



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

## N°4, 2014

*PACE Session  
29 September –  
3 October 2014*

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President of Liberal  
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## October session in Strasbourg

- What do liberal parties in Europe stand for? ALDE exchanged views on the future and the present of liberalism in Europe with Dr Juli Minoves, President of Liberal International.
- “Witnesses of Maidan”: ALDE hosted a debate around a documentary depicting the repression of protest rallies of 18-20 February 2014 in Kiev. Parliamentarians, diplomats and Ukrainian activists took the floor.
- ALDE discussed the human rights situation in eastern and southern parts of Ukraine with Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Mr Nils Muižnieks. ALDE also met with Ukrainian human rights activists who help IDPs and collect data on rights violations in the region.
- ALDE welcomed the decision to award the annual Václav Havel human rights prize to Mr Annar Mammadli, currently in jail in Azerbaijan. Before his arrest, Mr Mammadli had taken part in ALDE’s round table on NGO legislation in June 2013. ALDE expresses its solidarity and concern over the situation of human rights defenders in Azerbaijan.

As always, we wish to thank all ALDE members who took active part in plenary debates, defended our position in committees, presented reports and attended group meetings. We also welcome all new members who joined the group since June and wish them excellent work.

We are especially thankful to the valuable contribution of Mr Emil Kirjas, Secretary General of Liberal International. We also wish to thank the team of young liberals who helped us during the session: ALDE trainee Mariëlle van Heumen (Netherlands), Jockum Nyberg (IFLRY) and Noam Grebler (Spain).

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## LI President urges ALDE to “stand firm” in face of growing illiberalism in Europe



Dr Minoves, Mr Xuclà, Mrs Bigday and Mrs Brasseur

**What brings liberals together? How do liberals see the challenges of today’s world? Do liberal ideas matter? On 29 September, ALDE hosted an exchange of views with Dr Juli Minoves, President of Liberal International in office since May 2014.**

“The values of democracy and human rights that the Council of Europe stands for, very clearly correspond to the ideas that the liberals put in the Oxford Manifesto signed in 1947. There is no true democracy without freedom; there is no prosperity without economic freedom; there is no peace and stability without responsibility”, said Jordi Xuclà opening the debate.

The idea of liberalism has shaped European institutions and societies and has since taken root in different parts of the world. Presenting Liberal International, Dr Minoves particularly underlined its globalised aspect. Today Liberal International is a global network of liberal political forces which helps to elaborate ideas and share good practices around the globe. In his address to the group, Dr Minoves encouraged ALDE to stand firm for the liberal values: “The Council of Europe was founded on values that brought peace and development to Europe after devastating wars. We cannot allow for this important institution to be undermined by strong men who advocate illiberal democracy, by populists or by religious fundamentalists.”

Anne Brasseur, President of the Parliamentary Assembly attending the debate welcomed the topicality of the questions raised by Dr Minoves: “If we do not have individual freedom, we cannot have democracy. Liberals have always put the individual in the centre. More than ever do we need strong and coordinated messages: the respect of human rights, democracy and the rule of law are the red lines that cannot be crossed.”

*The exchange of views with ALDE concluded Dr Minoves’s one-day visit to the Council of Europe, during which he attended a series of high-level meetings, including with Mr Thorbjørn Jagland, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mrs Anne Brasseur, President of the Parliamentary Assembly, and Mr Emin Eyyubov, Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan, country currently chairing the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe.*

## “Witnesses of Maidan”: ALDE’s side event



On 30 September 2014 ALDE hosted a debate around the documentary “Celestial Hundred” to be featured at the closing screening of the International Human Rights Film Festival in Strasbourg on 8 November. The documentary depicts the events of 18-20 February 2014 in Kyiv. The side event brought together parliamentarians, diplomats, including the Ambassador of Ukraine, members of the secretariat of the Council of Europe, as well as Ukrainian activists and human rights defenders, many of whom were direct witnesses and participants in the protests in Kyiv.

“The ‘Celestial Hundred’ shows Maidan through the eyes of simple protesters, people like you and I, people who wanted change for a better life, people who wanted to be heard”, said Mrs Ivanna Pinyak, Co-ordinator of the PromoUkraine initiative, presenting the documentary.



Ms Sofia Borysko, student at the Taras Shevchenko University in Kyiv, protester of Maidan: “I do not wish to any European student to search among dead bodies, which I had to do. The Russian media call us all fascists. Do you think I am a fascist? Do I look like one? I hope our testimonies will also change the indifference towards what is happening in Ukraine.”



Mr Mykola Tochytyskiy, Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the Council of Europe: “Ukraine cannot be divided artificially between east and west, north and south. You noticed that most people shown in this documentary spoke Russian. The people of Ukraine, whatever language they speak, want to live in European future, and not in the past.”

Mrs Mailis Reps, who as co-Rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee was in Kyiv on a regular mission when the violence out-broke, explained why ALDE decided to speak again about Maidan, seven months after the events: “For some Maidan has become a symbol of hooliganism and rubber tires burning. But very little has been said why all these different people came to protest. Sometimes we as politicians mention Maidan, but we forget to speak about people, and I am hurt when we are bringing these events into geopolitical games”.

“The documentary which we saw today tries to distance itself from the geopolitical situation, from power struggles, and from taking sides in order to focus on the people of Maidan, on those who were at its grass-roots thinking that Ukrainian people deserve a better, European future. Future without corruption and without power abuse, the future they wished to build themselves. Let us adopt a similar attitude in our discussions. Let us remember the victims of Maidan, but also let us remember the everyday commitment of the Ukrainian people. The right to live in democracy is also a human right”, concluded Jordi Xuclà, President of ALDE.



**Ms Meritxell MATEU PI (Andorra)**

Observation of the presidential election in Turkey (10 August 2014), Rapporteur of the Bureau of PACE (Doc. 13611), Monday 29 September 2014

**Mr Michael Aastrup JENSEN (Denmark)**

The functioning of democratic institutions in Georgia, Co-Rapporteur of the Monitoring Committee (Doc. 13588, Doc. 13588 Addendum), Wednesday 1 October 2014

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\*translation

**Question to Mr Elmar MAMMADYAROV, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers**



Ms GUȚU  
(Republic of Moldova)  
– What progress

has been achieved under the Azerbaijani chairmanship in resolving “frozen conflicts”, and what can the Council of Europe do to make sure that the military conflict in Ukraine – in the east and in relation to the annexation – does not become yet another such conflict?

Mr MAMMADYAROV – I am grateful for that question, because it is a real privilege to hear, from the first few speakers, that one of the Assembly’s greatest concerns relates to the resolution of this crisis or conflict. Without repeating what I said a few moments ago, I recognise that our consolidated reaction must be to prevent people from being tempted to change internationally recognised borders by the use of force. That is one of the major principles we accept, and to which we have already committed ourselves by enshrining it in the United Nations Charter, the Helsinki Final Act and other major international agreements. That principle is clearly the one that corresponds to all the risks involved.

I understand your point in relation to the Moldovan case. The same could be said by those from Georgia or Ukraine, and by members of the delegation from my country. I believe that we need to consolidate our efforts to settle such conflicts on the basis of international norms and principles. We should take the same united view, at least in approaching a settlement.

**Monday 29 September 2014**



**Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee**

Ms FIALA (*Switzerland*) – I had the honour of being involved in the observation of the Turkish presidential election of 10 August. Carlo Schmid, once said that we should be very courageous by not tolerating those who use democracy in a way that will degrade democracy. By observing elections, we should not legitimise unfairness. It is about having elections that are not only free but fair. [Read more](#)



**Free debate**

Mr STROE (*Romania*) – The ongoing electoral campaign in Romania has raised some issues of concern. Although the Venice Commission recommended that the electoral laws should not be changed less than one year before the elections, a governmental emergency ordinance was adopted a few months ago that modified the electoral process and the organisation of voting. And this month – only two months before the election – an eight-year-old law forbidding local elected officials from moving to another party during their term was modified by a governmental emergency ordinance and suspended for 45 days. [Read more](#)

**Tuesday 30 September 2014**



**Counteraction to manifestations of neo-Nazism**

Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*) – It is vitally important that education be considered as an effective tool in combating neo-Nazism, and it has to start at a very early age in our schools. The second point is the need for both national and European-wide action: a co-ordinated approach across Europe in tackling this issue. The third point is the need for exit measures for individuals involved in exploiting young people and others. We have to find a way to give those individuals some hope in society, so we can remove them from the claws of those who perpetrate such actions. [Read more, voting results](#)



Ms ANTTILA (*Finland*) – Three years after the uprisings that started the Arab Spring, women's status on the southern shore of the Mediterranean has a mixed record. Morocco and Tunisia have achieved significant progress by creating or consolidating democratic institutions, but in Libya, Egypt and Algeria the situation is more difficult. Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1873 on equality between women and men provides a good basis for the countries that experienced the Arab Spring to succeed in improving the status of women and eliminating all forms of discrimination against them. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Joint debate: Good governance and enhanced quality in education; Raising the status of vocational education and training**



Mr BARDINA PAU (*Andorra*)\* –We are aware that education is a priority in most of our countries, and that indefatigable economic efforts are being made with regard to infrastructure and human resources. It should be noted, however, that such efforts are not always reflected, or are insufficiently reflected, in the quality of teaching in education and in the level of knowledge acquired by students. In talking about education or training, the expression “more effort leads to better results” is far from automatic. [...] Improving the quality of education is synonymous with rising prosperity. [Read more, voting results 1, 2](#)

**Wednesday 1 October 2014**

**The activities of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2013-2014**



Mr PASQUIER (*Monaco*) – Thomas Piketty, in his book, “Capital in the 21st Century”, argues that we are in a period of unprecedented concentration of wealth. This phenomenon seems to be global – it is true in China, in the US, in Europe. For how long is this sustainable? What is the point of growth if it accrues only to a tiny share of the population? This matters politically because people are losing faith in the system and moving to populism and a more extreme political position – or even worse – particularly in Europe. The Assembly has been discussing a report called, “Counteraction to the manifestations of neo-Nazism”. Part of the solution is to prevent people from reaching a state of hopelessness in the first place. [...] I respectfully suggest, Mr Gurría, that

the OECD should allocate even more resources to trying to understand this phenomenon and develop economic policy recommendations to ensure that all people benefit from economic growth. [Read more, voting results](#)



Ms MATEU PI (*Andorra*)\* – Over the past few months, the US Department of State, the EU External Action Service and some of our member States have expressed concern about the wave of arrests of former Georgian leaders, but our institution has not said much about it. Democratic institutions can function only if we remove ourselves from thoughts of revenge. As Mr Cilevičs said, the ongoing judicial process must be impartial. [...] However, we want to believe that they will consolidate the rule of law and introduce a clear separation of powers. The future of a prosperous, democratic Georgia depends on our being confident, constructive and positive about the future. [Read more, voting results](#)

### The crisis in Ukraine



Ms REPS (*Estonia*) – How can we support and advise Ukraine so that people can participate in all areas of the country? [...] There are serious concerns about human rights violations by the separatists and the Russian troops, but we are also concerned that there are no effective investigations of violations by Ukrainian troops. It is vital that we work with both sides so that propaganda, the information war and all other forms of hate speech do not overshadow the parliamentary elections and so that Ukraine can have an effective parliament that represents the people of Ukraine and can go further with judicial reform, constitutional reform, reform of the Prosecutor's Office, economic reform, and so on. [Read more, \\_\\_\\_\\_\\_](#)

### Thursday 2 October 2014

**Urgent debate: Threats against humanity posed by the terrorist group known as “IS”: violence against Christians and other religious or ethnic communities**



Mr XUCLÀ (*Spain*)\* – We are facing an increase in radical international Islamic terrorism. It is based partly, but only partly, in the Islamic world, and it has managed to exploit the failings, loopholes and vacuums in some countries in which there are pockets of vast oil resources that are not properly controlled by the State. Given the speed with which “IS” has grown within six months to a year, we are in a situation that undoubtedly we could never have expected. The proper response is a military alliance, but in the medium term, we must consider the conditions that have caused hundreds of our compatriots to be recruited and allowed the “IS” cause to exert such attraction that they go to the countries affected, creating this great crisis. [Read more, voting results](#)

## The activities of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in 2013- 2014



Ms GAMBARO (Italy)\* – Speaking on behalf of the ALDE group, I cannot but support financial or commercial cooperation that would foster development and progress. We would like to see greater support for countries that are emerging from crises and persistent difficulties. It is only by such cooperation and support that we can ensure transition towards more stable political systems and guarantee social and individual rights, as well as build representative democracy. For these reasons, I believe that we should firmly support the strategies proposed to this Assembly to make concrete steps to provide economic assistance, by giving credits or by investing under the control of an institution in which, I remind, the Council of Europe member states are shareholders. [Read more](#)



### The progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure (October 2013 – September 2014)

Ms GUȚU (*Republic of Moldova*) – It is perfectly true that the list of countries under monitoring has remained pretty much unchanged in the past 10 years. We now find ourselves to be one of the ex-Soviet countries that are emerging democracies and have similar problems on the respect of human rights, electoral democracy, freedom of expression, pluralism of opinion and other democratic values. We also face the problem of frozen conflicts. [...]It is time to review the thinking behind the monitoring procedure to make it more effective, including from the financial viewpoint, and also more specific, more targeted, and unable to leave things to drag on for years. [Read more, voting results](#)

### The honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania



Ms MATEU PI (*Andorra*)\* – We of course welcome the positive efforts made in the fields of media freedom and combating corruption in justice – thanks to the precious assistance of the Venice Commission – but efforts also have to be made in the fields of education and health, where corruption is also present. Furthermore, as the rapporteurs indicated, substantial reforms are necessary to deal with abuse of power in politics and the civil service. However, we want to praise the efforts Albania has made in respect of its legal framework, and we hope that legislation Albania is producing in favour of transparency and democracy will genuinely be applied and developed. [...]We share the rapporteurs' view on the need to end the polarisation of politics and to normalise democracy.

We note the habit of boycotting parliament that opposition parties seem to have adopted. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Friday 3 October 2014**



### **The alternatives to immigration detention of children**

Mr XUCLÀ (*Spain*)\* – The Rapporteur spoke about alternatives to detention for immigrant children. We are talking about “children” rather than “minors” because this subject involves the protection of immigrants who are detained because they arrive from third countries without any papers, not because they have committed a crime or have a police record. [...]The report mentions the best practice followed in quite a few of the 47 States in our Organisation, and it suggests that that best practice should be extended to other countries. Very diplomatically, the Rapporteur did not name the countries where there is best practice – Belgium, Denmark, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom – but I want to mention them because they are exemplary in how they take in migrant children

and integrate them in the right environment. [Read more, voting results](#)

### **Towards optimum breast cancer services across Europe**



Ms GUȚU (*Republic of Moldova*) –Of course, the draft resolution will not be any relief to women who have breast cancer now, but the report and the draft resolution, which will be sent out to our Parliaments and will reach our governments, combined with measures taken by specialised hospitals, will certainly help in the prevention and treatment of cancer in women who are also wives and mothers. The Republic of Moldova has been very much affected by this illness. In 2012, breast cancer caused 486 women’s deaths. In terms of morbidity, it is the second most serious illness. The number of women diagnosed is about 10 000 and, of course, we can assume that many women who have not yet been diagnosed also have the disease. It is treatable in 90% of cases in EU countries, but to give a comparative figure, in the Republic of Moldova only 30%

of cases are treatable and lead to a cure. The general reasons for this are late or incorrect diagnosis of the illness or incorrect treatment, because of the modest possibilities in our health service. [Read more, voting results](#)

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