

**THE INTERNATIONAL COMMISSION ON CIVIL STATUS (ICCS)**  
**La Commission Internationale de l'Etat Civil (CIEC)**

*in brief*

Founded: 1948-49. Protocol on the International Commission on Civil Status, signed at Bern on 25 September 1950.

Member States: 15

Observer States: 8

Official language: French

International Conventions: 32

Recommendations: 9

Main publication: "Guide Pratique international de l'Etat Civil" (*International practical Guide on civil status*)

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Presidency 2008-2009

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Secretariat General

Secretary General: Mrs Joanna SCHMIDT-SZALEWSKI

Deputy Secretary General: Mr Jonathan SHARPE

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Aim

The ICCS is an intergovernmental organisation whose aim is to facilitate international co-operation in civil-status matters and to improve the operation of national civil-status departments. To this end, it keeps up-to-date a documentation on legislation and case-law setting out the law of the member States, provides those States with information and expertise, carries out legal and technical studies, prepares publications and drafts Conventions and Recommendations.

Structure and organisation

Each member State sets up a National Section responsible for promoting the aims of the ICCS in its territory and ensuring liaison with the other Sections through the intermediary of the Secretary General.

The General Assembly is composed of the members of the National Sections and meets twice a year, in spring in Strasbourg and in September in a member State, *ad hoc* working-party meetings being held in the meanwhile. The General Assembly takes notably decisions on the admission of a new member State to the ICCS, adopts the text of the Conventions and Recommendations and decides on proposals for new activities.

The Bureau, which is composed of the Presidents of the National Sections, notably elects the President, the Vice-President, the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General, grants observer status to an international organisation or a State and adopts the budget.

The Secretary General is notably in charge of the management of the ICCS. He implements the decisions taken by the ICCS, ensures liaison between the National Sections, participates in the meetings and prepares the record thereof, keeps the accounts and archives and ensures liaison with other institutions.

### Member States and Observers

Member States : Belgium, Croatia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the United Kingdom.

States with observer status: Cyprus, the Holy See, Lithuania, Moldova, Rumania, the Russian Federation, Slovenia and Sweden.

### Co-operation with other intergovernmental organisations

The ICCS collaborates with other organisations and co-ordinates its activities with theirs. It has entered into co-operation agreements with the Council of Europe, the Hague Conference on Private International Law, the United Nations High Commissioner for refugees and the European Union.

### Work of the ICCS

The Commission's work, which is proposed by the National Sections, is prepared by working parties, with the assistance of the Secretariat General

### Conventions

Since its creation the ICCS has adopted 32 multilateral Conventions, which are legally binding instruments. The depositary of the Conventions, of which 26 are currently in force, is the Swiss Federal Council. The most recent Convention, on the recognition of registered partnerships, was open for signature at Munich on 5 September 2007.

The object of the Conventions is either to harmonise the substantive law of the member States in civil-status matters or to facilitate the functioning of civil status across frontiers, notably by means of multilingual documents, thereby simplifying formalities for persons living abroad.

Being confronted with the problem of the increasing number of languages to be used in the multilingual forms, the ICCS drew up Convention No 25, signed at Brussels on 6 September 1995, creating a system of code numbering for the entries appearing in civil-status records and documents. The Conventions adopted since that date include appendices drawn up in this way (for example, life certificate, certificate of nationality).

### Recommendations

Since 1958 the ICCS has addressed to its member States 9 Recommendations covering the improvement of the functioning of civil-status departments, the harmonisation of civil-status records and extracts, the publicity of records, the computerisation of civil status, the co-operation in the matter of administrative assistance to asylum-seekers and documentary fraud.

### Documentation et publications

For the fields within its competence, the ICCS compiles a documentation on legislation and case-law of the member States. It prepares consolidated summaries on issues of current concern (for example, fraud with respect to civil status, civil status and the European Convention on Human Rights, transsexualism, registration of lifeless children, ...).

Main publication: the "International practical Guide on civil status", prepared since 1985. This work (in French) contains an overview of the general organisation of civil-status departments in the member States and gives, by means of questions and detailed answers, particulars of the legislative and regulatory provisions on numerous matters (rules common to the various civil-status records, birth and parentage, marriage and its dissolution, registered partnerships, death, nationality, surname and forenames, civil status in international law). The work, which was sold directly by Editions Berger-Levrault until 2001, is now available on the ICCS webpage.

### Questions of current concern

Amongst the activities now in progress, mention may be made of those relating to computerisation, fraud, international adoption, revision of Convention No 26 and the preparation of a Colloquy (in Strasbourg on 13 et 14 March 2009).