



ICMICA MIIC

International Catholic Movement for Intellectual & Cultural Affairs
Mouvement Catholique International pour les Affaires Intellectuelles et Culturelles
Movimiento Internacional de Intelectuales Católicos

EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONS

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1. We need Europe to invent a common future

Our forthcoming MCC Conference is entitled “**Inventing a common future**”!
Isn't that precisely the very stake of the construction of Europe in a globalized world?

The topic “**World governance ... need and/or utopia ?**” discussed in the March 2010 issue of our monthly Responsables shows that such a governance is already a fact through different institutions¹: International Labour Organization (ILO)², Council of Europe (CoE)³, European Union (UE), UNESCO....

The MCC International Letter and the launching of the Pax Romana - Siiac - MCC⁴ International Relations Network on January 23-24 2010 aim to “*create the relationships needed to develop among MCC members a global awareness of our local topics, to find out the conditions necessary for action with other countries and to understand that international institutions are one of the places for action.*”

But to fully understand these institutions it is important to know their respective roles. And yet, the low turnout of voters at European elections, the hard time we have to introduce a European dimension in our thinking, other than clichés and falsehoods, or the lack of interest for the calls for action sent through our networks, all this demonstrates our general lack of knowledge and thus of interest!

Do we realize that some 80% of our national rights proceed straight from European laws?

One of the missions of International Non Governmental Organizations (INGOs) holding participatory status is to “disseminate information about the Council of Europe's aims and activities among their constituencies.”⁵

As a permanent representative of the Pax Romana INGO at the Council of Europe, I would like to sum up here some reminders of the differences between European institutions⁶ and more particularly to explain the role of the Conference of INGOs within the Council of Europe, the only institution that gives “civil society” participatory status.

¹ Des Institutions et des hommes ... Vers une conscience globale par Philippe Ledouble, pages 8 et 9.

² OIT. Poursuivre le dialogue par Pierre Martinot-Lagarde s.j. pages 10 à 12.

³ CoE. Patient travail ... par Bernard Bougon s.j. pages 14 et 15

⁴ Lettre Internationale. Responsables n°402, mars 2010, pages 28 et 29, par Olivier Vasseur.

⁵ Le Conseil de l'Europe, 800 millions d'europeens. Direction de la communication - Division des relations publiques. Page 30. Octobre 2009

⁶ Les Institutions Européennes à Strasbourg : <http://www.strasbourg-europe.eu/les-institutions-a-strasbourg,2082,fr.html>

2. The Council of Europe and the European Union

What you should not mix up between those two European institutions⁷:

<p>Council of Europe (CoE)⁸</p> <p>International organization with headquarters in Strasbourg, gathering 47 European states and a population of 800 million inhabitants, covering the whole European continent, except Belarus.</p> <p>Its mission is to promote democracy and to protect human rights and the rule of law in Europe</p> <p>The CoE was instituted by the London treaty of May 5th 1949 signed by ten states: Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Norway, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and Sweden.</p>	<p>European council</p> <p>Regular meetings (at least twice a year) of heads of states and governments of Member states of the European Union in order to decide on the direction of community policies.</p> <p>European Union (UE)</p> <p>The European Union gathers 27 countries that have delegated part of their sovereignty in order to take democratic decisions on questions of common interest at the European level. To this day, no country has joined the Union without being first a member of the Council of Europe.</p>
<p>Parliamentary assembly</p> <p>Deliberative organ of the CoE. It is made up of 318 representatives and 318 substitutes named by the national parliaments of member states.</p>	<p>European parliament</p> <p>Parliamentary organ of the EU made up of the 736 European MPs from the 27 member states, elected through universal suffrage by the inhabitants of the EU.</p>
<p>European Commission of Human Rights</p> <p>The commission stopped functioning in November 1998, when the single Court of Human Rights was created. Until November 1998, this international body would examine the admissibility according to the European Convention of Human Rights of any request made by an individual or a state against a member state.</p>	<p>European Commission</p> <p>Executive organ of the EU, situated in Brussels, which oversees the implementation of the provisions of the treaties and of the decisions taken by Union institutions.</p>

⁷ Centre d'Information sur les Institutions Européennes. Auteur : Conseil de l'Europe, www.coe.int - Dernière modification : 19/02/2010

⁸ Voir Historique à : <http://www.strasbourg-europe.eu/historique,127,fr.html>

<p>European Court of Human Rights</p> <p>Created September 18th 1959, its headquarters are in Strasbourg. It is the only truly judiciary organ created by the European Convention of Human Rights and is made up of one judge for each state recognizing the Convention. It is the last instance to ensure respect by these states of their obligations resulting from the Convention. Since November 1998, the Court has operated non stop.</p>	<p>International Court of Justice</p> <p>Judiciary organ of the United Nations, its headquarters are in the Hague.</p> <p>Court of Justice of the European Communities</p> <p>Its headquarters are in Luxembourg and it ensures respect of European Union laws, and enforcement of the treaties shaping the EU.</p>
<p>European Convention of Human Rights</p> <p>Signed in Rome November 4th 1950, first international legal instrument to guarantee the protection of human rights.</p> <p>Treaty by which the member states of the CoE have pledged to respect human liberties and fundamental rights</p>	<p>Universal Declaration of Human Rights</p> <p>Voted by the United Nations Organization in 1948 in order to reinforce the protection of human rights at the international level.</p>
<p>Revised European Social Charter</p> <p>Signed in Torino October 18th 1961, revised in 1996.</p> <p>This CoE treaty- matching the European Convention for Human Rights – sets social and economic rights and establishes a monitoring system to guarantee their enforcement by member states.</p>	<p>Charter of Fundamental Rights</p> <p>Charter voted by the EU at the Nice European Council in December 2000.</p>

3. Civil society at the CoE⁹

Bernard Bougon, s.j. has already presented the historic foundations of the Council of Europe, its role and its scope¹⁰, and he stressed its first two “pillars” in particular.

In fact, its work rests on “four pillars”:

- The Committee of Ministers
- The Parliamentary Assembly
- The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
- The Conference of INGOs

3.1. The CoE and Non Governmental Organizations

The work of the Council of Europe benefits extensively from contacts and cooperation with NGOs, the dynamic elements of a well-organized civil society. One of the greatest challenges for the Organization today is to strengthen INGOs and civil society in the new member states and to develop participative democracy on a pan-European basis. Therefore, the Organization’s cooperation programmes grant a large part to partner NGOs and deal mostly with democratic reform.

Since 1952, INGOs had held consultative status with the Organization. In November 2003, this status was changed into **participatory status**¹¹, which showed recognition for the importance of the latter in shaping the policies of the CoE.

3.2. The Conference of NGOs of the Council of Europe¹²

The Council of Europe keeps statutory relationships with the group of INGOs holding participatory status, known collectively as the **Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe**. Through this status, INGOs are now actively contributing to the decision-making process at the Council of Europe and to the implementation of its programmes, thus ensuring their relevance to the expectations of Europeans.

To get participatory status, INGOs must be particularly representative in the field(s) of their competence at European level, share the aims of the Council of Europe and actively contribute to its work.

At present some 400 NGOs hold the status.

The Conference of INGOs meets in Strasbourg three to four times a year, during the ordinary sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

⁹ Internet : <http://www.coe.int/ngo>

¹⁰ Dans la revue du MCC Responsables n°402 de mars 2010 (pages 14 et 15) déjà citée plus haut.

¹¹ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/particip_status_intro_fr.asp

¹² Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/conference_fr.asp

The Conference of INGOs is chaired by its president-in-office, whom it elects every three years. Mr. Jean-Marie HEYDT is the current president, elected in January 2009.

It is thus interesting to note that the Council of Europe is the only international organization to grant civil society an active (participative) role; other institutions only grant it an observing, or at best consultative, role.

3.3. The Committees of the Conference of INGOs

Standing committee¹³ :

The Standing committee is responsible for coordination between the Conference of INGOs and its Committees and Transversal groups. It ensures consistency of the Committees and Transversal groups' work and compliance with the major policy lines defined by the Conference. It has a consultative and proposal-making role vis-à-vis the conference of INGOs and its Bureau.

It promotes participation by the INGOs in the work of the other partners in the Council of Europe "Quadrilogue" (dialogue between the four pillars) and encourages the INGOs or their Committees and Transversal groups to prepare contributions, and ensures that these are sent to the other Council of Europe Quadrilogue Partners.

It also encourages the INGOs' liaison and information bodies to prepare written communications on the Council of Europe's work and achievements.

The Standing Committee meets during the sessions of the Conference of INGOs which coincide with the sessions of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Committees:

- Civil society and democracy¹⁴

The Civil Society and Democracy Committee brings together some 140 NGOs. Topics that are currently on the Committee's agenda include: the European Local Democracy Week, the Expert Council on NGO Law, the Code of Good Practice for civil participation in the decision-making process, the Forum for the Future of Democracy, support to civil society in Belarus.

- Culture, science and education¹⁵

The Culture, Science and Education Committee brings together some 150 NGOs. Topics that are currently on the Committee's agenda include:

¹³ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/standing_com_fr.asp

¹⁴ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/conf_civ_fr.asp

¹⁵ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/conf_cult_fr.asp

- *for education*: access for all to digital media, education for democratic citizenship and human rights, education and health, higher education in Europe, the inclusive dimension of education, the view of others in history teaching, the teaching profession in the 21st century.

- *for culture*: intercultural dialogue, the religious dimension of intercultural dialogue, European identity.

- *for science*: science, society and ethics.

- Human rights¹⁶

The Human Rights Committee brings together some 160 NGOs. Topics that are currently on the agenda include: the protection of human rights defenders, media and human rights, religion and human rights, children and human rights, the Social Charter, economic and social rights.

- Social cohesion and eradication of poverty¹⁷

The Social Cohesion and Eradication of Poverty Committee brings together some 130 NGOs. Topics that are currently on the Committee's agenda include: poverty, human rights.

« Each year, those States that have adopted the Social Charter of the Council of Europe are to publish a report on the implementation of one quarter of its provisions. Those reports are posted on the CoE Internet site.

The role recognized to the INGOs holding participatory status is to make their own report on the truthfulness of this implementation.

After this double control, the Committee of Ministers makes its remarks and demands for corrective action for the States that have not met their commitments. »

- Sustainable Territorial Development¹⁸

The Sustainable Territorial Development Committee brings together some 80 NGOs. Topics that are currently on the Committee's agenda include: environment and health, water and health, pollution, the European Local Democracy Week, the Urban Charter.

Transversal groups:

- Gender equality¹⁹

The Gender Equality Transversal Group brings together some 90 NGOs.

- Europe and global challenges²⁰

¹⁶ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/conf_hr_fr.asp

¹⁷ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/conf_soc_fr.asp

¹⁸ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/conf_ter_fr.asp

¹⁹ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/conf_tg_gen_fr.asp

²⁰ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/conf_tg_glo_fr.asp

The Europe and Global Challenges Transversal Group brings together some 100 NGOs.

These groups meet with representatives of the CoE at regular intervals, thus getting first-hand information on the latter's activities and contributing collectively through their know-how in the accomplishment of these activities.

3.4. Different forms of cooperation

The relationship takes several forms, from mere advice to genuine cooperation on given topics. INGO experts may:

- Participate as consultants in different projects or contribute to the work of intergovernmental committees on an institutional or on a one-off basis,
- Draft notes for the Secretary General,
- Make oral or written notes for the Committees of the Parliamentary Assembly and for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities,
- Speak at seminars and other meetings organized by the CoE.

4. The Pax Romana delegation at the CoE

4.1. Its members

The Pax Romana delegation at the Council of Europe is made up of five members:

- Philippe Grolleau, permanent representative at the CoE
- Philippe Ledouble, European vice-president of Pax Romana
- Emile Barthel
- André Kermarrec
- Gabriele Peus-Bispinck (KAD-Allemagne)

4.2. Its mission

The delegation's mission is three-fold:

- To inform and challenge the different national member associations of Pax Romana²¹ about the aims and activities of the Council of Europe;
- To include the work and reflection of these associations in its contribution to the work of the CoE;
- To take an active part in the work of the committees and work groups of the Conference of INGOs.

4.3. Its actions

It is not possible to take part in all the committees and work groups, so we choose according to our experience and personal competence. To be more precise, we participate on a regular basis in the work of the following committees:

- Civil society and democracy (Emile Barthel)
- Culture, science and education (André Kermarrec)
- Human rights (Philippe Ledouble, Philippe Grolleau)
- Social cohesion and eradication of poverty (Philippe Ledouble, Philippe Grolleau)
- Sustainable territorial development (Emile Barthel)

Moreover, in the wings of the sessions, all Christian INGOs (ICOs) meet to share ideas and harmonize their views on the topics dealt with in the committees.

In the different committees and groups, we have helped with:

- Drafting the White Book on Intercultural Dialogue:
 - Document to present the White Book to Christians;
 - Document on the training of European educators and teachers in intercultural dialogue.
- Written and oral presentations on:
 - Ground occupancy and the protection of our natural patrimony;
 - Human ecology: production of household refuse;
 - Water: states should control resources and make sure they do not become mere commodities used for financial speculation.

²¹ Cf. Chapitre 1, §6 ci-dessus

- Follow-up work on State reports on the implementation of the European Social Charter:
 - Questionnaire on the annual State report for 2009²²
 - As all the provisions to be revised in 2009 had to do with employment laws, we received no answer to the questionnaire. It was the same for the other INGOs, since the field of investigation has more to do with trade-unions.
- Recommendation to the Committee of Ministers, proposition of a 2011-2021 plan of action for the eradication of poverty in Europe²³²⁴.
 - We were part of the work group that drafted this recommendation, insisting on its economic dimension.

« When we talk about the eradication of poverty, we should struggle head first and resolutely against anything in the economic, cultural and social field that leads to the different personal and group situations of poverty. However committed society and individuals may be to support poor people, no genuine eradication of poverty is possible unless States, as organizers of society and answerable for its common good, pledge to make investments, i.e. expenditures with a positive return concerning the fight against long-term social exclusion. Those expenditures should be assigned to complete and lasting measures. »

- Support to the joint Appeal of INGOs to the Interlaken Ministerial Conference on the reformation of the European Court of Human rights²⁵²⁶.

²² Nous avons diffusé ce questionnaire accompagné d'une explication sur le processus de contrôle le 20 février 2010 au RRI et à Pax Romana.

²³ Cf. http://www.coe.int/t/ngo/Articles/CONF_PLE_2009_REC8_poverty_fr.asp

²⁴ L'année 2010 a été déclarée « Année de lutte contre la pauvreté » par l'Union Européenne.

²⁵ Cf. http://www.coe.int/T/NGO/Articles/Contribution_INGO_Conf_Interlaken_fr.asp

²⁶ Cf. http://www.coe.int/T/NGO/Articles/CONF_PRES_SPEECH_2010_2_fr.asp

5. Conclusion

Our national legislations proceed mostly from European laws, therefore “inventing a common future” can only be imagined at that European level first, and then at the global level.

All member states of the European Union are members of the Council of Europe whose fundamental values they have pledged to respect.

The Council of Europe is a founding stone of the construction of Europe, of the promotion of democracy, of human rights and of the rule of law in Europe. It is at the Council of Europe that these values are promoted, their implementation monitored and defended if necessary. As for the European Union, it has a more economic and political perspective first.

It is the only institution recognizing the importance of civil society by granting it participatory status in the making up of its policies. It is thus the only place where we can collectively with other INGOs, especially Christian ones:

- Check that our national governments abide by their commitments and genuinely implement the rules and principles of the Council of Europe,
- Defend and assert our ideas and reflections on the organization of society, on the construction of a common future that respects the human and social rights of all citizens.

Let's be present and active where our common future is being invented and built up!

Such is the raison d'être of our delegation at the Council of Europe, but of course it has no point unless we establish a two-way current of exchange with you.

Our information means are numerous and easily available, just click here:

- Le site internet du MCC : <http://www.mcc.asso.fr>
- Responsables : <http://www.mcc.asso.fr/-Responsables->
- La lettre Internationale : <http://www.mcc.asso.fr/-010-Lettre-internationale->
- Le Réseau des Relations Internationales Pax Romana-MCC-Siaec
- Le site officiel de Pax Romana : <http://icmica-miic.org/>
- La News Letter : <http://icmica-miic.org/category/topics/federations/europe>
- Le site du Conseil de l'Europe : <http://www.coe.int/DefaultFR.asp>
- Le site de la Conférence des OING : http://www.coe.int/T/NGO/default_fr.asp

Philippe GROLLEAU
Permanent representative of
Pax Romana- MIIC/ICMICA
at the Council of Europe

(Thanks to Françoise Brunelle for this English translation)