

CONFERENCE OF INGOs CONF/AG(2025)Decisions2

GENERAL ASSEMBLY MEETING Strasbourg, 13-16 October 2025

Hybrid meeting

Summary Notes and Decisions Adopted

Please note that this is an executive summary of the General Assembly; it does not provide an exhaustive description of all matters raised.

1. The meeting on 14 October was opened with Gerhard Ermischer, President of the Conference of INGOs, in the Chair. He gave an overview of the organisation of this Autumn session and the draft agenda, pointing i.a. to:

- the various side activities (meetings and special events by the thematic committees, youth representatives and the Task Force on Civic Space) which had taken place on 13 October including a reception hosted by the Permanent Representation of Austria,
- an exhibition and refreshments offered by the Permanent Mission of Mexico on 15 October,
- a ceremony to mark the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, on the lower forecourt of the Palais de l'Europe, on 15 October
- a special event in the morning of 16 October on democracy and civil participation organised by Volonteuropa to notably present outcomes of the Bridge project which had benefited from a grant from the Council of Europe in support of engagement of civil society with the Organisation.

CINGO subsequently adopted the [draft agenda](#).

2. CINGO held an exchange of views with Ambassador Caitriona Doyle, Permanent Representative of Ireland to the Council of Europe and Chair of the Committee of Ministers Rapporteur Group Democracy (GR-DEM). She provided information also in response to questions and comments from members concerning i.a. the New Democratic Pact, the need for an initiative on the interreligious and interconvictional dialogue, access to certain Council of Europe documents, the recently created "Friends of Civil Society". **CINGO took note of the information.**

3. CINGO held an exchange of views with Ambassador Vebjørn Heines, Permanent Representative of Norway to the Council of Europe, Vice-Chair of Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM). He provided information, also in response to questions and comments from members – concerning i.a. the Friends of Civil Society initiative, the state of play regarding the revision of Recommendation CM/rec (2007)14 on the status of NGOs in Europe and the quality of contributions received through the public consultation on the draft. **CINGO took note of the information, including that the final draft as well as the Parameters to support the application of the Reykjavik Principles for Democracy will be examined by the CDDEM in November and that CINGO will participate in the work.**

4. CINGO held an exchange of views with Ambassador Daniela Cujbă, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Moldova to the Council of Europe on the country's priorities for its upcoming Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, in particular the need to increase outreach to stakeholders, ensuring the implementation of decisions of the European Court of Human Rights, support for Ukraine, events to be organised in relation to the European Social Charter, freedom of the press and of journalists and against foreign information manipulation, protection of children and violence against women. **CINGO took note of information provided.**

5. CINGO heard a report from Jeremy McBride, the Chair of CINGO's Expert Council on NGO Law, concerning two studies due in the early 2026 on the registration of NGOs representing minority communities, and on recent national developments that actually or potentially undermine the ability of NGOs to operate – based on a public call for responses to a short questionnaire. **CINGO took note of the call to participate in that study, with a deadline for responses set at 30 November. It also took note of:**

- **the call for suggestions and key issues for the Expert Council to consider** in the context of a possible new study on NGO access to the courts to present matters of public interest;
- **an upcoming call for candidates to fill two vacant positions in the Expert Council.**

6. Jeremy McBride referred to recent positive developments to limit the risks of unintended consequences of the implementation of the standards of the Financial Action Task Force (Recommendation 8) in the context of international monitoring work – also applied by the Council of Europe's MONEYVAL Committee; these involve better opportunities for NGOs to raise concerns and a new procedure to tackle wrongful use of regulations on the prevention of money laundering and terrorist financing that can lead to states being grey listed. **CINGO took note of the information.**

7. In the context of a special agenda item on the civic space, the President and Jeremy McBride CINGO provided information in relation to the recent visit to Serbia (9-11 September) and the upcoming one to Greece (11-14 November). They also commented on recent legal and other developments in Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Serbia, the Slovak Republic and Türkiye, and gave an overview of recent letters to the Permanent Representatives of the countries concerned they had co-signed and in legal opinions of the Expert Council. They underlined in particular the issues connected with the use of legislation on foreign agents registration, problematic statements made

by member of government, heavy bureaucracy and other administrative burdens, the use of intrusive surveillance techniques, the misuse of anti-money laundering prevention mechanisms, the fact that exchanges with civil society representatives from some of those countries – even within the Council of Europe - exposed the persons concerned to risks of retaliation. **CINGO took note of the information provided and the suggestion that the Council of Europe should offer more direct support for people under threat.**

8. In the ensuing discussion, participants confirmed the risks of retaliation for contributors to CINGO and other events, they expressed support for the World Union of Ahiska Turks in the light of the situation faced by this community (unable to return and reconcile within Georgia). The particular issue of Greece's Turkish minority organisations not being able to register and use 'Turkish' in the organisation's name (which was mostly a problem of execution of a decision of the European Court of Human Rights) was also discussed, as well as a recent bill in Hungary that would prevent access to all foreign funding (it has been withdrawn but may well come back) and other problematic arrangements. Some members took the view that the Council of Europe and the EU were not reacting effectively to such situations.

9. CINGO heard a report on recent work of the Standing Committee and the President, in particular on efforts deployed over the past year to gain more involvement and support from Council of Europe bodies; interactions with the thematic committees; the implementation of the Youth Strategy and the last (North Macedonia in November 2024, Serbia in October 2025) and upcoming (Greece, November 2025) country visits; that 2026 will mark CINGO's 50th anniversary and there will be celebrations throughout the year. Efforts were made by the Standing Committee to increase transparency and share more information on its activities. **CINGO took note of the information.**

10. CINGO heard presentations on the following draft texts, which were subsequently discussed, some of them following amendments:

- Draft Recommendation on State Accountability in the Provision of Housing for People on the Move, Refugees and Asylum Seekers – A fundamental matter of respect of human rights, proposed by the Committee on Migration;
- Draft Recommendation "For a permanent Platform for Ongoing Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue within the Council of Europe" – accompanied by an explanatory note, proposed by the Committee for Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue;
- Draft Recommendation on Access to sport for all as a recognised fundamental right, proposed by the Sports and Human Rights Committee;
- Draft Statement "The human cost of war: a call for peace and protection in Gaza", proposed by the standing Committee.

11. **CINGO, following a vote on each draft, adopted the texts on 15 October** and asked the President to communicate these to the other Council of Europe bodies (final versions are available on the [General Assembly webpages](#)).

12. The Secretariat provided an information update on the implementation of the Council of Europe's Roadmap on engagement with civil society 2024-2027, the

Conference on Shaping democratic renewal: civic space and the path to a New Democratic Pact for Europe, that will be held in Strasbourg on 2-3 February 2026, and the recent dissemination of a short questionnaire to collect data on the INGOs' participation in the Conference and Council of Europe activities, which will be needed for the annual Council of Europe reporting exercises. **CINGO took note of the information and the need to answer the questionnaire.**

13. The President of OING Service, Harry Rogge, provided an update on the composition of the current Board of the association (composed of himself, Thea Mohr (Treasurer), Hank Baars (VP), Wielie Elhorst, Joyce Herrent, with three supporting members from the Standing Committee, Gerhard Ermischer, Genevieve Laloy, and Simon Matthijssen), the association's activity and financing. Following an exchange of views on the current financial situation, the fact that too many INGOs were not member of, and contributing financially to OING Service, **CINGO took note of the call for all those concerned to become members of OING Service and contributing to the running of its work.**

14. The thematic committees and the Task Force on Civic Space gave presentations on the results of their meetings held on 13 October and on major updates and ongoing activities. **CINGO took note of the information provided.**

15. CINGO was informed about a proposal submitted by Anne Bergheim Negre (University Women of Europe) with interest expressed by a group of approximately 20 organisations - for the creation of a task force on gender parity, building on the new approach taken in General recommendation No 40. on the equal and inclusive representation of women in decision-making systems, adopted by the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) in October 2024. **CINGO also noted that the Standing Committee at its next meeting would look at what the task forces' specific activities would be before formally validating its creation.**

16. Ciaran King, member of the Standing Committee, presented a draft revised version of CINGO's Communication Charter and explained the changes proposed and the reasons for these. Following a vote, **CINGO subsequently adopted the proposed draft, without changes.**

17. The President presented a possible workplan for 2026. Participants mentioned further dates to be borne in mind (25 November: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women; 3 December: International Day of Persons with Disabilities). The dates of the General Assemblies in 2026 would be as follows:

- 14-17 April (tentatively) and
- 28 September-1 October.

18. At the closure of the General Assembly, a preliminary summary of the work and main decisions was presented, for subsequent publication once finalised by the Standing Committee. **CINGO took note of it.**