President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe. It is an honour and a challenge for me. I am convinced that in the same connection I shall have much to learn, as well as a great deal to give so that our Conference may tackle with energy and courage the challenges facing it now and in the future.

Trained as a social worker, I am currently an educational sciences teacher and researcher in a Parisian university. I have always pursued my professional activity and my social commitment side by side. I seek to dedicate my actions to the general interest which I regard as one of the foundations of a participatory democratic society sensitive to other people's uniqueness.

My country of birth, where Chopin's polonaise is heard from the cradle, where convictions shook the Iron Curtain, instilled into me the importance of civil society's role in dialogue and in building the social cohesion fundamental to democracy.

The years spent beside you in the Conference, and specifically the last two years, during which I have been adviser on Children and Family Affairs to the President and member of the Bureau, have enabled me to form a vision of our Conference. This vision will guide my mandate, a vision expressed in policy directions which we shall implement together. I should like us to be:

- a Conference knowing how to query, analyse, ideate and act. A Conference with the courage to express opposing arguments as a token of its strength and perceptive of complexity where others see mere complication.
- A Conference aiming at political, economic and strategic efficiency based on ethical principles. A conference armed with proposals, heeded, understood, intelligent in its diversity and respectful towards what all the policies in the world have in common: the human being.

It is necessary that all of us, the representatives of the INGOs, are convinced of these assertions and participate actively in this goal.

The mission entrusted to the Conference of INGOs since its inception is complex, since we are required to work at THREE levels:

- with our networks of INGOs,
- with the agencies forming the Council of Europe,
- with the state authorities and the intergovernmental institutions.

The principal and transversal objective of all our actions is our undertaking that all human rights, hence also social and cultural rights, should be applied both in the legislation and in the practice of the member states. We must contribute to the emancipation of civil society and to the reinforcement of its participation in decision-making processes.

With our networks of INGOs, we must:

- Refuse the economy of exclusion, refuse social injustice which is a form of violence against civil society and vulnerable groups.
- Recall the fundamentals of an inclusive society based on respect for rights and for cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.
- Help to build a society knowing how to use its freedoms so as to turn them into social bonds and respect for the state and its institutions.

It is a great cause, and I have the resolve to guide the Conference on this path and further it with you.

In the Council of Europe, we must continue consolidating our position in the quadrilogue by harmonising our agenda with those of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress. The previous Bureau has already worked in this direction. I venture to believe that the Council of Europe bodies are in need of representatives like ourselves, of the great diversity of the federations of INGOs.

We must continue to answer “present” and to create occasions for acting in conjunction with the organs of the Council of Europe while respecting the specific place of each entity. We have common goals including the application of the Council of Europe treaty system. For this the states need the INGOs and the Conference can contribute, especially via the tools for dialogue already developed and put to use at the local, national and international level.

On the international area and WITH the Council of Europe, the Conference of INGOs should reinforce multiparty partnerships with inter-governmental organizations and states to strengthen the role of civil society in the countries where the margin for freedom declines, to protect the separation of powers and political pluralism.

In order that our actions suitably and coherently meet the challenges and the needs of civil society, during my mandate I shall invite you to update our strategic objectives regularly, focusing on the work areas and the geographical fields of action. I would wish the governance of our Conference to be more participatory, that every INGO enjoying participatory status should be able to find its interest and contribute its expertise. For that to be possible, it seems to me indispensable to look after the quality of reception of the new INGOs and the good logistical conditions of our work in the Council of Europe.

Our strength is at once in the collective aspect and in the specificity of each INGO making up this Conference. As President I shall work with all, relying on each one's competences. Common determination and work in common are necessary in order that the Conference may pass a further major milestone, aware of and secure in its competences, its potential, and our commitment.

Thank you for your attention!

Anna Rurka, Vice-President of the European Committee for Home-based Priority Action for the Child and the Family, was elected President of the Conference of INGOs for a term of office of 3 years. Anna Rurka, of Polish nationality, has been an active member of the Conference of INGOs since 2005 in particular for questions related to children and family and is the representative of the Conference of INGOs on the Committee of the Parties to the Lanzarote Convention.

She succeeds Jean-Marie Heydt, President of the Conference of INGOs from January 2009 to January 2015, who has been elected Honorary President.