

Exchange on the work priorities of the INGO Conference

Dear President, Vice-President, Secretary General, and colleagues,

I am pleased to write to you today in my capacity as the newly elected President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, to discuss with you the fresh impetus that I would like to give to the work of the Conference.

You will have noticed that in many countries the areas where democracy prevails are shrinking. Civil society therefore needs to be strengthened, organised, innovatory, ready to respond, and be heard within our political institutions.

The INGOs, which enjoy participatory status with the Council of Europe, are members of the Conference of INGOs. Through its members, in other words thanks to your organisation too, the Conference has the ability to represent civil society at the Council of Europe and in its 47 member states.

The mission of the Conference of INGOs is to be a participatory body that draws on the ideas and activities of its members and to involve them in its own activities. In this perspective, I think we should consider how to work together on the three priorities of my mandate (2015-2018), which are:

- to help strengthen civil society and increase its participation in decision-making processes at local, national and international level;
- to help build a society that knows how to assert freedoms to foster social cohesion;
- to contribute to the work of the various bodies of the Council of Europe, including the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities.

Our INGOs are “whistleblowers” but it is also our responsibility to help political decision-makers build a better world. In order to do this, we need to use our strengths, which lie in both collective action and in the specific action of each of the INGOs, which are members of our Conference. My colleagues in the Bureau of the Conference of INGOs and I wish to work with everyone, and to draw on the specific competences of each and everyone.

I count on you to respond to this invitation and to send us the following information by completing the attached questionnaire:

- the subjects that are a priority for your organisation,
- the themes you wish to work on in the context of the Conference of INGOs and the actions that you think should be carried out with the Conference of INGOs at the Council of Europe and in member states,
- other things your organisation expects from our collaboration.

Please return the enclosed form by e-mail to the following address (anna.rurka@coe.int) before 12 April 2015. The Bureau members and I are also at your disposal if you wish to talk to us on the phone or to arrange a meeting.

I look forward to hearing from you or meeting you soon.

Yours sincerely,

Anna RURKA
President of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe
23 March 2015