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**Session report of the session of the conference of non-governmental organizations from 24 - 26 April 2023 in Strasbourg.**

For the first time since Fall 2019, I attended the NGOs session in person in Strasbourg. The session continues to be offered in hybrid form. This seems to make sense and it also shows in the numbers of participants that more people attend. Especially for smaller organizations this hybrid form is an advantage because there are no travel and accommodation costs. It is also possible for members of accredited organizations to follow the conference and "listen in".

In June 2022, in Lizari, we addressed the question of how women can advocate in a vulnerable world. Considering the current situation in the world, it seems first and foremost indispensable to stand up for values such as democracy, the rule of law and human rights. These very values are the basis of the Council of Europe, the basis for all actions and activities that NGOs advocate in all member countries of the Council of Europe.

During the spring session, the six committees reported on the progress of their work. Andante is active in the "interreligious and interconfessional dialogue" committee. The group is chaired by Gabriela Frey and Sören Lenz. If everything works out we will meet Gabriela Frey during our study days in 2023.

More information about the work of this committee can be foun at the following link.

<https://rm.coe.int/report-of-the-committee-for-the-interreligious-and-interconvitional-di/1680aad0ba>

It is not possible to be present at all the committees. In my opinion, there will be topics in the future that will change the world once again. I would refer to artificial intelligence. Legal, moral and ethical issues will certainly have to be clarified in the future. The "Human Rights and Artificial Intelligence" committee is working in this area.

Another major topic for us as Andante, which affects us in many areas of our daily lives, is the environment, climate change and health. The committee "Environment, Climate Change, Heritage and Health" works on these topics.

In addition to the work of the current committees, there are overarching issues in each session that affect the Council of Europe and, in particular, non-governmental organizations (civilians).

With the decision of March 16, 2022, Russia was excluded from the Council of Europe. Currently, 46 countries are still represented at the Council of Europe. The issue of Russia, the war and what it means for Europe is a major topic in the Conference of NGOs as well as in the Ministerial Conference, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

Especially for the non-governmental organizations in Russia, which represent the civilian population, this exclusion has consequences. Within the conference of NGOs, the question is raised how the NGOs can be supported and how they can continue their work. It is about strengthening Europe and its values. For current reasons, the member states of the Council of Europe have decided to meet at a summit in Reykjavik on May 16-17, 2023, to discuss these very issues.

The Reykjavik Summit "should be the starting point for a renewed Council of Europe, better able to contribute to our common democratic security, to respond to the real concerns of the people and to meet the great challenges we face. We should make the most of this opportunity. " (Fiona O'Loughin, Head of Irish delegation to PACE at Council of Europe,)

For those who would like to read more about this summit, information can be found at: [www.coe.ing](http://www.coe.ing) «Reykjavik summit is member states' response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine"

Or at: Reykajavik Summit, Council of Europe Summit A historic opportunity for the Council of Europe to refocus its mission in the face of new threats to democracy and human rights, and to support Ukraine

**In relation to this meeting on 16-17 May 2023 in Reykjavik, a recommendation was adopted by the non-governmental organizations in our session. The details can be read at the following link.**

<https://rm.coe.int/recommendation-of-the-ingo-conference-to-the-summit-of-heads-of-state-/1680ab0e0c>

ANDANTE agreed with this recommendation.

Not only the war in Russia, but also the situation with migrants (topic Andante Study Days in 2018, migration from and to Europe from the perspective of women) occupies many NGOs. For this reason, a recommendation was again adopted. "Recommendation for a global approach to the rights of refugees and migrants and the role of civil society".

<https://rm.coe.int/recommendation-for-a-global-approach-of-the-rights-of-refugees-and-mig/1680ab0e0d>

ANDANTE agreed with this recommendation.

Another important recommendation is the

**«Recommendation on the Right to Social Protection as a Human Right. The need to address the non-utilization of rights»**

The Recommendation notes that the non-utilization of social rights is a serious problem in the lives of millions of people in Europe. Paradoxically, it is particularly prevalent among the most marginalized, those most in need of social protection, as the overly complicated procedures are the cause of discrimination and non-take-up of social rights and services. Living in poverty or social exclusion is a violation of human dignity. This is an area where a large proportion of Member States need to take action.

<https://rm.coe.int/report-of-the-committee-for-the-interreligious-and-interconvitional-di/1680aad0ba>

ANDANTE agreed with this recommendation

I would like to take this opportunity to pass on two important pieces of information that you may be interested in or where you may find information that could provide important input for you and your organizations.

**CURE - for a strong and effective Council of Europe.**

"We share a strong belief in the founding idea of the Council of Europe and the value it contains: the Council as a guardian and promoter of a pan-European legal framework for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, and as a leader in the development of international norms and standards.

We are committed to making the Council of Europe even stronger and to making the voice of civil society more heard

[www.cure-campaign.org](http://www.cure-campaign.org)

Through citizen participation initiatives in decision-making processes

[www.bepart.org](http://www.bepart.org).

 

**Secretary General of the Council of Europe Mary McHugh and Sybille Bader**

**Marija Pejčinović Burić , (Mary McHugh represents**

**Guest in our Conference. RENATE in the conference)**

6. Mai 2023/Sybille Bader