

## VIENNA NGO COMMITTEE ON THE FAMILY



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

Digital Networks:

[www.10yearsIYF.org](http://www.10yearsIYF.org)

[www.20yearsIYF.org](http://www.20yearsIYF.org)

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

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### *ANNUAL REPORT 2020*

Since its inception in 1985 projects of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family have been supported by:

- ❖ Austrian Federal Government
- ❖ Bank Austria Creditanstalt
- ❖ Berndorf Group
- ❖ Country Womens Association in Lower Austria
- ❖ E.F.T. Transportagency GmbH
- ❖ European Commission
- ❖ Government of Germany
- ❖ Government of Liechtenstein
- ❖ Government of Luxembourg
- ❖ Government of Spain, Catalonia and the Balearic Islands
- ❖ International Non-Governmental Organisations
- ❖ Lower Austrian State Government
- ❖ Lower Austrian Insurance AG
- ❖ OMV Energy Group
- ❖ Rotary International
- ❖ Schoeller-Bleckmann Oilfield Equipment AG
- ❖ Shell Austria AG
- ❖ Siemens
- ❖ United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities



## Vienna NGO Committee on the Family



### *PROJECTS AND ACTIVITIES 2020*

At a Full Committee Meeting, which was held as a Zoom video conference, representatives of the 41 International Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), who are members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family, and 22 associate member organisations, discussed various institution-building projects and activities. The Board of the Committee had worked out a schedule for their implementation, which was realised in co-operation with the support of the member organisations of the Committee and their representatives. The worldwide network of civil society organisations, research and university institutions, government agencies and individuals, continues to be, not only a beneficiary of interactive exchange, but is in many cases, directly involved in the work of the Committee. The Vienna Committee on the Family, understands itself as a non-political, non-denominational umbrella organisation, with a global focus on the well-being of families worldwide, providing a bridge between families-oriented Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), The United Nations, Governments of Member States of the United Nations and Academia, as well as between CSOs themselves, through the various digital networks set up and maintained by the Committee.

### *The following projects were realised in 2020*

#### **1. Families International (FI)**

Issues, Nos. 113-116 of the Quarterly Bulletin of the Committee, were published online in 2020 at [www.viennafamilycommittee.org](http://www.viennafamilycommittee.org). At the end of 2020, the Editorial Committee consisted of the Deputy Editors, Julia Birner, Christin Kohler, M.A., Karin Kuzmanov B.A., B.A., Isabella Nening, M.A., and the Editor, Peter Crowley, Ph.D., who having been Editor since 2009, and sole Editor until 2018, and having edited Issue No. 116, in December 2020, is handing over the editorship to the four Deputy Editors, just mentioned, and will become Deputy Editor, with issue No. 117 in 2021.

Special features in FI in 2020, included: 'Issues relating to families at the 58th United Nations Commission for Social Development 2020'; 'Research from UNICEF on Gender Equality'; 'Covid-19 and the influences on families' lives, and on the physical and mental health, of adults and children.'; 'Covid-19: Childcare and Work & Family Life and Global Education Systems in Future Crises.'

Each issue of Families International also included texts submitted by member organizations of the Committee as well as other relevant texts from United Nations agencies.

Over five hundred readers of 'Families International' are informed by the Secretariat of the Committee by e-mail, when the latest issue is published and available to download free of cost.

#### **2. International Forum: "Status of food & Nutrition in Europe & Central Asia - Challenges and Actions" with Mary Kenny (UNFAO)**

The Committee organised and scheduled an International Forum, during a Full Committee Meeting, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre (UNVIC) for Monday May 11th 2020, to observe the United International Day of Families (UNIDF) 2020, entitled "Status of food & Nutrition in Europe & Central Asia – Challenges and Actions" with Mary Kenny, a Food Safety and Consumer Protection Officer at the Food and Agricultural Office of the United Nations (UNFAO) Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) in Budapest, who has extensive experience in working with countries to strengthen national food control programmes and related food safety capacities. Mary also manages FAO's work in the region on agri-food trade and market integration, including work on nutrition and sustainable food systems. Mary has a Degree in Environmental Health Officer and a Masters in Food Science and Technology. Due to the rapid spreading of the Covid-19 pandemic this International Forum had to be postponed and it is re-scheduled with Mary Kenny (UNFAO) for Monday May 10<sup>th</sup> 2021, to observe UNIDF 2021 at the UNVIC. If, for continuing health concerns due to the pandemic, the meeting cannot be held in person, it is intended to hold it as a Zoom Video Conference.

### **International Forum: ‘Feed the child and save the world’ – life-long effects of food and nutrition that support childhood growth and development with Prof. Mary Flynn**

The Committee further organised a second International Forum, which was held during a Full Committee Meeting, and originally planned to be held in person, at the United Nations Vienna International Centre, on Monday October 19<sup>th</sup> 2020, with Prof. Mary Flynn, who has worked for many years in public health, clinical nutrition and academia in Ireland, Canada and the Middle East. Her work includes the development of best infant feeding practices, food-based guidelines for children and adolescents and programs to support families when children’s weight growth ‘gets ahead’ of their height growth. Currently she leads work on nutrient reference standards for infants and young children at Codex Alimentarius [World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Food & Agricultural Organisation (FAO) of the United Nations]; and was an Expert Advisor on the development of Health Canada’s new Food Guide (2019). In 2014, Mary was awarded the inaugural medal for excellence in Public Health Nutrition by the Nutrition Society in the UK, and was appointed as a member of the first Healthy Ireland Council by the Minister for Health in Ireland and has been a Visiting Professor at Ulster University, Northern Ireland since 2012. Due again to the Covid-19 pandemic, this International Forum was held as a Zoom video Conference. The proceeding of the meeting will be published in an issue of the online quarterly bulletin ‘Families International’ in 2021.

### **3. Cooperation with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family in New York**

The Board of the Committee keeps its various networks informed with documents of United Nations Resolutions and Reports of the United Nations Secretary-General pertaining to family issues. A text on the theme for the **United Nations International Day of Families** May 15<sup>th</sup> 2020 entitled: “Families in Development: Copenhagen & Beijing + 25” was included in ‘Families International Issue No. 114:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/international-day-of-families/2020-2.html>

The Committee further encouraged its members and the organisations included in the over five hundred addresses on the mailing list of ‘Families International’ to participate in the consultations to prepare the **30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2024 (IYF+30)**:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/2020/08/06/iyf30/>

**The 59<sup>th</sup> United Nations Commission for Social Development (UNCSD) 2021** has as its Priority Theme: ‘Socially just transition towards sustainable development: the role of digital technologies on social development and well-being of all.’ The new Committee Coordinator for the UNCSD, Franziska Reichel, composed a statement for the Committee on this theme, in cooperation with the Secretary of the Committee, Peter Crowley Ph.D. and it was signed by a number of member organisations of the Committee and subsequently submitted to the UNCSD by the Committee, and has since become an official document of the UNCSD in 2021. <https://undocs.org/E/CN.5/2021/NGO/18>

An eighty page report, of a study update entitled: ‘**Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisation to the Well-Being of Families**’ by Peter Crowley Ph.D. then Secretary of the Committee, in cooperation with the United Nations Focal Point on the Family, which was presented by the author, at the United Nations in New York, to observe the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations International Year of the Family, is available to download, on the United Nations website:

<https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/international-day-of-families/2014-3.html>

The following quotation from the Report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the General Assembly on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2019, (A/75/61-E/2020/4) which relates to activities of the Committee as recently as 2019, brings to bear the appreciation of the highest office of the United Nations for the endeavours of our Committee, the Member Organisations and their representatives, for the well-being of families worldwide. “The Vienna NGO Committee on the Family organized two international forums. One forum, held in cooperation with the United Nations Office on Drugs & Crime, was focused on the global effort to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030, in the light of Sustainable Development Goal 3. The other, which was focused on child and youth media protection, from the

perspective of parents, was the third of in a series of three forums dealing with families and digital media usage, organized in cooperation with the University of Salzburg. The Committee also published its online quarterly bulletin, “Families international”, incorporating forum proceedings, with a focus on endeavours to eliminate the practice of child marriage.” <http://undocs.org/A/75/61>

#### **4. Website of the Committee**

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

This website, which was set up in 2000 is, amongst others, the main vehicle to publish our quarterly bulletin ‘Families International’. Issues Nos.113 to 116, which were published in 2020, may be downloaded from our website without cost to the reader. A button entitled ‘Families Online’ is available on the homepage with a direct link to the proceedings of three International Forums organised by the Committee, between 2017 and 2019, dealing with families and digital media usage.

#### **5. The Three Digital Networks of the Committee** **[203 CSOs Networked - 92 in Sub-Saharan Africa]**

A so-called ‘**Digital Divide**’ exists between those connected and not connected to the Internet. Statistics from the United Nations International Telecommunications Union based in Geneva, for 2019, show that just over 50% of the World’s present population of over 7 billion was connected, for the first time, to the world-wide-web. However, in the continent of Africa alone, 72% of the population was offline. Further, the proportion of women using the internet globally is 48%, compared to 55% percent of men.

92 CSOs, or 45.3% of the total, of 203 CSOs in the three Digital Networks, set up and maintained by the Committee, are based in Sub-Saharan Africa, which is particularly affected by the ‘Digital Divide’. These 92 CSOs offer important knowledge resources for the well-being of families, especially in the first 1000 days of a child’s life, which are so important for its future development, as UNESCO pointed out in 2014. These digital knowledge networks expand the concept of Civil Society being an advocacy and discourse entity, to also being a resource entity, especially of knowledge.

[www.10yearsIYF.org](http://www.10yearsIYF.org)

This website continues to experience interest, as a digital network, and also as a resource archive for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in 2004, with many relevant links to other sources. It resulted out of the participation of the then Chairperson of the Committee in a consultative meeting of twenty international and regional Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) set up by the United Nations Secretariat in New York, in 2002, to implement a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly to observe the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the International Year of the Family (IYF) in 2004. There it was agreed to prepare a study, under the chairmanship of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Family on: ‘Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families’ since 1994. The original study, in which thirty two CSOs, from eighteen countries in five continents participated, was also published in book form with the financial support of the United Nations Trust Fund on Family Activities in 1994, under the title: ‘Documenting Contributions of Civil Society Organisations to the Well-Being of Families’ and edited by P. Crowley, who presented the study at a meeting of the United Nations in New York, to observe the United Nations International Day of Families on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2004. The book was also submitted to the members of the special session of the 59<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the United Nations on Dec. 6<sup>th</sup> 2004, to observe the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the International Year of the Family.

The United Nations Secretary General referred to the above publication in his Report to the 59<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly (A/59/176, 2004). The contents of the book, which also includes a comparative perspective of international, national, and local families-oriented civil society organisations enhancing social justice, are also available to download at [www.10yearsIYF.org](http://www.10yearsIYF.org)

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To facilitate the implementation of an update of the above-mentioned study, originally carried out at [www.10yearsIYF.org](http://www.10yearsIYF.org) a further website was set up by the Committee at [www.20yearsIYF.org](http://www.20yearsIYF.org) to gather data entered by the twenty-eight participating CSOs, from seventeen countries in four continents. This network now further offers a knowledge resource on family issues for visitors to the website, by creating a so-called 'Cyber Street' of websites of families-oriented CSOs, which deal with eight categories relevant for families: 'Children; Economic-Financial; Education; Gender; Health Issues; Organisation; Parents; and Subsistence-Services.' This website is also a further digital network and includes a series of links, inter alia, to the United Nations Focal Point on the Family in New York.

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

An Interactive-Internet-Forum for civil society organisations world-wide, including local, national and international CSOs, as well as academic and research institutions, was set up at the request of many organisations from around the globe, and went online in August 2004 at [www.civilsocietynetworks.org](http://www.civilsocietynetworks.org). This Network had 143 member organisations from 25 countries in 2020 having incorporated the Interactive-Forums the Committee had originally set up with civil society organisations in Eastern African and in Central and Eastern European Countries, between 2000 and 2004, and then extended and opened up, as a further digital network, to worldwide membership in 2004. Civil Society Organisations worldwide can join, and participate in this Forum, free of cost, by contacting the Committee at: [contact@viennafamilycommittee.org](mailto:contact@viennafamilycommittee.org)

Each organisation receives an individual User-Identity and Password and is able to enter and change data as necessary. The Forum also includes a discussion board, internal e-mail and online conference facilities, as well as a newsletter function, for each individual member organisation of the network.

The above outlined facts and figures, reflect perhaps, the ever-increasing interest generated by issues relating to families and also speak for themselves, with regard to the continued and increasing endeavours worldwide of the Committee, which observed in 2020 the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of its inception in 1985.

## **6. The Members of the Board of the Committee for 2019 - 2022**

Board Officers:

Chairperson: Wolfgang Engelmaier, M.A. Kolping International,  
Secretary: Peter Crowley, Ph.D., International Council of Psychologists,  
Treasurer: Alexandra Lugert, M.A., European Union of Women

Board Members:

Julia Birner, Families International,  
Christin Kohler M.A., Families International,  
Karin Kuzmanov B.A., B.A., Families International,  
Oscar McConkie, Latter Day Saints Charities,  
Isabella Nening M.A., Families International,  
Franziska Reichel, Committee Coordinator,  
United Nations Commission for Social Development,  
Dr. Eleonora Teixeira Da Costa Rossoll,  
Federation of Catholic Family Associations.  
Dr. Maria Riehl, Women's Federation for World Peace,

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**January 2021**  
[contact@viennafamilycommittee.org](mailto:contact@viennafamilycommittee.org)

**Secretary: Peter Crowley, Ph.D.**

**Chairperson: Wolfgang Engelmaier, M.A.**