



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee CONF/DEM(2015)RAPACT

Draft Activity Report for 2015

In 2015 the Committee focused on three priority areas: **social cohesion, migration and the climate**.

The creation of cohesive societies was a key focus as from January – a month bloodied by the attacks in Paris – and throughout the months that followed, during which an increasing number of acts of terrorism were committed in Europe and around the world in the name of Islamic State, the influx of refugees swelled, and the danger of rifts opening up between and within the Member States of the Council of Europe increased.

Climate change was also on the global agenda for debate in 2015, with a high-level commitment at world level at stake. Having spent three years working in this area, the Committee continued to support efforts to incorporate respect for human rights into climate policy.

In relation to these three challenges, the Committee's stated aim was to promote the values and instruments of the Council of Europe, and to do so jointly with its "Quadrilogue" partners as far as possible.

I – Development of cohesive societies

This work involved:

1. **An urgent debate** at the end of January 2015 on the theme: "*Je suis Charlie, je suis...*", *the march of 11 January 2015: tremendous hope and responsibility. How should we respond and act now?*

This debate was attended by press officers, the President of the *Club de la presse Strasbourg – Europe*, the editor-in-chief of the most widely read French regional daily newspaper, actors involved in some remarkable integration and dialogue efforts, the founders of [Nes & Cité](#) and [Coexister](#), the members of the Committee who founded and lead the interfaith group – [G3I](#), and the Director of Democratic Governance of the Council of Europe.

(Read the detailed synopsis at [CONF/DEM\(2015\)SYN1](#) and see the [Committee's website](#), January 2015)

2. **Cooperation for an inclusive society with the European Committee on Democracy and Governance (CDGG) of the Council of Europe**, bringing together representatives of the ministries responsible for local and regional government, in April 2015. It was agreed that each participant would take stock of their country's best practices and share them with the others. (See the [Committee's website](#))
3. **Support for the InterFaith Tour team** which attended a plenary session of the Committee on the occasion of its departure from the Council of Europe in June 2015. The initiative, which had been presented to the Committee in January by the President of Coexister and which brought together a Muslim man, a Christian woman, a Jewish woman and a female atheist, received a very positive response from the Committee. The latter offered the assistance of its networks whenever necessary during the group's journey. It pledged to help to disseminate its findings. (See the June synopsis and the Committee's website: [Departure of the InterFaith Tour from the Council of Europe](#))
4. **The establishment of a working group entitled "Inclusive societies: from living together to doing things together"** whose role is to research and disseminate cohesive practices developed by our NGOs in Europe and on other continents and the **launch** on the social media of **dedicated pages** providing noteworthy examples of good practice for the creation of inclusive societies. ([Dedicated page](#))
5. **Participation in European Local Democracy Week** for which the theme was "*Living together in multicultural societies: respect, dialogue, interaction*". The NGOs members of the Committee were called upon to mobilise their skills so as to promote social cohesion and dialogue in October. They did so by publicising the key themes and concepts of ELDW, which was coordinated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. ([Committee website](#))

II – Migration

1. **Transformation of the "Migration" Working Group into the "Europe-Mediterranean" Working Group**
 The Mediterranean has become one of the world's deadliest regions due to migration-related disasters. As a result, the Migration Working Group led by Jean-Claude GONON wished to situate its work in a "Euro-Mediterranean" geographical and political context. Its goal is not to supplant political leaders and analysts, but to seek to identify specific courses of action and ideas in order eventually to put forward practical examples specifically relating to the activity of NGOs, with the aim of tackling an issue that threatens to create deep divisions in Europe. ([See dedicated page](#))
2. **Supporting two initiatives to raise the awareness of the NGOs members of the Committee:**
 - **A travelling exhibition** by AEDE about **the situation of migrants in Europe**.
 - **A conference** held by MIAMSI under the patronage of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe entitled "*Mediterranean, a way through the sea: migration of peoples, culture and religion*" from 20 to 22 November 2015 in

Pozzallo, Sicily, the aim of which was to address the issue of migration in a holistic manner.

3. Link between migration and climate: forced migration due to environmental constraints through

- **A discussion on the topic “*Climate change and migration*”** during the June session, with contributions from Karl DONERT, the Vice-Chair of the Committee, and François GEMENNE, an expert on environmental geopolitics. (See the June 2015 Synopsis and the [Committee’s website](#))
- **A round table discussion on the topic of environmental refugees** during the climate debates organised jointly with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Dina IONESCO, head of division at the International Organization for Migration (IOM), also participated. See the synopsis and the [minutes of the proceedings](#) on the Committee’s website.

III – Climate change and human rights, contribution of Council of Europe civil society to COP 21

1. Texts and lobbying

- A declaration by the Committee was adopted by the Conference of INGOs for submission to the statutory bodies of the Council of Europe, the European Union, the United Nations, the States Parties and relevant civil society organisations
- Development, adoption and wide-ranging dissemination of a position paper entitled “Climate Change and Human Rights” supported by the Conference of INGOs

[See the website](#) dedicated to these texts

2. Three side events given the COP 21 label

- **At the Palais de l’Europe**, a round table discussion entitled “***Towards an ambitious agreement at the Paris Summit***” was held on 29 September in collaboration with the Sub-Committee on Sustainable Development of the Parliamentary Assembly and was chaired by Lord Prescott, a former UK Deputy Prime Minister and former negotiator of the Kyoto accords, and Sir Alan MEALE, a member of the Parliamentary Assembly. ([See article](#))

This event was attended by NGOs, parliamentarians, a climatologist, a representative of the Human Rights Directorate of the Council of Europe and the Head of the Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division of the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Contributions to the committee's proceedings were also received from the delegate of the NGOs Working Group on

“Climate and Human Rights” within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) ([see article](#)) and the representative of the Anna Lindh Foundation.

Three key points emerged from this meeting:

- Ensuring that the Council of Europe has relevant and effective tools. In particular, it has a unique monitoring tool, the European Court of Human Rights. ([See the article on the website](#))
 - The need in the opinion of PACE – a position shared by the Committee – for effective national legislation to strengthen action against climate change . ([See the article on the website](#))
 - Growing awareness of the undeniable link between migration of all kinds and environmental constraints ([See the article on the website](#))
- In the “**Climate Generations Areas**” at COP 21:
1. **Side event: “Citizens and local authorities: a common agenda for climate”,** 9 December 2015
 2. **Side event: “Climate change and human rights: focus on urban life”,** 10 December 2015

These two events, which were attended by intergovernmental organisations, NGOs, elected representatives with primary responsibility for climate issues in major urban areas, public debate leaders and representatives of the student movement COY, provided an opportunity to highlight examples of good practices and policy recommendations based on civic participation and respect for human rights. ([See the Committee’s website](#))

They helped to effectively drive forward the Action Agenda implemented by Peru, France, the United Nations and the UNFCCC Secretariat.

IV Main contributions to the activities of the Conference and other Council of Europe bodies

- **Fact-finding visit** made by the Conference of INGOs to **Moldova** (Thierry MATHIEU)
- **World Forum for Democracy 2015:** the Chair of the Committee moderated [Lab 4](#) on civil society responses in relation to “Freedom vs. control”

- **Parliamentary Conference on the MEDICRIME Convention** (Thierry MATHIEU, Vice-Chair of the Committee)
- **European Landscape Convention** of the Council of Europe
 - o Member of the jury for the fourth European Landscape Award of the Council of Europe (Anne-Marie CHAVANON)
 - o Contribution to the European Landscape Convention workshops. *“Landscapes and cross-border cooperation: landscapes know no borders”* – Andorra – October 2005 (Gerhard ERMISCHER and Patrice COLLIGNON)
 - o 8th Council of Europe Conference on the European Landscape Convention (Gerhard ERMISCHER, Coordinator of the Working Group on “Social Cohesion and Shared Territories”)
 - o Statements made at a meeting of the Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP) – June 2015 (Gerhard ERMISCHER and Patrice COLLIGNON)

V Working Groups

Several of the groups were involved in the activities referred to above. For details of the objectives and activities of all of the Working Groups in 2015, see the Committee’s website: <http://www.democracy-coe.org>

VI – External promotion of the work of the Conference of INGOs and the principles and statutory bodies of the Council of Europe

The Chair and Vice-Chairs of the Committee spoke in an official capacity at numerous conferences in 2015, such as: the UNEP Eye on Earth Summit in Abu Dhabi, 5-8 October 2015, the conferences of the Anna Lindh Foundation in Paris (Karl DONERT, Vice-Chair), international conferences and seminars: “Smart cities and smart countries” in Paris, “Refugee Housing” in Berlin, 12 November 2015 and “The Necessity of an exchange of Good Practices for the City as a Project” at Paris City Hall on 5 December 2015 (Anne-Marie CHAVANON, Chair), and several national and international events in Monaco (Thierry MATHIEU, Vice-Chair).

Speakers who were given hearings or invited to participate in the Committee's activities in 2015

Samir AKACHA, member of the [InterFaith Tour](#)

Abdel BELMOKADEM, founder and director of [Nes & Cité](#), author of [Tendez-nous la main](#)

Merete BJERREGAARD, Human Rights Directorate of the Council of Europe

Dimitrios CAVOURAS, Programme Officer at the [Anna Lindh](#) Foundation

Dave COLEMAN, founder of Cooler, a community interest group in Manchester

Albert DUBLER, former president of the [International Union of Architects](#)

Maguelonne DEJEANT PONS, Executive Secretary, European Landscape Convention – Council of Europe

Eladio FERNANDEZ-GALIANO, Head of the Democratic Initiatives Department and Head of the World Forum for Democracy

Léa FRYDMAN, member of the [InterFaith Tour](#)

Orsolya GANCOS, Project Assistant for [European Local Democracy Week](#)

Samuel GRZYBOWSKI, founding president of Coexister, author of [Tous les chemins mènent à l'autre](#)

Denis HUBER, Head of the Department of Cooperation, Administration and External Relations of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Yves HAUSS, climatologist

Dina IONESCO, Head of the Migration, Environment and Climate Change Division at the International Organization for Migration ([IOM](#))

Ariane JULIEN, member of the [InterFaith Tour](#)

Dominique JUNG, editor-in-chief of *Dernières nouvelles d'Alsace*

Bachir KANOUTE, town planner, Executive Coordinator of ENDA ECOPOP, focal point for Africa of the Observatoire international de la démocratie participative, Dakar (Senegal)

Claudia LUCIANI, Director of Democratic Governance at the Council of Europe

François LEBLOND, honorary regional prefect, former chairman of a public debating committee, President of COFHUAT (Confédération française pour l'habitation, l'urbanisme et l'aménagement des territoires) – [FIHUAT](#)

Charlotte MARCHANDISE-FRANQUET, President of the French Network of WHO [Healthy](#)

[Cities](#), Deputy Mayor of Rennes (France) with special responsibility for Health and the Environment

Emmanuel MICHEL, General Secretary of [Coexister](#)

Sir Alan MEALE, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Henri SMETS, international expert, member of the *Académie de l'Eau*, France

Niccolò MILANESE, Co-President of European Alternatives

Lucie NEUMANN, member of the [InterFaith Tour](#)

Sophie NEMOZ, lecturer and researcher, leader of the Conference of Youth (COY)

Gita PARIHAR, legal officer, Friends of the Earth England, Wales and Northern Ireland, delegate of the NGO Working Group on “Climate and Human Rights” of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

Lord John PRESCOTT, former Deputy Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and former negotiator of the Kyoto accords, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Environment and Energy of the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE)

Françoise SCHÖLLER, journalist working for FR3, President of the *Club de la presse Strasbourg – Europe*

Jo SPIEGEL, Commissioner for Energy Transition of the Mulhouse Alsace Agglomération, Mayor of Kingersheim (France), author of [Faire \(re\)naître la démocratie](#)