

## **Final report of the INGO Conference committees whose two-year mandate is coming to an end and vote on a one-year extension (14-17 November 26)**

- 1 - Committee [Inclusive Territories, Environment and Health](#)
- 2 - Civil Society Committee on the [Rights of the Child in Europe: Protecting and promoting the well-being of children of all ages](#)
- 3 - Committee on the [Education for Democracy](#)
- 4 - Committee on the [Human Rights Democracy and Artificial Intelligence. Civil society in action](#)
- 5 - Committee [for Intercultural, Interreligious and Interconvictional Dialogue](#)
- 6 - Committee on [Migration Issues](#)
- 7 - Committee of NGOs as [defenders of gender equality and women's rights](#)
- 8 - Committee on the [Sport and Human Rights](#)

### **Vote on the extension and elections of committee chairpersons**

Oral report of the other INGO Conference committees

- Committee for the [European Social Charter and its monitoring mechanisms](#)
- Committee for the [International Year of Volunteers 2026](#)

### **Discussion and adoption by the INGO Conference of any draft text**

- 1 - **Draft Recommendation:** [Ensuring climate justice, the protection of vulnerable populations and social cohesion in the face of energy instability and international climate disengagement](#)
- 2 - **Draft Recommendation** [to the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress and Draft Resolution to the INGO Conference concerning a platform for interreligious dialogue](#)
- 3 - **Draft declaration concerning** [the new law on the death penalty in Israel, adopted by the Knesset on 30 March 2026](#)
- 4 - **Draft declaration** [of the Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)

## **What role do non-governmental organizations (NGOs) play in the work of the Council of Europe?**

While international NGOs can cooperate with the Council of Europe through the Conference of International NGOs, local, national, and regional NGOs also have opportunities to engage with the Council of Europe, both formally and informally. The contribution of civil society is valuable, particularly for the exchange of information related to human rights monitoring. NGOs can participate in national consultations, propose solutions to rights violations, contribute to standard-setting, and provide information throughout the monitoring cycle.

### **Participatory status with the Council of Europe**

Independent NGOs are an essential component of European society, ensuring freedom of expression and association—two fundamental rights for democracy. Recognizing their influence, the Council of Europe offers international NGOs the opportunity to obtain participatory status.

The Council of Europe has maintained working relations with NGOs since 1952, when it granted them consultative status. In 2003, acknowledging the increasingly active role of INGOs, the Council of Europe decided to transform this into participatory status.

A revision of the guidelines on participatory status was carried out in consultation with the Conference of INGOs in 2015, and in July 2016, the Committee of Ministers adopted Resolution (2016)3, which sets out the rules for granting participatory status, provides further context, explains what it entails, the conditions to be met, and the opportunities it offers INGOs to cooperate with the Council of Europe.

More than 300 international NGOs currently benefit from participatory status, enabling them to actively engage in the work of the Conference of International NGOs. The Conference itself holds participatory status with various Council of Europe bodies and sits on numerous intergovernmental committees. For example, members of the Conference of International NGOs may request accreditation to lodge collective complaints under the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter (ESC) adopted in 1995. They may also contribute to the reporting procedure under the European Social Charter. Further information is available in the relevant sections of the manual.

NGOs may also participate in intergovernmental committees to contribute to the policy-making process (Article 8 of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3). This role is reinforced in the 2022–2025 mandate, which calls on all committees to strengthen civil society participation in their work where appropriate.

When an international NGO obtains participatory status, it becomes a member of the Conference of International NGOs. This Conference represents organized civil society within the Council of Europe and works to promote participatory democracy. It holds two plenary sessions per year and organizes events linked to the Council of Europe's priorities, such as

visits to member states, with particular attention to the protection of civic space. Its report is then transmitted to the member state concerned for comments and is debated in plenary session in the presence of representatives of the member state and NGOs.

## **Conference of International NGOs**

The Conference of INGOs brings together more than 300 NGOs that have obtained participatory status. It maintains direct dialogue with its members through thematic work, consultations on specific issues, public events, and its two annual general assemblies. Since 2018, the Conference has celebrated World NGO Day through public events highlighting the role of NGOs in democratic society.

The Conference engages with member states and civil society through numerous visits carried out each year. It draws the Organization's attention to civil society concerns by adopting resolutions, communicating with the Secretary General and the Commissioner for Human Rights, and informing the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, and the Congress. It is represented in intergovernmental steering committees and is a member of the Executive Committee of the North-South Centre. The Conference has an Expert Council on NGO Law, which provides legal expertise and conducts studies on issues related to freedom of assembly and association.

Most of the thematic work is carried out within committees established for a limited period, generally two years. These committees centralize discussions and research on issues related to the Council of Europe's work and prepare reports, draft declarations, recommendations, and resolutions, which are then debated during the General Assembly of International NGOs.

The President is elected for a three-year term and may be re-elected once. The President is supported by two Vice-Presidents and eight elected members of the Standing Committee.

Through the Conference of INGOs, the Council of Europe ensures that civil society is represented in intergovernmental activities and has the means to exchange views with parliamentarians and local and regional authorities on societal issues. The Conference of INGOs is an essential partner of the other institutions of the Council of Europe.

## **Participation of NGOs in intergovernmental committees**

NGOs may also participate in intergovernmental committees to contribute to the policy-making process (Article 8 of Resolution CM/Res(2021)3). This role is reinforced in the 2022–2025 mandate, which calls on all committees to strengthen civil society participation in their work where appropriate.

## **Expert Council on NGO Law**

The Expert Council conducts thematic and country-specific studies on particular aspects of NGO legislation and its compliance with international standards, notably the European

Convention on Human Rights and Recommendation (2007)<sup>14</sup> on the legal status of NGOs in Europe.

It was established in January 2008 by the Conference of INGOs with the aim of creating an enabling environment by examining national legislation concerning NGOs and its implementation, and by providing advice on how to bring national law and practices into line with Council of Europe standards and European best practices.

It is composed of 15 members with expertise in various fields, such as law, human rights, and best practices. Members are appointed by the Conference of International NGOs for a three-year term and serve in their personal capacity.

**Its activities include:**

- Monitoring legal and regulatory frameworks affecting NGOs across Europe and how these frameworks are implemented, including country visits and thematic consultations.
- Preparing opinions and studies on the compatibility of national laws and regulations affecting the status and functioning of NGOs with international standards.
- Producing thematic studies analyzing legal, regulatory, and policy issues affecting NGOs.
- Providing advice, training, and awareness-raising activities on standards applicable to the status and functioning of NGOs.

Among its other activities are contributions to the Council of Europe's intergovernmental standard-setting work and support to the President of the Conference of INGOs.

The Expert Council prepares opinions and thematic studies either on its own initiative or at the request of the Conference of INGOs, NGOs, national authorities, or Council of Europe bodies. Once adopted, these documents are presented to the Conference of INGOs, which decides on follow-up action and ensures their dissemination.

The Chair of CMAtlv consults the Expert Council in order to develop a theme related to ATLV and the activities of CMAtlv.