

CONFERENCE OF INGOs CONF/AG(2026)Decisions1

MEETING OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY Strasbourg, 15-17 April 2026

Summary Notes and Decisions Adopted¹

1. The meeting was opened with Gerhard Ermischer (President of the Conference) in the chair, who welcomed participants.
2. Rapporteurs of the meeting were designated, with Geneviève Laloy as coordinator.
3. CINGO **adopted the draft agenda**, after the President had given an overview of the organisation of this Spring session and the content of the draft agenda.

Following a proposal from the floor for CINGO to recognise issues of war, peace, and militarisation, possibly with the creation of a dedicated committee, the President invited delegations interested to come up with a formal proposal by April 2027 when new committees will be formed. **He also supported the idea of extending committee mandates from two to three years (whilst retaining the possibility of a one-year extension); this would require a change to the rules of procedure, to be examined at the next (Autumn 2026) General Assembly.**

4. **Presentation of an [Activity Report of the CINGO](#) including a financial report by OING-Service and information from the Secretariat.** The President explained the importance of sharing information and ensuring the transparency and understanding of funding for all, providing a basis to discuss the future of funding and further projects. The number of INGOs with participatory status (and thus the CINGO membership) had shrunked slightly. The report contained basic figures on activities and an overview of work of CINGO and its various bodies in 2025. CINGO had increased its presence on social networks. Anna Sevortian then presented and explained the financial income and expense structure based on direct and grant-based funding from the Council of Europe and OING Service (through membership fees).

Plans and prospects for the second half of 2026 and in 2027 included: 1. strengthening CINGO's involvement in intergovernmental work in priority areas; 2. contributing to the implementation of the Reykjavik Principles and the New Democratic Pact; 3. organising in connection with the Autumn 2026 session a high level event connected to the 50th Anniversary, with a focus on the civic space and launching an initiative on civil society solidarity in 2026; 4. Strengthening

¹ Please note that this is an executive summary of the General Assembly; it does not provide an exhaustive account of all matters raised.

CINGO as an institutional platform; 5. Prioritising interactions with public and specific groups.

Harry Rogge (OING-SERVICE) highlighted the reduced financial reserves and the urgent need for increased contributions and donations. The next 16th General Assembly of OING-Service would be open to all participants.

Key discussion points included:

- the recognition of volunteer work and the need to better document and showcase unpaid contributions;
- the need to discuss projects before and not just after completion, and to pursue the practice of providing a comprehensive overview of activities;
- institutional cooperation: committees were encouraged to strengthen links with new Council of Europe bodies;
- ways to make best use of hybrid meetings (increased budget and more advanced use of technology was required);
- gender equality: participants called for renewed focus and concrete proposals
- funding challenges: increased support from the Council of Europe was needed, alternative funding sources - including the benefit of charity status – should be explored; need for improved communication and invoicing practices; giving consideration to cost-saving tools such as AI-based translation

CINGO took note of the information provided in the annual activity report 2025, and in respect of CINGO's financing, including the call made to all INGOs participating in CINGO to contribute to its collective funding mechanism and join OING Service (link to [subscription form](#)).

5. **Developments concerning the New Democratic Pact for Europe:** Cécile Gréboval gave a general [presentation](#) with the most recent developments regarding the [Democratic Pact for Europe](#). Discussion highlights included the rising polarisation and declining mutual respect, the need for educational initiatives and sub-committee work, timelines of work and opportunities for collaboration: all NGOs are welcome to submit contributions to pact [at] coe.int by 30 May 2026 for inclusion in the first analysis.
6. CINGO held an **exchange of views with special guests:**
 - Michel Forst, [Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders](#) under the UNECE Aarhus Convention (online) provided in his [presentation](#) an overview of the mechanism for the protection of environment defenders under the Aarhus Convention. His mandate covers all the signatory states, but also complaints from countries outside the convention system, where alleged perpetrators of acts against defenders are located in member states of the convention. The complaints mechanism is open to all, user-friendly and mainly built on a letter of allegation sent to the country concerned. The Special Rapporteur follows up on the answers with regards to action taken by countries concerned and can also undertake country visits to form an opinion on site. To date, 106 complaints have been received and 27 finalised concerning 15 Aarhus Parties. The kind of attacks on environment defenders reported corresponds well with experiences we have in other fields.
 - Tonje Meinich Chair of the [Steering Committee on Human Rights \(CDDH\)](#) (online, with some technical problems) presented the work of the CDDH, its broad remit and various sub committees, the main recent work on environment, AI and migration. She acknowledged the valuable contribution of CINGO, especially in the drafting groups for new policy documents.
 - Ambassador Gabriel Revel, Permanent Representative of Monaco to the Council of Europe presented the priorities of his country's upcoming presidency of the Committee of Ministers (15 May - 10 November 2026), namely: the independence of

the European Court of Human Rights; children and technological challenges; women's rights (including the Istanbul Convention); the fight against organised crime; youth and sport. He also emphasised his country's continued support for women's role in peace processes, particularly in Ukraine, and commitment to environmental issues.

CINGO delegations took note of the information provided.

7. CINGO held a **special thematic debate on Hate Speech and Hate Crime and Discrimination** with a focus on Anti-Semitism and hatred against LGBTQI communities, facilitated by the President and Ruth Allen (Standing Committee member), and based on interventions of distinguished CoE speakers and CINGO member organisations' representatives:
- Irene Kitsou-Milonas, Special Representative of the Secretary General on antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred and all forms of religious intolerance, provided information about her new mandate and its special focus on religious intolerance, she also offered comment on growing antisemitism, anti-muslim sentiment, digital hatred and their disproportional effect on youth. She also responded to questions and comments from CINGO members, inter alia coming from Jewish organisations, exiled groups and CINGO's Committee on Interreligious dialogue.
 - Mats Lindberg, [European Commission against Racism and Intolerance \(ECRI\)](#), provided information about ECRI's 7th monitoring cycle and the upcoming activity report for 2025, flagged thematic ECRI recommendations and pressing issues such as rise in antisemitic attacks (in schools) and anti-Muslim hatred, hate crimes and stereotypes, discrimination of LGBTQI persons, especially the transgender community. Mr. Lindberg responded to questions and comments from members – including on the modalities of access to education and health care for the Muslim minority and the impact of ECRI's monitoring on policy change.
 - Michael Ottolenghi, legal counsellor to the Permanent Representation of the United Kingdom to the Council of Europe noted the backsliding on LGBTQI persons' rights in Europe and presented the recent creation and experience of the Group of Friends on LGBTQI issues in the Committee of Ministers, comprising twenty countries, and their three priorities.
 - Yanna Parnin, Head of the [Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression and Sex Characteristics \(SOGIESC\)](#) Unit at the Council of Europe provided information, also in response to questions and comments from members, concerning the intergovernmental ADI-SOGIESC committee, its current focus issues and their upcoming report to the Committee of Ministers in the autumn of 2026. She referred i.a. to the issue of underreporting of hate crimes and hate speech incidents across Europe regarding the communities concerned.
 - Ahmed El-Salawy, International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex Youth & Student Organisation (IGLYO) reflected on the prior contributions from CoE bodies regarding the backsliding on LGBTQI rights. He underlined the need for preventive approaches to hate speech, for following through on the SOGIESC and hate speech recommendations at the Council of Europe level and the need for psychological support to LGBTQI youth.
 - Isuf Halimi, European Center for Human Rights (ECHR) presented results of a [recent research](#) within the Project "[Sphere+ Cooperation Against LGBTIQ and Hate Speech in Political and Public spheres](#)", implemented in France, Belgium, Hungary, Bulgaria and Ireland. He noted the gap in decision-makers' awareness about hate speech and hate crimes against LGBTQI communities and clear rise in both. The project will provide online training in its next phase.

CINGO delegations took note of the information provided

8. **Special item on Youth:** under the moderation of Ece Ciftci, Member of the Standing Committee, the General Assembly held a dedicated exchange on youth employment, participation, and the role of civil society in enabling inclusive pathways to work.
- The session opened with a contribution by Dr. Tobias Flessenkemper, Head of the Council of Europe Youth Department, who shared his sector's perspective on current youth work, its priorities, the broader policy context, and the structural challenges young people continue to face across Europe. His intervention provided the broader framework for the discussion by highlighting the links between youth participation, socio-economic inclusion, and democratic engagement.
 - Building on this policy perspective, Emine Kamışlı, Chair of [ESAS Social](#), presented the First Chance Program run in Türkiye as a practical model for addressing youth unemployment through structured cooperation with civil society organisations. She outlined both the operational model of the programme and its self-funding approach.
 - This was followed by the intervention of Hazal Elif Gollwitzer, First Chance Program Graduate, who shared her personal experience and illustrated how the model supports young people in overcoming barriers to employment and in building a stronger transition into professional life. The session was then opened to the floor for discussion, allowing members to engage with the speakers through questions and comments. The Assembly welcomed the exchange and underlined the importance of strengthening youth employment pathways through civil society-based solutions and cross-sector cooperation.
9. **Reports from CINGO thematic committees:** the thematic CINGO committees provided updates and final activity reports (those whose 2-year term is coming to an end in April 2026) on achievements and ongoing activities, as well as justifications for applying for a one-year prolongation, where relevant.

Committee on [Inclusive Territories, Environment and Health](#)

- the Committee has so far positioned its work at the intersection of housing, territorial inclusion, climate justice and health, and it reported active links with Council of Europe work on bioethics and the environment, as well as external engagement through events on affordable and healthy habitat, climate justice and inclusive communities.
- it requested an extension of its mandate, with Anne-Marie Chavanon as Chair, in order to continue work on climate justice, social cohesion, the emerging EU Affordable Housing Plan, and practical local initiatives concerning disability inclusion, care, youth mental health and healthy lifestyles;

CINGO agreed to extend the Committee's mandate until Spring 2027 and invited it to continue developing work on climate justice, affordable housing and inclusive territorial practices, with a view to possible further CINGO action on housing rights and vulnerable populations.

Committee on the [Rights of the Child in Europe: Protecting and promoting the well-being of children of all ages](#)

- The Committee reported sustained cooperation with the Steering Committee on the Rights of the Child (CDENF), the Lanzarote Committee and the Pompidou Group, notably on children's mental health and the risks of online gambling and gaming,

while also linking its work with migration, gender equality, sport and the Social Charter.

- It requested a one-year extension in order to continue mainstreaming children's rights across CINGO, strengthening attention to the most marginalised children, contributing to a joint event marking 50 years of children's rights work in the Council of Europe, disseminating work on parental separation and care proceedings, reviewing NGO representation across relevant CoE bodies and better connecting child-rights work with the youth theme.
- CINGO took note of the report and welcomed the Committee's role in ensuring that children's rights remain visible across CINGO and the wider Council of Europe framework. **It agreed to extend the Committee's mandate until Spring 2027** and encouraged it to continue prioritising the rights of diverse and marginalised children, strengthening institutional representation and advancing the link between children's rights and youth participation.

Committee on [Education for Democracy](#)

The Education for Democracy Committee reported that its mandate officially ended in April 2025, but that members have remained active in Council of Europe education-related work, including participation in events on digital citizenship, democratic renewal and webinars on democracy education in vocational and early childhood settings.

- Rather than seeking a straightforward extension, the committee signaled its intention to submit, in October 2026, a proposal for a renewed Committee on Democratic Citizenship Education, justified by the democratic backsliding in Europe, the need for life-long learning in relation to democratic values and principles, and the importance of closer cooperation with the CDDEDU.
- The General Assembly took note of the report and acknowledged the continuing relevance of education for democracy within the Conference's priorities. **It invited the committee to submit, for the October 2026 session, a renewed proposal, workplan and chairmanship arrangements for a Committee on Democratic Citizenship Education**, so that the matter may be considered in a structured manner. The plan would then be to formally propose the establishment of a new education committee in April 2027.

Committee Human rights, Democracy and Artificial Intelligence - Civil Society in Action

This Committee presented no activity report nor request for prolongation.

Committee for [Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue](#)

- The Committee for Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue reported sustained engagement with a wide range of Council of Europe actors and related democratic dialogue processes, including PACE, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM) and the New Democratic Pact for Europe. Over the reporting period, the committee remained active through institutional meetings, conferences, webinars and public interventions, while continuing to promote the establishment of a permanent platform for dialogue between religious, philosophical and non-confessional actors within the Council of Europe framework.
- It requested a one-year extension of its mandate in order to continue advancing implementation of PACE Recommendation 2080 (2015), contribute an

interreligious and interconvictional dimension to the New Pact for Democracy, expand its European stakeholder network, and further develop education-oriented work on dialogue, democratic values and living together.

- CINGO took note of the report, welcomed the Committee's contribution to intercultural understanding, democratic dialogue and freedom of religion or belief within the broader Council of Europe framework, and **agreed to extend the Committee's mandate until Spring 2027**, noting the proposed continuation of its chairing arrangements, and encouraged the Committee to continue its work on the permanent dialogue platform, the New Pact for Democracy, and education for dialogue and democratic coexistence.

Committee on [Migration Issues](#)

- The Committee on Migration Issues presented itself as a rights-based monitoring body focused on the protection of migrants and refugees under the European Convention on Human Rights, with regular interaction with PACE, the Migration and Refugees Division, the Commissioner for Human Rights, the European Court of Human Rights and other international actors. It reported that around 75% of its activity had been devoted to monitoring migration policy developments, issuing statements on restrictive trends and contributing recommendations on reception conditions, return procedures and the implementation risks of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum. It requested a one-year extension to continue monitoring, launch an integration workstream, create a dedicated Pact-monitoring group and maintain its contributions to international bodies.
- The General Assembly took note of the report and welcomed the Committee's sustained monitoring role and its contribution to ensuring consistency between political developments and fundamental-rights obligations. **It agreed to extend the Committee's mandate until Spring 2027**, with continuity in its leadership, and encouraged it to pursue its priority work on monitoring, migrant integration, implementation of the EU Pact on Migration and Asylum, and dialogue with relevant international institutions.

Committee [NGOs as advocates for gender equality and women's rights](#)

- The Gender Equality Committee reported that it acts as a transversal platform for gender mainstreaming across CINGO and maintains working links with the Gender Equality Commission, the Gender Equality Division and GREVIO, while also cooperating with several other CINGO committees. It requested a one-year extension in order to continue disseminating Council of Europe standards on gender equality and women's rights, contribute to the 50th anniversary through the project "INGOs say NO to violence against women and girls," address the backlash against women's rights and the anti-gender narratives, promote the Additional Protocol to the Revised Social Charter in relation to women's working rights, and deepen cross-committee gender mainstreaming. It proposed to extend the Committee's mandate until Spring 2027 with Anita Schnetzer-Spranger as Co-Chair and Teresa Gerns as new Co-Chair.
- CINGO **agreed to extend the Committee's mandate until Spring 2027 with the updated co-chairing arrangements**, and invited the Committee to continue its work on women's rights, countering sexist and anti-gender narratives, and preparing the 50th anniversary initiative on violence against women and girls.

Committee on [Sports and Human rights](#)

- In its report, the Committee recalled that it had emerged from cooperation between ESAN and young people linked to sport studies, drawing momentum from the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic context, and that it had narrowed its work from a broad agenda to a more focused priority on combating discrimination and barriers to participation in sport. It recalled that its Recommendation on “Access to sport for all” was unanimously adopted by the General Assembly in October 2025 and explained that its current work centres on two practical follow-up instruments: a Code of Good Practice for inclusive and ethical sport associations and a Charter for Young European Athletes, supported by field visits, research, networking and engagement with Council of Europe sports bodies; the Committee requests an additional year to finalise and implement these projects.
- CINGO took note of the report and welcomed the progress made by the Committee in operationalising the previously adopted Recommendation on access to sport for all. **It agreed to continue the Committee’s work for an additional year** in order to complete the Code of Good Practice and the Charter for Young European Athletes, while encouraging continued cooperation with relevant Council of Europe bodies and stronger cross-committee synergies

The above decisions were made by votes on the prolongation for one year and the chairing persons. The vote was conducted with 56 participants in the room and 14 participants online and results were as follows:

Committee	Matter voted	Result	Chair / Co-Chair result	Chairs and Co Chair
Committee on Inclusive Territories, Environment and Health	Prolongation of the Committee	65 in favour 2 abstentions, 0 against	65 in favour, 2 abstentions, 0 against	Anne Marie Chavanon & Elena Curtopassi
Civil Society Committee on the Rights of the Child in Europe: Protecting and Promoting the Well-being of Children of All Ages	Prolongation of the Committee	67 in favour 1 abstention 0 against	68 in favour 1 abstention, 0 against	Herminio Corrêa & Ruth Allen
Committee for Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue	Prolongation of the Committee	67 in favour 1 abstention, 0 against	66 in favour, 2 abstentions, 0 against	Gabriela Frey
Committee on Migration Issues	Prolongation of the Committee	67 in favour 0 abstentions, 0 against	67 in favour 1 abstention, 0 against	Christine Monty & Daniel Guery
Committee NGOs as Advocates for Gender Equality and Women’s Rights	Prolongation of the Committee	67 in favour 0 abstentions, 0 against	66 in favour 1 abstention, 1 against	Anita Schnetzer-Spranger & Teresa Gerns
Committee Sports and Human Rights	Prolongation of the Committee	68 in favour, 1 abstention, 0 against	67 in favour 1 abstention, 0 against	Maritchu Rall & Christian Saint-Lezer

10. **Oral reports were then presented by other CINGO Committees** (whose mandates had not come to an end):
- The **Committee for the [European Social Charter and its monitoring mechanisms](#)** reported active work to raise the visibility of social rights within CINGO and the wider Council of Europe framework, with particular focus on poverty eradication, implementation of the Revised European Social Charter, territorial exclusions in states' ratifications, youth access to social rights, and strengthened dialogue with PACE and other CINGO committees. Over the reporting period, it contributed to a CINGO statement on the announced EU anti-poverty strategy, supported activities for the UN Day for the Eradication of Poverty, engaged in advocacy around the removal of territorial exclusions, took part in preparations for the High-level Conference on Social Rights and the Revised European Social Charter in Chişinău. It was preparing follow-up visibility actions linked to both CINGO's 50th anniversary and the 30th anniversary of the opening for signature of the Revised Charter and indicated that its regular hybrid meetings and cross-committee engagement will continue.
 - The **[Committee for the International Volunteer Year 2026](#)** reported on its work concerning the survey and youth-related perspectives on volunteering, highlighting the importance of better understanding young people's engagement in volunteer action in the lead-up to the International Volunteer Year 2026.
11. **Discussion and approval of draft political and other documents by CINGO:** CINGO examined and discussed the following draft documents, presented for adoption. The results are detailed hereinafter. Final versions of adopted texts are available on the [2026 Spring session's webpage](#).
- 11.1 Draft Recommendation "Ensuring climate justice, the protection of vulnerable populations and social cohesion in the face of energy instability and international climate disengagement": No requests for revision or comments were raised, and **CINGO subsequently adopted the draft** with 65 votes in favour, 1 abstention, and no votes against.
- 11.2 Draft Recommendation Toward Greater Effectiveness in the Fight Against Antisemitism in Europe (see [agenda](#)): Stephane Teicher of International Council B'NAI B'RITH, stated that the authors of the proposal had decided to withdraw it and proposed to develop it further in response to feedback from within the CoE and the CINGO President. A new, more focused version will be developed with wider input, including from the CINGO committee for Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue. Isuf Halimi from the European Human Rights Centre offered to help form a drafting or focus group with the authors of the draft and other participants. **CINGO agreed to postpone consideration until the next General Assembly session, based on a revised draft prepared in consultation with other CINGO delegations - a call for input will be circulated in due course.**
- 11.3 Draft Recommendation to PACE and Congress and Resolution for CINGO on a platform for inter-religious dialogue (see [agenda](#)): the Committee for Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue stated that the authors of the proposal had decided to withdraw it, and proposed to make it a working document complementing the earlier Recommendation adopted by CINGO at the Autumn 2025 session, to be presented to the PACE and Congress. The draft needed to be restructured into two documents with different tailored formats and it would be brought back in these forms for consideration at the next General Assembly in October. The Special Representative of the Secretary General on antisemitism, anti-Muslim hatred, and all forms of religious intolerance had offered to meet with committee representatives to discuss further steps. **CINGO agreed to postpone**

consideration of the text until the next General Assembly session, based on a revised draft. It was therefore not put to a vote during this session of the General Assembly.

- 11.4 Draft Declaration on the new law on death penalty in Israel passed by the Knesset on 30 March 2026 (see [agenda](#)): The President presented the draft, proposed and prepared by the Standing Committee, which had been prompted by the passing of legislation in the Israeli Knesset to reintroduce the death penalty with the additional discriminatory element of a focus on acts committed by Palestinians. The abolition of the death penalty was a core principle of the Council of Europe and this move in Israel had already been deplored by the Secretary General and the Human Rights Commissioner. As Israel was a country with Observer status to the Parliamentary Assembly, it was within CINGO's mandate to issue a statement on this matter. Although adopted by parliament, it had not been promulgated and a constitutional challenge had been filed with the Supreme Court, which could rescind it. In the ensuing discussion, participants expressed grave concern about the reintroduction of the death penalty and evaluated the merits of a CINGO statement at this point, given the risk that it be perceived as an attempt from abroad to influence a pending decision by the Supreme Court. **CINGO took a vote and with 57 votes in favour, 1 abstention and 4 votes against, it agreed to a gradual approach, mandating the President, in the immediate and in his own name to convey concerns to the Israeli authorities and to ensure subsequently the release of the full statement in the name of the Conference (without the need for further consultations of CINGO) should the Court not rescind the law.**
- 11.5 Draft Statement on the rights of the Child in Europe on the occasion of CINGO's 50th Anniversary: Ruth Allen and Herminio Correa (Committee on the Rights of the Child in Europe) presented the draft, including changes proposed to one paragraph. Following discussions, it was agreed to make it a [Resolution](#) aimed at CINGO as a reminder, for it to act on the rights of children and the many threats to their wellbeing across Europe. **CINGO subsequently adopted the draft as a resolution**, with 63 votes in favour, 1 abstention, and no votes against.
12. **Report of the CINGO representatives at Steering Committees and other bodies of the Council of Europe (Enlarged Partial Agreements, Drafting Groups) and concrete examples.** Several Standing Committee and other members reported back on their attendance of Council of Europe steering committees and other bodies:
- **Steering Committee on Human Rights (CDDH):** The President and Christine Monty (Migration Committee) referred in particular to the process started in May 2025 when a group of states, led by Italy, Denmark and Austria, called to rethink how the European Convention on Human Rights is interpreted in order to reduce its influence over European migration policy. This led to the informal ministerial conference on migration at the end of 2025 within which the President and the Chair of the Migration Committee of CINGO participated, albeit without speaking rights (in the meantime, the President had voiced his concerns with the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM), the ambassador of Denmark and the special envoy of Denmark on migration issues). As a result of this conference it was decided that the Committee of Ministers should draft a political declaration, to be adopted at the ministerial conference in Chisinau in May this year. The CDDH was tasked with the drafting of a list of possible elements for this declaration. It held three meetings in close proximity in early 2026 which were extremely challenging for the two CINGO representatives in the CDDH and for the Committee on Migration Issues working in close cooperation. With very little time for consultation, they had to react to a growing number of suggestions, some of which posed a threat to the independence of the Court of Human Rights, the implementation of its judgments and fundamental human rights in general. Even worse, for reasons of lack of time, opportunities given to Civil Society to comment were limited and only accepted for debate when supported by at

least one member state. The developments in the Committee of Ministers were now under scrutiny in the running up to the Ministerial Conference in May and close contacts kept with PACE on the matter. In the ensuing debate, CINGO delegations issued concerns about current developments of the political environment in Europe, with growing numbers of governments and political parliamentary groups taking a negative stance against civil society, the independence of the judiciary, human rights matters in general, using migration-related debates as opportunities for hostile attitudes.

- **European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ):** Ece Ciftci reported that on 24–25 March, the Joint Council on Youth held its first statutory meeting of 2026 at the European Youth Centre in Budapest, bringing together around 100 representatives from governmental and non-governmental organisations, as well as national and international youth stakeholders, while also marking the start of the 2026–2027 mandate of the new Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ). CINGO's presence at this important meeting once again highlighted the value of collaboration, co-management, and inclusive decision-making processes built with young people and for young people. During its 54th session, the youth sector's co-managed decision-making body, composed of the European Steering Committee for Youth (CDEJ) and the Advisory Council on Youth (CCJ), reviewed and advanced several key priorities, including follow-up to the 10th Council of Europe Conference of Ministers responsible for Youth, the integration of a Youth Perspective across the Council of Europe and its member states, the finalization of the draft Recommendation on Peace Education. The meeting also addressed follow-up to the 4th European Youth Work Convention, the Partnership with the European Commission, reform of the European Youth Foundation, the adoption of the revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life, as well as bilateral co-operation, country action plans, and multilateral projects, including support for Ukraine. Overall, the session underlined the continued commitment of the youth statutory bodies and CINGO to empowering young people, strengthening democratic participation, and advancing youth perspectives within the Council of Europe and its member States.
- **Steering Committee on Anti-discrimination, Diversity and Inclusion (CDADI):** Goran Miletic reported that at its 12th plenary meeting in November 2025, CDADI adopted Recommendation CM/Rec(2026)1 on Equality and Artificial Intelligence and transmitted it to the Committee of Ministers for adoption. The plenary finalised the Guidance Document on Strategies for Inclusion and adopted a Study on Regional and Minority Language Protection and Identification of Good Practices in Member States. CDADI organised a Conference on Preventing and Combating Hate Crime in June 2025 under the Maltese Presidency, supporting implementation of CM/Rec(2024)4, and launched a multi-stakeholder initiative on hate speech and hate crime covering 18 member states. The Committee also provided guidance for a new study on the impact of the environmental crisis on persons exposed to discrimination and engaged with the New Democratic Pact for Europe as a strategic framework for its upcoming work.

As regards its subcommittees, the one on **Experts on Roma and Traveller Issues (ADI-ROM)**, at its 12th meeting in October 2025, completed the Final Evaluation Report on the Strategic Action Plan for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2020–2025, providing a comprehensive assessment of what was achieved, what fell short, and what systemic gaps remain across member states. Building directly on those findings, the Committee endorsed the draft Strategy for Roma and Traveller Inclusion 2026–2030, which was subsequently approved by CDADI and formally adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 21 January 2026. A Handbook on democratic governance and political participation of Roma and Travellers is due by the end of 2026. Other projects under way include a compilation of promising practices supporting implementation of the Recommendation on equality of Roma and Traveller women and girls at national level. ADI-ROM will continue conducting at

least two thematic visits per year, with reports transmitted to CDADI for follow-up, feeding the evidence base for all remaining deliverables through 2027. The sub-**Committee on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity and Expression, and Sex Characteristics (ADI-SOGIESC)**, at its third meeting in October 2025, welcomed the adoption of Recommendation CM/Rec(2025)7 on Equal Rights for Intersex Persons — the first Council of Europe standard dedicated entirely to intersex rights, adopted unanimously — and discussed implementation priorities including legislative reform, training, and the #EuropeGoesPurple awareness campaign. The 2025 thematic review of CM/Rec(2010)5 focused on SOGIESC-based hate speech, with Malta and Norway conducting national reviews and a thematic roundtable exploring promising practices and implementation challenges. Work is currently underway on the Council of Europe Strategy for the Equality of Rights of LGBTQI Persons 2027–2032, building on the implementation review of CM/Rec(2010)5 and the newly adopted intersex Recommendation. New leadership was elected for 2026 — Aaron Giardina (Malta) as Chair, Andreas Lunn (Denmark) as Vice-Chair, and Milena Čalić-Jelić (Croatia) as Gender Equality Rapporteur — with the next meeting planned in Copenhagen in May 2026 alongside the European IDAHOT+ Forum.

- **Steering Committee for the Rights of the Child (CDENF) and Lanzarote Committee:** CINGO is represented in the CDENF by Ruth Allen (Standing Committee) and in the latter by Katerina Melissari. The priorities of CDENF up to 2027 are: Freedom from violence for children ; Equal opportunities and inclusion; Access to and use of safe AI/digital technology; Child friendly justice; A voice for every child; Child rights in emergencies and crises. CINGO's involvement in CDENF and other child-focused bodies is summarised in the CINGO Rights of the Child Committee [report](#). Overall, the Council of Europe's Children's Rights Division is steadily collaborative with civil society participants including CINGO. There is considerable positional consensus amongst member states. However, notable exceptions occur particularly around the legitimacy of children's agency and right to be heard under 18, and issues of sexuality. Strong, ongoing civil society advocacy brings lived reality of children and adults, and uncompromised attention to rights into the debates of political representatives. We provide in depth knowledge on specific areas, particularly for most marginalised and disadvantaged children and young people and focus on civil liberties and rights to protection for children.

CINGO could increase its impact by coordinating across INGOs in the Conference and its Child Rights Committee will coordinate a wider process for this throughout the next 12 months. **Other upcoming activities and priorities for CINGO representatives in 2026 are as follows:**

- Social media and children's mental health event on 26 June under the Presidency of Monaco;
 - attendance of periodic CDENF and other relevant Council of Europe bodies' meetings and events;
 - 50-year anniversary activity: 50 years of Children's Rights in CINGO and CoE, jointly with CDENF
 - Supporting upcoming workstreams on child rights in crises and emergencies
- **Steering Committee for Education (CDEDU):** Geneviève Laloy provided a reminder regarding the CDEDU's structure and its members: 46 member states, a diplomatic representative, permanent participating members (representatives of the Committee of Ministers, the Assembly, CINGO and the North-South Centre), NGOs with observer status (some of which have participatory status within CINGO) and the CDEDU Bureau, which also comprises representatives of CINGO member organisations. Key information stemming from CDEDU's 9th plenary meeting of 18-20 March 2026 include:
 - the abridged report will be posted on [CDEDU's website](#)
 - the 10th plenary meeting is scheduled for 23-25 September 2026

- the annual conference of the [Observatory on History Teaching in Europe](#) on 8-9 October 2026 will be devoted to *History Manipulation*
- Forum ETINED Ethics, Transparency and Integrity in Education on 15-16 October 2026
- 27th session of the Council of Europe Standing Conference of Ministers of Education of 3-4 December 2026 in Montenegro will be devoted to *Strengthening the role of educators for democracy*

Geneviève Laloy stressed the importance of giving greater recognition to the work of NGOs attending CDEDU sessions, but above all of uniting the voices of civil society more effectively, in particular by forging a close and effective link with a future proactive Education Committee within CINGO. There are many INGOs dealing with education issues within CINGO and a need to ensure that their voice is heard in CDEDU and vice versa, and to coordinate our resources and actions.

It is proposed to invite to the next session in the Autumn 2026 a member of the CDEDU Secretariat for reasons of visibility and gather views from this steering committee as it was done in the past and to give an overview of the wide range of issues and tools related to this committee. With regard to CINGO's representation on the CDEDU, consideration should be given to appointing a pair of representatives

- **In the ensuing discussion and conclusion, the following key points were raised:**
 - CINGO needed to update and rethink its representation on steering committees and other bodies to ensure there are stronger links with CINGO's thematic committees and the various representatives
 - consequently, the list of CINGO representatives will be reviewed and updated shortly
 - better communication and a smoother flow of information would make CINGO's actions more effective in the future

13. **Functioning of CINGO, its contributions and those of its members to the Council of Europe's work** (reference texts: [Strategy 2024-2027](#) ; [Code of Conduct](#) ; [Rules of Procedure](#) ; [Communication Charter](#))

In addition to what was mentioned under item 12 above, the President provided information on the way the Steering Committee designates representatives to Council of Europe bodies. A new document will be circulated showing all the current structures of the Council of Europe and indicating those where CINGO has no representation yet. The [Guidelines for CINGO Representatives to the CoE Steering Committees](#) will probably need to be updated.

Christophe Spreng on the harmonisation of draft documents / their logic prepared for consideration by CINGO, the following orientations emerged from the discussion:

- different types of formal political texts can be proposed for consideration to, and adopted by CINGO's General Assembly, but in general they would fall into one of the following categories, which need to be understood and drafted in an appropriate manner :
 - resolutions, which reflect the formal expression of the opinion or will of CINGO, e.g. when adopting or amending the texts related to its functioning or approving a declaration or statements)
 - recommendations, which are addressed to one or more addressee(s), inviting to take action or certain specific steps. and guidance provided.

- the structure of CINGO texts needs harmonisation with regard to format, presentation and quality of content (the preamble stating the justifications and relevant reference texts and the body containing the key substance)
- the purpose of a CINGO recommendation should be related to the overall objectives and mandate of the Organisation (Human Rights, Democracy and Rule of Law), and the mandate of the recipient in case of (a) specific addressee(s). It should be issued with a clear understanding of the priorities, state of play and work already done, under way or under preparation by the addressee; likewise, it should be linked to CINGO's mission, mandate and geographical coverage (situations outside the Council of Europe territory need a clear connection to the Organisation).
- recommendations should be drafted so as to deliver clear-cut messages and have impact (a few, consistent, concrete and feasible steps are more likely to attract follow-up than lengthy redundant texts)
- a recommendation should ideally emanate from the committee with the corresponding expertise, where applicable
- Christoph Spreng proposed to produce a guidance note to assist CINGO members and thematic committees and ensure consistency across the production of documents to be adopted by the Conference

At the closure of discussions, **CINGO took note of the suggestions of the President to review the practices and guidelines concerning CINGO representation and approved the offer of Christoph Spreng to work out a guidance document to assist the drafting of CINGO's political and other texts.**

14. **Report from Jeremy McBride, President of the [Expert Council on NGO Law](#) :** CINGO heard a presentation about recent opinions and reports, including: opinions on problematic legislative developments in Georgia, Greece, France the study on [Recent adverse developments for non-governmental organisations in Europe](#) (published in February 2026, and which confirmed the on-going / worsening hostile environment for civil society and NGOs across many countries in Europe. Work had started on a study on stigmatisation of NGOs dealing with national minorities to which all CINGO member organisations and any organisation interested where asked to contribute (deadline 30 April – [see call](#)). Current plans included:

- an update study on the non-execution of the European Court decisions related to freedom of association;
- a study on barring cooperation with “uncivil” society organisations
- a study on transnational repression of civil society.

The report was welcomed and the ensuing discussion addressed the communication of studies and opinions to the Council of Europe and the follow-up given to these; increasing initiatives taken to raise the visibility of the Expert Council's work also outside the context of the Council of Europe; participants confirming that transnational repression was on the rise and using new technologies all civil society actors should be aware of: in this respect, International Partnership for Human Rights (IPHR) recalled the recent public collective call from a number of NGOs for the Council of Europe to elaborate a Convention on Transnational Repression – see [here](#) and [here](#).

15. Presentation, discussion and endorsement of a [report on CINGO fact-finding visit to Serbia on Civil participation in the decision-making process](#), 9-11 September 2025: Goran Miletic (Standing Committee member and coordinator of the report) presented the report and the situation in Serbia, which was summarised as “stagnation and regression”. Recommendations made in the context of the first visit in 2017 had not been implemented, the situation for human rights and freedoms had deteriorated, particularly in relation to oppression of civil society protests and maltreatment in custody. The government had abolished the office for collaboration with civil society and not made adequate alternative arrangements, with devastating changes in the system for the funding of NGOs favoring clientelism and support to new groups close to government.

The delegation, which met with members of Government, was struck by the lack of care and action on complaints from civil society. The degradation of LGBTQI and women's rights was particularly noted. Repression and violence characterise everyday life. Elections are now high-risk events – e.g. municipal elections included a large number of masked men attacking citizens and journalists. These have become more violent and serious up to attempted murder, with an atmosphere of impunity and police inaction. The European Commission had requested that oppressive laws be repealed but the situation is still deteriorating. The CINGO report comprised many recommendations and it was important that INGOs support colleagues in Serbia, keep on moving with advocacy work against raising issues, and for CINGO to maintain the situation under scrutiny. Ivana Randjelovic (Civil Rights Defenders, Serbia, as the partnering NGO for the organisation of the visit) shared further information and viewpoints.

It was noted that the Serbian authorities were represented in the room but made no comments during this agenda item.² **CINGO subsequently endorsed the report.**

16. Presentation, discussion and endorsement of a [report on CINGO fact-finding visit to Greece on Civil participation in the decision-making process](#), 12-14 November 2025. Jeremy McBride, President of the Expert Council and coordinator of the report, presented the results of the visit, underlining the fact that no proper agenda of meetings with the public authorities had been organised by the government. Key concerns addressed in the report included: minority NGOs being refused registration including Turkish NGOs where 'Turkish' is seen as anti-state rhetoric (which is seen by the Council of Europe as a significant freedom of association issue); the system of registration for NGOs implied a cumbersome and difficult double process; the Ministry for Asylum and Migration was putting particularly high barriers for NGOs to operate; inadequate consultation periods with NGOs on legislative issues; general lack of public support for NGOs fostered by rhetoric used by government which also restricted public protests: a collective national voice of NGOs would be beneficial; funding issues (including the fact that EU monies are not reaching organisations – something that needs to be tackled by the EU Commission); specific concerns about unacceptable statements by members of government and use of 'enemies of the state'-type language against NGOs (particularly in relation to migrants); use of SLAPPS etc. The situation was not favourable to civil society overall and the recognition of CoE standards did not translate into action on the ground. The Report was making several recommendations to the authorities, to address the above. Lefteris Papagiannakis from the Hellenic League for Human Rights added further information.

A discussion and exchange of views with members followed. It was noted that Greece had not commented in person or in writing and **CINGO subsequently endorsed the report.**

17. **Exchange on 2026-27 projects and 50th anniversary of the CINGO.** Under the previous agenda items, several ideas and proposals were brought forward in relation to the 50th anniversary and a major the main event would be held at the next session in October, which will be held in parallel to the Parliamentary Assembly session. The President indicated that contacts had been made with different bodies to sponsor receptions, as well as for a festive dinner, a film event, an exhibition organised by the Committee on Gender Equality and Women's Rights in cooperation with the Assembly and GREVIO, as well as a high-level event on the protection of civil and human rights defenders. The thematic committees are encouraged to organise additional events or special editions of their webinars etc. and to publish them as part of the 50th anniversary. To this end they will be provided with a special logo to use as a common brand. Additional funding would be sought to cover these various costs. **CINGO took note of the calls and information.**

² Comments were sent in writing, in Serbian, a few minutes after the closure of the item.

18. At the closure of the General Assembly, preliminary summary notes of the work done and main decisions were presented, for subsequent publication once finalised by the Standing Committee. **CINGO took note of it.**
19. Date of next CINGO General Assembly: CINGO agreed to the proposed date of 28 September to 1 October 2026.
20. At the end of the discussions and some final observations, the President of CINGO thanked all the participants and formally closed the meeting.