

CONFERENCE OF INGOS OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

THREE-YEAR STRATEGY (2021-2024)

Preamble

The three-year (2021-2024) Strategy of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organizations (CINGO) of the Council of Europe (CoE) has been developed by the CINGO Standing Committee in consultation with members of the CINGO. It is to be adopted by a vote at the CINGO General Assembly on 5 October 2021

The Strategy is aligned with both the Strategic Framework of the Council of Europe¹ and the CINGO members' prioritization of actions in 2021-2024, leading to the six Strategic Priorities:

External

1. Ensuring freedom of expression, assembly and association.
2. Strengthening the effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights' system
3. Fighting inequalities and pursuing the European Social Charter.
4. Equality, anti-discrimination and protection of vulnerable groups
5. Acting against environmental degradation and climate change

Internal

6. Membership engagement and "Quadrilogue": enabling CINGO as the CoE civil society pillar.

Similarly to the CoE Strategic Framework, the CINGO strategy focuses on developing a "result-oriented culture, streamlining its organizational structures and operations". Through this, our strategy will directly contribute to one of the CoE's main aims by 2024 – to achieve "a stronger and more active role for representatives of civil society in the activities of CoE statutory bodies"².

To realize this, the 2021-2024 CINGO Strategy's six Priorities are matched with focal action points.

¹See SG/Inf(2020)34 of 23 November 2020. CoE Strategic Priorities are:

1. Implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights (ensuring its sustainability and strengthening the implementation of the European Court of Human Rights' judgments).
2. Ensuring freedom of expression both online and offline.
3. Fighting growing social inequalities and poverty.
4. Non-discrimination and ensuring the protection of the vulnerable groups.

There are also several additional foci – as, for instance, fight against environmental degradation (CoE Priority 10, Strategic Framework).

² SG/Inf(2020)34 of 23 November 2020, p.5, "Concrete achievements (deliverables) over the four-year period", Deliverable 8.

This Strategy is a framework document which sets the direction and guides the development of the Conference for the next three years. The tangible actions and modes of working for each Strategic Priority will be formulated in 2021 together with CINGO Committees and engaged member INGOs, using the existing CINGO 'toolbox' (delivering analysis/ policy proposals, country visits, side events, direct interventions/ quick response, etc.). CINGO may add new activities to deliver our strategic aims.

The Standing Committee will oversee overall implementation of this Strategy and report back on progress annually at the CINGO General Assembly.

CINGO and its Mission

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe is the representative body of all international NGOs enjoying participatory status within the Council of Europe³.

The Conference of INGOs is civil society's representative body ('pillar') in the CoE "quadrilogue", the other three being the Committee of Ministers (CoM), the Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (Congress).⁴ The exchange between all the bodies of the CoE is essential for the CoE to progress its aims of an inclusive Europe and democratic pluralism.

In addition to facilitating the participation of organized civil society in the work of the CoE, in line with the 2019 Helsinki decisions⁵, the CINGO serves as a platform where civil society can interact with the CoE in the attainment of its goals. It also promotes participatory democracy, principles of good governance and active citizenship, and freedom of association.⁶

The mission of CINGO is to be a true voice for the civil society within the Council of Europe member states and within the Council as an international organization, supporting the vision of a Europe of peace founded on the values of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

CINGO Strategic Priorities and Focal Points

Priority 1: Ensuring freedom of expression, assembly and association.

- **Focal Point:** Freedom of Association (CINGO core remit).⁷⁸

³Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 16 December 2020.

⁴ [The Conference of INGOs in a nutshell \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress)

⁵Decisions of the CoE Committee of Ministers adopted at the 129th Session in Helsinki (on 17 May 2019) "A shared responsibility for democratic security in Europe – The need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society's space in Europe", complemented by a set of CoE Secretary General's proposals in June 2020 (SG/Inf(2020)8).

⁶ Rules of Procedure of the Conference of INGOs (2020). The Conference is governed in accordance with the Rules of Procedure. It operates under the rules and mission of the Council of Europe according to Resolution CM/Res(2016)3 ([Decision of the Ministers' Deputies \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/en/web/congress)).

⁷See the 2018 Report "New restrictions on NGO activities in Council of Europe member States" (<https://pace.coe.int/en/files/24801/html>)

⁸ For CINGO this priority naturally includes ensuring academic freedom and advocating for democratic education.

- *Activities*: legal monitoring regarding civic space; policy advice at the level of CoE and member states; country visits + reports; World NGO Day; World Forum for Democracy; support for local and regional NGOs; collaborations with NGOs under pressure + international partners; educational efforts for diverse groups; debates by CINGO, etc.
- *Implementation Mode*: putting forward CINGO Expert Council on NGO Law input, advocacy, country visits, online and offline events.

Priority 2: Strengthening the effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights’ system.

- **Focal Point:** Implementation of the European Court of Human Rights’ judgments
 - *Activities*: improving public oversight for the judgment implementation on the national level, country visits + reports, monitoring/ contributing to follow-through on the CoE level, including Committee of Ministers, online and offline events.
 - *Implementation Mode*: aggregating information, putting forward CINGO members’ work on implementation of ECtHR judgments, country visits, establishing emergency switch board.

Priority 3: Fighting inequalities and pursuing the European Social Charter.

- **Focal Point:** Collective Complaints Procedure promotion.
 - *Activities*: advocating with CoE members states for the ratification and implementation of the revised European Social Charter, empowering NGOs to participate in the collective complaints system, policy work and education, awareness-raising around modern slavery, migrants, youth and children rights, organizing Days on Eradication of Poverty, etc.
 - *Implementation Mode*: monitoring (developing online Social Rights Tracker), advocacy, training sessions on the collective complaints’ procedure for international and local NGOs, online and offline events.

Priority 4: Equality, anti-discrimination and protection of vulnerable groups.

- **Focal Point:** Acting on the Istanbul Convention.⁹¹⁰

⁹ Intercultural dialogue and education across CINGO activities are vital to ensure equality, anti-discrimination and protection of the vulnerable.

¹⁰ CINGO acts as part of the accountability infrastructure of CoE, engaging and organizing INGOs to hold countries and organizations to account for their adoption and operation of key commitments of the CoE.

- *Activities*: awareness raising/ education, advocating for CoE member states' signature and ratification, action on countries that did not sign/ ratify or fail to progressively implement/ incorporate the convention into the national systems. Solidarity actions, cooperation with PACE.
- *Implementation Mode*: aggregating information, putting forward CINGO members' and committees' work on the Istanbul Convention, online and offline events.

Priority 5: Acting against environmental degradation and climate change.

- **Focal Point:** promoting environmental sustainability and action on climate justice
 - *Activities*: reviewing, designing, integrating policies leading to climate neutrality, promoting the appropriate CoE conventions, engaging members around the climate goals, promoting the best practices and setting the standards for the CoE as a whole.
 - *Implementation Mode*: monitoring developments, aggregating information/ developing a toolbox on sustainability, adapting operations, putting forward CINGO members' work, online and offline events.

Priority 6: Membership engagement and “Quadrilogue”: enabling CINGO as the CoE civil society pillar.

- **Focal Point:** Linking up with the CoE bodies (PACE, CoM, Congress, SG, Commissioners, etc.)¹¹
 - *Activities*: raising CINGO profile and visibility within CoE, strengthening cooperation and collective actions across organisations within the Conference, providing services to CINGO members, improving the resource base of the Conference.
 - *Implementation Mode*: internal advocacy, networking, organizational development, members' support and solidarity, online and offline events.

The priorities of CINGO are reflected in the activities of its committees. The Conference also participates in the Council through its representatives in intergovernmental Steering Committees and other CoE bodies and aims at member organizations' growing engagement in these activities. ++++

¹¹ Acting on this priority is tied to fostering youth participation and intergenerational dialogue within the Conference.