



Representatives' Reports, May 2023

Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (CINGO) in the Council of Europe (CoE)

Name of the Representative: Dr Ruth Allen

Background information about CINGO and CoE can be found on the website here

<https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo>

ACTIVITIES / EVENTS

My role

I contribute to CINGO as both IFSW Europe representative and as an elected member of the CINGO Standing (coordinating) Committee. The latter means working closely with the President Gerhard Ermischer, two Vice Presidents and six other elected members, and with the Secretariat of CINGO. There is ongoing policy, writing and promotional work in monthly Steering Committee meetings and which culminates in setting the agenda and running the six-monthly General Assemblies. I am Standing Committee representative on the ad hoc committee on Rights of the Child and (COE Committee on Bio Ethics. I currently run CINGO's social media Twitter account.

Key activities since October 2023 include:

- Working with the Standing Committee and the President to coordinate and facilitate the April 2023 CINGO General Assemblies in CoE in Strasbourg (in person) <https://www.coe.int/en/web/ingo/-/annual-spring-session-of-the-conference-of-ingos>
- Representing and promoting social work and IFSW as Vice Chair of CINGO's Rights of the Child Ad Hoc Committee. Currently starting new work stream within the committee on good practice in enabling the voice and choice of children in judicial proceedings to inform CoE's formal work on statutory instruments on children's rights within legal processes
- Representing CINGO in sessions of CoE Human Rights in Biomedicine and Health (CD-BIO) Committee
- Attending and representing CINGO in World Forum on Democracy (WFD) November 2023.



- Enabling and empowering the work of CINGO ad hoc Committees through consulting members, authoring and implementing new operating and reporting guidance. This enables ad hoc committees to make more effective reports to the General Assembly and demonstrate greater professionalism, planning and progress towards tangible objectives.
- Writing and presenting the Standing Committee interim progress report on CINGO's three-year strategy to April 2023 General Assembly. The report was adopted.

Council of Europe Summit, Reykjavik, Iceland May 17, 2023

The current major priority for CINGO is influencing the Council of Europe summit in Iceland in May. This is a special event, convened following the war in Ukraine and expulsion of Russia, and is an important opportunity to push for better funding, recognition and status for CINGO and civil society within CoE. CINGO is underfunded and not fully recognised in the governmental/ministerial parts of CoE. The expulsion of Russia has reduced funding to CoE but removed barriers also, including barriers to more involvement of independent civil society and the ability of CoE to live up to its democratic and human rights values. CINGO is looking for real reform in CoE form the Summit in respect of recognition of Civil Society and participative democratic approaches within the institution as a whole.

Relationship between CoE and EU in relation to human rights law

The EU is likely to become an institutional member of the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR). This would mean that the EU, through greater funding and legal levers over its member states which CoE does not have, will be able to promote implementation of rulings from the ECtHR more strongly in EU (and accession) countries. Currently, many rulings are not implemented at all or only partially. It is down to individual states to comply.

CINGO and social work

CINGO benefits from social work perspectives within its leadership through:

- Advocacy and facilitation of anti-discriminatory, inclusive and participative processes and debate within the General Assembly, committees and the work of Standing Committee. Social work engagement skills support inclusive facilitation of the Conference including promoting empowerment and voice of diverse members.
- Continuing promotion of the revised Social Charter and new 'Social Rights Tracker' e.g. I am working with rights tracker lead on inclusion of children's rights within the tracker.



- Ensuring the empowerment of the most at risk, marginalized and disadvantaged in society is fully integrated into CINGO policy analysis and advocacy work (e.g., using IFSW People's Charter for an Eco-Social World to help shape CINGO's position on social and ecological/environmental rights).

ACHIEVEMENTS FOR IFSW EUROPE

My involvement in CINGO as Standing Committee member and IFSW representative promotes IFSW and the voice of social work across multiple topics and platforms.

I continue to ensure the voice of social work and our concerns for the most marginalised and at risk in society is heard in the work of CINGO on the Ukraine situation – raising the profile of risks to children, minority ethnic groups, disabled people and the LGBTQi community.

I am increasingly bringing social work and IFSW perspectives to the growing work of CINGO and CoE in climate and environmental justice actions since CINGO became a formal signatory to the People's Charter for an Eco-Social World.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN 22/23

Challenges:

- There remains a need to develop an IFSW support team for CINGO including youth delegates able to attend in person. This will be a priority for next 12 months (last year of my Standing Committee mandate unless I am re-elected) – to make IFSW a distinct presence in CINGO assemblies and committees (etc).
- Likely financial constraints in coming years: CINGO has lost funding over recent years and is pushing for greater recognition and essential additional funding from CoE to enable the Conference to achieve its potential in advocating for civil society
- Further engaging INGOs in working towards common objectives of the three-year CINGO strategy. Developing more effective ad hoc committees to act as credible, organised entities influencing CoE policy, legal and other work.
- Getting NGO voice heard in the May 17th CoE Summit in Iceland which it is hoped will be a reset of CoE's overall commitments and how it upholds its purposes in light of undermining of democracy and rights in increasing number of member states

Opportunities

- To further raise IFSW profile through regular and impactful involvement of an IFSW members in the Gen Assembly and in committees, in person or online



International Federation of Social Workers

European Region

europe.ifsw@ifsw.org

- To take forward a specific IFSW project through CINGO's workplan including linking more proactively with CoE's specific work on social care and social work and to identify where it has gaps in its activities.
- Developing a proposal for a social work-focused ad hoc committee of CINGO for Oct 23 or April 24 onwards.
- To participate in one of the country field visits to evaluate civil society effectiveness and strength
- To link with INGOs within Ukraine to support the IFSW project.

Dr Ruth Allen, IFSW Representative to CINGO within the Council of Europe
May 2023