



Strasbourg

Summer Session

June 2017



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

This year the summer session of the Council of Europe Parliament was held in Strasbourg on 26 - 30 June 2017, as were the meetings of the INGO Conference, its Commissions/Working Groups and the Christian INGO Group.

A few newsflashes on reflections during this 2017 summer session:

Human Rights Commission:

Three specific topics addressed:

✓ **The results of the Commission's three years of work**

The reflections and activities of every working group made it possible to measure progress on each topic. The latest version of the "Human Rights and Business" Recommendation has been approved (see "INGO Conference")

✓ **Emerging Technologies and Human Rights**

The spread of digital technology poses serious problems with respect to human rights and data protection. There are very few regulations and they date back to the end of the last century!

This makes responding difficult; we're left with ambiguity, the paradoxes of our society: everyone wants to benefit from the advantages of hyper-digitization but keep their freedom and privacy.

What was stressed during this working session: personal data management remains the current key issue as regards respect for Human Rights.

✓ **Populist wave in Europe**

Populism is very dangerous for democracy, one of the CoE objectives. Let's not think that it is the sole representative of the people. At this level, civil society has a card to play! It also represents the people! Populism undermines international law and multinational agreements. They are, however, the guarantors of everyone's protection ... in the long run.

To combat populism, the weaknesses of our democracies have to be tackled: unemployment, poverty, precariousness. There is also a need to promote social inclusion, develop education and dispel disillusionment among people.

The working groups attended by MIAMSI:

- ***Extreme Poverty and Human Rights Group***: in addition to actually preparing the 17 October 2017 day, the powers of this working group have been extended: ***promoting the Social Charter*** as such. The Human Rights Convention should be supplemented by articles guaranteeing social rights.

In addition, the working group wished to work on more specific topics: ***Poverty and social rights - employment and decent income - access to education and training.***

- ***Combat Hate Speech Group*** :

Speech by the General Rapporteur on combating hate speech (in Parliament) to present "**An anti-hatred alliance between politics and civil society**".

The working group should be renewed for the next term of office, in particular as a resource platform for INGOs/NGOs; in connection with the struggle against populism.

Cross-cutting actions on migration with the Education Commission and working groups should also take place over the next three years.

Culture and Education Committee:

The commission members took stock of the four working groups (see specific sheet):

- ✓ Educating in intercultural dialogue - Living together in Europe,
- ✓ Teaching history,
- ✓ Proper use of digital media,
- ✓ The teacher interacting with his/her environment – educating on European values.

Democracy Commission - social cohesion and global issues:

The Chair of the Committee - and her whole team - wished to recall the importance of mobilizing and effectively uniting our forces today to:

- ✓ Rebuild our societies in the face of violence,
- ✓ Address the migratory cycle as a long-term phenomenon,
- ✓ Help consolidate the Paris Agreements as COP 23 gets closer,
- ✓ Improve our countries' governance, promote cohesion and democracy tools.

The commission is also involved in organizing "European Democracy Week".

Europe and the Mediterranean Working Party:

The working group met and began by observing the state of migrant flows for the first half of 2017. Flows across the Mediterranean are increasing as are the number of deaths. The issues of "resettling" people accommodated in hotspots were also discussed. Vigilance and the appeal to respect human dignity remain the two key avenues to be developed and improved. A "harvest" of good practices is put in place. Feedback on this point is invited from each movement.

The INGO Conference

1. During the first session of the INGO Conference, **elections were organized for the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Human Rights, Education and Democracy Commissions**. This is a total renewal which will require INGOs to "reposition" themselves in the working groups, which are also largely renewed.
2. The review of the past three years has been done as a **list of cross-cutting challenges that are currently emerging**:
 - ✓ Democratization of governance
 - ✓ Use of fear in politics
 - ✓ Democratization of culture
 - ✓ Relationship between man and machine – is artificial intelligence a threat?
 - ✓ No-go areas
 - ✓ Ungovernable nature of the WEB
 - ✓ Anti-human rights offences
3. The **Human Rights and Business Recommendation** was finally adopted (also with a view to keeping populations of the South countries in place via a policy of respecting human rights). Below are the links to the recommendation in English and French:
<https://rm.coe.int/conf-ple-2017-rec2-human-rights-and-business-en/1680730295>
<https://rm.coe.int/conf-ple-2017-rec2-human-rights-and-business-fr/1680730296>
4. Report on **visits** by the Chair of the INGO Conference and secretariat services in several countries **to support Civil Society** and its organization:
 - ✓ Hungary where the right of association is far from being respected
 - ✓ Ireland where there are grey areas exist despite a "proper" economic and social situation.
5. **Speech by Ms Battaini-Dragoni - Council of Europe Deputy Secretary General**

- ✓ Highlighting the value and acknowledging the importance of civil society and in particular the INGO Conference
- ✓ Importance of supporting and promoting the social charter in these times of withdrawal
- ✓ Promotion of participatory democracy

6. Votes and Litigation Commission

- ✓ Partial renewal of existing staff
- ✓ Mr François Debrowolska (MIAMSI) and Philippe Grolleau (Pax Romana) remain members of this commission.

7. Combating Discrimination, Hate Speech in the Post-Truth Era:

Much time was devoted to this issue of discrimination, and hate speech which are largely the source of populism.

A presentation of a document (Alternatives) on combating hate speech enabled us to work on the concept of "alternative narrative" which is not designed as a direct response to hate speech (which in most cases only reinforces sterile polemics) but is based on:

- ✓ The equal dignity of every human person
- ✓ Developing critical thinking
- ✓ Spreading objective information.

This document, which is made up of fact sheets, can be downloaded from the following links:

French

<https://rm.coe.int/alternatives-fr-final-23052017-web/168071ba07>

English

<https://rm.coe.int/wecan-eng-final-23052017-web/168071ba08>

8. Next World Democracy Congress in November 2017 on the topic:

"Populism in question(s)"

The Christian INGO group (CINGO)

The various Christian INGOs accredited to the Council of Europe met to exchange views on the summer **session topics, elections** to the chairs of the INGO Conference and **Pope Francis's recent speech to the European Union Heads of State** and Government (24 March 2017).

In particular, we took time to appraise the elements of discerning Hope that he put forward. For the Holy Father, Europe will find Hope:

- When Man is the centre and core of its institutions,
- In solidarity,
- When it does not withdraw into fear and false security,
- When it invests in development and peace,
- When it opens up to the future.

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