A RECOGNISED CONTRIBUTION TO THE FOUNDATIONS OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

“The Council of Europe is playing an irreplaceable role in the building of a single Europe. Its intergovernmental cooperation method is a unique instrument of consensual and democratic public decision making.”

Micheline CAUVIN, Chair of the Committee Ministers, Address to the Parliamentary Assembly, 25 January 2010

The Parliamentary Assembly noted “its satisfaction that the work programme of the Conference of INGOs contains several major themes, which are closely related to the development of the Assembly. Co-ordinated steps should be taken with a view to an enhanced cooperation aimed at further integrating INGOs into the Council’s work.”

Resolution on Co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Conference of INGOs, Resolution 1580 (2003)

A PIONEERING CIVIL SOCIETY ASSEMBLY

Organised and independent civil society makes itself heard throughout greater Europe through the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), which is made up of 70 INGOs holding participatory status with the Council of Europe. Operating continent-wide, bringing together federations of national and local associations in each of the 47 Council of Europe member states and in other parts of the world, and covering a very wide range of sectors (humanitarian, social, educational, cultural, religious and political), INGOs are a very wide range of sectors (humanitarian, social, educational, cultural, religious and political) assemblies.

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Chairing:
Catherine Sophie Demeulenaere, Vice-President of the Conference of INGOs, Responsible for Communication

THE CONFERENCE OF INGOs AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

“Giving Europe a human touch”

INGOs address the Council of Europe and the Conference of INGOs

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE
AND INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (INGOs)

“Giving Europe a human touch”
A KEY PARTNER IN THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS
An innovative force in the “quadrilogue”

The Conference of INGOs is the institution which represents the INGOs holding participatory status with the Council of Europe. It was created in 1999 to enable INGOs to be heard in the decision-making process and to participate in the work of the Conference of Ministers. Today, the Conference of INGOs is an established and recognized actor of the Conference of Ministers, the main political decision-making body of the Council of Europe, which it called for as a means of overcoming the gap between the political will to involve civil society in the process and the participatory status of INGOs within the Organisation. The Conference of INGOs represents the INGOs holding participatory status with the Council of Europe, which is made up of the INGOs that have been granted participatory status by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

The Conference of INGOs, acting as a “catalyst for systemic change”, has become the forum for INGOs to work together to promote and defend the values of democracy, freedom, respect for human rights, the rule of law, pluralism, the fight against poverty, gender equality, the environment and cultural diversity. It helps to build a democratic Europe “by and for all”, making the Conference of Ministers’ decisions more comprehensive.

The Conference of INGOs has also contributed to the modernization of the Conference of Ministers, which in 2012 completed the reform of its decision-making procedure. The Conference of Ministers, which became a participatory institution following the modernization of the Conference in 2012, has led to a significant democratization of public affairs. The Conference of Ministers’ meetings now take place in plenary session and are open to the public and the media. The Conference of Ministers now prioritizes active participation of all citizens in conducting public affairs. The Conference of INGOs has been designated as a “third world” in the Conference of Ministers.

The Conference of INGOs was also a key partner in the decision-making process, representing INGOs in the newly created intergovernmental body, the Conference of Ministers. It has played an important role in the modernization of the Conference of Ministers, which it called for as a means of overcoming the gap between the political will to involve civil society in the process and the participatory status of INGOs within the Organisation.

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Giving Europe a human touch

PARTICIPATORY STATUS FOR INGOs

Participatory status is granted by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe after consultation of the Committee of Ministers, the Conference of INGOs, and with the agreement of the Committee of the Whole of the Parliamentary Assembly.

The INGOs concerned must be:
- representatives in a field of competence or action of the Council of Europe
- present in a significant number of European countries
- capable of undertaking co-operation between players
- capable of contributing actively to Council of Europe work
- able to make known the work of the Council of Europe among European citizens
- for the benefit of the citizens of those states in whose territories they are present or whose citizens are present there.
A Partnership Based on History

60 years of participatory democracy

Organised civil society working to build a united Europe by representing the will of the Council of Europe, which is ratified for a means of expressing the interests of civil society in the decisions taken by the Council of Europe.

The INGOs concerned must be:
- of INGOs, and with the agreement of the Committee of political organs, including, in particular, the Conference
- Participatory status is granted by the Secretary General
- The participation of the representative of INGOs in the work of the Conference
- The Conference of INGOs holds plenary sessions in Strasbourg twice a year, during the Ordinary Sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly.
- The Conference of INGOs is an independent body, democratically elected by the representatives of the INGOs. The Conference of INGOs has a budget and its own office.
- The INGOs are recognised as a part of the democratic life of the member states of the Council of Europe, as a basis for a possible further development of the participation of INGOs throughout Europe.
- The Conference of INGOs is a key partner in the decision-making process, representing civil society alongside the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Council of Europe's own organs.
- The Conference of INGOs holds plenary sessions in Strasbourg twice a year, during the Ordinary Sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly.
- The Conference of INGOs is granted the possibility of presenting its views and those of the European Union to which it is invited. In particular, it is a member of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, on which it is represented by its president, an elected representative of the Conference of INGOs.
- The Conference of INGOs is invited to participate in the Council of Europe's consultations and those of the European Union to which it is invited. In particular, it is a member of the Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, on which it is represented by its president, an elected representative of the Conference of INGOs.
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A RECOGNISED CONTRIBUTION TO THE FOUNDATIONS OF EUROPEAN DEMOCRACY

“The Council of Europe is playing an invaluable role in the building of a single Europe. Its intergovernmental cooperation mechanism is a truly unique government-parliamentary dialogue – as well represented by your Assembly – as well as a regional and local dimension in the form of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, not forgetting civil society, represented through the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations. Thus, the huge diversity of our continent is represented within a single institution. No organisation can claim to be more representative of all Europeans.”

Micheline CAUVIN, Chair of the Committee Ministers, Address to the Parliamentary Assembly, 25 January 2010

THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE AND INTERNATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (INGOs)

“Giving Europe a human touch”

THE CONFERENCE OF INGOS AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

A pioneering civil society assembly

Organised and independent civil society makes itself heard throughout greater Europe through the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), which is made up of almost 400 INGOs holding participatory status with the Council of Europe. Operating continent-wide, bringing together federations of national and local associations in each of the 47 Council of Europe member states and in civil society, and covering the very wide range of sectors (humanitarian, social, educational, legal and trade union, etc), the member INGOs combine all players and all levels of government to foster both public and private, civil society is embedded in INGOs, intermediary bodies that act as forums for participatory democracy. They are also a way for civil society to express its freedom of association and to influence the decision-making authority of democratic bodies. This form the real link between European political institutions and 400 million citizens. They also encourage solidarity and political awareness, the INGOs in the conference seek to define, promote and enrich the values and fundamental rights of the European democratic identity so that all individual citizens can enjoy them in every Europe.

The Conference of INGOS of the Council of Europe is the only civil society assembly that plays an institutional role within an intergovernmental organisation. It provides a forum for free and innovative participation and discussion which enables committed citizens and their representative associations to make a direct contribution to building Europe. The Council of Europe does not need to be the first to introduce a consultative status for INGOs, from its very inception, followed by participatory status, thereby recognising the institutional place of the very wide range of actors and institutions involved in the democratic process in the whole of Europe: legislative branches and local and regional authorities (‘quadrilogue’).

Today, 60 years after the introduction of consultative status, the Conference of INGOS of the Council of Europe can show in its achievements and implemented approach in pursuing its goal of driving forward a new democratic phase in dialogue between European civil society and the public authorities and institutions. Against the background of various global challenges to democracy, human rights and social cohesion, civil society has a responsibility to act with courage and determination on all levels to ensure that people live together in greater harmony and that the vital social fabric is maintained, while safeguarding a unified, united, and human Europe where democratic and human values spread out across the world.

Jean-Alain HEITZ, President of the Conference of INGOS of the Council of Europe
A Recognised Contribution to the Foundations of European Democracy

The Parliamentary Assembly voted in favour of the work programme of the Conference of INGOs containing several major themes, which are closely related to the priorities of the Assembly. Continuing efforts should be taken with a view to an enhanced co-operation aimed at further developing citizen participation and dialogue with civil society. A pioneering civil society assembly

Organised and independent civil society makes itself heard throughout greater Europe through the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), which is made up of almost 460 INGOs holding participatory status with the Council of Europe. Operating continent-wide, bringing together federations of national and local associations in each of the 47 Council of Europe member states and in other parts of the world, and covering a very wide range of sectors (humanitarian, social, educational, legal and trade union, etc.), the member INGOs combine all players related to the priorities of the Assembly. On this basis, it is convinced that additional steps should be taken with a view to an enhanced co-operation aimed at further developing citizen participation and dialogue with civil society. A pioneering civil society assembly

A recognised contribution to the foundations of European democracy

The Conference of INGOs in the Organisation’s “quadrilogue” in declaring that “developing – with the help of the Conference of the International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) – interaction with civil society, whose representative associations to make a direct contribution to building Europe. The Council of Europe owes its credit for having been the first to introduce a consultative status for INGOs, from its very inception, followed by participatory status, thereby recognising their institutional place in the Union. They are linked to legislative branches and local and regional authorities (“mandate”).

“Giving Europe a human touch”

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe is an independent civil society assembly that plays an institutional role within an inter-governmental organisation. It is responsible for communication

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Free and innovative participation and discussion which enables committed clubs and other representative associations to make a direct contribution to building Europe. The Council of Europe owes its credit for having been the first to introduce a consultative status for INGOs, from its very inception, followed by participatory status, thereby recognising their institutional place in the Union. They are linked to legislative branches and local and regional authorities (“mandates”).

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