

**CONFERENCE OF INGOs
CONF/AG(2024)SYN2**

MEETING OF THE SECOND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Meeting report

9-10 April 2024

Tuesday 9 April 2024

Hybrid meeting

09:30-11:00 - First Session of the second General Assembly - Open to CINGO members only
English/French interpretation provided

- 1. Opening of the meeting** by Gerhard Ermischer, President of the Conference of INGOs (5 minutes)
- 2. Nomination of the Rapporteur** of the meeting
Rapporteurs: Piotr Sadowski & Anna Sevortian
- 3. Brief reminder of the election procedure and voting test**

GE hands over to the Moderator, Christoph Spreng, CINGO VP standing down at the end of his mandate, for clarity and transparency. Furthermore, to Cyril Ritchie, President of Verification and Dispute Committee, who chairs the proceedings.

Test of the electronic vote for those participants online, the vote has worked, and the test is finalised.

- CS expresses his best wishes to everyone and all the candidates, and hands over to Cyril Ritchie, President of the V&DC.
- CS thanks the members of this V&DC, Cyril Ritchie, MC Galibert, Anna Kraus, Michalis Mittas, Jean-Bernard Marie. Reminds of the election procedures, rules are very detailed. All but one candidate fulfilled all the requirements of the rules. Voting procedure in the room explained, first vote for President, then vote for Vice-Presidents, then election of the SC.
- Urns supervised by 4 tellers, member of the Secretariat, and Anne Kraus on behalf of the V&DC.

4. Draft agenda – for adoption

5. Elections (1st round)

Moderator: Christoph Spreng, Vice-President

Chair: Verification and Dispute Committee

[List of candidates](#)

5.1 Presentation of candidate for President and Election

Presentation of candidacy for President, by Gerhard Ermischer; election takes place; result 97 votes
87 Yes, 5 no, 5 abstentions.

RESULT: Gerhard Ermischer elected as President.

5.2 Presentation of candidates for Vice-Presidents and Election

Presentation of candidacy for the posts of two VPs, by Anne Bergheim-Nègre, Genevieve Laloy and Piotr Sadowski; election takes place; result: 88 votes.

- Anne Bergheim-Nègre: 26 votes
- Genevieve Laloy: 76 votes
- Piotr Sadowski: 66 votes
- Abstentions: 2
- Invalid: 1
- RESULT: Genevieve Laloy & Piotr Sadowski elected as Vice-Presidents.

5.3 Presentation of candidates for Standing Committee and Election

Presentation of candidacy for the post of eight elected members of the SC: Ruth Allen, Iordanis Chorooglou, Ece Ciftci, Isuf Halimi, Harry Hummel, Ciaran John King, Simon Matthijssen, Grissel Meneses Camacho, Goran Miletic, Olga Sadovskaya, Anna Sevortian, Claude Vivier Le Got; election takes place; result: 96 votes.

- RESULT

Absolute majority required (Rule 121 of the Rules of Procedure): 48

Ruth Allen: 72

Iordanis Chorooglou: 45

Ece Ciftci: 62

Isuf Halimi: 38

Harry Hummel: 30

Ciaran John King: 52

Simon Matthijssen: 50

Grissel Meneses: 36

Goran Miletic: 50

Olga Sadovskaya: 61

Anna Sevortian: 66

Claude Vivier Le Got: 47

Invalid: 1

RESULT

7 Elected: Ruth Allen, Ece Cifti, Ciaran John King, Simon Matthijssen,
Goran Miletic, Olga Sadovskaya, Anna Sevortian. second vote in the afternoon.

All the elections are in accordance with the Regulations and validated by Cyril Ritchie, President of the Verification and Dispute Committee

11:15-13:00 - Networking Event for the members of the Conference of INGOs - in the Hall in front of room G.03

14:30-16:45 Second Session of the second General Assembly - Open to CINGO members only

Election (2d round)

- Session starts. Cyril Ritchie presides.
Harry Hummel withdraws. Isuf Halimi withdraws. The e-ballot is being adopted accordingly.
- The second vote starts at 2.40 and closes at 2.46. Four tellers come out of the room + reps of verification and dispute committee.

• *Second round* to elect 1 member. Result: 82 votes

2 candidates withdrew: Isuf Halimi, Harry Hummel.

Invalid: 1

Abstentions: 3

Relative majority required.

Iordanis Chorooglou: 37

Grissel Meneses Camacho: 16

Claude Vivier Le Got: 25

RESULT: Iordanis Chorooglou has been elected

The election has been conducted in conformity with the rules.

- Cyril Ritchie stands down and Christoph Spreng thanks everyone, including for the operations, thank you who were all candidates, there was energy, in the preparations and in the room today.
- Gerhard gives thanks to Christoph at his stand-down and CS receives a standing ovation. CS: Our slogan "post-Reykjavik summit, the implementation summit".
- Gerhard goes back to the Chair, but gives chairing over to Genevieve, confirming working as team in the new Standing Committee.
- President and outgoing VP take over the moderation. Recognition for the Secretariat and technicians. Christoph thanks all candidates.

6. Presentation of new Committees

6.1 [Committee Inclusive Territories, Environment and Health](#) (Anne-Marie Chavanon & Elena Curtopassi)

- To enable CINGO to stimulate the bodies of the CoE to embrace... (+ relevant conventions and partial agreements) (event in Toulouse + COP29 in Azerbaijan)
- **Comment:** Swiss (2500 women association) the verdict was handed down and the state found in violation of the ECtHR.

6.2 [Civil Society Committee on the Rights of the Child in Europe: Protecting and promoting the well-being of children of all ages](#) (Ruth Allen as Vice-Chair)

- **Questions / Comments:**
 - o Church on the move: what age are children? How about the children in closed institutions. Ruth: 0 – 18, it is an international definition.
 - o This is the work we are doing around kids in parental proceedings.
 - o Mother's behaviour during pregnancy can affect children, can we protect these children at this phase?
Ruth: Happy to talk more how to work on the rights of very young children.

6.3 [Committee Education for Democracy](#) (Arja Krauchenberg)

- Asking for a one year prolongation of their mandate (have worked for 2 years so far) and building up to the practices they have put together and putting the quality education at the heart of all we do.
- The new strategy is called “learners first”.
- They would be 2 webinars, repositories of information, then Policy Recommendation to take all the work done.
- **Questions / Comments**
 - FEDE: what do you mean by vocational education for the children?
Answer: Educational practices for children between 0 and 12, some for 12- 25. We would want to have a special focus on children in the vocational training, it varies depending on the country, but there is no specific programme for these children for the education for democracy.
FEDE: there is a working and expert special group at CoE
Answer: there is a working group, but not much practice in the school. We are happy to collect practices.
 - Genevieve Laloy: we have cooperation between different commissions and organisations, we can establish links and share information amongst themselves.

6.4 [Committee Human rights, Democracy and Artificial Intelligence Civil Society in Action](#) (Gilbert Flam & Thierry Matthieu)

End of the session:

- Genevieve hands over to Gerhard to respond about the question of conflicts.
- GE talks about the moderation of conflicts which is very important, and when we talk about CoE, it is not a peace keeping, nor peace making institution, but it is there for human rights, rule of law and democracy, and there is no peace without them.
- So, what CoE can do is reestablish and reinforce these three principles. This is the fundament to the restoration of peace upon these principles! Upcoming country visits – e.g. BiH, need solutions where principles of human rights, democracy and rule of law are respected and implemented. We will not solve those problems in CINGO, but we will do work to help the victims of these impacts, wars, conflicts.
- GE: “United around our values” – CoE – but not all CoE MSs are living up to those values

17:00-17:30 Meeting of the General Assembly of INGO-Service Hybrid meeting (Agora G.03 / Kudo)

Wednesday 10 April 2024

10:00-13:00 Third Session of the second General Assembly -Open to CINGO members only

Rapporteurs: Ruth Allen and Ciaran King

President Gerhard Ermischer opened the session and announced we will open the youth delegate programme for new applications soon. Gerhard handed over to Genevieve L Vice President to facilitate the session on presentation of new committees.

7. Presentation of new Committees(continued)

7.1 Committee for [Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue](#)

- Gabriela Frey introduced the rationale for the committee – to enable constructive dialogue between religions and convictions to address the problems of today, and to work for a permanent platform for such dialogue in Council of Europe (CoE).
- Lilia Bensedrine Thabet continues to explain the aims of the proposed committee and the work plan, including work within the EU as well as CoE structures. They will involve young people, hold a webinar on education for dialogue, collect inspiring practices and working towards a toolkit.
- Gabriela and Lilia respond to question about how the committee addresses gender equality in its work, explaining this is integrated into the work and membership across different religions. More men are encouraged to join the committee.
- Comment from interfaith INGO online: The proposal is exciting and the speaker welcomes future cooperation with the committee and supports the female leadership of this agenda. They will make contact after the General Assembly which is welcomed by the proposers.
- Genevieve (Vice President) highlights importance of fostering dialogue across members and across committees.

7.2 Committee on [Migration Issues](#)

Presented by proposed new Chair, Christine Monty (OENDDF) and Daniel Guery (Vice Chair).

- The proposal is a continuance of work of the previous committee with a new focus on difficulties of resettlement/housing. The committee will also remain responsive to contemporary migration issues hence the name –dealing with the question of ‘migration’ – and the important role of CINGO in addressing these. The committee will coordinate actions across all the main parts of CoE and focus on results. This is an important (crosscutting) to pic for all of CINGO.
- **Questions /Comments:**
 - o With reference to the UK proposed removal of ‘illegal’ asylum seekers to Rwanda, what can we do to resist this inhuman policy? Acknowledgement of this issues and response that PACE is addressing this.
 - o Comments from the floor that the work of the committee is well regarded and applauded.
 - o Comments on anti-immigrant advertising linked to elections in Spain. Christine notes importance of work to challenge this during upcoming elections.
 - o Question about improving access to language education. This will be one of the issues to be discussed in the upcoming webinar.

7.3 Committee [NGOs as advocates for gender equality and women’s rights](#)

- Anita Schnetzer-Spranger (proposed co-chair) presented. The proposal is for continuance of previous committee (no name change) as gender is still central and cross cutting issue for CINGO and CoE. She explained the rationale and case for the committee and moved on to the

priority topics including training CINGO members and our NGOs on Istanbul convention's elements including gender stereotypes, sexism and changing men and boys' attitudes. She noted the recent (past) HR commissioner's paper on gender rights.

- Other themes to be considered will be sexual and reproductive rights and discrimination in workplace. The committee is working with CoE bodies on solutions and also planning events with youth. The committee welcomes more members.
- Comment from the floor: does the committee consider intersectionality? Anita responds that committee would like to look into this further but needs more experts to assist.

7.4 Committee Sports and Human rights

- New committee presented by proposed co-Chair Maritchu Rall. This is a new subject for CINGO. It is a priority for CoE – sport is important for rights and welfare particularly for young people. Combatting hate speech / actions and tackling racism and discrimination in sport are also priorities. Un equal access to sport is also a rights issue and benefits of sport should be open to all. It is also an issue for migrants as sport can be important for integration.
- The committee will work with the bodies of CoE working on sport including the PACE. Maritchu thanked CINGO colleagues for the help received in submitting this proposal.
- Proposed co-chair, Arthur Garrido, spoke on the dual importance of sport countering discrimination and countering discrimination in sport, and links with CINGO work on immigration and youth. The committee will promote importance of access to sport for physical health and wellbeing throughout life. Also noted the importance of socialisation, social wellbeing and emancipation through sport, particularly for girls and young women and migrant communities who may have less access to sport.
- **Questions / Comments**
 - o the floor are supportive and expand the presentation with further ideas including importance of informal sport and activities, how to combat violence in sport,
 - o particular issues of why people with frailty/disability and in unsafe living situations cannot access sport/physical activities opportunities. These ideas were welcomed by the committee.

8. Vote on new Committees and Election of Committee Chairs

All committee proposals were adopted by the General Assembly. All the candidates for the position of their Chair or co-chairs were elected by the General Assembly (see above).

9. Appointment of 5 members of the Verification and Dispute Committee, proposed by the Standing Committee, for a term of three years (2024-2027) (15 minutes)

- Chair - Cyril Ritchie, Civicus, World Alliance for Citizenship participation
- Marie-Claire Galibert, International Federation of Associations of the Elderly, FIAPA
- Anne Kraus, CISV International
- Michalis Mittas, European Young Bar Association, EYBA
- Marie-Christine Davy, Religious in Europe Networking against Trafficking and Exploitation (RENATE)

10. Appointment of 5 members of the Appellate Committee, proposed by the Standing Committee, for a term of three years (2024-2027) (15 minutes)

- Chair - Jean-Jacques Kuster, European Union of Court Clerks

- Daniel Guery, International Movement of Apostolate in Middle and Upper Classes (MIAMSI)
- Harry Hummel, International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)
- Tracey Martin, Quaker Council for European Affairs
- Harry Rogge, European Association of Geographers (EUROGEO)

14:30-18:00 Fourth Session of the second General Assembly

- President Gerhard Ermischer opened the meeting. Noted that work is starting on a strategy for the new mandate and information will be shared after the General Assembly regarding how members can input.
- Gerhard, noting recent concerns about increase in 'smears', illegal campaigns and legislation against NGOs in member states, introduced a presentation from European Social Action Network (ESAN).
- In connection with the studies carried out by the Council of Experts on NGO Law, ESAN organised an informal meeting on *"Threats to the rights, freedoms and capacity for action of associations, the place of associations in civil society today and tomorrow"* Attendance included Jeremy McBride (CINGO Expert Council on NGO Law), Ciaran King (CINGO Standing Committee) and Christophe Spreng (CINGO Standing Committee).
- Gianluca Mengozzi, President of the ARCI Association, member of ESAN, presented on negative consequences of the "Third Sector Reform" for the life of associations in Italy: reduction of financial resources through taxation, administrative registration and bureaucratic control, instrumentalisation by the public authorities, etc. .
- Camille Vega, Secretary General of Secours Populaire Français, expressed concern about the infringement of the rights of associations and their ability to act in the spirit of public generosity and voluntary work.
- The discussions revealed that, in addition to frontal attacks (stigmatisation of migrants and refugees, gender issues, LGBT, etc.), particularly in the legal sphere, there are many forms of attacks on the rights and freedoms of associations, their independence and their ability to act, depending on the country.
- Following this discussion, it was felt that it would be useful to consider, in coordination with the Presidency of the Conference and the Council of Experts, setting up a monitoring unit or observatory. Its purpose would be to collect information in each country via the member OINGs of the Conference in order to draw up an inventory, a map of Europe of infringements of the rights and freedoms of associations.
- For the time being, it was suggested that further work be done to develop the subject to specify and refine the different types of situations faced by NGOs, perhaps through drawing up a questionnaire for associations. Also, with the support of the Conference Secretariat, work to protect NGO and journalist freedoms already underway will be identified, in particular work by the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights.
- Gerhard commended the usefulness of this ad hoc group, an example of how such informal initiatives can be taken.

11. Presentation of a [new strategy on Equality](#)

Anita Schnetzer-Spranger introduced the paper developed following the pre-GA roundtable in October 2023. The paper proposes various ways in which gender as cross cutting theme can be taken forward in each committee within its own mandate.

- The new gender equality strategy 24-29 of CoE is available on the website in final draft.

- Gerhard thanked Anita for the paper and noted that gender equality committee in CoE have noticed the strategy and want dialogue, so he will introduce the parties. The new strategy was welcomed and all CINGO members were encouraged to read and engage with it.

12. Draft [communication on Migration and electoral context](#) prepared by the Committee on the rights of persons who are migrants – for approval by the Conference of OINGs

- Christine Monty and Daniel Guéry introduced proposed statement on the integration and rights of people who are migrants in context of upcoming elections and the risks of anti-migrant political campaigning. The statement included relationship between combatting hate speech/actions in populations and the need to address poverty, inequality and community integration.
- The paper noted that migrants often become scapegoats for all social ills. Unfairness becomes the message as people are competing for resources.
- Discussion ensued about the precise wording of the statement (which has been incorporated into the final published version of the statement on the CINGO website).

For 39 - Abstention 4. The motion was carried.

13. Intervention by Mr Matjaž Gruden, Director for Democracy, to give a future perspective

- Gerhard welcomed Mr Gruden who offered congratulations to the President and Vice Presidents on their new mandates.
- Mr Gruden leads the new directorate of democracy. This has been set up to support states in achieving and maintaining high democratic standards. The new directorate reorganised responsibilities and now includes attention to civil society. The directorate is also responsible for issues of media and journalist freedom.
- The directorate is new and there is opportunity for CINGO to shape its future after the Reykjavik summit. It includes a new intergovernmental committee on democracy - a significant investment. CDDEM will have broader mandate than preceding CDEM, including reviewing standards in light of Reykjavik. It is ambitious - to help member states implement the aims of Reykjavik and to strengthen civil society input, including CINGO's relationship with CoE. It will reaffirm the importance of civil society in genuine democracy and focus on strengths and threats to civic space. The CINGO expert committee on NGO law will be very important in this. Work with civil society will go beyond participatory and observer status and will include more outreach to NGOs. The Committee will meet in May 2024 to consider range of civil society matters.
- CDDEM will work with other intergovernmental committees and will connect intergovernmental work on democracy with the annual World Forum of Democracy (6-8 November 2024 -N.B. just after US elections) to strengthen democracy around the world.
- Mr Gruden noted importance of bringing together the cultures of civil society and the political bodies in CoE. Government bodies need to recognise and appreciate perspectives of civil society/NGO (not just vice versa) and efforts need to focus on turning 'in-principle' commitment to cooperation into concrete actions. The Council of Europe still stands alone in its depth of working with civil society compared to other similar bodies. Reasons to be proud and to improve.
- The Reykjavik roadmap includes improving various modalities of engagement with diverse CS beyond CINGO and CDDEM looking at how to mainstream approaches to CS inclusion. Also looking at how to provide more information to CS and to facilitate more and better interaction and resource this properly. Governments need to see this is an investment into the quality of their work and in CoE normal ways of working.

- **Questions / Comments**

Discussion with participants ensued on topics of:

- Culture of collaboration between civil society and governments within CoE
- How to influence Council of Ministers on migration issues
- The loss of space in PACE on interreligious and inter-convictional dialogue
- The fact that the 'roadmap' was not co-produced with civil society but emerged from Secretary General's office

Gerhard concluded the session noting that the aim is to go from 'Participatory Status' of civil society to true Participation.

14. Presentation by Mrs Tanja Kleinsorge, Head of Reykjavik Process and Environment Department, Directorate General Human Rights and Rule of Law, on the work of the new Department and of the Inter-Secretariat Task Force on the Environment

- Gerhard introduced Mrs Kleinsorge, noting that the recommendations of the Reykjavik process are holistic across all the key values of CoE: Environment, Human Rights, Rule of Law and Democracy all of which are covered by Mrs Kleinsorge's portfolio.
Mrs Kleinsorge presented on how CoE is effective through how its different parts work together. She is seconded to PACE for a year to work on the planetary crisis, to make this visible and to take action with member states. She is working on elements of a strategy while waiting for decisions at the ministerial session in May.
- CoE had reduced funding and focus on environment but now there is a mandate and secretariat are taking proposals to the Ministers to get progress.
Gerhard noted that her words reflect our representative, Greenpeace's comments on the difficulty with the new structure.
- Discussion ensued including questions about the successful climate case decided in the ECtHR on 9th April 2024 (<https://www.coe.int/en/web/portal/-/three-climate-change-rulings-from-the-european-court-of-human-rights>) This found in favour of potential victims who were members of an association. The right to healthy environment is included in the Reykjavik process. Need to anchor right to environment in legal instruments. There was some dissent amongst ECtHR judges who found the application of the law in this case 'judicial activism' which might lead to call for the court to be reined in.
- Gerhard thanks Mrs Kleinsorge for her presentation.

15. Wrap up and perspective of the new mandate, initiate a new strategy for CINGO

- Gerhard introduces the final session. A new three-year CINGO strategy will be developed. The new Standing Committee has met and decided a process to develop the strategy. This will include a short questionnaire for members based on priorities from the Reykjavik process.
- A first draft on strategy will be published and comments taken, second draft will be discussed in online meetings which will have interpretation. A third draft will be sent out and will be voted on for adoption in October 2024 session.
- Gerhard also noted some of our members are being attacked by repressive laws, smears, fake news and harassment. A working group will be set up with view to setting up a way of responding and supporting members facing such actions.
- We will set up a Reykjavik task force through the Standing Committee— a coordinating group.
- We will review and develop the youth project including bringing younger colleagues to the conference as a mainstream approach.

- A handbook on civil society and CoE is being revised and will be finalised soon and available online. This will include best practices and cooperation between govts and civil society.
- **Notices:**
Event June 21st pm in person and online on migration – all welcome
- **Important** Four-year review of compliance of INGOs – on 15 April all representatives will receive a link to questionnaire to provide information and update database. Must be sent back by deadline of 15 June to ensure continuous status.
- Question from floor about submission process and wish for possibility to see all the questions in advance of uploading. Secretariat will look into this.
- **A note of congratulations from the floor for the President, Gerhard, and the team** in managing the Spring session well, and for all the INGOs attending. Asked for a training/induction session for new members, and more information on the website and make it more accessible and attractive.

Session closes at 5.03pm

16. Date of the next Session: Strasbourg, 14-16 October 2024