Guidelines for CINGO Committees: Objectives, governance, resources, reporting

Introduction

CINGO's committees are vital to its success. They are hubs of expert knowledge, they influence the work of the Council of Europe (CoE) at all levels, and they exemplify the commitment of International Non-Governmental Organisation (INGO) and civil society leaders to promoting democracy, human rights and rule of law.

Committees enable CINGO to meet its objectives through clear alignment of committees' priorities and plans with the CINGO three-year Strategy and work programme.

High quality, relevant and influential work from its committees on influential topics is therefore essential for the future strength of CINGO in the CoE.

These guidelines help ensure CINGO's ambitions for its committees – and the ambitions of expert committee members - can be well supported and fulfilled.

The Guidelines cover:

1. The purpose of CINGO Committees
2. The governance processes and constitutional Rules that support CINGO committees
3. The relationships between CINGO committees, the CINGO Standing Committee (SC) and Presidency, INGO-Service, the CINGO Secretariat, and the political and other bodies within CoE.
4. Reporting requirements of CINGO committees at each General Assembly (GA) (see also Appendix – reporting template for April 2023)

1. The purpose of CINGO Committees

CINGO Committees give members of CINGO a formal platform to use their expertise to advance action on key topics and to promote INGO influence on CoE policy and operations.

Committees support and facilitate CINGO's delivery of its three-year Strategy, work programme and other priorities, as adopted by the GA. CINGO's work and that of its committees is further aligned with the priorities and work programme of the Council of Europe (CoE).

Through this system of alignment, we can intensify the voice and effectiveness of organised civil society at the heart of European democracy, human rights and rule of law.

Maintaining high quality, relevant and impactful work by Committees is therefore important to demonstrate the vital value of CINGO throughout CoE.

Committees make formal contributions to statutory bodies including CoE statutory committees, working groups, drafting and consultation processes, ministerial and Parliamentary activities and more. They are the means by which CINGO can reach meaningfully and deeply into CoE structures and decision-making forums. This work should be reported through the standard reports to the CINGO GA.

Where CINGO Committees need to raise concerns about CoE direction, operations, approaches or actions/inaction - or need to raise major concerns about individual member states - they should bring these to the attention of the CINGO President and SC who can advise on further outreach to members and inclusion in the agendas of the GA where relevant.

CINGO Committees should not operate in silos but should be connected with other committees and activities of CINGO. They can share knowledge, gain support or endorsement from across the membership of CINGO through:

- liaising regularly and constructively with the SC (in writing to the President or other member of the SC)
- using CINGO's website and social media communications channels (in writing to the SC social media leads)
- reporting effectively to the GA (using the standard template – see Appendix)
- networking with other committees and individual INGOs (e.g. joining online and real-life networking events in Strasbourg, developing joint activities with other committees etc.)
- aligning their priorities and work plans with the overall Strategy of CINGO and, where relevant, other CINGO committees.

2. Governance and constitutional rules

Constitutional rules for committees

The Rules for setting up, running and governing committees are laid out in the constitutional Rules of CINGO (2020) (particularly clauses 61-71) . These are available on the CINGO website: https://rm.coe.int/rules-of-procedure-reglement-adopted-161220-en-fr/1680a0cf32 . These Rules are the basis of this guidance.

Committee Chairs, members and anyone considering setting up a committee are encouraged to read these Rules.

Setting up a committee

A proposal for a new CINGO Committee should be made in writing to the SC (and copied to the Secretariat). The proposal should be received by the SC no less than six calendar weeks before the next CINGO GA.

The SC will review the proposal against the criteria in the constitutional Rules and decide whether to propose the Committee to the GA. This power of the SC is laid out in Section 40 (i) of the Rules:

proposing the creation of a new Committee or the extension of the mandate of an existing one

Rule 62 lays out the criteria for Committees which the SC uses in it is initial consideration and which are then applied by the GA for any proposed Committees

62. In deciding to establish a Committee, the General Assembly shall have regard to:

(a) the relevance of the proposed issue to be examined for the three-year Strategic Plan adopted by the General Assembly and for work being undertaken, or that ought to be undertaken, by Council of Europe bodies;

(b) the availability of sufficient expertise, whether amongst Delegates or that can otherwise be called upon;

(c) the need to avoid overlap with an issue that is being addressed by an existing Committee;

(d) the willingness of at least 7 Delegates to participate in it; and

(e) the possibility of accommodating meetings of the proposed Committee in the schedules of forthcoming Sessions of the Conference

The SC may:

- ask for more information on committee applications,
- ask for other changes to the proposal before being put to the General Assembly
- decline the proposal entirely if the Rules are not and cannot be met

If the application is approved by the SC, it will be proposed to the next General Assembly and unless withdrawn, will be put to a vote of the full membership for a final decision.

The proposed Chair of the Committee will also be put to the vote in the General Assembly.

All committees are required to be open to membership from any INGO within CINGO and may invite other members from outside CINGO.

Length of terms of Committees and Committee Chairs

- CINGO committees are time limited. They are established for two years and may be extended for another year by approval at the General Assembly.
- Chairs of committees are also appointed for a two-year term (as marked by the dates of the Spring and Autumn General Assemblies) and may be renewed by the General assembly for another year.
- Committees and Chairs should write to the SC at least six weeks before the next General Assembly if they need/intend to ask for a year extension to their mandate.

How to raise disputes or concerns

Any disputes or concerns about any aspect of committee business or functioning of CINGO that cannot be resolved within the committee should in the first instance be sent in writing to the SC. The Rules of Procedure provide further guidance on dealing with/escalating more complex concerns.

3. CINGO Committees and key relationships with SC, INGO -Service, the Secretariat and wider CoE

The CINGO Committees sit within the formal CINGO member leadership and secretariat structures and resources, and within wider CoE. It is important that committees understand how they are supported and enabled in their work through these structures and what is available to them. Each committee needs to have a clear and supportive relationship with each part of this structure.

The Standing Committee

The CINGO Committees are supported by the Standing Committee (SC) and should liaise (usually in writing) with the President/SC with any queries, requests for access to resources, concerns or proposals. A strong and mutually supportive relationship between the CINGO topic committees and the Standing Committees can best support the development and effectiveness of CINGO overall.

The CINGO topic Committees are accountable to the SC which under the Rules of Procedure are responsible for

> '*…overseeing the work undertaken by the Committees and Expert Councils to ensure the quality and overall coherence;' (section 40(j))*

To enable this oversight, Committees will provide a written report in the standard format provided, at least four calendar weeks before the next GA, as requested by the Standing Committee.

Committees will respond to any additional queries or requests for information from the SC and will in turn receive responses to queries put to the SC or President.

If Committees wish to raise a matter on the agenda of the SC monthly meetings, they will request this in writing. Scheduling of Committee agenda items will depend on urgency, relevance and the timing of the regular SC meetings.

Accessing resources and assistance with activities

Committees can access CINGO resources and support through the following routes:

<u>Via the Standing Committee (SC):</u>

Committees should maintain good working relations with the SC and should have a link person and/or member of the SC on their committee for continuity of contact. The SC can assist and support committees in a number of ways. In particular, committees should approach the SC for the following:

- Booking meeting rooms for in-person committee meetings in Strasbourg during the General Assembly (GA): committees should approach the SC contact person (see below) at least one calendar month before the GA if they wish to hold a committee meeting (or side event) in person on the day before, during (outside main session times) or after GA. The SC will communicate the request to the Secretariat. Due to the high demand of rooms in CoE buildings, rooms may not always be provided
- Communications and social media: Committees should liaise with the SC members in charge of the Twitter and Facebook accounts for social media promotion of their activities and issues
- Raising issues, agenda items and proposals to the SC: Committees should send any queries or statement they wish the SC to consider at least two weeks before the next SC monthly

meeting (usually the first Thursday of the month). Any items for the GA – other than issues admitted as urgent by the agreement of the President – should be sent to the SC at least one month before the GA.

Contact SC Vice Chair - genevieve.laloy@conf-ingo.eu

Via INGO/OING-Service

- General funding for committee activities: INGO/OING-Service holds a budget of member contributions and Council of Europe grants which makes available up to €1000 per committee per year. Before incurring expenditure, the Committee should submit it's request to INGO/OING-Service.
- Webinars and interpretation/translation services for committees: INGO/OING-Service provides support for the organisation of webinars via access to its Zoom account at no cost to Committees. It will not reimburse the use of other communication tools. It may manage and cover interpretation costs for specific projects. Committees either work with the interpreters proposed by INGO/OING-Service or with other agreed interpreters at the same rate (currently €100 per hour or part thereof). Translations are usually done by the committees on a voluntary basis.
- Special projects/activities of committees: committees may submit specific projects for funding (whole or in part) from INGO/OING-Service. This will be presented by INGO/OING-Service to the SC for consideration which will advise whether the project should be funded. INGO/OING-Service will consider a positive recommendation from the SC favourably, but remains free in its decision, which will be taken according to its financial situation. Committees should not incur costs before project funding is agreed.

Contact: President: Harry ROGGE : hrogge@ziggo.nl

Treasurer: Thea MOHR: theamohr@aol.com

Via Council of Europe Secretariat

- Publishing on the CINGO website: The committees shall forward to the Secretariat information in both official languages (as brief as possible) to be published on their internet page.
- Email communication with INGOs: The committees will be supplied with an updated mailing list so that they can communicate information on their work and send out any related invitations to all INGOs using the links to their dedicated webpage. The mailing list will be updated twice a year and committees can communicate with all INGOs through this list.

Contact: ngo-unit@coe.int

Relationships of committees with wider structures of CoE

CINGO Committees have opportunities to influence CoE formal structures and decisions through invitations to CoE Committees, working and drafting groups, consultations, etc. There are opportunities to use a range of effective influencing approaches.

The most powerful, regular influence approach of Committees will be through providing high quality topic expertise, verbally and writing. This requires Committees to prioritise their actions and areas of involvement within their knowledge and resource parameters, and with regard to the three-year Strategy and priorities of CINGO overall.

CINGO Committees also add value through innovative and powerful activities that complement and augment the work of CoE – e.g. creative webinars, roundtable discussions, actions on marginalised issues etc. These draw on the creativity and inclusivity of the progressive civil society sector.

Liaising with the SC regularly is important. Committees should not undertake unilateral lobbying of groups or individuals within CoE – matters requiring strong representation outside of the usual channels of communication and involvement within CoE should be raised with the SC to discuss approaches/tactics.

Committee Chairs and members should be clear and explicit about when they are acting for the Committee (i.e. on behalf of CINGO) and when they are acting on behalf of their INGO.

4. Reporting back to each General Assembly (GA)

Achievements of committees will be captured and reported through the regular, standard reports to the GA which should be completed and returned at least one calendar month before the next GA.

The reporting template should be completed according to the questions asked. It should be succinct but comprehensive enough to stand as the main report to the GA without the need for verbal explanation.

Appendix

CINGO Committee Report for the General Assembly (required format)

Version: Spring 2023

Committee Chairs are advised to read the Guidance for CINGO Committees to assist in completing this report for the General Assembly.

Committee name:

Date of report:

Report author name and contact details:

Date committee was approved by CINGO General Assembly:

N.B. If this committee was approved in Spring 2021 it will come to the end of its mandate at the 2023 Spring Session of the General Assembly and you must complete section 7 if you wish the committee to continue for another year.

To encourage members to read all the committee reports and to share information effectively, please keep your free text sections short and focused on priorities activities and actions.

1. Committee Chair/Vice Chair name/s and contact emails

2. Which INGOs are represented on the committee?

3. Which Council of Europe committees and other activities is this committee mainly involved in? *Please provide a list, a brief description of how your committee is involved.*

4. How has this committee linked with other CINGO committees in the last year?

5. How can new members join the committee (please provide email address for expression of interest)?

6. What else could CINGO Standing Committee and Secretariat do to support the work of the committee and the communications between your committee, other members of CINGO and other parts of CoE?

7. If your committee is at the end of its two-year mandate at the 2023 Spring Session of the General Assembly, please answer the following questions:

   a. Does the committee wish to continue its mandate for another year? Yes or No

   b. Please explain why the extension of mandate for another year is being requested and describe what objectives this committee will be pursuing over the next 12 months up to Spring 2024 (no more than 250 words). (Please also send a work plan for 2024/24 with this form if available).

   c. Has the committee decided to continue with the same Chair or appoint a new one?

      If a new Chair is being proposed, please give their name.

8. Activity and Outcomes Report – please choose up to 6 main topics. *Please add links to any online resources/publications/reports (etc) your committee has created and published in the last 12 months.*

Topic	Summary of progress/impact in last 6 months	Current key issues/concerns	Plans for next 6 – 12 months
1.			
2.			
3.			

4.			
5			
6			

9. Is there anything else you would like to share with CINGO members and/or the CINGO Standing Committee?