

COUNCIL of EUROPE  
Activity Report Winter Session ( 21-25 January 2008)

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The main event of the winter session was the annual **General Assembly of the INGO Conference** during a full day. It was attended by a large number of associations. Fifteen new international or Europeanwide associations had applied for membership raising the membership well beyond 400.

*The activity report of the Conference* highlighted the work done in 2007:

The new participative Status implying new expectations and a closer cooperation between the Conference and the other pillars of the COE being required, the nine thematic groupings of the Conference have been called upon to contribute to different events, especially through:

- transmitting *the expertise of their members* in working with the different committees( comites directeurs , experts committees), participating in the campaigns organized by COE( Campaign Parliaments United to combat violence against women including domestic violence, Campaign for the White Paper on Intercultural and interreligious dialogue, campaign for the ratification of the European Convention on Trafficking Human Beings
  
- defence and promotion of **COE values** especially Human rights , democracy and attachment to the democratic participation of civil society
  
- willingness to *increase the efficiency of the thematic groupings ,hence restructuring* by reducing their numbers redefining their role and their mode of cooperation with the different divisions( as demonstrated in our participation to the Forum on Democracy in Sweden june 2007 ) and also coordinating their efforts to avoid duplication .

*-The other contributions* of the INGO Conference cannot all be listed but among them are included a **protocole on stakeholders** (by the grouping Health); **Motions** to the Parliamentary Assembly by different groups (on situation in Belarus for example); a **hearing on feminisation of poverty** by grouping Equality between women and men, the follow up being a report of the Parliamentary Commission EGA to the Parliamentary Assembly; participation to the **expert committee on legislation for European NGOs** by the grouping Civil Society and Democracy ; motions on environment by the groupings Countryside and environment and grouping Towns.

INGOs act as watchdogs close to the grass roots of civil society, giving an echo its needs and its demands

**Reorganization of the Conference of INGO s** was an important topic of the agenda A Memorandum on reorganization of the Conference of INGO s of the Council of Europe (doc revised 1 of 20/12/07 ) was submitted for general discussion .The assembly agreed that the Conference (all INGO ) would retain the powers currently assigned with the **president and the Bureau** (president, **3 vice presidents** , **2 rapporteurs** and **one** representant of *INGO service*) being elected by the General Assembly plus a **Standing Committee of approximately 20 persons** .

**The Conference of INGOs being the political core it was advised to have four sessions a year (actually there is only one) during the Winter session**

Reorganization of the thematic groupings being part of the general reorganization, is still in process

[Meetings of the thematic groupings](#) (Health, North-South Dialogue, Human Rights, Country Environment, Towns groupings) were held on the two following days. Gender Equality did not meet but its members met at an informal dinner.

The Grouping Human Rights had invited Pia TIRRONEN, officer in charge of Civil Society at the new **Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union** as a follow up of the Consultative Conference organized in Bruxelles from 9 to 10 december to organize its Social Platform. The INGO Conference of the Council of Europe had been represented at that Conference by Renée GERARD and the Secretariate by Mehdi REMILI. This encounter was very important with respect to the cooperation between the COE and the European Union in matters of fundamental rights.

[A Chart for the INGOs of the Council of Europe](#) is in process of elaboration and UWE belongs to the working group

During this session I attended also a meeting of the [Parliamentary Commission on Equality between Women and Men](#)

The Spring session of the Conference of INGO will take place on 14, 15 and 16 April in Strasbourg (meeting of the Liaison Committee and of some groupings)