



CONFERENCE OF INGOs  
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

## **Committee of the INGO Conference “NGOs as advocates for gender equality and women’s right”**

**October 2021 to April 2024**

### **Final report**

**Co-chairs:** Anita Schnetzer-Spranger (Zonta Intl) and Bettina Hahne (Soroptimist Intl of Europe, SIE)  
**Secretary:** Sara Pilia (Eurodoc)

#### **Founding principle:**

Based on the Committee of Ministers’ decision in Helsinki and the Secretary General’s follow-up proposal to strengthen the role of civil society organizations and their meaningful participation within the Council of Europe, the Conference of INGOs adopted a declaration on its commitment in December 2020.

It highlights amongst others the dissemination of the Council of Europe’s legal instruments and tools “to inform the citizens about their rights, granted by their country’s commitment to the Council of Europe treaties and conventions”.

To fulfil this commitment the Gender Equality Committee seeks to enable INGOs to promote the Council of Europe’s ground-breaking conventions and recommendations concerning women’s rights and gender equality in their respective NGO and civil society. The objective is to explore and develop concrete strategies, advocacy activities and tools to make the conventions better known and implemented in member states’ civil society. The Committee encompasses a broad variety of NGOs with focus on women’s rights, gender equality and the empowerment of women.

#### **Activities and achievements**

**Roundtable** “Gender equality is a Human Rights issue. How can we join forces to promote and protect it today?” on October 9, 2023 during the autumn session of the INGO Conference

Cécile Gréboval, Programme Manager at the Gender Equality Division of the CoE, gave an introduction to the topic. The other committees of the INGO Conference had been invited to present how GE is part of their work in their committee. 5 out of 7 committees presented.

**Webinar:** „NGOs and the monitoring of the Istanbul Convention” on January 31, 2023

Mihail Stojanovski from the Istanbul Convention Secretariat presented the monitoring mechanism by GREVIO. He described how NGOs can report violations and the non-application of the Istanbul Convention. There were more than 150 participants from all over

Europe. Special interest was shown by NGOs that are situated in Ukraine and UK. Both countries had recently ratified the Istanbul Convention.

**Presentations** of the most important CoE Conventions concerning GE to the committee members:

Istanbul Convention, Revised Social Rights Charter and Anti-Trafficking Convention

**Critical** (confidential) **assessment** by the committee members of successful and less successful projects by the participating NGOs, in order to support each other and to learn good practice.

**Presentation** of the Istanbul Convention to the plenary meeting at the April 2022 session of the INGO Conference

**Statements:** 3 statements were posted:

- a) On the situation of women in Ukraine
- b) On the impact of COVID-19 on women
- c) On the rights of women and girls (in the wake of the backlash on women's rights in Iran)

**Internship** of Giulia Alesse:

Giulia was a first-year student of SciencesPo who did a 4-week online internship. She searched GREVIO country reports on the involvement of NGOs to combat violence against women.

## **Outcome and Conclusions**

The objective of the committee was how to make the CoE conventions that refer to gender equality and women's rights better known and implemented in the CoE member states. After a first assessment of our NGOs, it became evident quite quickly that a common approach for all NGOs turned out not to be realistic due to their different target groups, different approaches, different structures, and different political environments. We also noticed that the numerous brochures of the CoE are very good and serve well our needs. The exchange among our different NGOs within the committee was helpful for understanding the width of approaches, objectives and framework of civil society engagement for gender equality and women's rights.

Our different presentations of the Istanbul Convention and of GREVIO reached many NGO members. Especially the webinar on how to report violations of the Istanbul Convention to GREVIO was well attended. Possibly, more such presentations could follow, though in other languages but English and French.

The roundtable "Gender equality is a Human Rights issue. How can we join forces to promote and protect it today?" addressed the transversal nature of the objectives of our committee: The other committees presented how gender equality is also an important issue in their work.