



What's new for MIAMSI at the Council of Europe ?

The autumn session of the INGO Conference, Commissions and Working Groups was held in Strasbourg on 28 - 31 October 2019, at the same time as the Local and Regional Authorities Congress.

The idea was to **bring Civil Society representatives closer to elected representatives of local and regional authorities.**

In addition to the usual topics found below, a few highlights of this session :

* the **guiding thread that focused on migration** with several variations :

- passing a **recommendation**: climate-driven migration
- showing a film on testimonials from people who welcomed migrants
- an exhibition featuring the faces of women in camps, reception centers (Greece)

* reform of **Rules of Procedure** for the Conference of INGOs accredited to the Council of Europe

And also:

- October 17 day (poverty eradication)
- 30th anniversary of the Convention on Child Rights
- 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe.

And again, the meeting of the Migration Watch Unit and Christian INGOs (see end of document)

Some newsflashes on the usual meetings and each of the events in Strasbourg in October 2019 :

The INGO Conference and commissions

1. Two affairs were dealt with in depth:
 - ✓ Revised Code of good practice for civil participation in decision-making: exemplary cooperation with the Local and Regional Authorities Congress, the Council of Europe Parliament and the European Youth Centre.
 - ✓ The draft **Rules of procedure for the INGO Conference**. Constructive exchanges helped inform the discussions and change the project.
2. **Migration update.**
 - ✓ Reminder from the Human Rights Commissioner on the law on saving lives
 - ✓ Regret that the European Parliament (EU) did not pass the law on rescuing refugees in difficulty on the Mediterranean Sea
 - ✓ Need to carry on monitoring this issue
 - ✓ Appeal to INGOs to report experiences in the field.
3. **Passing a statement and other recommendations:**
 - ✓ Statement on the Turkish invasion of Syria (see attachment)
 - ✓ Recommendation on equality between women and men
 - ✓ Recommendation on climate change
4. **Celebration of the Council of Europe's 70th anniversary** (European anthem played)

Human Rights Commission:

The commission presented the situation in **Syria, following the Turkish offensive in the north-east of the country**: 9 deaths, destruction of neighbourhoods in many border cities, massive population displacement and weakening of the Kurdish population. A statement regarding the "invasion" of territories in northern Syria was put forward and passed (text attached).

Several topics were discussed after this preamble:

- **Human rights and climate change** : Tensions between Human Rights and climate change were again highlighted. This will need to be emphasized in future sessions.

Proposed recommendation (which will be voted on by the Conference at the Plenary Assembly).

- A lot of time was spent on the issue of "**online hate speech concerning migrants.**"
 - ✓ The representative of LICRA (International League Against Racism and Antisemitism) recapped the finding of the European Agency for Fundamental Rights; in the 14 states studied, there is **growing hostility towards migrants and asylum seekers**. Other institutions make the same remark.
 - ✓ The Director of the French Immigration and Integration Office indicates that in France, over the last two generations, **25%** of the population has a direct link with migration ! He also denounced the **Dublin Regulation** and underlined the lack of trust of European countries among themselves.
 - ✓ A French MEP insists on **the obligation that platforms have to withdraw hate speech within 24 hours** but denounces the appearance of over-censorship in issuers, it is an obstacle to freedom of expression and a failure by the "regulators".
- Determining the topic of the next anti-poverty day:
"**Protection from poverty via the right to social and medical assistance** and the right to benefit from qualified social services."
- For the **next session** : development concerning migrants in the Mediterranean, criminalization of INGOs and human rights defenders, human rights and climate change.

Poverty, Discrimination and Exclusion Group :

The Working Group addressed several issues including the next day for eradicating extreme poverty. It will take place on 16 October 2020.

Pursuant to the European Social Charter, states must report every two years to take stock in certain specific areas. These conclusions are published at the beginning of the year by the Social Rights Commission. Two possible ways depending on the subjects:

- children - families – migrants : reports issued by states around 31 December 2019
- health - social protection : reports at the end of 2020

The group chose to work on the topic of **health / social protection**.

Education and Culture Commission: The commission continued working on the topic of "**European cultural identity**" - this time with participation from local and regional elected representatives.

The final objective of these consultations is to publish a "White Paper on European Cultural Identity" in order to present it to the INGO Conference during the spring session in April 2020. This collective work, written by Consultations and many INGOs, will be a practical educational guide containing plural definitions of words and concepts, intended for learners, teachers and trainers in the context of **education for democratic citizenship**.

In the exhaustive report, we can find the speakers' names and some items of the speeches.

The right to lifelong education group :

- Recap of the working group's activities in April 2019 : higher education and migration; recommendations on poverty and precarious state of students in Europe.
- Proposal to work on a **draft statement on schoolchildren in the Sahel**.
- Drafting a working document concerning the **draft Council of Europe Recommendation on History Teaching in Europe** in connection with establishing a History Observatory for Peace in Europe (HOPE).
- By April 2020 : Contribution to the **White Paper on European cultural identity** and Identification of possible priority challenges such as **IT accessibility for seniors**.

Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Commission:

The meeting of this commission focused on migration, biodiversity and climate

1. Environmental migration (speech by the Director of the Liège Observatory) :

To the extent that climate change never acts alone, it is a multiplier of social, political, demographic and environmental threats.

Sub-Saharan Africa is one of the three most affected places together with deltas and small islands.

2. Nature conservation, protecting natural heritage:

Recap of the Berne Convention which is a binding international legal instrument in the field of nature conservation. It protects most of the natural heritage of the European continent and extends to some African states.

3. COP 25 to be held in Spain

The INGO Conference will attend and present its activities including the "Human Rights and Climate Change Recommendation"

In addition, there was a presentation of the **World Forum for Democracy 2019** with the topic: **"Information: democracy in danger?"**

Cross-cutting Working Group :

Digital Citizen Working Group:

The working group's role is to help establish a coordinated strategy for the digital age and identify the role of civil society organizations and the IT industry. How can digital technology strengthen the implementation of our values ?

A list of recommendations was contemplated vis-à-vis the INGO Conference, the Council of Europe in general and the Council of Europe with the INGO Conference (see specific report).

In view of the Standing Committee meeting on 20 January 2020, preparation of two documents :

- A recommendation to the INGO Conference on its IT strategies.
- For the Council of Europe, a list of 6 or 7 points of attention to encourage it to act.

INGO Conference migration watch unit:

The Migration watch unit met to reaffirm its objectives vis-à-vis the INGO Conference and the Council of Europe in general.

It continues to establish links with the Parliamentary Migration Committee.

A contribution was made as part of the 30th anniversary of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture. The unit welcomed the publication of the text on an "alternative to the detention of migrant children" (Parliamentary resolution and more general document).

It supported broadcasting the film "Grand H" and the exhibition of women's faces "SEEN, self- portraits of women fleeing"

The Christian INGO Group :

The various Christian INGOs accredited to the Council of Europe met to take stock of their individual commitments to the Council of Europe.

- Pax Christi emphasized the importance of the manifesto written by Pax Christi France and Pax Christi Germany on **peace in Europe: "The Europe we want."**
- Renate "**Anti-human trafficking**" wrote a booklet on this topical issue
- The issue of **sexual abuse** has been addressed by INGOs linked to Catholic schools (alumni, ...)
- CCE, Christian Churches in Europe presented its Kirkentag 2021 project on the topic : "**Europe's global responsibility.**"

Compared with the autumn session:

- Willingness to take an active part in drafting the White Paper on "European Identity" to promote the contributions of Christendom.
- Denunciation of lobbying by certain INGOs related to promoting gender theories.

Reminder of upcoming events:

- World Forum of Catholic-inspired INGOs in Rome on 5 - 7 December on the topic of inclusion.
- Debate on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Holy See at the Council of Europe in Strasbourg (see attached leaflet).

For information :

FAFCE (European Federation of Catholic Family Associations): Press release "30 years of the International Convention on Child Rights: our common responsibility"

Change in the **Holy See's Permanent Representative to the Council of Europe in Strasbourg : Mgr Marco Ganci** replaces Mgr Paolo Rudelli appointed as Papal Nuncio in Zimbabwe.

A meeting with Monsignor Ganci is scheduled for Thursday, 28 November 2019.

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