

Expert Council on NGO Law



COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



WHAT IS THE EXPERT COUNCIL?

■ The [Expert Council on NGO Law](#) (Expert Council) was established by the [Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations](#) (INGOs) of the Council of Europe in 2008. It contributes to ensuring an enabling environment for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) throughout Europe.

■ It is composed of 15 members with, *inter alia*, legal expertise, wide NGO experience and knowledge of human rights standards and good practice. Members are appointed by the Conference of INGOs for a three-year term and serve in their personal capacity.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe has recognised “the essential contribution made by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to the development and realisation of democracy and human rights ... and of the equally important contribution of NGOs to the cultural life and social well-being of democratic societies”. (Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2007)14 to member States on the legal status of non-governmental organisations in Europe).

The Committee of Ministers has recently called on its member states to “ensure that legislation, in particular on freedom of association ... is drafted and applied in conformity with international human rights law and standards and, where appropriate, seek advice from ... the Expert Council on NGO Law of the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations”. (Committee of Ministers Recommendation CM/Rec(2018)11 to member States on the need to strengthen the protection and promotion of civil society space in Europe).



WHAT THE EXPERT COUNCIL DOES?

■ The Expert Council considers the situation of NGOs and applicable laws which affect NGOs in all 47 Council of Europe member states and Belarus.

■ It carries out the following types of work:



monitoring the legal and regulatory frameworks affecting NGOs throughout Europe, as well as the implementation of such frameworks, including through country visits and thematic consultations;



preparing opinions and studies on the compatibility of national laws and regulations affecting the status and operation of NGOs with international standards;



producing thematic studies analysing legal, regulatory and policy issues affecting NGOs in Council of Europe member states and Belarus;



providing advice and training, and carrying out awareness-raising activities with regard to the standards applicable to the status and operation of NGOs.

■ Other work includes contributing to the development of rule of law and human rights standards through the participation in Council of Europe inter-governmental standard-setting work and supporting the President of the Conference of INGOs.



HOW CAN THE EXPERT COUNCIL SUPPORT YOU?

— The Expert Council prepares opinions and thematic studies either on its own initiative or on the request of the Conference of INGOs, NGOs, national authorities or Council of Europe bodies.

— Once adopted, the opinions and studies of the Expert Council are presented to the Conference of INGOs, which decides on the follow-up required and ensures their dissemination to NGOs across Europe, member states and Council of Europe bodies.

EXAMPLES OF PAST WORK

— The Expert Council has delivered thematic and country-specific opinions and studies on issues key for the functioning of NGOs, including:

- ▶ conditions for their establishment;
- ▶ establishing an enabling environment;
- ▶ funding;
- ▶ internal governance;
- ▶ regulating political activities;
- ▶ registration requirements;
- ▶ reporting and disclosure requirements;
- ▶ the right to freedom of association;
- ▶ sanctions and liability.

HOW TO GET IN CONTACT?

■ The Expert Council welcomes communications from NGOs, public authorities, international organisations and others.

■ To contact the Expert Council, please write to: **NGO-Unit@coe.int**

FOR MORE INFORMATION

■ The Expert Council's opinions and studies are available on:
www.coe.int/ngo
www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/ngo-legislation

www.coe.int/ngo

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, including all members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.



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