



Strasbourg

Winter Session

1st term 2019



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



The **Council of Europe** is celebrating its **70th anniversary** throughout 2019 and this is an important time for all its members! The INGO Conference, its Commissions and Working Groups, like all the Council of Europe players, will use this year's meetings to highlight the importance of this institution, which aims to make States interact with each other in order to better serve Human Rights, Democracy, the Rule of Law.

Some newsflashes on the events in Strasbourg in early 2019:

The INGO Conference

As part of celebrating the 70th anniversary of the founding of the Council of Europe, there is a desire to return to the fundamentals of "living together" in Europe in each country and especially between the various states. The place and role of civil society are regularly questioned, particularly in countries where democracy is in crisis, such as in ex-Soviet bloc Eastern European countries.

1. On the occasion of **World Non-Governmental Organization Day**, the INGO Conference organized a meeting attended by several Strasbourg team members, entitled "**Why do we need NGOs ?**" It was emphasized that:

- The change in **NGO status** in the Council of Europe: from advisory(1976) to participatory (2003 means, for example, that they are contributing Steering Committee members (25 steering committees)..
- **Civil society** has an indispensable rôle making **its voice** heard, particularly in combating poverty (see Caritas Europa's testimony)
- They take part the **steering committees' normative work**, monitoring it particularly in areas of the Social Charter.
- NGOs are able to submit "**collective claims**" to states that do not implement the charters and other agreements they have signed.

Of course, the issues of support and **freedom of association** were raised since some countries restrict the creation of NGOs or even enact laws that may force some to end their activities.

Requests were made to various Council of Europe bodies - Committee of Ministers, General Secretariat - to **further acknowledge and support the work of INGOs.**

The **importance of the INGO Conference** was also emphasized, making it possible to enter into a **collective dynamic** to defend Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law.

See brief summary on the CINGO website

2. The Council of Europe Committee of Ministers is organizing a meeting on 22 March 2019 in Warsaw on:
The place and role of NGOs in the Council of Europe

Ambassadors, the Secretary General, senior officials, INGOs and students will attend. MIAMSI has been invited to take part in this meeting due to its regular and "relevant" (sic) attendance.

Culture and Education:

On January 17th, a symposium was held on:

« **Intercultural Dialogue, learning citizenship and Democracy – Practice in Catholic schools** »

11 Council of Europe member states were officially represented and many Catholic NGOs attended including MIAMSI.

Concrete examples were presented like the school in Farnières, Belgium.

Migration monitoring unit:

The Migration monitoring unit met during the parliament session in January and decided to organize a **Side Event** during the Council of Europe Parliament's spring session on the topic: "**Solidarity - Duty or offence.**"

Speakers are already booked:

- The Mayor of Grande Synthe, a town in the north of France where there are migrants wanting to cross to the United Kingdom.
- The Chairperson of the Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons Commission in the CoE Parliament.
- A member of the INGO Conference legal group (specializing in the criminalization of INGOs who defend and protect migrants/human rights).
- A representative of the Seawatch INGO whose boats patrol the Mediterranean.
- A representative of Médecins du Monde.

MIAMSI is part of the preparation and facilitation team for this conference.

The monitoring unit also shared some statistics.

The Christian INGO Group:

The various Christian INGOs accredited to the Council of Europe met in January to share their actions and projects. Highlights:

- Upcoming **European elections**: MIAMSI circulated the message from Florence on these elections
- The **Council of Europe's 70th anniversary**: a document will be drawn up and sent to all INGOs
- The dynamics of the **INGO Conference** that need strengthening
- The importance of **networking** in each INGO and with other INGOs

In the coming weeks or more

- ✓ The **INGO Conference** session on 8 - 13 April
- ✓ A meeting of the members of the **World Forum of Catholic-inspired INGOs** will take place in the premises of the Holy See's embassy in Strasbourg on April 8th. MIAMSI will be represented.
- ✓ The **World Democracy Forum** on the topic of **information** in November 2019

For Strasbourg local team members
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