



# News from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

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*“The ALDE Group must make its guardianship of Council of Europe values more effective, through enhanced political action inside and outside the Assembly.”*

[ALDE Mission Statement](#)

Welcome to the *Newsletter of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)* in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe!

The Council of Europe is the largest pan-European institution, bringing together 47 states. Its Parliamentary Assembly meets four times a year, discussing the most important European issues related to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Members of the Assembly are – unlike members of the European Parliament – not directly elected, but they are all members of the 47 national parliaments. PACE is therefore the most important and effective network of European MPs! The ALDE Group currently brings together 98 MPs. As a group, we endeavour to be the engine of the Assembly defending core European values.

We issue this newsletter in order to cordially invite you to follow the debates in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe during its sessions in Strasbourg and provide feedback on our activities. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Grigory Yavlinsky and Alexander Shishlov for the excellent contribution to the work of the ALDE. We are also grateful to Mr Scott Simms, Canada and to our colleague from IFLRY who attended ALDE meetings: Ms Mane Manukyan, Executive Director, IFLRY.



Mr Alexander Shishlov, Mr Grigory Yavlinsky, Mrs Mailis Reps, Mrs Anne Brasseur. ALDE Group meeting, 26 April 2010

It was 65 years ago that the World War II ended. The scope of the disaster was so devastating that the entire world learned the lesson and found ways for reconciliation of the recent foes and creation of international mechanisms for peaceful development of the mankind. Responsibility and intellect of politicians, experts and public leaders took over narrow national and corporate interests allowing to formulate common approaches to the construction of a new Europe and a new world. After the war, the UN and the Council of Europe were established and the integration of the European democratic states leading to today's European Union began. The Liberal International was created, and its Oxford Manifesto of 1947 proclaimed liberal values to be a must for future development. Freedom and democracy, human rights and rule of law became key components of the new world order. In spite of the fact that half of Europe remained under Stalin's totalitarian dictatorship, progress was irreversible. This value-orientation proved to be successful as the communist regimes collapsed in the USSR and Eastern Europe.

However, the fall of the Berlin Wall did not bring about the understanding of the need for a new European strategy for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Today, when we enjoy far more comfortable conditions than after the end of the Second World War, when considerably better assets and modern technologies are available, Europe and the world still fail to find an adequate response to new challenges. The rise of extremism, nationalism, international crime and terrorism present a real threat to the European security. Crisis in the global finance and economy, ecology and healthcare, population growth and migration can reverse the progress.

We believe that all these new problems, albeit different, have one common root: dominance of the *Realpolitik*, narrow pragmatism and short-term material interests over universal humanitarian values. It is not about moralising. There is a real practical need for the governments to observe a minimal set of requirements concerning public goods and the rules of fair political competition (even if it is only words and declarations at the beginning). It is vitally important to build a system that would prevent violations of minimal moral norms by the governments. And this is, by the way, an important aspect for overcoming the present economic crisis.

Although such a "moral" and "ethical" approach to politics is not new, it has been as a rule considered as secondary and often ignored, which led to serious economic and political problems, and even wars. However, no regime in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries – except for the rogue states – dared to publicly challenge the moral approach. The victory over Nazism consolidated the moral approach, which brought about and secured the victory of the Euro-Atlantic world in the competition against communism. Politics remained separated from business, and business players in their pursuit of profits did not make any steps to destroy or disrupt the system. As to totalitarian and authoritarian corporate regimes, they were not allowed to participate in the fully-fledged competition in the free world, or to be integrated into the Western financial system. At the time, the Western governments felt obvious military, political and economic threat. Now, when the military and political threats seem to disappear or weaken, one can get the illusion that there is no more moral or economic threat to the European system of values. We also observe how prosily, virtually conflict-free and unemotionally the states governed by corporate culture turn into important world players while the businesses of their leaders increasingly merge with their political power.

Before such systems affect the social structure, they manifest themselves in political morals. For example, political techniques used by the Russian leaders (and not only Russian) for the past ten years may be unable to override the political practices employed by Washington, London or Paris, but they affect them nonetheless. That is where we think the problem of political morals resides.

The Council of Europe as institution based on values of human rights can and should play a considerably larger role both in strengthening the moral basis of politics and in confronting new threats. It is of special importance to us, Russian liberals, since we see that the Russian government, preoccupied with suppressing political opposition, emerging civil society and democracy, builds a bureaucratic police state, creates artificial “pocket” political parties and conducts elections in such a way that its victory is guaranteed. At present, elections in Russia are held under tough governmental control and their results are falsified. Consequently, there is no independent parliament in Russia. Russia also lacks independent judiciary which could protect the citizens from criminals and corrupted bureaucracy. Political censorship has been *de facto* introduced at the national television where any discussion on important political and social issues is prohibited.

We also see that the existing European mechanisms are unable to help Russian citizens to efficiently protect their rights. A group of privileged individuals has formed in Russia, and is rapidly turning into a “superior caste” with unlimited rights. In addition, the principle of equality of all before the law does not prevent Russian authorities from conducting domestic discriminatory policies towards specific social groups.

We have been observing freedom shrink in our country from year to year, democratic elections and independent press disappear, kidnappings and murders in the North Caucasus continue and serious crisis potential accumulate, while the Council of Europe was simply watching and, unfortunately, such a passive “watching” approach is not applied to Russia only.

We think that it is up to democrats, people with liberal views, to start the fight for bringing the European politics back from shortsighted pragmatism and *Realpolitik* to the moral values.

YABLOKO proposes to start formulating a new European agenda for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We are aware of the scope and the complexity of such a task, however, the opposite would result in a relative decline of Europe compared to North America and Asia –continents that in 20 years will obviously turn into centres of economic growth and, consequently, global political influence. If Europe does not want to be left on the roadside and lose its competitive economic capacity and its status of equal political partner, it has to stop resting on its laurels. It’s high time to start working on a new long-term development strategy in order to keep reinforcing the post-war European civilization based on liberal-democratic values and human rights respecting national cultures and traditions. In our view, this is the only way to prevent Europe’s sliding towards uncontrollable socio-political and systemic economic crisis. We are already observing the symptoms of such a crisis not only in Russia, but also in other former Soviet republics, such as Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova or even in some countries of the “old Europe” as, for example, Greece.

Some of the required initial steps in this direction are already obvious and can be made by the Council of Europe. The Council of Europe needs strong analytical institutions that would considerably raise its competence and allow not only to analyse but also forecast socio-political trends and develop preventive measures rather than good wishes. Another step would be building and improving the instruments of independent public opinion surveys (especially urgent in Russia and some other Eastern European countries).

In our opinion, the principles of PACE composition should be further improved. The Parliamentary Assembly based on delegation of national MPs proceeds from the idea that all the member-states have approximately the same (high) democracy level. But this is not so, and a considerable part of the Council of Europe population does not yet have free and fair elections and is deprived of direct links with the European institutions. This is not strategic and even dangerous. Direct elections to PACE (or any other European representative body) could be decisive for such countries’ progress towards modern democracy, rebuilding of confidence in elections and limiting the power of criminal bureaucracy.

For Russia the Council of Europe is the key and yet the sole real bridge to Europe. The most important task for us, Russian liberals, is to make it broader and stronger.



**Nursuna Memecan (Turkey)**

**Women and the economic and financial crisis ([Doc. 12195](#))**

*Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men:*

Report presented by Mrs Gisela Wurm  
Presented: Tuesday, 27 April 2010



**Mr Dick Marty (Switzerland)**

**Mr Matyas Eörsi (Hungary)**

The consequences of the war  
between Georgia and Russia

Debated: Wednesday, 28 April 2010



**Mr Serhiy Holovaty (Ukraine)**

**The necessity to take additional international legal steps to deal  
with sea piracy ([Doc. 12194](#))**

*Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights*

Presented: Wednesday, 28 April 2010



**Mr Paul Rowen (United Kingdom)**

**Commemorating the victims of the great famine (Holodomor) in  
the former USSR**

Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights (for opinion) ([Doc.  
12181](#))

Presented: Wednesday, 28 April 2010



**Mr Serhiy Holovaty (Ukraine)**

**Honouring of obligations and commitments by Montenegro  
([Doc. 12192](#))**

*Co-rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee*

Presented: Wednesday, 28 April 2010



**Mrs Nursuna Memecan (Turkey)**

**Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity**

*Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (for opinion)*  
*([Doc. 12197](#))*

*Presented by Mr Mendes Bota*  
*Presented: Thursday 29 April 2010*



**Mr Serhiy Holovaty (Ukraine)**

**Post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria ([Doc. 12187](#))**

*Monitoring Committee*

*Presented by Mr Marty*

*Presented: Friday, 30 April 2010*



**Mrs Doris Fiala (Switzerland)**

**Migrants and refugees: a continuing challenge for the Council of Europe ([Doc. 12201](#))**

*Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population*

*Presented: Friday, 30 April 2010*



**Mr Denis Badré (France)**

**Euro-Mediterranean region: call for a Council of Europe strategy ([Doc. 12108](#))**

*Political Affairs Committee*

*Presented: Friday, 30 April 2010*

**Question to Micheline Calmy-Rey, Head of the Federal Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers**



Mr BADRÉ (*France*) asked what the Council of Europe should do to ensure progress was made towards a moratorium on the death penalty in Belarus?



Ms CALMY-REY said the Council of Europe should continue with its work. The Parliamentary Assembly laid down that the death penalty should be abolished or that there should at least be a moratorium. The Council of Europe should

continue efforts to win over authorities and take positive steps, but executions had taken place and that affected progress. The Council remained open to dialogue with Belarus; the worst thing it could do was to close the door.

**Question to Viktor Yanukovich, President of Ukraine**



Mrs BRASSEUR (*Luxembourg*) congratulated Mr Yanukovich on his election. She said the glorification of Stalin and the Soviet interpretation of the Second World War in the Ukraine was supported by the

Minister of Education and asked what Mr Yanukovich was doing to put an end to these very worrying developments.



Mr YANUKOVYCH said it was a wonderful question, but did not accept the premise of the question as the Minister of Education's views coincided with his own, which were that there were radical opinions in society, but that these could not be

taken into account. He was not aware of efforts to build a monument to Stalin, although there had been an example of a bust being built in the garden of an office in Zaporozhie; the mayor of the city had contemplated holding a referendum to resolve the issue. Much of society in Ukraine had removed such monuments and they would not be restored.

**Question to Thomas Hammarberg the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights**



Mrs BECK (*Germany*) thanked the commissioner for his report and agreed that its subject was not always one that governments were always willing to consider. She asked whether he had any update for

the Assembly on the cases of the murdered Chechens, including those assassinated in Austria last year, as well as the tragic cases where refugees had been murdered.



Mr HAMMARBERG – No, I have no positive news to report when it comes to the investigations into those cases, including the important one from July last year involving Natalia Estemirova. I am very concerned about that.

Impunity in such cases simply cannot be accepted. I had a good discussion on this issue with President Medvedev, and I got the impression that he completely understood why we are so concerned about these cases. I have been promised that there will be a result very soon. I have had several meetings with the leadership of the investigation committee in Moscow, and I hope that we will soon have a report on what really happened with these awful murders and who was behind them.

**Question to Sergey Lavrov, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation**



Mrs BRASSEUR (*Luxembourg*) The Council of Europe needs to apply the European Convention on Human Rights and to carry out the judgments of the Court. Of the 103 judgments

concerning Russia, only two had been implemented. What is Russia doing to improve this deplorable situation.



Mr LAVROV said that the Russian Federation was a member state of the Council of Europe, a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights and had fulfilled all of its commitments, including in respect of judgments. It was

unfortunate that other governments had attempted to politicise the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights. He was in favour of reforming the European Court of Human Rights. It was extremely important to build a single human rights base in Europe. It was particularly important for the European Union to become a state party to the European Court of Human Rights and for the law of the Council of Europe to apply right across the continent.

Monday 26 April 2010

### Progress report



Mr MARQUET (*Monaco*) said he had attended a meeting of the Standing Committee to defend a draft European Convention on medical products. In January, the Assembly had been asked for an opinion and it had understood that the issue was of great importance. As rapporteur he had followed the issue for over five years. Consideration had been given to drawing up a convention. It had taken time to make any progress but the value added by the Council of Europe was clear and significant expertise had been developed. [Read more](#)

### Lobbying in a democratic society



Mr GIARETTA (*Italy*) The question was whether regulation of lobbyists was either useful or possible. There was a need to produce good laws, which should ensure that access to goods was guaranteed, regardless of income. As interest in regulations had increased, lobbying had increased to represent these interests. Without transparency, lobbying could put illicit pressure on law makers and lead to corruption. [Read more, voting results](#)

Tuesday 27 April 2010

### Associating women in the prevention and the solution of unsolved conflicts in Europe



Mrs LUNDGREN (*Sweden*) – I came back from eastern Congo last week, so I have in my mind the way in which women are treated in conflict and how the treatment of women can be used as a weapon to destroy society. [...] We have much to do in this area – in our countries, in Europe and when we act together abroad and far away. As has been pointed out, we need early-warning systems and we need to take this issue into account in conflict resolution, peacekeeping and peace building. However, we first have to acknowledge the need to include the whole society when we are trying to make a difference. [Read more, voting results](#)

### The consequences of the economic crisis



Mrs REPS (*Estonia*) – Today, one of the most urgent tasks is to enable enterprises to sustain and create jobs. [...] However, we also need to create public sector jobs – even temporary or short-term jobs – to keep people from long-term unemployment, to bring them back into society and to give them hope and the ability to re-enter the work force. [...] Another issue outlined in the report relates to policies to tighten borders against migrants and the increasing phenomena of xenophobia and hatred. [...] Lastly, I raise the question of family set-ups. Careful attention should be given to people with families in difficulties, such as single parents, those with very large families or those with family members with disabilities. [Read more, voting results](#)

## Wealth, welfare and wellbeing: how to reconcile them in a changing Europe?

Mr GIARETTA (*Italy*) said that the global economic crisis had caused great suffering among families throughout Europe, and the limitations of gross domestic product had been highlighted as a measure of a nation's success. GDP measures only economic activity in a defined market and the nature of the crisis had proved the need for a new measure. GDP did not indicate how resources were distributed or how people felt. There were notable increases in inequality even in times of economic growth. There needed, therefore, to be international agreements over an improved form of GDP. The Italian National Institute of Statistics had developed a statistical constitution, which incorporated psychological, physical and social indicators in a measure of national well-being. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe would be voting in favour of Mr Vrettos's report, which it hoped would help move beyond the acquisition of wealth and growth as key drivers of individual motivation. [Read more, voting results](#)

Wednesday 28 April 2010

### Current affairs debate: The consequences of the war between Georgia and Russia

Mrs REPS (*Estonia*) – What is our demand here today? Why is the ALDE Group still in the position of asking for further reports in the long run and in the shorter run? We demand that Resolutions 1633, 1647 and 1683 are fully implemented. We demand that we should have constant monitoring until these very sensitive issues are resolved. We should have fair access for all international community organisations and monitors, as well as humanitarian aid to these territories – break-away regions or so-called administrative borders. We should have an opening up of the so-called administrative borders from the Georgian side as well, not only so that it can be accessed through Moscow. We should also ensure that internally displaced persons can safely return to their areas in the presence of willing and able international peacekeepers. [Read more](#)

### Piracy – a crime and a challenge for democracies

#### The necessity to take additional international legal steps to deal with sea piracy



Mrs SCHUSTER (*Germany*) thanked the rapporteurs for their reports, which had discussed both judicial issues and the causes of piracy. Piracy was a symptom of the humanitarian, economic and political crisis in Somalia. Civil war had destroyed Somalia's internal structures and had created an internal vacuum, which was the perfect environment for the breeding of terrorism and piracy. [Read more, voting results](#)

### Commemorating the victims of the great famine (Holodomor) in the former USSR



Mr MEIKAR (*Estonia*) – The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe welcomes the strong condemnation of the Soviet regime's policies in the 1930s. [...] The tragic events in Ukraine are referred to as the Holodomor, a politically motivated famine that is recognised by Ukrainian law as an act of genocide against Ukraine. The Holodomor has been recognised as genocide by several other countries as well. To honour the memory of the great famine and the relatives of those involved in it, historians from countries of the former Soviet Union that suffered during the great famine, as well as historians from all other countries, should conduct new, joint, unbiased and unpoliticised research. All the countries concerned could allow historians full access to all their archives. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Honouring of obligations and commitments by Montenegro**

Mr FAHEY (*Ireland*) – Certainly, the report gives rise to concerns, although I accept that progress is being made. I would say to the government and the politicians of Montenegro that there is a real opportunity to put behind them those kinds of activity and to embrace democracy and the rule of law. [...] We want to see greater freedom of expression and greater freedom of the press to bring about a democracy that the people of Montenegro will be proud of and benefit from much more quickly than if its government decides to continue to take things at a slow pace. Coming from the most westerly city in Europe, Galway in Ireland, I would love to see this beautiful country become a democracy and take its place among the nations of Europe. [Read more, voting results](#)

Thursday 29 April 2010

**Debate under urgent procedure: The urgent need for a constitutional reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

Mrs BRASSEUR (*Luxembourg*) said concern, worry, disappointment, and feelings of impotence arose in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Hopes had risen with the Dayton Agreement but today it was clear that imposing a constitution had simply been a sticking plaster and not a cure. Bosnia and Herzegovina's institutions had not made the required constitutional reforms and eight years later there had been little progress. The rapporteurs had found that the reform process had reached deadlock. [...] No section of society should be prevented from standing for election because of their ethnicity. [...] Faced with that situation, all the Council of Europe could do was to insist on procedures and a timetable to initiate reforms after the election. The Council of Europe could provide guidance, but reforms needed to be carried out by the authorities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Debate under urgent procedure: The situation in Belarus: recent developments**

Mr KASTĒNS (*Latvia*) – The Belarusian authorities have repeatedly reiterated their interest in the further development of co-operation with the Council of Europe, the aim of which is fully fledged membership. On the other hand, Belarusian authorities are creating obstacles towards dialogue with the Council of Europe. [...] Nevertheless, I fully agree with Mrs Hurskainen that nothing can be gained through a policy of isolation. The Assembly and the Council of Europe should pursue a strategy of engagement with the Belarusian authorities. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Effective implementation of the European Convention on Human Rights: the Interlaken process**

Mr BADRÉ (*France*) The European Court of Human Rights was indeed having to filter too many of the cases placed before it, and this was impinging upon its ability to carry out its real work. The entry into force of Protocol No. 14 had prompted the Council of Europe to consider the whole process, and possibly consider limiting the number of petitions that could be made to the Court. The need for increased resources ought not to be met from the budgets of other institutions, and no one ought to think that the process would be a fast one. [...] The accession of the European Union to the European Court of Human Rights would provide recourse for individuals who believed that European Union legislation had violated their rights. It would, however, require a new treaty and even more effort would be needed in the reform process. [Read more, voting results](#)

## Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity

Mrs BRASSEUR (*Luxembourg*) said that Patriarch Alexis II, former Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church, had previously told the Council of Europe that homosexuality was an illness, a distortion of a human being. [...] More recently, Cardinal Bertone had said that there was a relationship between homosexuality and paedophilia. The Vatican had distanced itself from these comments saying that it was outside its field of competence but had not disagreed. [...] The Assembly should follow this example and end open and covered discrimination. It should vote in favour of the draft in its original form, as had been debated in January. To this end, she urged members to support the amendments that returned the report to its original form. [Read more, voting results](#)

## Protection of "whistle-blowers"



Mrs FIALA (*Switzerland*) – the Liberal Group wants to point out the importance of the report concerning whistleblowers. We are very much in favour of the report's ideas. [...] What is more important: the fight against corruption or the loyalty of employees towards their company? People have been discussing that issue intensely. Incidentally, the discussion here was triggered by a member of the Swiss Council of States who is well known to us: Dick Marty. In December 2008, the Swiss Government drafted a Bill for consultation aimed at the protection of employees who report on corrupt business practices or other misconduct in the workplace. The main assumption underlying the Bill is that the employee should strictly adhere to the procedures laid down by law. To that extent, the employee's first responsibility is to ensure that the misconduct at the company is made known and discontinued. [Read more, voting results](#)

Friday 30 April 2010

## Post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria

Mr MARQUET (*Monaco*) Bulgaria needed to realise that there was a strong connection between the rule of law and economic development. Countries able to show that they had a sound legal system would find it easier to secure foreign investment. Bulgaria had made the wise choice to accede to the Council of Europe, NATO and the European Union and it was essential for the Assembly to support it in this endeavour. Questions remained over the progress that Bulgaria still had to make. He thanked the Monitoring Committee and Mr Holovaty for their hard work. [Read more, voting results](#)

## Migrants and refugees: a continuing challenge for the Council of Europe

Mrs REPS (*Estonia*) – On behalf of my group, and also on my own behalf, I would like to congratulate the rapporteur on an interesting and, more importantly, a significant report. It is clear that many of us – I hope most of us – believe that, in order for the Council of Europe to continue for many years to come, we need a clear mainstreaming of our activities. The report is therefore timely, in calling for the mainstreaming of migration questions. If we consider the purposes of the Council of Europe, it is clear that no other assembly at such a level takes such a detailed human rights approach to migration, displacement and refugees. [Read more, voting results](#)

## Biodiversity and climate change

Mr MARQUET (*Monaco*) said that today's issue was an important one but climate change was often overlooked. As the report showed, biodiversity covered a wide range of issues. It was important for the effective survival of the human race, but sometimes the intrinsic value of life was forgotten. The Council of Europe still had a chance to act, even if that window of opportunity was swiftly closing. Action required the co-operation of governments. [Read more, voting results](#)

## Euro-Mediterranean region: call for a Council of Europe strategy

Mr MARQUET (*France*) In the face of shared challenges, there was a need for organisations to work together and not multiply their functions beyond necessity. The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe welcomed and congratulated the committee on its report. The Council of Europe was in a strong position to offer its expertise vis-à-vis co-operation. It was bolstered by its legitimacy of experience and had the means at its disposal to help the Mediterranean move forward. [Read more, voting results](#)

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## ALDE Conference

### Liberal Groups discuss the EU Eastern Partnership Programme, 26-27 February



In May 2009, the Eastern Partnership (EaP) programme was launched as a tool for enhancing bilateral and multilateral cooperation between the European Union and its eastern neighbours: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine.

Some 40 representatives of the ALDE groups in the Council of Europe and the European Parliament, ELDR, FNF, IFLRY, LI and liberal parties and movements from the EaP countries convened in Berlin on 26-27 February for a workshop on Liberal vision of the Eastern Partnership.

#### Building the liberal approach

Liberals have always been the watchdogs of democratic values on the European continent. As a value-oriented force, we should work together for an Eastern Partnership based on commitments to the principles of international law and to values of democracy, the rule of law and the respect for human rights.

The values and standards of democracy, good governance and stability should be the basis of the EaP. The Eastern Partnership is not to become an ordinary instrument of political and economic marchandage; the founding principles of the European integration cannot be set aside.

The liberal family strongly supports the initiative of the European Union and welcomes the commitment to promote democratic values in view to strengthening stability and cooperation in Europe under the Eastern Partnership Programme and its thematic platform on democracy, good governance and stability.

[Final conclusions](#)

[Thematic Platform I: Democracy, good governance and stability](#)

[Thematic Platform II: Economic integration and convergence with EU sectoral policies](#)

[Thematic Platform III: Energy security](#)

[Thematic Platform IV: Contacts between people](#)

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