



CONFERENCE OF INGOs
OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

CONFERENCE DES OING DU
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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: **Committee for the interreligious and interconvictional Dialogue (CIRICD)**

Date of report: **March 22, 2023**

Report author name and contact details:

- Gabriela Frey (EBU), gabriela.frey@t-online.de,
- Sören Lenz (until Dec. 2022 CEC) Email: soren.lenz@uepal.fr
- Lilia Bensedrine Thabet (IRSE) Email: lilia.bensedrine@wanadoo.fr

Date committee was approved by CINGO General Assembly: **April 28, 2021**

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

Co-chairs: Gabriela Frey (EBU), Email: gabriela.frey@t-online.de
and Sören Lenz (CEC) Email: soren.lenz@uepal.fr

2. Which INGOs are represented on the committee?

INGOs-members of the committee:

1. **ANDANTE**, European Alliance of Catholic Women's Organisations - Sybille Bader Biland
2. **CEC** (Conference European Churches) - Sören Lenz / Elizabeta Kitanovic
3. **EBU** (European Buddhist Union) - Gabriela Frey / Dr. Thea Mohr
4. **EFECW** (Ecumenical Forum of European Christian Women) – Anne Marie Schott
5. **GERFEC** (European Group for research and training of teachers holding Christian and other convictions) - Joëlle Croess / Kari Flornes
6. **ICBB** (B'NAI B'RITH International) - Stéphane Teicher / Jean-Luc Vallens
7. **ICCS** (Intereuropean Commission on Churches and School) - James Barnett
8. **ICJW** (International Council of Jewish Women) – Liliane Seidmann
9. **IRSE** (Robert Schuman Institute for Europe) - Sabine Rohmann / Lilia Bensedrine

10. **JUSTITIA PAX** (Conference of European Justice & Peace Commissions) - Jean-Bernard MARIE
11. **LGBTI+** European Forum of LGBT Christian Groups - Wilie Elhorst + Kees Goedegebuur
12. **MIAMSI** (International Movement of Apostolate in middle and upper classes) - Daniel Guery, Jean-Michel Strub
13. **MIIC Pax Romana** (Int. Movement for Intellectual and Cultural Affairs) - Begona Ocio
14. **OIEC** (International Office for Catholic Education), Pierre Dussere, Bernard Senelle
15. **QCEA** (Quaker Council for European Affairs) – Timmon Wallis

Active partners of the committee:

1. **AWR** (Academy of World Religions, University of Hamburg) – Prof. Wolfram Weisse, Dr. Carola Roloff, Ephraim Meir, Shakyha Halima Krausen
2. **CPCE/CCR** (Communion of Protestant churches in Europe/Conference of the Churches on the Rhine, Europe) - Sören Lenz
3. **DECERE** (Democracy European Construction and Religion, Strasbourg France) – Bernard Senelle, Jean-François Bour
4. **EMOUNA** (Amphi de Religions, Science Po, Paris, France) – Pauline Bebe
5. **FDCW** (Foundation for the development of Compassion and Wisdom, UK/France) -Victoria Coleman
6. **G3I** (Groupe interreligieux, interconvictionnel, interculturel, Paris, France), François Becker, Michel Aguilar, Gabriel Nissim,
7. **IARF** (International Association for Religious Freedom), Esther R. Suter
8. **Institute LOGOÏ** (Institute interconvictionnel, Belgique, Brussels) – Tatiana Letovalsteva
9. **Mind with Heart**, (Educating inner values, international charity) - David Rycroft
10. **TUSMO** (Dialogue between generations, Bergen / Norway) – Kassim A. Adan

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.

01/07/2021: Zoom-Presentation of the film on EMOUNA (a programme on interfaith education at Sciences Po University) followed by an exchange with Pauline Bebe, the first woman rabbi in France and head of EMOUNA. <https://www.emouna.org/>

16/12/2021: Webinar presenting the SASCE project (Safer and Stronger Communities in Europe). This multi-faceted project, funded by the European Commission, aims to significantly improve safety in and around places of religious practice, as well as within and between Buddhist, Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities. Information: www.sasce.eu

18/01/2022: Meetings and exchanges with the "Dialogue Unit of the EPP Group in the European Parliament" in order to present the work of the Conference of INGOs and in particular that of our Committee for Interreligious & Interfaith Dialogue. Other contacts and invitations followed.

15/03/2022: Joint statement on the war in Ukraine and a call for peace.

01/04/2022: Webinar "From knowledge to mutual recognition in interreligious and interconvictional dialogue". Identity formation in Europe through mutual recognition in interreligious and interconvictional dialogue.

13/10/2022: Webinar on "Self-awareness as a key to intercultural and interfaith understanding".

27/03/2023 Webinar on "The fundamental importance of education for interreligious and interfaith dialogue".

Each of these webinars is followed by a booklet, available on our website:

www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/interreligious-and-interconvictional-dialogue

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

All webinars and related activities were carried out in cooperation with the INGOs listed under point 2 and the partner organisations listed thereunder, depending on the thematic focus.

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

Simply contact one of our co-chairs via email

- Gabriela Frey (EBU), Email: gabriela.frey@t-online.de,
- Sören Lenz (until Dec. 2022 CEC) Email: soren.lenz@uepal.fr,
- Lilia Bensedrine Thabet (IRSE) Email: lilia.bensedrine@wanadoo.fr

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?

An important goal of our committee is to establish a permanent, inclusive platform for interreligious and interconvictional dialogue in the Council of Europe. This has been requested by the APCE already in 2015 in a recommendation (REC 2080) to the Council of Ministers. We need support (material, relational, organisational) to meet with the right bodies and decision-makers in the CoE to see how this dialogue platform can be implemented.

Inter-religious and inter-convictional dialogue is recognised by the European and UN institutions as one of the important means of preventing and combating prejudice, rejection of otherness, hatred and violence against the other, who is different in culture and religion.

By enabling a better knowledge and understanding, it contributes to demining sensitive and controversial inter-religious issues. In view of the current challenges, these are only increasing. That is why it is important to continue to develop the work of our committee. It is complementary to the work of the Council of Europe, particularly in relation to hate crimes and all forms of racism and religious intolerance.

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

Our committee has implemented a genuine interreligious and interconvictional dialogue platform since its establishment in the Conference of INGOS. We aim that it will exist at least until a genuine, inclusive dialogue platform is established in the Council of Europe that also includes civil society.

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).

- Discrimination and conflict often result from a lack of in-depth knowledge of different cultures, individuals and their beliefs and convictions. The more knowledge is opened up, the more understanding and empathy can develop.
- We strive to involve religious and philosophical communities as a driving force of inter-cultural dialogue and to associate them with the responsibility of civil society as important actors of intercultural dialogue for human rights, freedom of conscience and religion.
- In today's rapidly digitalising multicultural society, a thorough education and knowledge of different religions, worldviews and beliefs is a real challenge. The differences between people are sometimes felt as a clash of identities as specific attributes - nationality, religion, belief, culture, social group membership, etc. - are part of one's fixed identity. Even if there are no fixed identities, some of them seem more alien and dangerous. This is even more true when these different specificities are carried by migrants. The question of the religious and convictional dimension in the reception of migrants, in particular children, will be addressed in connection with the CINGO's "Migrants' Rights" commission during the next stage of our work.
- Within our committee, we are collecting examples of inspiring good practice in dialogue. Our aim is to collect and discuss them in order to highlight how they can contribute to openness to others and be proposed as models. We have realised that this process of creating dialogue takes time, that we are all interdependent, that life is constantly changing and that the aim is therefore to move forward together. ***See Workplan further down*****

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

Our committee has 2 vice-chairs: Gabriela Frey (EBU) & Sören Lenz (CEC)

- The CEC has closed its office in Strasbourg and has a new delegate based in Brussels.
- Sören Lenz is now delegate of the INGO Communion of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), who has submitted the participatory status. He is and remains an important, active member of our committee.

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

The Committee has appointed a new Co-chair: Lilia Bensedrine (IRSE) and invites the CINGO to approve this change.

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. Joint statement on the war in Ukraine and call for peace	Common statement, see website: https://rm.coe.int/iric-dc-statements-against-war-in-ukraine-gb-15-03-2022/1680a5d692	Faiths are called upon to take a stronger stand on war, arms supplies and the development of peace.	Planning of the side event in June 2023 War & Peace

2. Webinar” From knowledge to mutual recognition in interreligious and interconvictional dialogue”	<p>Identity formation in Europe through mutual recognition in interreligious and interconvictional dialogue</p> <p>Booklet published: www.coe.int/en/web/interreligious-and-interconvictional-dialogue</p>	<p>The way in which one's own identity can be constituted by feeding on other existing identities within and outside Europe. Religions can have a significant impact because there is already a group identity for each of the religions or beliefs that crosses national borders between the different religions of the world. We must try to use these existing networks. We must also use the means of education for future generations. We must ask the question: how can the different religious identities resonate with the European identity?</p>	<i>See Workplan further down**</i>
3. Webinar on “Self-awareness as a key to intercultural and interfaith understanding”	<p>Booklet published www.coe.int/en/web/interreligious-and-interconvictional-dialogue</p>	<p>Self-awareness promotes a deeper understanding of our own conditioning and helps us to empathise more deeply with ourselves and with others. This promotes the removal of ideological barriers, builds bridges by learning to accept and appreciate those who are different from us. An enhanced self-awareness leads to human-cultural and spiritual connectedness and constructive interactions with others for the benefit of the broader community</p>	<i>See Workplan further down**</i>

4. Webinar on “the fundamental importance of education for interreligious and interfaith dialogue	Booklet in process of publication	It is essential to find and demonstrate new ways to strengthen existing groups working on interfaith, to draw their attention to the importance and role of education - formal and informal - and to make it more inclusive, reflective and critical.	<i>See Workplan further down**</i>
5 Work in progress: - Research on inspiring practices in interreligious & interconvictional dialogue			<i>See Workplan further down**</i>
6 Work in progress: - Categorisation of inspiring and non-formal practices in this dialogue - Project to elaborate a manual or a guide of good practices			<i>See Workplan further down**</i>

<p>9. Is there anything else you would like to share with CINGO members and/or the CINGO Standing Committee?</p> <p>I. Our IR-IC Dialogue Committee is also attracting more and more attention and interest outside the Council of Europe (in the European Union, universities, organisations, etc.). When it comes to peaceful coexistence in diversity, education on issues concerning religions, beliefs and related communities and faith organisations is an important part of civil society. Dialogue is essential for coexistence and can only be achieved through an open, inclusive and transparent platform.</p> <p>II. For the coming year and beyond, we plan to work with the other committees and delegates of CINGO. Freedom of religion and conscience is an inalienable, indivisible and universal human right. Religion and conscience touch all areas of human existence. However, this right is not absolute, but must always be seen in the context of other human rights. This is what our committee is working for together with other INGOs.</p> <p>III. In this spirit, we ask that attention to the religious dimension of social and cultural issues be fostered and maintained, especially in relations with minorities, whether or not of immigrant origin. For the latter, see below, a planned webinar with the Committee for the Rights of Migrants.</p> <p>IV. The fields of activity of the different INGOs have many points of contact and mutual impacts which require a more structured exchange. We see our diversity as a mirror of our society. Diversity becomes fruitful for living together when there are open and transparent spaces for dialogue. We aim to continue working in this direction in the future</p> <p>V. Civil society has a clear interest in these exchanges: beyond the relations between religions and beliefs, they concern the protection of human rights, citizens, minors, migrants, minorities, the fight against discrimination, freedom of the expression as well as</p>
--

the protection of the environment, which is linked to the respect of fundamental rights

VI. In summary, it seems to be very important and indispensable to develop a framework for our IR-IC-Dialogue committee in such a way that a perpetuation of its activities is assured.

****WORKPLAN: Planning of the Committee until spring 2024 and beyond**

Summer 2023 (between 19-23 June) Side-Event during the PACE session:

- Provisional title: War & Peace, the current situation in Ukraine and the roles and perspectives of religions in Europe

Co-ordination: Sören, Gabriela, Jean-Luc

Autumn 2023: Webinar on the inter-religious and inter-convictional dimension of welcoming migrants and refugees

- In connection with the Committee on the Rights of Migrants, Daniel Guery

Coordination : Sören, Pierre, Tatiana

Autumn Session 2023 or in 2024: Concert Sacrées journées

- The next "Sacrées Journées" festival will take place in Strasbourg from 15 to 22 October 2023 <https://sacreesjournées.eu/> The session of the CINGO and the PACE will take place the week before the festival, from 9 to 12 October 2023. Lilia Thabet-Bensedrine proposes to organize the opening concert at the Council of Europe. As the hemicycle of the CoE will be renovated starting from March 2023 for at least one year, the place of the concert will be known later. For information a film (3'15) of Hamid Derrouich presents the event on the following link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OeykiT5WDgs>

Coordination : Lilia, Gabriela, Thea, Anne-Marie

Spring 2024: Colloquium or webinar on "Gender equality, place of men and women in religions/beliefs »

- Religions as an obstacle to women's rights?
- Inter-religious, intra-religious, inter-convictional
- Possible guest: Her Excellency, Ambassador Marie Fontanel, Permanent Representative of France to the CoE and President of the Committee of the Parties to the Istanbul Convention
- In connection with the committee "NGOs as advocates for gender equality and women's rights"

Coordination: Anne-Marie, Gabriela, Thea, Esther, Tatiana, Sören

Projects for Spring 2024 Session (elections) and beyond:

- The following are up for re-election for the next 3 years: President, Vice-Presidents, Standing Committee and Committees. Our committee wishes to continue its work, because IR-IC dialogue needs time and continuity!
- It is also important for us to focus on interconvictionality; we will participate in the organisation of the "Interconvictional Fair" in Brussels and plan to hold it also in Strasbourg in 2025 (G3I, Logoï).
- Presentation of concrete examples of inspiring practices in the field of interreligious and interconvictional education. Publication of a digital guide.
- Webinars on the "Complexity of spiritual care in plural societies", interreligious and interconvictional spiritual care in times of crisis, in difficult life situations, with the military, in hospitals, in prisons, etc.
- Education: promoting a caring and more inclusive environment in schools, colleges and high schools.