

Annex 4: Online survey results and questionnaire

70 people answered the survey concerning the Conference of INGOs: women and men are almost equally distributed among the respondents: 45,7% are women, 45,7% are men while 8,6% did not want to provide an answer on their sexual identity.

A large majority of respondents are over 50 years of age:

- 67% are more than 50 years old
- 13% are between 40 and 50 years old
- 11% are between 30 and 40 years old
- 9% are between 20 and 30 years old

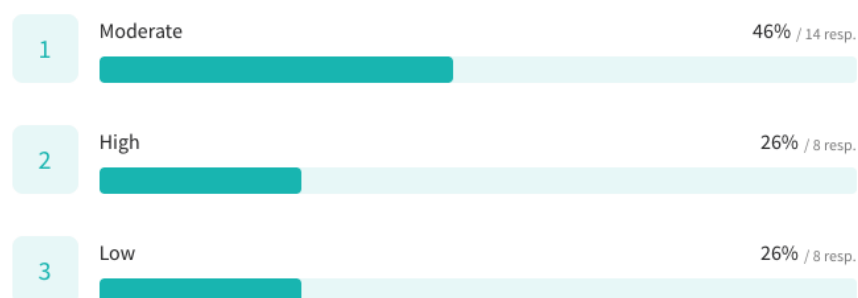
55% of the respondents representing their personal views qualify their engagement in the Conference as high, 30% as moderate and 15% as low.

The respondents attended the conference session for the 1st time between 1985 and 2020 with an average in the year of 2009. Out of 40 respondents, 15% attended the conference session less than twice. So out of the 85% who attended the conference session more than twice, 50% of them participated more than 20 times.

Almost half of the respondents feel that their organisation's level of engagement in the Conference is moderate, 26% qualify it as high while 26% consider it low. Only 18% of the respondents did not participate in other meetings, others participated in one of the working groups (30%), in one of the thematic committees (40%), in the Standing Committee (10%), in the Bureau (1 respondent) but none in the Expert Council.

How would you qualify your organisation's level of engagement in the Conference of INGOs?

30 out of 55 answered



Beyond the attendance to the Conference sessions, out of 55 respondents, almost all engage with the Council of Europe in other ways, more often through email exchanges but also via bilateral meetings or attendance in other events. Phone calls seem to be another way to interact with the Council of Europe occasionally.

- Bilateral meetings: 30% often, 48% sometimes and 22% never
- Official meetings: 26% often, 57% sometimes and 17% never

- Emails exchange: 48% often and 52% sometimes
- Phone calls: 9% often, 60% sometimes and 30% never
- Other conferences, events: 30% often and 70% sometimes

As for the topics discussed during the Conference's sessions, nobody feels that they are irrelevant. Respondents unanimously declare they are relevant (44%), nuancing from 'somehow relevant' (29%) to 'very relevant' (27%).

The respondents have different opinions about the articulation between the Conference's activities and their organisation's priorities: 33% feel that the activities always match with its organisation's priorities while 67% feel that it sometimes matches.

Value of the Conference

73% think that the activities allow their organisation to take action on issues that it would not be able to cover otherwise, 16% think that it is always the case and 11% think that it is never the case.

Concerning the activities, the respondents find interesting:

- 67% feel that they are sometimes relevant for their organisation's beneficiaries
- 31,5 % feel that they are always relevant for their organisation's beneficiaries
- 1,5% feel that it is never relevant for their organisation's beneficiaries

Most consider the Conference of value for their purpose and their own beneficiaries (target population according to their mandate). At the same time, the Conference sparks ideas and fosters cross-fertilisation of ideas, on topics that are not necessarily the core mission of the INGOs. INGOs appreciate opening up the scope of activities, bringing fresh ideas and to become acquainted with the most recent trends. There is thus a wide consensus on the relevance of the topics that are addressed at the Conference. The Conference operates within the framework of the Council of Europe which is an intergovernmental organisation mobilising ministers, local decision-makers, and parliamentary members. The Conference is therefore positioned at the cross-road of the authorities who take decisions at international level (47 states), as well as nationally and locally. The Conference is harnessed into the decision-making and reflective process and is very distinct from an overarching body which would operate freely. The Council of Europe framework is not a constraint to the freedom of the INGO members, but an opportunity to connect the civil society group that they represent with those who take action. Some INGOs interviewed highlighted also the Council of Europe provides a specific environment that facilitates the connexion. The participatory status is the "sesame to open doors" said one INGO member. Not all INGOs have the professionalism and capacity; "The participative status is a huge benefit to their organisation and its position in the academic and political framework they work in"

The Conference is a place for freedom of expression, and at the same time contribute to the work of the Council of Europe. In this respect, the INGOs understand that the Conference is not a vehicle for advocacy or promote their own mandate.

However, not all respondents have a comprehensive knowledge of the activities undertaken by the Conference and how it contributes to the programme of work of the Council of Europe, which

may also be unknown. The value of these activities for the Council of Europe is generally accepted but few are able to describe them in detail and more operationally – except the limited number of INGOs recurrently solicited thanks to their expertise in domains shared with Council of Europe (e.g., human rights, torture...).

31 respondents expressed their opinion regarding the relevance of the topics discussed during the Conference's sessions. Here is a selection of the most representative answers to the open question:

The recurrent hindering factor to participate more is the lack of funding. Most are unable to cover their own travel expenses to go to Strasbourg and to leverage increased resources to the Conference -specific activities.

- “Our organisation doesn't participate in the conference's activities as much as we they might like to as they don't have the funds to attend the meetings”.
- “It is good for all NGOs to have sessions or meetings on topics that don't completely fit in their areas of expertise in order to raise their awareness for the situation of other NGOs and other European regions”.
- “Nonformal education can help to raise critical thinking, awareness for respect of diversity, educate for democratic competences, sustainable development and help participants commit for a more just world and the respect of human rights. All this is important for democracy and corresponds to Council of Europe values and aims and belongs to the work of the Conference”
- “It makes them able to impact on policy and provide their experience and expertise in return.”
- “The participative status is a huge benefit to their organisation and its position in the academic and political framework they work in”
- “Topics of relevance can be treated on the intergovernmental level in Europe”
- “One NGO is specialised in public traffic issues and public service in Europe and don't find relevant issues in the ongoing annual programmes complying with their goals”
- “It helps them to become more politically active, it is an incredibly useful link between the activities and claims of their INGO and the achievements of the Council of Europe”
- “The existence of 3 internal committees is essential to improve and deepen the relations between the INGOs and the PACE's committees and the Congress.”

Furthermore, they generally feel that the activities included in the Conference's Action Plan 2018-2021 are relevant:

- 54% think that they are relevant

- 29% think that they are somehow relevant
- 17% think that they are very relevant

80% of the respondents, the topics of the Conference sometimes match with their organisation's priorities and for 20% it always matches. 77% also think that they also allow their organisation to take action on issues that it would not be able to cover otherwise whereas 14% think that it is always the case and only 9% think that it is never the case.

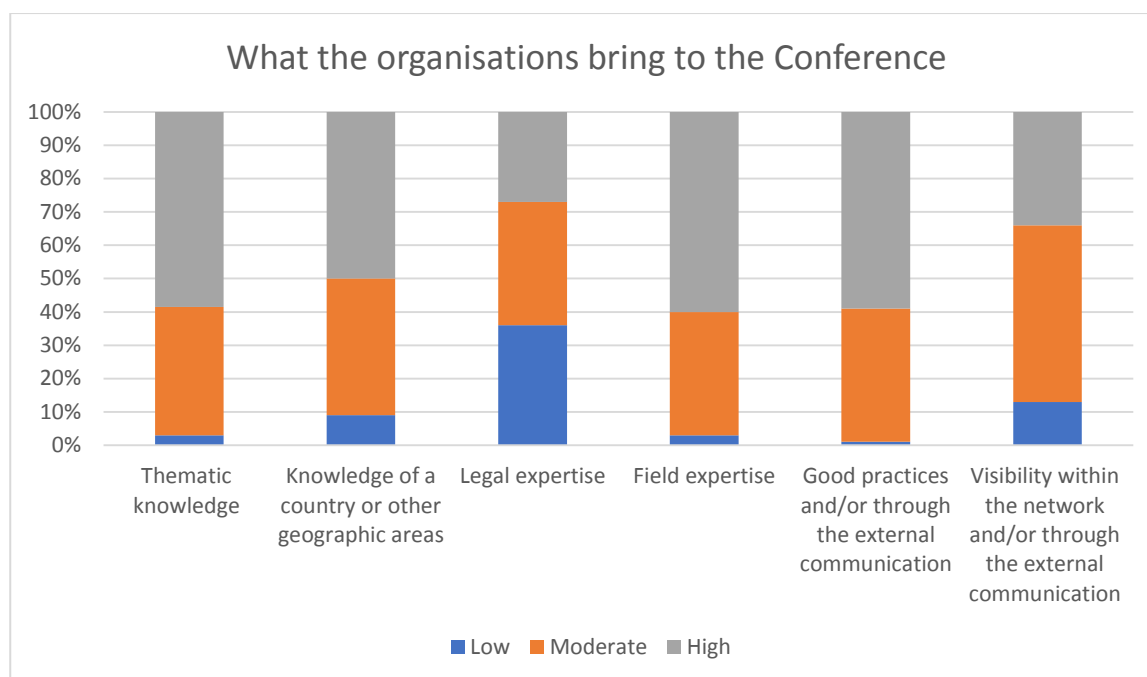
We can also see that for 76% of them, the topics are relevant for their organisation's beneficiaries while for 21% of them it is always the case and for 3% of them it is never the case.

Other remarks made by the INGOs:

- "The need for a better articulation between the Conference and the other bodies of the Council of Europe is mentioned"
- "We have entered a new era that calls for more solidarity between INGOs"
- "Support the INGOs so that the Social Charter is ratified by all States"
- "Working with the Conference of INGOs broadens their field of action because of the complementary nature of the members of the conference"
- "Expertise will be valued much more if working groups have a clear mandate. By dropping the "thematic committees", the work will be more transversal and relevant for the Council of Europe"

Additionally, they think that what their organisation mostly bring as added value to the Conference is:

- Thematic knowledge: 58,5% high, 38,5% moderate and 3% low
- Knowledge of a country and/or other geographic areas: 50% high, 41% moderate and 9% low
- Legal expertise: 27% high, 37% moderate and 36% low
- Field expertise: 60% high, 37% moderate and 3% low
- Good practices and/or innovative ideas: 59% high, 40% moderate and 1% low
- Visibility within the network and/or through external communication: 34% high, 53% moderate and 13% low.



70 respondents gave their opinion regarding “the main challenges and/or negative sides of participating in the Conference”. Here is a selection of the most given answers:

- “Lack of funding support from the Council of Europe, travel costs can be expensive to get to the Conference for some INGOs, virtual meetings are more accessible for them.”
- “Not always clear how an organisation can get involved in the Conference and spread its messages”
- “Human and time constraints and limited logistics, sometimes there is very short time between notification and practical registration to the event or during the sessions”
- “The structure of the working groups can be improved”
- “More informal meetings between sessions in order to raise burning issues”
- “Digital transition is an emergency; translations should not swallow the budgets”
- “Promoting the right to health in the Agenda and the bodies’ activities”
- “Meeting only twice a year instead of 4 times previously makes much more difficult following the Council of Europe work in the fields of interest of the NGOs”
- “Less time on organisational and bureaucratic issues”

- “INGO's are not seen as equal within the Council of Europe, they have poor relations compared with other pillars, yet they offer so much and increasingly relevant in defending the shrinking civil society space”
- “Providing sufficient information to EN-RE member groups so they will apply the Conference's recommendations in their own countries”
- “Difficult to get direct updates”
- “Education and culture could be more focused”
- “The victims of trafficking for example) whereas some other want the Council of Europe to focus on the principles it was originally built upon.”
- “More visibility of the implementation of the decisions voted at the Conference”
- “Find a way to make the decisions more efficient because it doesn't have the desired influence”.

70 respondents expressed their opinion regarding “the main benefits of participating in the Conference”. Here is a selection of the most given answers:

- “Team-work, networking, exchanges of ideas and events with other INGOs, implementation of the European Social Charter”
- “Formations and information about unknown topics and the work in other countries but also teach the other INGOs about their area of expertise”
- “The work of the Conference can have some influence on the programme of the INGO”
- “This strengthens the field of action of the INGOs and allows them to submit a recommendation”
- “Participatory status with the Council of Europe, access to policy developments, interaction with the Council of Europe and its different Committees”
- “Providing information on recommendations to civil society, local and national authorities and other organisations to promote social cohesion to improve legislation with the backing of the Conference makes their task easier to obtain a hearing”.

The respondents' organisations mostly work in Western European Union countries (Germany: 89%, France: 87% Italy: 77%, United Kingdom: 77%, Spain: 74%). Almost half of them work with the Russian Federation (44%) or Turkey (47%). Only a few works with Eastern European countries or countries from the Balkans (Serbia: 33%, Republic of Moldova: 19%, North Macedonia: 16%). Furthermore, they rarely work with smaller states such as Lichtenstein (11%), Andorra (7%) or San Marino (3%).

Most of the respondents live in France (43%) but they also live in Belgium (9%), Denmark (7,5%), Germany (7,5%), the UK (6%), Luxembourg (4%), the Netherlands (4%), Switzerland (4%), Austria (3%), Canada (1,5%), Cyprus (1,5%), Greece (1,5%), Ireland (1,5%), Italy (1,5%), Lithuania (1,5%), Slovenia (1,5%) and Spain (1,5%).

44% work in International Co-operation, 43% in Democracy, in Environment and Sustainable Development and in Social Cohesion, 34% in Youth, 27% in Culture, 17% in Rule of Law, 11% in Media and Communication, 4% in Sport.

- 84% think that the Conference should provide relevant and timely collective contributions to other Council of Europe bodies.
- 79% think that the Conference could serve as a platform for co-operation and joint actions among INGOs
- 71% think that the Conference could create new information through research, consolidation of existing information, meta-analysis or lessons learned
- 71% feel that the Conference could detect and interpret signals in the environment through, for example, monitoring new developments and identifying trends
- 70% feel that the Conference could promote innovative participation tools and facilitate access to the Council of Europe for National NGOs
- 66% of the respondents feel that the Conference could provide professional development and skills building to its members.