

European Council

Strasbourg Team

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Non Governmental International Organization (NGIO)

Enjoying Participative Status with the COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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The Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is an inter-governmental organization which was created by 10 countries in May 5th, 1949. Today, 46 states are members of the Council of Europe.

1.1 Aims

The Council of Europe is an intergovernmental organization which aims:

- to protect human rights, pluralist democracy and the rule of law;
- to promote awareness and encourage the development of Europe’s cultural identity and diversity;
- to seek solutions to problems facing European society (discrimination against minorities, xenophobia, intolerance, environmental protection ...) and preserve the life quality to European people.
- to help consolidate democratic stability in Europe by backing political, legislative and constitutional reform.

1.2 Field of action

The Council of Europe covers all major issues facing European society other than defence. Its work programme includes the following fields of activity : human rights, media, legal co-

operation, social cohesion and economics, health, education, culture, heritage, sport, youth, local democracy and transfrontier co-operation, environment and regional planning.

1.3 Organizational structure

- The Committee of Ministers is the Council of Europe's decision-making body. It comprises the Foreign Ministers of all the member states, or their permanent diplomatic representatives.
- The Parliamentary Assembly is the parliamentary organ of the Council of Europe consisting of a number of individual representatives from each member State who are elected by the national parliaments.
- The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe is a participatory body representing Local and Regional Authorities.
- The Conference of the OINGS regroups the 390 OINGS (about) having "Participative statute"
- The Secretary General is responsible for the working programme and the budget of the Council of Europe and assures the Secretary daily activities.

1.4 Work and findings

The Council of Europe findings enable drawing up Conventions and European Agreements which will involve legislative modifications and harmonization throughout the member states.

Partial agreements are approved in the same way. In agreement with the other member states, they enable a variable co-operation on a specific activity to some countries.

Some agreements are also ratified by States which are not members of the Council of Europe..

Note :

Council of Europe and European Union are 2 distinct organizations. The 25 European Union countries are also members of the Council of Europe.

Information on the Council of Europe is regularly revised – to be consulted : [http:// www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

2. The Council of Europe and the NGOs enjoying participatory status

The Independent Non-Governmental Organizations are a vital component of the European Society, guaranteeing freedom of expression and association, both of which are fundamental to democracy.

Recognising their influence from 1952, the Council of Europe provides International NGOs with the opportunity to acquire consultative status.

The (2003)⁸ new Resolution adopted on November 19th, 2003 establishes the working relation rules between the Council of Europe and the NGOs enjoying Participatory Status which replaces the initial Consultative Status.

2.1 Co-operation bodies

- The NGOs Conference meets once a year to decide on general lines of action for the coming year and determine the objectives of the Liaison Committee.
- The NGOs Liaison Committee liaises with the Secretariat General in the Council of Europe, is involved in NGOs groupings and encourages them to co-operate with the Council of Europe.

2.2 Spheres of activity

Following subjects are examined in the groupings:

- Social rights, European social charter, employment and social policy
- Human rights
- Education and culture
- North-south dialogue and solidarity
- Civil society
- Countryside and environment
- Health
- NGO-Towns
- Gender equality
- Extreme poverty & social cohesion.

NGOs have been involved in the preparation and drawing up of many of the Council of Europe's Conventions and Charters.

The Council of Europe is constantly in touch with public opinion and presses for social change through its extensive network of NGOs.

Revised information on NGOs enjoying participatory status with the Council of Europe to be consulted : [http:// www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)

3. MIAMSI and the Council of Europe

In 1996, Jean Bouttier, a catholic priest, was charged by the archbishop of Strasbourg to develop the presence of the church in the Council of Europe. He had then the idea to start a team of the MIAMSI which would work as an NGO in the Council of Europe. He knew very well the ways of working of this institution and the importance of the civil society represented by Independent Non-Governmental Organisations.

The MIAMSI, through the involvement of its members in the society and the way of working of the local teams can actually bring an original contribution to the work of the NGO's represented

at the Council of Europe : the voice of responsible people, who want to change the mentalities and the structures of our societies.

A European team of the MIAMSI has then been started. Representatives of the European movements of the MIAMSI joined this team.

The first task of our team was to learn how the Council of Europe works and the role of the NGO's in this institution. Then we had to define our objectives and how we will be able to act in this institution.

The NGO's working at the Council of Europe are present in many fields that may interest the members of our movements. We can, through our team work get information and bring our contribution to some projects of the Council of Europe.

We also had to get the consultative status for our NGO, in order to be able to work in the frame of the Council of Europe. This was achieved in June 1999. During an audit, we could present the results of an investigation made by our movements on the theme of : «Social exclusion and human dignity ». Following this audit, we also were invited to participate to the Conference of Helsinki, which was held in 1999 on the same subject.

NGO's working with the Council of Europe also must give maximum publicity to the institution and its achievements. Therefore the team which has been created in Strasbourg presented the Council of Europe during the congress of our movement in Fuiggi.

Today, the MIAMSI takes an active part to the work of the following groupings:

- Social rights, European Social Charter
- Human Rights
- Education and Culture
- North-South Dialogue and Solidarity
- Health
- Extreme Poverty and Social Cohesion

4. Co-operation with the European Movements

In order to be efficient in our work with the Council of Europe, our team strongly needs the participation of the Europeans movements of the MIAMSI.

The yearly subjects discussed in our teams always reflect major issues in our societies and the conclusions of these discussions may often be used in the contributions made by our movement to the work of the Council of Europe.

Therefore the team working in Strasbourg often asks the different European movements to send the results of their work, in order to be able to express our opinions in the frame of the Council of Europe.

Thanks to this collaboration, we already could take an active participation to the European Committee for Social Cohesion and to the work of the grouping « Health » (Education to health, sexuality, palliative cares). This could be done because we got many information from our teams.

In return, we will inform the movements on the work we perform and the results of the various contributions we brought to the Council of Europe.

5. Strasbourg working group

5.1 Mandate of the European Relay

“The Strasbourg working group” issues from the MIAMSI International Bureau. It is appointed by the European Relay, which comprises the European Movements, i.e. the MIAMSI European Members.

On this account, MIAMSI was granted a consultative status (a participatory status from January 2004) with the Council of Europe. The European working group in Strasbourg represents the MIAMSI NGO by the Council of Europe. People working in the European working group report their activities to the European Relay, considering the objectives given by this body.

5.2 Organization of the “Strasbourg working group”

2 working groups are involved in the NGOs activities : “The Strasbourg working group” and “a local team”.

5.2.1 “Strasbourg working group”

§ Setting up the group

Mandated by the European Relay, the Strasbourg working group represents all Movements relating to the MIAMSI in Europe. Therefore the Strasbourg team has at least one Member of each European Movement. Each member of the local team is a member of the Strasbourg working group.

§ Meeting

“The Strasbourg working group” has a plenary meeting once or twice a year, dealing with following subjects :

- Specific tasks of our NGO in connection with the Council of Europe.
- Relationships with the European Relay.
- Co-operation with the European Movements – in the countries where MIAMSI is represented in Europe.
- Involvement in NGOs grouping and projects.
- Priorities and action plan.

5.2.2 The local team

The majority of the local team members live not far from the European Council in Strasbourg. They represent MIAMSI Movement, dealing with usual work and taking part to the meetings in connection with the European Authorities and the other NGOs. The local team makes contact with MIAMSI movements in all European countries and with the “Strasbourg working group”.

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6. Relationship between “Strasbourg working group” and “ECOSOC MIAMSI representatives”

MIAMSI is also active within UNO, enjoying a participative status with ECOSOC in Geneva since 1996. MIAMSI representatives are involved in the Human Rights Committee work and more specially in following subjects ;

- Economic, social and cultural rights
- Right to development.

Considering that they often have more or less the same fields to deal with, both working groups in Strasbourg and Geneva – respectively in connection with Council of Europe and UNO – have a lot of subjects to share. Documents and experiences are willingly exchanged.