



Strasbourg

Summer Session

June 2016



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

The Council of Europe Parliament's summer session was held in Strasbourg from 20 to 24 June 2016, as were meetings of the INGO Conference, its Commissions and Working Groups.

It was also time for several debates including:

- The treatment of migrants, refugees and NGOs defending their rights,
- Age and health: public health issues and social cohesion
- Religions and women's empowerment,

For MIAMSI, this session enabled it to reaffirm its place as an INGO focused on defending human rights, respecting the dignity of people in all their dimensions and combating extreme poverty (see MIAMSI Status). The team in charge of the Council of Europe representation specifically reported its involvement in "Major risk prevention and management for the vulnerable: migrants", according to its commitments in Pozzallo.

Some flashbacks on the reflections in the various committees, working groups and other meetings in Strasbourg in June 2016:

Human Rights Commission:

Three major issues were addressed by the commission:

✓ **Position of human rights defenders in Transnistria**

Transnistria, a region that seceded from Moldova on the Ukrainian border, is far from respecting human rights and human rights defenders are under threat. A recommendation was drafted to be voted on in the conference.

✓ **Children's Rights Strategy**

The Council of Europe is working on the subject and an INGO Conference working group has been set up. MIAMSI (François Debrowolska) has joined it.

✓ **Rights of children in prison**

A comprehensive study on children deprived of freedom has been carried out and we are asked to support it. See the website: http://www.childrendeprivedofliberty.info/?lang=en_us

A new working group on Digital technology was set up (MIAMSI is not a member).

The working groups to which MIAMSI belongs:

- ***Extreme Poverty and Human Rights Group*** : The group's work has been the actual preparation of the 17 October day (Eradicating Poverty - especially focused on children) and support for the European Social Charter.

- ***"Fighting hate speech" Group:***

Contact was made with youth INGOs to take up the campaign "No Hate Speech movement" in the fight against hate speech on the Web.

Each INGO and national NGOs are encouraged to publicize the campaign and website.

<http://www.nohatespeechmovement.org/>

- ***"Human Rights, co-development and migration" Working Group:***

The Committee of Ministers adopted a "Human rights and business" recommendation which requires the Council of Europe member states to legislate regarding respect for human rights and basic

freedoms. The working group is monitoring how implementation develops. It is clear that, the more attentive states become to such respect, the more co-development will be facilitated and migration, including economic migration, reduced.

[https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec\(2016\)3&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true](https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?p=&Ref=CM/Rec(2016)3&Language=lanEnglish&Ver=original&Site=COE&BackColorInternet=DBDCF2&BackColorIntranet=FDC864&BackColorLogged=FDC864&direct=true)

Culture and Education Commission :

Two topics were discussed at the meeting:

1. What skills are needed for a Democratic Culture

Presentation of the European competency framework for a democratic culture by the Ambassador of the Republic of Andorra where education is prioritized to access such skills.

Reflections on implementation, preparing young people to live Council of Europe values.

Summary document:

http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/Source/competences/competences-for-democratic-culture_en.pdf

2. Women's role in democratic culture and combating obscurantism.

"Living together in Europe" Working Group: focuses on intercultural education

The issue of **reciprocity** in the context of intercultural dialogue was the focus of debate as the condition for a true intercultural dialogue.

The role of **"Intercultural Cities"** was again addressed. We are asked to take a close look at this reality that seems very effective.

<http://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities>

Democracy Commission:

The commission dealt primarily with the topic of **participatory democracy**:

1. The World Forum for Democracy in November 2016:

Democracy and Equality, that can education do?

2. European Democracy Week

Living together in culturally diverse societies: respect each other, communicate, interact.

The "Europe and the Mediterranean" Working Group: did not meet

The "Health" Working group: has just been set up. Its purpose is applying standards for the healthcare and social management of the elderly (following the events described on page 4)

The INGO Conference

1. An exchange of views took place on the treatment of migrants, refugees and NGOs defending their rights. :

- ✓ What of INGOs and NGOs taking part: Being **watchmen** (whistleblower role), giving advice and guidance, involving the implementation of decisions
- ✓ **International cooperation:** the testimony of local Greek NGOs has shown the importance of INGOs and NGOs working in cooperation, so that local organizations can achieve their full potential, often as effective or more so than a "professional" INGO. We must combat NGO infighting and support cooperation.
- ✓ **Protecting NGOs and people who help migrants:** Such protection is not ensured in all countries and poses serious continuity problems. All Council of Europe players have come together (MPs, ministers and INGOs) to provide that protection and put in place "effective" legislation.

✓

2. Adopting the draft recommendations

- Transnistria (see above, Human Rights Commission)
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680684cac>
- Age and Health (see above, Democracy Commission)
<https://rm.coe.int/CoERMPublicCommonSearchServices/DisplayDCTMContent?documentId=0900001680684d19>

3. Announcement of work on surrogate motherhood

Each INGO is asked to send its thoughts during the summer so that a Conference document on this issue can be drafted from the human rights angle.

4. Upcoming **World Democracy Congress** in November 2016 with the topic :
"Living together - Inclusive Societies ..."

The two "Side Events" that took place on the INGO Conference initiative:

1. Age and health: a public health issue, social cohesion, the urgency of coordinating efforts

((Organized by the Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Commission))

This was to reflect and draw up a recommendation for Council of Europe member countries (recommendation adopted during the session - see above).

A few thoughts:

- Enable the elderly to create their own future
- Establish a policy of active aging
- Provide extensive, redesigned training for doctors and health personnel
- Encourage local authorities to establish a favorable environment for the elderly to remain empowered.
- Consider aging as a life phase of the elderly, not the end of life.
- Aging is living.

The European Social Charter (Article 23) clearly illustrates the entire mindset that presided over the meeting. <https://www.coe.int/en/web/conventions/full-list/-/conventions/rms/090000168007cf93>

2. Are religions a place of empowerment for women? Progress, setbacks?

(Organized by the Human Rights Commission - Religions and Human Rights Working Group)

Presentation text:

The European Convention on Human Rights, or the Lisbon Treaty for European Union Member States, respect religions or spiritual movements. Domestic laws also protect the freedoms of conscience and worship for citizens of Council of Europe member countries by ensuring equality between women and men. We question the fate of such equality in religious structures.

Speeches were made by:

- Mendel Samama, Rabbi of Strasbourg
- Mohamed Tahiri, chaplain and preacher at the Strasbourg Grand Mosque
- Tenzin Palmo, Venerable Buddhist Master and founder of a monastery in India
- Vasile Iorgulescu, Representative and priest of the Romanian Orthodox Church
- Agnès Von Kirchbach, theologian and pastor of the United Protestant Church of France.
- Mgr Rudelli, the Holy See's Permanent Observer at the Council of Europe.

Everyone had the opportunity to present the place, status and importance of women in religion, over and above the usual representations, and trying to share the "logic" associated with each specific theology, rite or code.

The text of the speeches (in French) can be sent on request.

The Christian INGO group (CINGO)

The various Christian INGOs accredited to the Council of Europe came together to discuss not only about the summer session topics, but also an emerging issue: **Animal Rights**. Lines of discernment to support a strong case were input by the representative of "Justice and Peace Europe". A link was made to the encyclical Laudato Si.

Recurring topics such as **migration** and **combating poverty** were also discussed.

Both "Side events" (fringe conferences) were mentioned: **Religion and women's empowerment / Age and Health**. Reference to the Church's social teaching was obviously effective.

The Catholic INGO group (Forum)

As part of the Catholic-inspired INGO Forum, a meeting was held at the Holy See's Permanent Mission in Strasbourg about publicizing "**Amoris Laetitia**" (Joy of Love), the Holy Father's Apostolic Exhortation following two synods on the family.

Father Senelle o.p. made a summary presentation and several Catholic INGOs indicated how the style and attitude described in the exhortation text had repercussions on how to be present and involved in the Council of Europe. A discussion ensued among those present. Mgr Rudelli, the Holy See's Permanent Representative, had a very warm welcome for INGOs.

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