



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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2013 ACTIVITY REPORT

OF THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs

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I. THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs

1. Introduction

Following the implementation of the new structures and operating procedures in 2011 and the statutory renewal of the management bodies in 2012, a wide range of in-depth, innovative activities were conducted in 2013 by the Conference and its component bodies: the Bureau, the Standing Committee and the three committees. A great deal of work was done, as demonstrated in particular by the reports of the Human Rights; Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges; and Education and Culture Committees and their respective working groups.

This clearly confirms the strong and lasting commitment of the Conference of INGOs to democracy, promotion of human rights and the rule of law and the fundamental values which the INGOs, in their diversity, defend and promote throughout Europe, as reflected, for instance, in the declaration on genuine democracy adopted on 24 January 2013.

The “consolidated” report covers everything done at the Conference and on its behalf. It includes the reports of the committees and various working groups (27 in number!) and includes the texts adopted at plenary sessions and by the Standing Committee (declarations, recommendations and resolutions), as well as those registered at committee meetings.

Naturally, an activity report of this kind is part of an ongoing process: it takes account of what has gone before, it records recent achievements and it paves the way for strengthening and following up our activities in 2014 and beyond...

We are all accountable for this overall assessment and responsible for carrying forward ongoing and future activities.

It is therefore vital to show both the comprehensive, co-ordinated nature of all our activities and also the quality, thoroughness and variety of everything we – the INGOs – do together: this coherent action guarantees our effectiveness and the representativeness of the INGOs in Europe, as it rules out a method of operation that merely amounts to the juxtaposition or addition of activities.

The major problems and social issues which we address are becoming increasingly general and multidisciplinary: it is becoming more and more difficult for a single group to tackle them because the expectations and consequences affect the largest possible number of players and stakeholders. Synergy and the pooling of efforts are becoming a necessity. And this applies to human rights, social rights, gender equality, culture, education and youth and all efforts to combat poverty.

To enhance its impact, the Conference of INGOs plays an active role in the quadrilogue, the exchange and co-operation with the Council of Europe political bodies – Committee of Ministers, Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

2. The countries of the southern Mediterranean – Intercultural dialogue

On 27 January, the Conference of INGOs adopted a Resolution on Gender Equality – a condition for success of the Arab Spring.

On 12 February, the Conference condemned the assassination of Chokri Belaid, which it described as “a despicable crime against a defender of democracy”, and expressed its “full solidarity with the democratic forces of Tunisian civil society”.

The Conference decided to take co-ordinated action in the Mediterranean neighbourhood countries and grant priority to Tunisia. A team visited Tunis from 17 to 20 February and met representatives of Tunisian NGOs and authorities. Among other things, it was agreed to expand exchanges of experience, help make civil society more structured, support NGO networking and step up the work of the Conference of INGOs so as to co-ordinate relations with counterpart organisations in Tunisia more effectively.

The Standing Committee has drawn attention to the establishment of a Tunisian Global Security Observatory, made up of independent academics and representatives of organised civil society.

The Conference was represented at a study day held by the Chamber of Counsellors of the Moroccan Parliament on the theme of citizenship and civic-minded attitudes and partnership, at which civil society’s role in social cohesion was underlined.

On 27 June, the Conference adopted a Recommendation on the Situation of the police and police trade unions in Tunisia.

In September, the Conference took part in a colloquy on the situation in the Mediterranean region as part of the North-South dialogue on the role of civil society in the countries of the southern Mediterranean. In particular, the colloquy condemned the “rise of reactionary forces” and focused on the “dynamic of the awakening of peoples”, as well as the desire to “promote dialogue”. A wide range of practical projects and activities were presented, in particular concerning culture and vocational training for young people, especially girls and women.

In this connection, the North-South Centre of the Council of Europe plays a leading role, in the context of the quadrilogue, in terms of networking and co-ordinated action in this part of southern Europe. Its long-standing experience of co-operation and its networking have helped to promote the Council of Europe’s values, and the Conference of INGOs is an active partner in this area; it took part in the Lisbon Forum on 6 and 7 November on “Valuing civil society as an actor of governance: prospects for the South Mediterranean”.

And we must underline and welcome the election of our President, Jean-Marie Heydt, as Chair of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre.

Intercultural dialogue in all its forms is a constant focus of many different activities and initiatives on the part of the INGOs in the Conference, with the production of a range of works, reference documents and studies, as demonstrated by the reports of the committee working groups in the areas of genuine democracy, interfaith dialogue, living together in harmony and citizenship education, as well as the adoption on 27 June of the Recommendation on Human Rights and Religions.

The Conference took part in the high-level colloquy held in February during the Andorran chairmanship on “Competences for a culture of democracy and intercultural dialogue: a political challenge and values”. It took the opportunity to highlight the INGOs’ work and contributions in this area.

3. World Forum for Democracy

Our Conference contributed to the preparations for the World Forum for Democracy held in Strasbourg from 27 to 29 November under the heading of “Rewiring democracy – connecting institutions and citizens in the digital age”. Several organisations took part in the forum, the theme of which needs to be integrated on a lasting basis in the policies, concerns and work of civil society. Various labs were sponsored by the Conference.

The Chair of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee spoke at the lab on the rise of the Wikicity, presented by the Lung start-up from Porto Allegre, which encourages citizens to become involved in shaping policies and launching initiatives.

The Conference sponsored the [lab on “skills for democracy”](#) presented by [Women of Uganda Network \(WOUGNET\)](#), who won the Council of Europe’s [Democracy Innovation Award](#).

4. Support to an enabling environment for NGOs

The Conference of INGOs works constantly to support organisations and NGOs in countries where human rights are still not respected in full and where democracy still has to be built, for instance in Belarus. We all remember the visits by delegations from the country. In 2013, the work continued with visits in January, April, June and October by representatives of civil society from Belarus respectively concerning “student organisations in decision-making processes”, “freedom of association – addressing the challenges”, “the point of view of the Belarusian think tanks on trends in politics, democracy and European integration” and “civic education and activism”. A round table took place in May in Minsk on development of student’s activities in Belarus. A meeting was also held in Warsaw in June on a Communication Platform for Belarus.

- Expert Council on NGO Law

2013 was a busy year for the [Expert Council on NGO Law](#), who worked in close co-operation with the Venice Commission. The Expert Council was particularly active in the Russian Federation.

In September, the Conference adopted a [Recommendation](#) on the Opinion of the Expert Council on NGO Law on “The law introducing amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation regarding the regulation of activities of non-commercial organisations performing the functions of foreign agents”.

In October, the Expert Council met in Moscow and the Conference of INGOs organised, together with the Civic Chamber, a round table on “Enhancement of Non-commercial Legislation. International Experience” in which participated representatives of Russian civil society and authorities as well as INGOs. The Expert Council presented at the round table the above mentioned opinion on the so-called “foreign agents’ law” [links: [OING Conf/Exp\(2013\)1](#) and [OING Conf/Exp\(2013\)4](#)]

The Expert Council keeps a constant eye on the situation of NGOs in the Council of Europe member States. Monitoring is vital, for instance in Azerbaijan.

- Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process

On account of its quality, the [Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process](#) has gradually become a benchmark used by civil society,

institutions and in the context of the quadrilogue at the Council of Europe, with co-operation with the Congress and debates about interaction between civil society and the authorities.

In November, a seminar held in Kyiv in Ukraine on [Civil Participation in Political Decision-Making Processes: Ukrainian Path to European Standards](#) was attended by 60 participants from civil society in Ukraine and neighbouring countries.

The Code of Good Practice was promoted at a conference held in Istanbul in April on co-operation with civil society in the public sector, in which members of the Expert Council also took part.

- **Dialogue Toolkit**

The [Dialogue toolkit – Toolkit for Conducting Intercultural Dialogue](#) is now up and running and is frequently used. The first training courses for facilitators have been held in France and are going to start in Tunisia. The toolkit supplements the range of instruments at the Conference of INGOs' disposal.

5. Intergovernmental committees – convention-based committees

The Conference is fully aware of the importance of the presence of civil society and INGOs in the intergovernmental committees on which our representatives sit. The committees have been radically reformed in terms of form, number and content. They cover the Council of Europe's main areas of activity and are still undergoing changes. There are eight intergovernmental committees in total, but there are also subordinate bodies and committees set up under conventions such as the [Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings](#) and the [Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#).

Our gender equality expert has taken part in many meetings on the media and the image of women and on the ratification and entry into force of the [Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence \(Istanbul Convention\)](#).

For her part, a representative was involved in the entire process of the Council of Europe Lanzarote Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse.

6. Participatory status

Participatory status has now existed for 10 years. A review of the situation as a draft contribution to the discussion on the Resolution (2003)8 on Participatory Status is under preparation. A working group has been set up within the Standing Committee for that purpose. It will have to demonstrate the advantages of the status for direct democracy, for organised civil society itself, for the member INGOs and also for the other three Council of Europe "pillars", given the value added and expertise contributed by the Conference of INGOs for the benefit of all parties, including the Committee of Ministers. Work to analyse the achievements and advantages of the status, as well as possible future developments, is under way.

The Standing Committee approved the requests for participatory status by four organisations, which are now members:

- the European Council of Doctoral Candidates and Junior Researchers;
- the European Lawyers' Union;
- the European Union of Deaf Youth;

- the Federation of Nature and National Parks of Europe.

The Standing Committee has been informed of the situation of 71 INGOs which might lose participatory status on account of failure to observe the rules (lack of replies, co-operation representativeness).

7. The Association INGO-Service

The association's balance sheet improved in 2013 and the number of contributors increased to 140 (out of 381 INGOs enjoying participatory status). Its financial position is now sound.

The statutes are being reformed, in particular as regards membership of the board.

Financial support from INGO-Service made possible some activities of the Conference of INGOs, such as the workshop organised on the occasion of the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty on 17 October "Building Europe through Human Rights: Acting Together against Extreme Poverty". The Association facilitated also the participation of representatives of the Conference of INGOs in Council of Europe committees and events by providing financial assistance.

II. THE THEME-BASED COMMITTEES AND THE GENDER EQUALITY EXPERT

1. The Human Rights Committee

Chair: Annelise Oeschger, Vice-Chairs: Gérard Greneron and Marie-José Schmitt, Rapporteur: Maritchu Rall

A. Themes studied with preparation of texts adopted by the Conference of INGOs and follow-up by the working groups

a. The Committee was very concerned at the fact that acts of torture of varying degrees of gravity are still taking place in the 47 Council of Europe member states and that States are not doing enough to prevent torture. It had been made aware of the situation by the ACAT's report "Un monde tortionnaire" ("A torturer's world") and proposed to the INGOs that they clearly express their views on a blanket ban on torture and inhuman and degrading treatment. It therefore drew up a Recommendation on "Changes in the situation with regard to torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the Council of Europe member states", which was adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 24 January 2013.

A working group was subsequently established to follow up this Recommendation. The first meeting of the *Working Group for the Abolition of Torture in Europe* was held on Wednesday 2 October 2013. This meeting was the opportunity to determine the working group's operating procedures and objectives:

- Advocacy and lobbying of CoE member states
- Work in co-operation with CoE institutions and bodies
- Work in co-operation with INGOs

To start implementing these objectives, the working group will be holding a side event entitled "A Europe without torture: what is today's reality ? – Fight against torture and cruel, inhuman and degrading treatments – everyone's responsibility" on Wednesday 29 January 2014, from 1 to 2 pm, in Room 2 of the Palais de l'Europe. The purpose of this awareness-raising event is to bring together and mobilise as many people as possible to eradicate the continuing scourge of torture in Europe.

b. Following the Conference "Building Europe through Human Rights: Acting Together against Extreme Poverty" organised on 17 October 2012 by the Conference of INGOs, the Committee prepared a follow-up Resolution "Acting together to eradicate extreme poverty in Europe, which was adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 24 January 2013.

The "Extreme Poverty and Human Rights" Working Group prepared a document entitled "Building Europe through Human Rights: Acting Together against Extreme Poverty" relating to the Joint Declaration made on 17 October 2012 by the Chair of the Committee of Ministers and the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of INGOs, and held a follow-up workshop on 17 October 2013.

c. On 24 June, following the 3 years of work done by the Human Rights and Religions Working Group, which prepared a report and elements for a recommendation, the Committee held a working session that was open to all the INGOs to finalise the Recommendation on "Human Rights and Religions". The Recommendation was adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 27 June 2013.

Members of the Working Group prepared two draft texts in addition to the Recommendation and they will be submitted at the January 2014 session, i.e.:

- Respecting and promoting human rights – lines of enquiry and action to be proposed to leaders and members of religions
- Human Rights and Religions – Appeal to citizens and NGOs.

d. In the context of its links with NGOs in the southern Mediterranean, the Committee drew up a Recommendation on the “Situation of the police and police trade unions in Tunisia” which was adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 27 June 2013.

B. Changes in legislation and working conditions for NGOs in the Russian Federation

In co-operation with Russian NGOs and the Expert Council on NGO Law of the Conference of INGOs, the Committee monitored developments following the enactment of the Law of 20 July 2012 and its provisions concerning NGOs acting as so-called “foreign agents”, i.e. NGOs receiving foreign funding “engaging in political activities”. The Committee is very concerned at the negative impact this may have on civil society and its organisations in general and at the public discrediting of NGOs which uphold human rights. The Committee expressed the opinion that engaging in the protection and promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law – the core values of the Council of Europe – should not be considered to be a “political activity” within the meaning of the law on “foreign agents” and that all negative propaganda on the NGOs must cease so as to allow them to conduct and develop their activities in an enabling environment.

The Committee Chair co-chaired the Round Table on “Enhancement of Non-commercial legislation: international experience”, held by the Conference of INGOs and the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in Moscow on 31 October. The Round Table was attended by Russian and international NGOs and representatives of the Russian authorities for the purpose of discussing the outcome of the Expert Council’s studies and the possible improvements that could be made to the “foreign agents’ law” and to its application.

C. Workshop on the occasion of International Day for the Eradication of Poverty “Building Europe through Human Rights: Acting Together against Extreme Poverty”, Council of Europe, 17 October 2013

This workshop, which was organised by the “Extreme Poverty and Human Rights” Working Group in co-operation with the European Social Charter Department, was attended by some sixty people, including delegates from Spain, France, Italy and Portugal who had experienced poverty, the Chair of GR-SOC and the Director for Human Rights. The workshop was chaired by the Chair of the European Committee of Social Rights and opened by the Deputy Secretary General and the Chair of the Ministers’ Deputies. Pursuant to the [Declaration made on 17 October 2012](#), the aim was to contribute to a European action plan on the basis of the experience and aspirations of the different countries.

D. Hearing by the Governmental Committee of the European Social Charter (ESC)

The annual hearing of the Committee by the Governmental Committee took place on 29 May:

- We presented the Joint Declaration of 17 October 2012 and forwarded a copy to the representative of each member state.

With regard to the social rights under examination, we noted:

- the dangerous regression affecting the different social security branches and concerning both contributory and non-contributory systems;
- With regard to the implementation of Article 15 ESC (the right of people with disabilities to independence, social integration and participation in the life of the community), we drew attention to the measures which States should take in the fields mentioned in this article. For example, with regard to employment, we underlined the importance of vocational training and of orientation towards jobs of the future and the active contribution which states could make to job creation through public procurement; With regard to social life, and with a view to ensuring that the situation continues to progress, states should support associations of people with disabilities and co-operate with them by ensuring mediation in the event of direct or indirect discrimination.

E. Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention)

A large part of the Committee meeting during the June session was spent informing the NGOs about this Convention and encouraging them to promote it, with the participation of the President of the Network of Contact Parliamentarians and the President of the Feminoteka Foundation of Poland.

The Working Group on “Preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking” has been set up. At its first meeting, on 26 June, the members decided upon the following priorities:

- Promoting the ratification of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO). [Two sample letters have been drafted](#) which organisations and individuals can use to urge their governments and members of parliament to promote the ratification of the Istanbul Convention. Our members as well as NGOs with whom we co-operate have already sent out such letters.
- Following and contributing to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Networks:
 - o “Women free from Violence”
 - o “Stop violence against children”
- Following and contributing to the work of the Violence against Women Division of the Directorate of Human Rights and contributing to the Gender Equality Committee (GEC).

F. Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention) and the ONE in FIVE Campaign

The “Lanzarote” Working Group informed and sought the support of the INGOs at the June meeting and by means of an e-mail. By holding meetings of both public and private stakeholders, the WG contributed to the multidisciplinary diagnosis and laid the foundations for setting out a working method that could subsequently be used as a guideline for the “courses of action” to be recommended to the various professionals and to promote concerted action. The aim is to establish a genuine partnership network to discuss issues concerning the sexual abuse of children and to encourage specific training for each of the professionals concerned: special needs teachers, social workers, psychologists, police officers, children’s judges and therapists, and to use Council of Europe awareness-raising

tools such as the Pact established by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which promotes the ONE in FIVE campaign.

G. Representation on the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH)

The representative of the Conference of INGOs reported on the priorities chosen by the CDDH and to which the Conference of INGOs and its committees can make a substantial contribution, in light of the previous or current experience of their member NGOs. The secretariat of the CDDH very much welcomed the prospect of interaction, in particular in the following fields:

- Corporate social responsibility: drafting of a non-binding instrument (with a guide of good practice) addressing gaps in the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles at the European level, (including access to justice for victims of corporate human rights abuses) – drafting of a declaration of the Committee of Ministers supporting the UN Guiding Principles.
- The impact of the economic crisis on human rights in Europe: studying the issue further in order to identify specific areas for action (by 30 June 2014), with a view to the possible revision of existing instruments or the drafting of a non-binding instrument or of a Committee of Ministers declaration on protection of human rights in times of crisis;
- Human rights in culturally diverse societies: drafting of general guidelines and of a handbook on human rights in culturally diverse societies. Preparation of a document compiling the existing Council of Europe standards relating to the principles of freedom of thought, conscience and religion and the link to other convention rights, accompanied by a compendium of good practices;

The work of the “F Group” on the longer-term reform of the Court and the European Human Rights Convention (following the Brighton Conference in 2012) also deserves special attention insofar as the outcome may have major consequences for the current system and the level of human rights protection in Europe.

The “Violence against the elderly” Working Group contributed to the work of CDDH-AGE on the Draft Recommendation on the promotion of the human rights of the elderly.

H. Representation on the Steering Committee on Media and Information Society (CDMSI)

In 2013, the CDMSI met three times and also held a ministerial conference in Belgrade. The main themes of its work are the protection of journalists and the application of Article 10 of the European Convention on Human Rights (freedom of expression and information), both online and offline, in the context of the Council of Europe’s overall strategy for the Internet. At the ministerial conference and during the CDMSI’s meetings, the representative of the Conference of INGOs made contributions regarding freedom of expression for all, in relation to the corresponding responsibilities, in particular on the Internet, and also therefore regarding the need for Human Rights education online; he also spoke about the part which civil society should play in the work done by the Council and the ministerial conferences under a multi-stakeholder approach.

The CDMSI has recently submitted to the Committee of Ministers a draft recommendation containing a Guide for Internet Users, which the Conference of INGOs could help to disseminate.

I. European Union Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA)

The Conference of INGOs takes part in the meetings of the FRA.

2. Education and Culture Committee

Chair: Sabine Rohmann, Vice-Chairs: Harry Rogge and Yosanne Vella, Rapporteur: Roseline Moreau

A. Working groups

a. Teachers' Profession in the 21st Century

Person in charge: Roseline Moreau

In 2013, the working group issued an online questionnaire divided into five sections:

- teacher's situation;
- teaching areas;
- the role of the teacher;
- professional training;
- free talk.

By early November 2013, the steering group (Roseline Moreau, François Debrowolska and Michèle Moritz) had received all the replies from 200 European teachers (Belgium, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Turkey, Ukraine and United Kingdom).

The steering group collected the data entered on the platform, which amounted to almost 1 000 pages, and read, classified and analysed the replies and comments so as to extract the key ideas and summarise the replies before drafting a report.

The very comprehensive and detailed report of over 100 pages has been completed and is now available.

The findings are very important for the continuation of the Education and Culture Committee's work. They served as the basis for the content of the Conference on the Professional Image and Ethos of Teachers held in Strasbourg in April (cf Other activities).

The project was carried out in close co-operation with the Pestalozzi Programme team in the Directorate General of Democracy (DG II).

b. Access to the Digital Media for All

Person in charge: Harry Rogge

The working group continued its discussion and preparation of a background paper concerning this issue that is crucial and innovative in both social and educational terms.

In May, a subgroup (Lena Axelsson, Harry Rogge, Didier Schretter and Emil Valdelin) met in Brussels to discuss specific aspects for the preparation of the background paper:

- societal aspects;
- educational aspects;
- political aspects;
- financial/economic aspects.

On the committee's behalf, Didier Schretter attended a conference held in Strasbourg in September on transparency for the protection of freedom on the Internet: a shared commitment. A summary was provided at the meeting in January 2014.

c. Learning History: Becoming a Democratic European Citizen

Person in charge: Yosanne Vella

The working group continued its work on the following issues:

- preparing for democracy;
- women's history;
- how to eliminate prejudice;
- misuse of history.

The group assessed two major projects, "Navigate", by the Council of Europe, and "Historiana", by Euroclio, and drafted a report which was submitted to the project leaders.

The working group co-operates with the Education Policy Division of the Council of Europe.

d. Living Together

Person in charge: Karl Donert.

The working group is aware of the importance of this area for the future of societies in Europe and worldwide.

The idea is to analyse what really is happening. What are we witnessing? For January 2014, the aim was to provide a contribution on achievements focused on the development of active citizenship in Europe today.

Account has to be taken of what has already been done by the Council of Europe (the White Paper and the Living Together report) and of what we want to do next.

A background paper has been prepared as a starting point for producing a compendium of best practices on implementing active citizenship within the NGOs in the working group and drawing up recommendations for education so as to promote "living together" in different contexts.

As the working group is in its early stages, the work will be completed after the committee's current term has ended.

Gabriel Nissim led the meeting in January on the issue of mediation in the area of living together and gave a wide-ranging and informative introduction which triggered lively discussion.

e. Working Group on the Religious Dimension of Intercultural Dialogue

Person in charge: James Barnett

The working group drew up a report for presentation at the Education and Culture Committee's meeting in January.

The report provides key input for the work of the Working Group on Living Together.

B. Other activities

a. Participation in conferences

The 24th session of the Standing Conference of Ministers of Education: Governance and Quality Education, Helsinki 26-27 April 2013

The Education and Culture Committee was represented by the Chair, Sabine Rohmann, the Vice-Chair, Harry Rogge, and the President of the European Parents' Association (EPA), Johannes Theiner.

Three main themes were discussed in plenary and in the workshops:

- decentralisation, social participation and empowerment of local authorities in the governance of education;
- ethics and integrity in education, with special focus on the ethical behaviour of teachers and the integrity of higher education and research;
- parents', teachers' and students' involvement in educational governance and management and quality education.

The ministers adopted a declaration on "Governance and Quality Education".

The Chair of the Education and Culture Committee underlined in her address the changes in our societies and the repercussions for education, as well as the changes to be initiated in the education sector.

b. Meetings of the Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE)

The Conference of INGOs is represented on the CDPPE and the Bureau of the CDPPE by the Chair of the Education and Culture Committee.

In 2013, she attended:

- the plenary meeting of the CDPPE in March;
- two meetings of the Bureau of the CDPPE (June and December);
- an informal meeting of the CDPPE in Belgrade in October – at which implementation of the ministerial declaration was discussed.

c. Meeting with the European Commissioner for Education, Culture, Multilingualism and Youth

At the 13th European Children's Book Fair opened by Doris Pack (MEP) in Saarbrücken on 13 May, the Chair of the Education and Culture Committee had the opportunity to accompany the Commissioner, Androulla Vassiliou, and discuss with her the challenges and prospects for education in Europe in the 21st century.

d. Seminar on "Europe and the World"

At a seminar on "Europe and the World" held by DGII in Strasbourg in March 2013, the Vice-Chair of the Education and Culture Committee presented her research on using history teaching to combat Islamophobia. Ms Vella also presented the work of the working group which she heads.

e. Seminar of French education authority delegates responsible for European and international relations and co-operation (DAREIC)

During the delegates' visit to the Council of Europe, the Chair of the Education and Culture Committee gave a speech on the challenges and prospects for education in Europe in the 21st century.

C. Plenary meetings

a. Diversity and living together

At the January 2013 session, a meeting on the issue of diversity was held with Gianluca Silvestrini, Head of the Managing Diversity Division, DG II. This was the first exchange between DGII and the Conference of INGOs on prospects for activities and projects in this area. It is a topic to be followed closely.

b. Digital culture and the challenges for education

At the Education and Culture Committee's June 2013 meeting, Richard Stock, Director of the Robert Schuman European Centre and member of the Board of EUnet, gave an address on the issue of digital culture and the challenges for education.

This very informative address demonstrated the massive impact on formal, non-formal and informal education, which will bring about far-reaching changes in the coming years.

D. Conference on the Professional Image and Ethos of Teachers, Strasbourg, 24-25 April 2014

Conference under preparation in 2013.

3. Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee

Chair: Anne-Marie Chavanon, Vice-Chairs: Vera John-Mikolajewski and Israël Mensah, Rapporteur: Edith Wenger

In 2013, the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee focused on the key issues covered by its terms of reference, which reflect the Council of Europe's priority objectives as regards developing democracy and "living together" in diversity. In so doing, it sought always to ensure a cross-sectoral interplay of views, in particular by fostering a multidisciplinary approach to the organisation of its round tables and the composition of its groups of experts.

It should be underlined that all of the committee's actions were geared towards ensuring dialogue between governments and citizens, with constant recourse to co-operation within the Council of Europe's quadrilogue.

The committee's key objectives include:

- Taking account of the complexity of the human and territorial dimensions in political debate;
- Achieving genuine, inclusive democracy throughout Europe and also in neighbouring countries, with the participation of young people, women and the excluded;
- Contributing to the major global debates concerning sustainable development;
- Supporting NGO members of the committee involved in emergency humanitarian activities.

A Declarations and other activities

a. Adoption of a Declaration on genuine democracy, a project initiated and headed by Mr Giuseppe Guarneri, with Professor Jean-Bernard Marie as rapporteur. This text, which was adopted after extensive debate by the committee and then the Conference of INGOs in January 2013, picked up, elaborated on and updated an earlier Council of Europe text that had been dropped despite being of high quality, and can now serve as a benchmark for all aspects of democracy in citizens' lives. It will be addressed on a sector basis in the coming months.

b. Adoption of a [Resolution to reduce inequalities associated with growing poverty within European democracies](#). This project was initiated and presented during the January 2013 session by Daniel Zielinski, Honorary President of the Conference of INGOs and delegate of the European Local Inclusion and Social Action Network (ELISAN). The text was adopted by the committee members by email and then, following approval by the Conference of INGOs, by the Standing Committee in February.

It was a contribution to the European Conference on "Poverty and Inequalities in Societies of Human Rights: the paradox of democracies" held jointly in Strasbourg from 21 to 23 February 2013 by the European Union and the Council of Europe, in connection with which the committee was addressed by Gilda Farrel, Head of the Social Cohesion Research and Early Warning Division.

The resolution, which sets out a range of proposals to governments and local authorities, was distributed at the above conference and posted on the respective websites of the committee and the Conference of INGOs. Some innovative measures will have to be followed up with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the relevant directorates.

c. Adoption of a [Declaration on Climate Change and Human Rights](#) by email in October 2013, as a contribution by the committee, supervised by Edith Wenger, co-ordinator of the ad hoc working group, to the Summit of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) held in Warsaw in November 2013. This declaration, which was distributed to the relevant UN bodies, the NGOs present and on the Internet, calls on governments to go beyond the strict framework of reductions in greenhouse gasses and integrate the protection of human rights, taking account of the impact of all the phenomena related to climate change on the enjoyment of these rights.

d. Discussion of the governance of large metropolises, in June 2013, followed by an appeal to the Turkish authorities regarding the clampdown on the demonstrations in Istanbul concerning a controversial urban development project. The guest speakers were Jeffrey Donaldson, member of the Parliamentary Assembly and author of a report on “Good governance of large metropolises”, and Kayhan Karaca, Europe correspondent of NTV Turkey, who gave his analysis of the events. The debate was intended to provide input for the parliamentary report and also to contribute to a calmer approach to democracy in major urban centres. The committee also heard a statement by Nicolas Detrie, head of Yes We Camp, a citizens’ initiative run by young people in Marseille.

e. [A letter calling for greater account to be taken of the views of the population](#), signed jointly by the Chair of the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee and the Chair of the Human Rights Committee, Annelise Oeschger, was sent via the Turkish Permanent Delegation to President Abdullah Gül and the Prime Minister of Turkey, R Tayyip Erdogan, as well as the former President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu, and the Vice-President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, Gaye Doganoglu, with whom the committee and the Conference previously conducted a pilot activity at the Council of Europe on participation.

f. [Support for and dissemination of the Doctors of the World appeal concerning Syria](#). Following a debate on Syria at the June session, which was addressed by Pierre Salignon, Director General for Humanitarian Action at Doctors of the World, and Jean-Pierre Estival, author of a book on the country, the committee decided to offer the support of its networks to the call made by the NGO, in application of the Geneva conventions, for civilians and the wounded, doctors and surgeons facing torture and execution to be protected, for hospitals to be safe havens and for all individuals to have the right to receive medical aid without discrimination.

g. [Appeal for responsibility and social cohesion in support of the town of Lampedusa](#). On the occasion of European Local Democracy Week, the Chair and the Vice-Chairs of the committee, Israël Mensah and Vera John-Mikolajewski, issued a joint appeal on behalf of the committee:

- Demanding respect for the European Convention on Human Rights and the Charter of Fundamental Rights so that the interceptions conducted by FRONTEX (the European Agency for the Management of Operational Co-operation at the External Borders) are accompanied by effective rescue measures consistent with human rights and the rights of refugees and so that physical strength, in the event of shipwreck, is not the only criterion for admission to Europe’s territory.
- And calling for a review of the international treaties on the rights of refugees.

They called on EU and Council of Europe member states to establish a genuine policy of co-operation on asylum and to step up the fight against the criminal activity of traffickers and smugglers. The Chair also sent a letter of support to the mayor of Lampedusa.

h. Adoption of a recommendation and a resolution. The working group headed by Anje Wiersinga, was particularly active in following up and disseminating the texts adopted by the

committee and the Conference of INGOs calling on the international community to listen to women and their representatives in the eastern and southern Mediterranean countries, to support their points of view, demands and priorities and to bring them to the attention of the countries' authorities.

- The working group drew up a new recommendation and a resolution on "Gender Equality – A condition for success of the Arab Spring", which was adopted by the Conference of INGOs in January 2013.
- On the initiative of the working group and with the support and participation of all the pillars of the Council of Europe, the working group held a round table in Strasbourg in January 2013 on the theme of "Supporting the wishes, demands and priorities of women in the Arab world".
- A recommendation on the use of sexual violence as a political weapon was adopted by the committee by email in June 2013. It was followed up by the working group in co-operation with Karama and WO=MEN. The latter association is a platform in the Netherlands that works to promote gender equality throughout the world. A side event on the subject is being prepared for the June 2014 session.

i. Dissemination of the Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process. The committee played a major part in disseminating the Code of Good Practice, both within the Council of Europe and among its own NGOs. An expert group on the Code headed by Antonella Valmorbida (Association of Local Democracy Agencies) co-operates closely with the committee.

The Vice-Chair, Vera John-Mikolajewski, represented the Committee at the Seminar on "[Civil Participation in Political Decision-Making Processes: Ukrainian Path to European Standards](#)" in November in Kyiv.

The committee was involved in setting-up a reflection group with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on drawing up a version of the Code of good practice on participation in the decision-making process for local elected representatives.

B. Participation in the activities of other Council of Europe bodies, including some through the quadrilogue

a. Stakeholder's platform on the strategy for innovation and good governance at local level. The Chair was asked to chair the last of these meetings, which, since 2008, have brought together representatives of the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the Conference of INGOs. One of the body's tasks is to grant states which so desire the possibility of awarding a good governance quality mark to local authorities that deserve it.

b. Seminar on good democratic governance at local and regional level held in Strasbourg on 17 and 18 June 2013. The aim was to publicise good practices concerning participation.

c. World Forum for Democracy. The committee contributed to the exchanges of experience and the analysis of digital participation by promoting the example of the Wikicity project, an innovative practice in the city of Porto Alegre. Several NGOs in the committee, in particular Eurogeo, EACY, CITI and IWA, played a very active part in the debates of lab 13, for which the Chair was one of the discussants.

d. European Landscape Convention: three levels of participation

- 7th Council of Europe Conference on the European Landscape Convention (Strasbourg 26 and 27 March 2013), at the invitation of the Andorran Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. The conference was held in Strasbourg and attended by governments and NGOs. The Chair, Anne-Marie Chavanon (IFHP), addressed the opening session, while other members of the committee, namely Patrice Collignon (RED), L. E. Bouche-Florin (ECTP) and Gerhard Ermischer (Civilscape), Chair of the Working Group on Landscape, a cohesive tool at threat, also made contributions.
- European Landscape Award jury – During the examination of the candidatures for this biennial award on 16 and 17 May 2013, the Chair of the committee praised the participatory quality of the projects presented.
- European Landscape Workshops, Cetinje (Montenegro – 1-3 October 2013) on the theme of “Territories of the future, landscape identification and assessment: an exercise in democracy” – statement by the Chair during the opening, and by the NGOs the European Council of Spatial Planners (ECTP), CIVILSCAPE and the International Federation for Housing and Planning (IFHP), during the workshops.

e. CEMAT: Democracy and spatial development. The committee contributed to the work of the Committee of Senior Officials of the CEMAT (Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning). Being unable to travel to Athens, its members submitted contributions by email [contributions by The International Association Rurality-Environment-Development (RED), ECTP and IFHP].

f. Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) – Contribution in support of a proper balance between spatial and cultural considerations.

g. European Committee on Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR)

The committee made contributions on behalf of the Conference of INGOs concerning almost all the issues addressed, in particular the impact of the crisis on local authorities and participatory procedures.

h. Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ) and Joint Council on Youth (CCJ+CDEJ). The Vice-Chair, Israël Mensah, attended these bodies’ meetings in Budapest from 3 to 5 April and in Strasbourg from 14 to 16 October 2013. In Strasbourg, he called for an extension of the Council of Europe’s “No Hate Speech Movement”. He helped take forward the main areas of action (democratic innovation, participation and diversity) developed in co-operation with the European Union and the Russian Federation.

i. North-South Centre

The Vice-Chair, Israël Mensah, represented the committee at the Lisbon Forum held on the theme “Valuing civil society as actor of governance: Perspectives for the southern Mediterranean” on 6 and 7 November 2013. He spoke about the need for reciprocity in the expectations of the North and the South regarding the establishment of the conditions for genuine social cohesion. He underlined the urgent need for a partnership between civil society and elected representatives for the southern Mediterranean with a view to building pluralist democracies (“Valuing civil society as an actor of governance: Perspectives for the South Mediterranean”).

j. European Forum of Municipal Youth Councils, set up by the Council for Justice, Equality, COJEP. The Vice-Chair of the Committee, Israël Mensah, represented the President of the Conference of INGOs at his request at a meeting held in Ankara by COJEP from 10 to 14 September 2013 on the subject of young people and social networks. He spoke about youth participation in the democratic process with municipalities as local decision-making bodies.

k. Belarus civil society communication platform – The Head of the Expert group on the Code of good practice, Antonella Valmorbida, spoke at the meeting of the Communication Platform Belarus on 14 and 15 June 2013 in Warsaw.

C Working Groups

- European Citizenship, chaired by H el ene Pichon, (Centre for Study and Strategic Prospective, CEPS)
- Climate and Human Rights, chaired by Edith Wenger (European Environmental Bureau, EEB)
- Social Cohesion and Intercultural Dialogue, chaired by Isra el Menah Catholic International Education Office, CIEO), Vice-Chair of the committee
- Follow-up fo the declaration on a genuine democracy, chaired by Jean-Bernard Marie (Conference of European Justice and Peace Commissions, Justitia Pax)
- Gender Perspectives in political and democratic processes, particularly dealing with conflicts, chaired by Anje Wiersinga (International Alliance of Women, IAW)
- Social and Political Developments in the Middle East and South Mediterranean Countries, chaired by Jean-Pierre Estival (European Association of Railwaymen, AEC)
- Housing and Health, chaired by Bernard Aubert (International Society of City and Regional Planners, ISOCARP)
- Landscape, a Social Cohesion Tool under Threat, chaired by Gerhard Ermischer (NGOs for the European Landscape Convention, CIVILSCAPE)
- Migrations and Democracy: situation, problems and exemples of answers given, chaired by Sylvano Marseglia and Jean-Claude Gonon, (European Association of Teachers, EAT)
- Relations with the EU, chaired by Claude-Laurent Genty (International Confederation of Professional and Intellectual Workers CITI)

D Running of English and French Websites and Facebook page

<http://democratie.weebly.com/>

<http://democracy-cingos.weebly.com/index.html>

[Committee's Facebook page](#)

4. The Gender Equality Expert

Betty Doornenbal, Gender Equality Expert

General goal

Promoting human rights/gender equality in theory and in practice.

Priority 2013

Promoting the ratification of the Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (CAHVIO), adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 2011. (Also referred to as the Istanbul Convention)

“It is the first legally binding instrument in the world creating a comprehensive legal framework to prevent violence, to protect victims and to end with the impunity of perpetrators. It defines and criminalises various forms of violence against women – including forced marriage, female genital mutilation, stalking, physical and psychological violence and sexual violence.” (Council of Europe press release, April 2011)

Main Activities 2013;

Representation of the Conference of INGOs and participation in the work of the [Gender Equality Committee](#) (GEC). The Committee was established in 2012 to help ensure the mainstreaming of gender equality into all Council of Europe policies and to bridge the gap between commitments made at international level and the reality of women in Europe.

Major subjects 2013:

- Media & the image of women. Conference organised by the GEC in Amsterdam on this subject;
- The ratification and entry into force of the Istanbul Convention;
- “Act against rape! Use the Istanbul Convention”. Joint action of the Council of Europe and the European Women’s Lobby (EWL).

Our sample letters to write to governments and members of Parliament to ratify the Istanbul Convention were very much appreciated by the members of the GEC for further distribution. The INGOs with participatory status received the [sample letters](#) by e-mail.

Participation in:

- the Parliamentary Network women free from violence, [Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination](#), worked together with its chair José Mendes Bota on this subject;
- the Parliamentary Network to stop sexual violence against children, [Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development](#);

Following of the work of the Parliamentary Assembly on gender equality.

Initiation and facilitation of the [Working Group on “preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings](#) of the Human Rights Committee of the Conference of INGOs.

Contribution to the Freely Constituted Equality Group of the Conference of INGOs in exchanging views and experiences on gender equality and in lobbying as a team for gender

equality and parity by talking with members of the Parliamentary Assembly and drafting amendments for their reports.

Working together to set up the Working Group on preventing and combating violence against women, domestic violence and trafficking in human beings.

Contribution to the Working Group on “Gender perspectives in political and democratic processes particularly dealing with conflicts”.

Endorsement of the side-event “[Supporting the wishes, demands and priorities of women in the Arab world](#)”

Writing and publication of an [article to promote the ratification of the Istanbul](#) Convention.

Speaker at the expert meeting on the ratification of the Istanbul Convention, organised by the Dutch Council of Women (umbrella organisation) in co-operation with the European Women’s Lobby and the Council of Europe, The Hague.

Speaker at the Human Rights Committee on the Istanbul Convention and what NGOs can do to promote the ratification.

III. CONCLUSIONS

We have just seen the work of the three committees and the working groups – we have, of course, taken account of the activities included in current projects and for 2014. At the same time, we have incorporated decisions, processes and the ratification of documents on which work began in 2013. The Conference operates on an ongoing basis.

This bears witness to the continuity and variety of what has already been achieved, taking account of the conceptual and practical input of the 27 working groups.

We must capitalise on all this and show the high standard and wide range of the analyses and proposals by the INGOs in the Conference and of their contribution for organised civil society as a whole and in the context of the quadrilogue.

This annual review covers the work done by the various players and includes the reports of the three committees, the texts adopted, specific contributions, the reports of the working groups, meeting synopses and the information published on the [site of the non-governmental organisations working in co-operation with the Council of Europe](#).

It is a very large and diverse document which must constantly be used, disseminated, published, highlighted, capitalised on and presented at all institutional levels and on the ground, as was and still is the case with our contribution to “Living Together”.

Our activities therefore form part of an ongoing process for the benefit of all of Europe’s citizens.

IV. ADOPTED TEXTS

In 2014 the Conference of INGOs adopted several texts related to its main areas of activity

- [CONF/PLE\(2013\)DEC1](#)
Declaration adopted on 24 January 2013 on "Genuine Democracy"
- [CONF/PLE\(2013\)REC1](#)
Recommendation adopted on 24 January 2013 on "Gender Equality – a condition for success of the Arab Revolutions"
- [CONF/PLE\(2013\)REC2](#)
Recommendation adopted on 24 January 2013 on "Changes in the situation with regard to torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in the Council of Europe member states"
- [CONF/PLE\(2013\)RES1](#)
Resolution adopted on 24 January 2013 on "Acting together to eradicate extreme poverty in Europe"
- [CONF/PLE\(2013\)RES2](#)
Resolution adopted on 24 January 2013 on "Gender Equality – a condition for success of the Arab Revolutions"
- [CONF/PLE\(2013\)REC3](#)
Recommendation adopted on 27 June 2013 on the "Situation of the police and police trade unions in Tunisia"
- [CONF/PLE\(2013\)REC4](#)
Recommendation adopted on 27 June 2013 on "Human Rights and Religions"
- [CONF/PLE\(2013\)REC5](#)
Recommendation adopted on 30 September 2013 by the Standing Committee on behalf of the Conference of INGOs on the Opinion of the Expert Council on NGO Law on "The law introducing amendments to certain legislative acts of the Russian Federation regarding the regulation of activities of non-commercial organisations performing the functions of foreign agents"