



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

A word from the President on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe

For the past 40 years, organised civil society has helped at both national and international level to achieve the statutory aim of the Council of Europe, which is “the achievement of greater unity between its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage and of facilitating their economic and social progress”. Compliance with the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter and the other legal instruments deriving from these treaties is the only way to ensure the effective implementation of universal and indivisible human rights for everyone. This specific aim lays the foundations for the joint action of the Conference of INGOs and the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and the General Secretariat, whose work is complementary to that of two other independent institutions of the Council of Europe: the European Court of Human Rights and the Commissioner for Human Rights.

The process of institutionalisation described below was marked by the adoption of legal documents aimed at regulating the role and the contribution of the Conference of INGOs to the Council of Europe’s work. In this connection we can cite the Committee of Ministers’ Resolution (2003)8, which put an end to the previously established consultative status, the Committee of Ministers’ Resolution (2005)47 in which the Conference of INGOs acquired the status of participant in the intergovernmental committees and subordinate bodies on an equal basis with the other institutions of the Council of Europe. On this occasion the status of the Conference of INGOs as a member of the Quadrilogue¹ was legally consolidated. Then came the Committee of Ministers Resolution (2016)3, which revised Resolution (2003)8 and redefined the criteria for the obtention or refusal of participatory status in a more transparent manner and affirmed the structural role of the Conference of INGOs within the Council of Europe.

In addition to this substantial work by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe with regard to organised civil society, there are two important documents concerning national NGOs: Resolution (2003)9 on the “Status of partnership between the Council of Europe and national non-governmental organisations”, and Recommendation (2007)14 on “the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe”, which, along with the “Joint guidelines on Freedom of Association “(2014) drawn up the Venice Commission and the Office for Democratic Institutions and

¹ Resolutions 2003(8) and 2016(3) state that “the development and reinforcement of this co-operation between INGOs and the Committee of Ministers and its subsidiary bodies, as well as with the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe has led to the “Quadrilogue” which is, within the Council of Europe, an expression of democratic pluralism and an essential element for the further development of a citizens’ Europe”.

Human Rights (OSCE/BIDDH), constitute the current standards to be respected by Council of Europe member states.

The Conference of INGOs has gradually gained recognition as a political body of the Council of Europe and has always demonstrated its commitment and relevance. The processes of construction and institutionalisation described below are not intended to be an exhaustive presentation of all the work being carried out. There is no doubt that a historical, or commonly referred to as a chronological, account, accompanied by a historical analysis, will contribute to a full understanding of the role of the INGOs and of the effects of their activities in the intergovernmental context of the Council of Europe and of its member states. Such an undertaking therefore remains a project which should bear witness to the creative potential of organised civil society with regard to new methods of governance, in ever-changing political, socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Today, the Conference of INGOs continues to be the main body representing INGOs which have participatory status with the Council of Europe. It ensures the proper functioning of the arrangements for INGOs' participation within the Council of Europe and thereby helps to affirm the political role of organised civil society within the Council of Europe.

I wish to thank Claude Laurent GENTY, who, in consultation with the other Presidents of Honour of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe (Daniel ZIELINSKI, Annelise OESCHGER and Jean-Marie HEYDT) has prepared the following presentation of the process of self-organisation and institutionalisation of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) which led to the establishment of the Conference of INGOs within the Council of Europe.

Finally, I would like to express the hope that the Conference of INGOs will continue to grow, thanks to the intelligence and relevance of its INGO members, which are its vital force and on whose behalf the Conference of INGOs speaks. I trust that the Conference will continue to be responsive and proactive in enhancing respect for human rights and responsible democratic citizenship, based on human rights and a common vision of solidarity in Europe. The future depends on us!

6 January 2017

Anna RURKA

President of the Conference of INGOs

The history of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe

As far back as 1952, the Council of Europe granted consultative status to International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs). In 1975, its Secretary General, Georg Kahn-Ackermann, invited the some 130 INGOs which had consultative status at that time to organise themselves so that they could have a common representation with the different bodies of the Council of Europe.

A year later, in 1976, after several working sessions attended by the delegates of a dozen INGOs and representatives of the Council of Europe Secretariat, the "INGO Liaison Committee" was set up and the 15 members of the first INGO Liaison Committee were elected by correspondence. These invitations to all INGOs with consultative status to lodge their candidatures and vote by correspondence were at the time organised by the Council of Europe's Political Affairs Directorate.

In January 1977, on the occasion of the winter session of the Parliamentary Assembly, the "Plenary Conference of INGOs ", proposed by the Liaison Committee during its first meetings, met for the first time and adopted its first set of Rules of Procedure. Since then, relations between the INGOs and the Council of Europe have steadily grown and become increasingly institutionalised.

In 1978, the Committee of Ministers recognised this new body representing the INGOs and it was given a secretariat and access to meeting rooms and to interpretation for its meetings. The internal organisation of the Plenary Conference of INGOs first provided for several "sectoral meetings" and then for "thematic groupings" bringing together all the INGOs according to their specific fields of interest. The Plenary Conference of INGOs also drew up its Rules of Procedure which ensure its proper internal functioning and guarantees its legitimacy and its representation on the various committees and on all of the Council of Europe's bodies.

In 1980, an Exhibition of the INGO members of the Plenary Conference was held in the Palais de l'Europe, in the Committee of Ministers' anteroom, to present the objectives and activities of each INGO to the parliamentarians and local and regional elected representatives. This exhibition, entitled "L'Europe des Peuples", was inaugurated in the presence of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Franz Karasek, the Ambassador of Cyprus, who represented the Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers, the Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly and of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CPLRE), which a few years later became the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The exhibition remained in place during the January session of the Assembly and the March session of the CPLRE. Several similar exhibitions were held throughout the 1980s.

In 1981, the Parliamentary Assembly's considerable interest in the Plenary Conference of INGOs led it to propose the establishment of a joint PA-INGOs committee, comprising 9 members of the Assembly's parliamentary committees and 9 members of the Bureau of the INGOs Liaison Committee. This joint committee organised several colloquies in the 1980s and the 1990s, which helped strengthen relations between the INGOs and the parliamentarians. It was unfortunately disbanded in the 1990s.

In 1983, a first reform of the Rules of Procedure of the Plenary Conference of INGOs stipulated that its President would henceforth be elected by the entire Conference and no longer by the members of the Liaison Committee. This major reform applied from the election of the new President in 1984.

From 1984 to 1986, a genuine dialogue was established between the INGO Liaison Committee and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marcelino Oreja Aguirre, at the initiative of the

latter, in the form of twice-yearly meetings, which were attended by the members of the Bureau of the INGOs Liaison Committee and the different Directors of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General.

For several years the Plenary Conference of INGOs and its Liaison Committee took part in the drafting of Convention 124 on the Recognition of the Legal Personality of International Non-Governmental Organisations, which would be adopted by the Committee of Ministers in 1986 and came into force – in 1990.

During the 1990s, the Plenary Conference of INGOs set up a financial association called “INGO-Service”, which is designed, thanks to the voluntary contributions paid by the INGOs, to give the Conference greater financial independence from the Council of Europe.

In 2003 consultative status was replaced by participatory status for the INGOs. The Council of Europe is the only international organisation to grant such a status to INGOs, with the aim of facilitating their collaboration with the steering committees, expert committees and the “subsidiary bodies” of the Council of Europe. The INGOs which hold participatory status contribute actively to the decision-making process and to the preparation of European legal instruments and their implementation.

In 2005, at the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, which took place in Warsaw, the Plenary Conference of INGOs took the title of Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe and was acknowledged as one of the “4 Pillars” of the Council of Europe alongside the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities. The Committee of Ministers then decided that the Conference of INGOs could henceforth delegate representatives to sit on the steering committees and expert committees, on the same basis as the Assembly and the Congress. Also in 2005, in the wake of the Warsaw Summit, Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, decided that members' travelling expenses to attend meetings of the INGO Liaison Committee would be reimbursed. Previously, the members themselves or their INGOs had had to cover these costs. At the same time “INGO-Service” decided to pay the Presidents of the Conference a monthly allowance.

In January 2008, the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe set up an Expert Council to help create conducive conditions for NGOs. With this aim in mind, this new Council examines legislation concerning national NGOs and its application and gives advice on bringing national legislation and practice into line with the standards set by the Council of Europe and with good European practices. Since its creation, this Expert Council has been very much appreciated by the other “Pillars” of the Council of Europe, in particular by the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, and by the Secretary General.

In 2008 and 2012, the Conference of INGOs undertook two major reforms: in 2008, it carried out a reform to inscribe in its Rules of Procedure the consequences of its new participatory status and the changes in its role following the Warsaw Summit; and in 2012, the Conference of INGOs carried out a further reform of its Rules of Procedure to adapt its organisation and functioning to the new architecture of the Council of Europe resulting from the major budgetary and structural reform, set in motion by its current Secretary General, Thorbjorn Jagland, when he took up office, following the example of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, henceforth referred to as “the Congress”.

Today, the Conference of INGOs comprises over 300 INGOs divided into 3 main thematic committees: the Human Rights Committee, the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges

Committee and the Education and Culture Committee, each of which comprises several working groups. Since the 2012 reform, a “Standing Committee” has replaced the former Liaison Committee. The latest Resolution relating to the participatory status of the INGOs, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 6 July 2016, confirms the place and the role of the Conference of INGOs as the voice of European civil society, which the INGOs have succeeded in establishing within the Council of Europe over the past 40 years.

Claude-Laurent-GENTY
President of Honour of the Conference of INGOs

Presidents of the Conference of INGOs

Claude-Laurent GENTY	1976 – 1986	<i>(President of Honour)</i>
Dirk JARRE	1986 – 1990	
Janine THOMAS-FONTAINE	1990 – 1992	
Catherine MIG-SCHALLER	1992 – 1996	
Pierre ARMAND	1996 – 1999	<i>(Passed away in 1999)</i>
Gilbert CAFFIN	1999 – 2000	<i>(President ad interim)</i>
Daniel ZIELINSKI	2000 – 2004	<i>(President of Honour)</i>
Annelise OESCHGER	2004 – 2009	<i>(President of Honour)</i>
Jean-Marie HEYDT	2009 – 2015	<i>(President of Honour)</i>
Anna RURKA	2015	

Celebrations of the Anniversaries of the Conference of INGOs

10th anniversary, in 1986:

Address by the outgoing President of the Conference, Claude-Laurent GENTY, to mark the end of his term of office "Future prospects for the role of the Conference of INGOs" and by the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Gaetano ADINOLFI, in the presence of most of the Directors of the Council of Europe

20th anniversary, in 1996:

Address by President of the Conference, Pierre ARMAND by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Daniel TARSCHYS, and by the President de the Parliamentary Assembly

25th anniversary, in 2001:

Address by the President of the Conference, Daniel ZIELINSKI, by the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, by the President of the Parliamentary Assembly and by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Walter SCHWIMMER

30th anniversary, in 2006:

Address by the President of the Conference, Annelise OESCHGER and by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Terry DAVIS