

Annual Report 2025

Letter from the Leadership

Dear Members, dear Colleagues,

I am delighted to share with you the 2025 Annual Report of the Conference of International NGOs of the Council of Europe (CINGO)!

This is our first report in this format. The Standing Committee has provided an overview of CINGO's key impact areas, accomplishments, financial performance and plans. Our annual reports aim to maintain transparency, engage our stakeholders and reflect on the impact of our collective efforts. Naturally, this report cannot reflect every individual activity within CINGO, but it does offer a compelling selection!

2025 was an eventful year for CINGO, and a year of adapting to the global political 'rupture'. In such times, the role and engagement of civil societies is crucial - for advancing the public good, defending rights, supporting the most vulnerable and giving a voice to the voiceless.

In 2026, CINGO turns 50, and our slogan for this special year is: 'Peace, democracy, human rights: More than ever'. I invite you to read the report, and I look forward to celebrating CINGO's anniversary with you and making 2026 an even more impactful year.

Gerhard Ermischer, President of CINGO

Strasbourg, 10 April 2026

Mission and Governance

The Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (CINGO), established in 1976, is the representative body of international NGOs with participatory status within the Council of Europe (CoE). It is civil society's representative body ('pillar') in what is called the CoE 'quadrilogue'. The other three pillars are the Committee of Ministers (CoM), the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Congress).

The [mission](#) of CINGO is to be the authentic voice of diverse civil society within the Council of Europe member states, representing national and international perspectives, and supporting the vision of a Europe of peace founded on the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

- CINGO comprises the following bodies: General Assembly, Standing Committee, Thematic Committees, Expert Council on NGO Law, Task Force on Civic Space Watch, Verification and Dispute Committee and Appellate Committee. [OING-Service](#) Association has been a partner organisation of the Conference since 1994.
- CINGO is working on the basis of various texts: [Rules of Procedure](#); [Code of Conduct](#); [Communication Charter](#); [Guidelines for CINGO Representatives to the CoE Steering Committees](#); [Information note on the organisation of side events](#).
- [Strategic plan 2024-2027](#) provides general direction for the CINGO development.

CINGO: 2025 in Review

FACTS & FIGURES

- 267 of members, 10 CINGO Committees, 14 Standing Committee sessions.
- 2 General Assemblies (150 participants)
- 7 new members: *Centre de la Protection Internationale (CPI)*, *Campaign to Uphold Rights in Europe (CURE)*, *International Academy of Family Lawyers (IAFL)*, *Missing Children Europe (MCE)*, *Save the Children Europe*, *International Justice Mission (IJM)*, *People in Need (PIN)*
- 6 recommendations, 3 declarations, statements adopted by the Conference.
- 200 young people engaged across Europe and beyond through CINGO Youth
- 2 country visits: [Serbia](#) in September 2025 and [Greece](#) in November 2025 (70+ NGOs interviewed on the ground!)
- 8 NGOs as partners within BRIDGE (Building Resilience, Inclusion and Democracy through Grassroots Engagement) project
- 6k follower on Facebook, 152 followers on Instagram.

IMPACT AREAS:

Impact Area 1: Civic Space and Solidarity

Working on civic space and supporting groups and individuals under duress and persecution has been central to CINGO. In 2025, the Conference consistently raised its voice in defence of [civic space](#) and the role of civil society across Council of Europe member states and CoE bodies. At the General Assembly in April 2025, CINGO adopted a [recommendation](#) on countering shrinking civic space, and called on the CoE to ensure ‘*that the New Democratic Pact is about people’s participation and the expansion of civic space*’.

Equally significant was CINGO’s role in strengthening internal solidarity towards human rights defenders (HRDs) and activists working in repressive contexts. CINGO intervened on several cases of HRDs from Serbia, Georgia, Ukraine, Turkey, etc.

‘CINGO stands as a living proof that solidarity is not a slogan, but a practice: a space where diverse voices come together, build trust across borders, and act in unity to defend the core values of human rights, democracy, and inclusion. Its

strength lies precisely in this collective commitment’. — Goran Miletic, Standing Committee

Impact Area 2: Migration

[CINGO Committee on Migration Issues](#) has been central to CINGOs monitoring developments in the field of migration and asylum.

In May 2025, nine EU countries have published an open letter calling for the European Convention on Human Rights ([ECHR](#)) to be reinterpreted and set ‘fewer limits’ to deport migrants. Following the publication, CINGO experts have been in constant dialogue with the CoE Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) and the member states, striving to bring in a civil society perspective: the level of rights protection granted by the Convention and the independence of the European Court of Human Rights are of paramount importance. *Michael O’Flaherty*, the CoE Commissioner for Human Rights also [warned](#) European leaders not to create a ‘hierarchy of people’ as they pursue reforms to migration policy.

The permanent CDDH-representatives of CINGO, *Ciaran King* and *Simon Matthijssen*, in close collaboration with the CINGO committee on Migration Issues, have provided a series of reviews and recommendations on the documentation prepared by CDDH for the ministerial conference in December 2025 and an intended political declaration, to be adopted in Chisinau in May 2026.

Impact Area 3: Artificial Intelligence

CINGO experts, led by *Francesca Fanucci* of ECNL, have been actively involved in discussions on the implementation of the new [Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence](#) and human rights, the *first-ever international legally binding treaty* in this field, opened for signature in September 2024. CINGO reviewed the Convention during the drafting process, and in 2025 contributed analysis of its new monitoring mechanism [HUDERIA](#), advocating for a consistent human rights based approach to assessing the risks and impact of AI.

In mid-2025, CINGO observers participated in a discussion with the CDDH on “*AI and military systems*”. Contrary to the suggestions of CINGO and many other observers, the CDDH decided that the proposed AI regulations *would not apply to military use or dual use AI*.

Impact Area 4: Environment and Climate

Together with its member organisations, including Amnesty International (*Rita Patricio*) and Greenpeace (*Amy Jacobsen*), CINGO played an active role in the Ad Hoc Multidisciplinary Working Group on Environment and Climate ([GME](#)). In 2025, this effort culminated in the establishment of a new [Steering Committee on the Environment](#) (CDENV), which was granted a mandate for 2026-2027. Though the CGENV, CINGO continues to advocate for the right to a clean and healthy environment to be recognised as a fundamental human right, with a goal of establishing a topical [additional Protocol](#) to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR).

Impact Area 5: Embedding Youth into CINGO and CoE events

One of the achievements of CINGO in 2025 was the continued strengthening of CINGO Youth as a structured space for participation, dialogue and cooperation. Through side events, round tables

and webinars, CINGO Youth brought more than 200 young people from Europe and beyond into CoE activities. Topics included youth strategy development, inclusion, peacebuilding, hate speech prevention, democratic participation, etc. On 12 August 2025, International Youth Day, the Maltese Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe and CINGO released a joint statement [*Empowering Young People for Democracy and Leadership*](#). ”

‘Youth participation is not a parallel track to democracy; it is one of its conditions. In 2025, CINGO Youth helped make this visible by creating real spaces where young people could connect and shape the conversations that matter.’ — Ece Çiftçi, Standing Committee

MAIN ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- **Work in the intergovernmental Steering Committees**

CINGO is represented in many of the intergovernmental steering committees, partial agreements, monitoring mechanisms and drafting groups of the Council of Europe. The Standing Committee coordinates this process, representatives come from CINGO member organisations.

E.g. In November 2025, CINGO was specifically recognised for its contribution to the adoption of non-binding recommendations regarding Children's Rights in Care Proceedings and Parental Separation by the [*Steering Committee for the Right of the Child*](#) (CDENF). CINGO has been represented at CDEBF by *Ruth Allen* of IFSW.

CINGO experts have also contributed to written and verbal consultations on key issues, such as Comprehensive Sexuality Education (including perspectives on LGBTQi youth), online risks and harms and AI impact on children and on access to child friendly multidisciplinary and interagency justice.

- **CINGO at high-level events**

Gerhard Ermischer, the CINGO president, represented the Conference at several high-level events, each of them a key development for international justice:

- 12 March 2025: adoption of the [*Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer*](#), first-ever international treaty aimed at protecting lawyers,
- 14 May 2025: adoption of the [*Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law*](#),
- 25 June 2025: signing ceremony for the creation of the [*Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression against Ukraine*](#),

On 16 December 2025, CINGO Standing Committee member *Simon Matthijssen* witnessed signing of the Convention establishing an [*International Claims Commission*](#) for Ukraine, currently signed by 35 States and the European Union.

- **BRIDGE project**

The BRIDGE project (Building Resilience, Inclusion and Democracy through Grassroots Engagement) won funding by the Council of Europe in an open call. Coordinated by Volonteuropé, it was implemented in partnership with eight NGOs across Europe: Social Platform, WeWorld, ProActive Group, La ligue de l'enseignement 35, Volunteering Matters, Európa Ház, Kimbé-Red and IDC Serbia.

BRIDGE was designed to boost trust and engagement in democratic processes by creating spaces for dialogue between civil society, citizens and local actors and to connect lived experience with the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy. Through national and regional roundtable discussions, BRIDGE gathered reflections and best practices of democratic participation and inclusion in the [Catalogue of Civil Participation](#), an interactive resource. The BRIDGE Final Summit took place in October 2025 in Strasbourg.

'Civil society must remain a co-creator of democracy's future, not a bystander to it.' - Piotr Sadowski, Volonteuropé/ Standing Committee

- **Expert Council on NGO law**

In 2025, the Expert Council held three meetings and published a [study](#) ('Non-Governmental Organisations: Review of Developments in Standards, Mechanisms and Case Law 2020-2024'). The Council issued several opinions: on Georgia's Foreign Agents Registration Act, the Hungarian Bill on the Transparency of Public Life and the Draft Amendments to the Slovak Republic's Framework Regulation Governing NGOs Introducing the Concept of 'foreign supported organisations'. Concerns about developments were raised in joint letters with the President of CINGO to the permanent representatives of Greece, Hungary, Slovakia, Serbia and Türkiye.

- **Enabling CINGO thematic [committees](#) (examples)¹**

Committee on Migration

CINGO Committee on Migration has been in constant dialogue with PACE and the Council's [Division on Migration and Refugees](#). On 10 -14 February 2025, a delegation from the Committee traveled to Poland to meet key stakeholders from civil society and political institutions in order to analyse the current migration situation in the country. This visit was hosted by Caritas Polska and its [conclusions](#) were presented to the embassies of Council of Europe member States. The Committee issued five communiques in 2025, drawing attention to [pressing issues](#) around migrants and asylum seekers in Europe.

Committee for interreligious & interconvictional Dialogue

Committee has been advocating for creation of a permanent platform for interreligious dialogue within the Council of Europe. In January 2025, it organised a side event at the PACE session, which was attended by the Commissioner for Human Rights, the President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, etc. Members of the Committee have built good working

¹ The committees carry out essential groundwork in specific areas related to the Council of Europe's remit. They act as the voice of civil society and represent CINGO, in particular, in dealings with various Council of Europe bodies. Here are a few examples of the work carried out by the committees (see online for a full list of the many activities and projects undertaken by each committee).

relations with a number with permanent representations, CoE PACE bodies and the European Parliament interlocutors. At the CINGO General Assembly in October 2025, the Conference adopted a [recommendation](#) adopted for the permanent platform.

Civil Society Committee on the Rights of the Child in Europe

In 2025, in addition to ongoing engagements with topical Council of Europe bodies, the Committee started its involvement in the CoE Consultation group on the Children of Ukraine and coordinated with the CoE Pompidou Group on addictions. In October 2025, the Committee and CINGO Youth organised a successful consultation on online gambling and young people.

“NGOs as advocates for gender equality and women’s rights”

On 26 May 2025, the Committee organised a [webinar](#): ‘Engaging Men and Boys in Gender Equality: A New Perspective’. Members of the Committee cooperate with GREVIO, PACE and around realisation of the CoE Equality Strategy. As a part of CINGO 50th anniversary programme, in late 2025 the Committee started preparing an exhibition around civil society efforts to promote the [Istanbul Convention](#) and address gender-based violence.

- ***World Day for the Eradication of Poverty***

On 15 October 2025, *Gerhard Ermischer* opened the [ceremony](#) to mark the World Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Held on the forecourt of the Palais de l'Europe, in front of the commemorative plaque symbolising the rejection of extreme poverty, the event brought together dozens of people. *Olivier De Schutter*, member of the European Committee of Social Rights and United Nations Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty, and *Bjørn Berge*, Deputy Secretary General of the CoE spoke at the event. To further mark this commemoration, the [CINGO Committee for the European Social Charter](#) organised a webinar on 16 October 2025 on social rights and the European Union's new anti-poverty strategy.

- ***A few more highlights***

- CINGO appointed its first representative to the ADI-ROM - Committee of Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues: *Allison Hulmes* of IFSW has activist/campaigning, lived and academic experience on the topic.
- CINGO celebrated the World NGO Day on 27 February 2025, by holding a webinar to discuss strategies for building sustainable and impactful civil society organisations.
- In October 2025, after a lengthy exchange, CINGO General Assembly adopted the [Statement](#) ‘The human cost of war: a call for lasting peace and protection in Gaza’.
- The Conference cooperated with the European Union - on the level of the European Parliament, European Commission, Fundamental Rights Agency, members states. It has also submitted its input for the new EU Civil Society Strategy.
- Since the establishment of the Group of Friends for Civil Society in the CoE Committee of Ministers, there has been a growing engagement with the group (Norway, Austria, etc.).

Financial Overview: FY 2025

Introductory comments:

(1) Financial data compiled in this report was received via CoE Civil Society Unit's Secretariat and OING-Service and compiled by the Standing Committee. This document aims to provide the CINGO membership with an overview of finances that supported CINGO functioning in FY2025. The report has not been audited. Minor inaccuracies are possible due to differences in accounting and grouping costs by CoE and OING-Service.

(2) The CoE directly bears the costs for: CINGO country visits, the Expert Council on NGO Law expenses (meetings and consultant fees), attendance of statutory bodies' events and protocolar representation (e.g. Committee of Ministers, ministerial conferences), GA venue provision and related expenses, etc.

(3) Via OING-Service, CINGO bears the costs for activities of its committees, representation at CoE intergovernmental committees (where CINGO has a participatory status), etc.

(4) This report does not account for the unpaid work and in-kind contributions that CINGO relies on in its daily functioning.

- **Revenues**

Revenue Source	Revenue Items	Amount (EUR)
<i>Council of Europe</i>		
	CoE: Annual grant matching the membership fees	20000
	CoE: direct funding of CINGO activities and processes	118261.24
<i>OING-Service</i>		
	OING-Service: membership fees	21386
	OING-Service: savings released for FY2025 activities	10500
	OING-Service: other sources	1732.55
<i>Other</i>		
		0
	TOTAL (EUR)	171879.79

- **Expenses**

Expenses/ Costs	Costs borne by CoE directly	Costs borne by OING Service	Costs borne by CINGO	Costs per category (EUR)
<i>Human resources</i>	10584	0		10584
<i>Travel</i>	21434.28	35861.04		57295.32
<i>Equipment and Supplies</i>	6896.61	0		6896.61
<i>Office costs</i>	4321.26	5081.61		9402.87
<i>Services</i>				0
<i>General Assemblies</i>	43363.77	0		43363.77
<i>Other fees</i>	31661.32	12440.5		44101.82
<i>Other</i>	0	0		0
TOTAL	118261.24	53383.15	0	
	GRAND TOTAL (EUR)			171644.39

Donor Acknowledgments

We are very grateful for the support by the Council of Europe, our members, our supporters and everyone who donates resources, time and energy to CINGO. Every contribution helps to create lasting change and realise our mission.

Standing Committee (2024 – 2027)

Gerhard Ermischer, President

Simon Matthijssen

Geneviève Laloy, Vice President

Goran Miletic

Piotr Sadowski, Vice President

Ece Çiftçi

Ruth Allen

Anna Sevortian

Iordanis Chorooglou

Ciaran John King

Looking Ahead

Goals for the Coming Year:

- 1. Intensifying CINGO experts' involvement in the Intergovernmental Standing Committees on key areas – as migration, environment, youth, education – and meaningfully contributing to realisation of the Reykjavik Principles the New Democratic Pact.
- 2. Organising a high-level event on civic space and launching a special Civil Society Solidarity Initiative during our 50th anniversary year.
- 3. Strengthening CINGO as an institutional platform, prioritising public-facing events and interactions and bringing the authentic voices of diverse civil society groups to the Council of Europe.

Get Involved

We invite you to join us on our mission!

Whether volunteering, donating, or simply spreading the word, your support makes an incredible difference.

To learn more, visit <https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/home> or connect with us by [email](#).

Thank you for being a part of our community!