



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

The Council of Europe Parliament's Winter Session was held in Strasbourg on 25 - 29 June 2018, as were meetings of the INGO Conference, its Commissions and Working Groups.

The Conference and Commission action plans were passed, a proper conduct code is being drafted and a change in the schedule was adopted: plenary meetings are now scheduled in April and October each year.

Some flashbacks to each of the events in Strasbourg in January 2018:

The INGO Conference

1. The **Council of Europe Secretary General's 2018 Report** particularly developed the topic: "**The role of the institutions and the threats they are under.**"

The issue of **populism** is widely developed:

"Populism claims to have the exclusive right to represent peoples and eliminates the legitimacy of any political opposition. It places itself above any democratic institution, courts, media, civil society. It gives bad answers to good questions."

The conclusions of this report are very disturbing. NGOs and human rights defenders are truly targeted by populists. This is very worrying, and the Council of Europe is seeking to put in place criteria to "save" democracy in some member states that seek to discriminate against many INGO.

(see third chapter of the CoE Secretary General's report)

<https://www.coe.int/fr/web/portal/-/secretary-general-2018-report-role-of-institutions-threats-to-institutions>

2. **The Parliament is preparing a report to prevent inappropriate restriction of NGO activities in Europe**

There is a Civil Society where some of our church lay movements and associations are in such a difficult position that the Council of Europe MPs have seized on this issue to prevent restrictive situations.

Freedom of association is currently being called into question in several countries in the 47-nation Europe!

3. **Gender equality**

The Council of Europe is launching a new strategy to promote and enforce gender equality (with a focus on women and children in migration situations - page 33).

<https://rm.coe.int/strategy-fr-2018-2023/16807b58ea>

4. **Conference recommendation to the Committee of Ministers**

This relates to suspending the activities of the Expert Committee on the Rights of the Disabled for budget reasons. The Committee of Ministers is asked to make this suspension as short as possible so that people with disabilities can enjoy the same rights as everyone else!

Human Rights Commission:

The committee came back to the Secretary General's report focused on the role of institutions, the threats they face (see previous page). It stresses the importance of reading the summary.

Information is given on the activity of the **Human Rights Steering Committee** on which the INGO Conference is represented. Five drafting groups are at work!

Anti-female genital mutilation and forced marriage:

Statement from the Committee of Ministers in 2017

Very useful proper practice guide

<https://rm.coe.int/comite-directeur-pour-les-droits-de-l-homme-cddh-guide-de-bonnes-et-pr/168073ca38>

Social Rights Protection in Europe:

Very important for the Conference. "Basic handbook being drafted"-type report.

<https://rm.coe.int/extrait-du-mandat-donne-par-le-comite-des-ministres-au-cddh-concernant/168077b6f4>

Migration and Human Rights

Alternative to detaining minors pursuant to migration.

The group is drafting an easy-to-use handbook on effectively implementing alternatives.

Freedom of expression and links to other human rights

Proper practice on how to reconcile the various types of expression.

Civil Society and National Human Rights Institutions

Analysis of the impact of current practices on civil society activities in various countries (human rights defenders).

Further information was given about the Oviedo Protocol (1997): **Protection of Human Rights in bioethics.**

<https://www.coe.int/fr/web/bioethics/oviedo-convention>

There is an issue of adding a protocol/Human Rights and bio medicine.

Poverty, Discrimination and Exclusion Group:

This group will work not only on extreme poverty but also on poverty in general and inequality.

Three key avenues:

- Increase access to Social Rights in Europe,
- Advocate for access to appropriate education,
- Help to overcome social and cultural exclusion.

It is continuing to organize the **October 17** day on eradicating poverty with this year's topic: **access to accommodation.**

Culture and Education Commission:

- The commission wished to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the publication of the "White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue: **Living together in equal dignity**".

For this, a conference was organized with several personalities on European cultural identity. Some significant extracts:

- Ms **Catherine Lalumière**, a former Council of Europe Secretary General, President of the House of Europe recalled that the Council of Europe has always had an open, flexible attitude. Some fear that numbers, origins, difference in religion entail the loss of European identity. National identities feel threatened. For nationalists, only national identity matters.
- Mr **Miroslav Papa**, Chairman of the Council of Europe Ministers' Deputies, presented Cultural Routes as a gateway to European cultural identity.
To counter negative trends, we must develop education and strengthen civil society which must act with governments to consolidate progress.

- Mr **Jean-Baptiste MATTEI**, France's Permanent Representative at the Council of Europe underlined developing identity withdrawal, i.e. sovereignty and protectionism as well as the phenomenon of developing regional identities which focuses more on differences than on common points.
- Mgr **Paolo RUDELLI**, the Holy See's Permanent Representative at the Council of Europe. European cultural identity is rooted in its rich legacy from the past, but it is a living, dynamic process, included today in the process of globalization.
- Ms **Aurélie FILIPETTI**, former French Culture Minister
Through culture, we are in an "otherness" that does not impoverish but enriches us: my identity will be extended by encountering the identity of others.
- Mr **Philippe POTENTINI**, the Council of Europe Communication Director, recalled that after the European Human Rights Convention the second founding text was the European Cultural Convention (1954).
- Mr **Christophe GIRARD**, founder of Nuit Blanche, emphasized that culture is the construction of critical sense, judgment, i.e. being able to love or not to love.

All speakers and the audience agreed on the imperative need to put education at the heart of all Europe building and consolidating processes!

Right to lifelong education group:

There are two adult education concepts: lifelong education for adult volunteers and education through integration (e.g. social treatment of unemployment); the adults concerned are not necessarily volunteers. The players and instruction are not the same in both cases.

This issue is impacted by the presence of migrants, the IT revolution, the place of women and specific audiences (disabled, detainees, ...).

Intercultural housing estates group:

Issues of living together with minorities were addressed via combating anxiety and exclusion. The arrival of migrants puts this issue at the heart of concerns on housing estates.

Democracy Commission:

In the preamble it was recalled that in more and more countries INGO members, including those registered with the Council of Europe, are behind bars and nobody knows if they will be released!

Another difficulty: budget restrictions linked to non-payment of dues by Russia and Turkey mean that training on the Shoa is cancelled!

1. Women's participation in political and public life:

Reminder of the principles of Recommendation CM/Rec (2018)4 from the Committee of Ministers to member states on citizen participation in local public life adopted on 21 March 2018;

https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?ObjectId=09000016807954c4 : combating violence, enabling access to justice, protecting migrant women ... political parties are also concerned, access to work, company decision-making bodies (boards of directors), women have different priorities.

Local Democracy Week 2018 on the topic: "Citizen Participation, Consultation and Commitment: A Living Local Democracy" (15-21 October 2018)

2. World Democracy Forum 19-21 November in Strasbourg

(<https://www.coe.int/fr/web/world-forum-democracy>)

Topic: "Gender equality in political and public life and combating violence against women"

<https://rm.coe.int/forum-mondial-de-la-democratie-2018-document-d-orientation-theme-egali/16808ac957>

3. Environment

Attending the COP24 (Katowice, Poland December 3-14, 2018). The goal is to adopt the regulations implementing the Paris COP 21.

Corruption working group: it determined its working lines and objectives.

- ✓ Educating citizens to prevent corruption
- ✓ Helping reduce domestic and international corruption
- ✓ Identifying tools to detect corruption clues

And more practically participate in writing a handbook about two chapters:

- Ethical culture,
- Putting it into practice: database of INGOs who have carried out campaigns and can offer examples of practices. Choosing from the examples those with the most impact to come and share and work with the Working Group.

The focus is: preventing corruption and not fighting corruption.

Cross-cutting working groups:

Social and territorial cohesion group:

Key line of work: towards the COP 24, to take place in Poland in December 2018. The aim is to finalize a set of guidelines for implementing the Paris Agreement:

- Evaluating measures implementing commitments
- 2020 Greenhouse gases: reduction for all countries
- From 2023 the UN will implement an evaluation every five years
- The problem is that this is happening in Poland, which puts obstacles in the way, banning demonstrations, hampering NGOs and very pro-coal

The United Nations Office and relevant associations are working to materialize human rights and social rights in the preamble

IT Citizen Working group: three main lines of questions:

- What vision do we have of possible futures for the IT citizen?
- Considering the challenges, what IT future do we want for IT citizens?
- How can we participate in policy making with policy makers?

Some preliminary exchanges related to IT:

- *There is as much positive as negative,*
- *IT can create links, including intergenerational ones,*
- *One difficulty: the big IT companies are global, government powers are local ...*
- *There are no more (or fewer) barriers to spreading information*
- *Compelling need to develop one's critical sense of the information circulated ...*

Migration watch unit:

The Migration watch unit, which is under the responsibility of an INGO Conference Vice-Chairman, is coordinated by one of the MIAMSI Strasbourg team members. It is responsible for collecting reliable information and circulating it to the various INGO Conference bodies so that everyone includes the migration issue in their problems.

This has been the case in the Democracy and Education Commissions. For human rights, migration was already largely taken into consideration.

The link to the Parliament (domestic laws) and the Local and Regional Authorities Congress will be enhanced to ensure that the laws and other recommendations issued are realized and implemented.

The Christian INGO Group:

The various Christian INGO accredited to the Council of Europe met particularly to share current challenges and to define a list of "must-have" markers promoting discernment.

The *challenges* are migration and receiving humanity thrown on the roads of despair, the end of life and "enhanced" man, war returning to the European continent, the crisis in the "European project" and the emergence of national, ethnic, economic particularisms (egoisms), poverty in all its forms (from economic misery to ignorance, social and civic exclusion).

The *essentials* are the centrality of the person, rather than the individual, respect for life, humanizing situations, the interdependence of man and creation, peace.

Views were also exchanged on participation in the working groups. A draft statement on the environment was mentioned, particularly on open pit mining in French Guiana.

The upcoming topics for reflection by Christian INGO will be around the 2019 spring European elections and the European Social Charter.

<https://www.coe.int/fr/web/turin-european-social-charter>

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