**Information about the work of the INGO Conference of the Council of Europe (** Prepared by Antonina Dashkina with the consultation with elected representative from IFSW Europe Fernanda Rodrigues).

In 2017 the INGO Conference had 2 meetings – in January 2017 and June 2017). Fernanda Rodrigues and Antonina Dashkina were reporting about the situation and IFSW Europe position at this international body in Iceland during IFSW Europe meeting.

The important thing happened in January 2018 during election of the new Board. As you know I, Antonina Dashkina had two terms of services three years each. According to the Constitution of the CoE I could not go for election again. All together I was representing IFSW Europe there for 10 years (four years as deputy chair of eradication of poverty and social cohesion committee and six years as Vice-president of INGO Conference). It was a great honour ti represent social work profession on behalf of IFSW Europe.

Within last ten years IFSW Europe was always represented by me but also by elected members of IFSW Europe what was making presence of social work profession really strong.

Now when I am not in Strasbourg any longer my advice would be to fund visits of our elected member to the meeting of the INGO Conference twice a year – in June and in January. It is a very important international body responsible for democracy, rules of law and human rights in Europe. We have to be visible and sound there.

 **The new Composition of the Bureau**

The Bureau of the Conference of INGOs is made up of nine members who are delegates from INGOs belonging to the Conference of INGOs. The members of the Bureau (with the exception of the President of “INGO-Service” who is automatically a member of the Bureau) are elected by the Conference of INGOs for a standard three-year term, renewable once.

I want you to know that the President of INGO Conference is Anna Rurka, social worker, very good friend of IFSW Europe.

The vice presidents are

Ms Anne Kraus

CISV International

Mr Christoph Spreng

Initiatives of Change – International (IofC)

Mr Robert Bergougnan

European Association of School of Social Work – EASSW

So we can see that again the key positions are with social workers – president and vice-president.

 **The activities of the Conference**

The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe visits Member States to meet local NGOs and public authorities to introduce them to the Conference of INGOs, better understand the cooperation between NGOs and decision-makers and to discuss NGO participation in the public decision-making process. Certain legal frameworks are in place in countries in order to consult NGOs and to associate them in decision-making.  The Conference hears the point of view of both NGOs and authorities to find out what use is made of these participatory tools. Each visit is followed by a report which highlights the important issues for the NGOs at that specific moment and socio-political context. Recommendations are formulated to improve the effectiveness of cooperation between NGOs and the public authorities. The findings of the visits also contribute to advancing the Council of Europe’s work in this field.

The participation of civil society in decision-making is one of the priorities of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and guidelines on civil society’s effective and meaningful participation in the political decision-making process are being developed for possible adoption by the Committee of Ministers.

In 2017 there were three visits organized - to Ireland, Serbia and Estonia. I strongly recommended Irish association of social workers to be the main partner of the delegation from the Council of Europe. It happened and was very useful for both sides I think.

In 2018 there will be visits to "The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" (it already took place), United Kingdom and Armenia.

After each visit a very comprehensive report is made and I think it is important for our members to read those reports and the official responses of the Governments of the countries.

You can find information about Conference and their reports on <https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo>

I would like you to pay attention to Recommendation relating to the proclamation of the European Pillar of Social Rights adopted by the Conference of INGOs on 24 January 2018 which states:

**The Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe:**

1. **Urges** the European Union and its Member States to translate their political commitment to protect social rights into concrete actions, reaffirming the indivisible, interdependent and inseparable nature of all human rights;
2. To this end, **calls** on the European Union and its Member States to accede to the Revised European Social Charter as the social constitution of Europe, detailing a roadmap to promote the effective guarantee of social rights for all;
3. **Calls** on the Member States to develop national strategies aimed at eradicating poverty and ensuring equal opportunities for all, especially for the most deprived;
4. **Invites** the European Union and its Member States to monitor the implementation of the principles enshrined in the European Pillar of Social Rights in close consultation with representatives of civil society;
5. **Undertakes**, in particular through its Coordinating Committee for the Turin Process for the European Social Charter, to ensure the regular monitoring of the implementation of the European Pillar of Social Rights in view of the European Social Charter.

The whole document can be found on Council of Europe site under CONF/PLE(2018)REC1

Every year Council of Europe is organizing World Forum for Democracy with active participation of INGO Conference. This year's World Forum for Democracy will take place in Strasbourg from 19 to 21 November.  The labs, which are the heart of the World Forum for Democracy, will focus on issues to resolve specific problems with regards to inequalities between women and men thanks to the critical analysis of tested initiatives.

I recommend the elected IFSW Europe for the Council of Europe follow the information and encourage members to participate.

Please find also the Code of good practice for civil participation in decision making process which is quite useful and easy to follow document produced be the INGO Conference. It is very important that the brochure is translated on more than 20 European languages.

I would like to thank my colleagues from IFSW Europe for trusting in me by giving a very important mandate to represent IFSW Europe and social work profession in the INGO Conference of Council of Europe.