



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

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**IN THIS ISSUE:**

**In memoriam of  
Boris Nemtsov**

**Rapporteurs**

**Questions**

**Speakers**

**ALDE  
members**

## **April 2015 session in Strasbourg**

- In memoriam of Mr **Boris Nemtsov** murdered in Moscow in February, ALDE held a public hearing on “**Russia and Council of Europe values: challenges and new paradigms**”. The debate was open to all PACE members, permanent representatives, Council of Europe staff and the press. Following the debate, ALDE supported the nomination of Mr Boris Nemtsov for the 2015 Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize
- ALDE discussed the situation of the liberal forces in Europe with **Sir Graham Watson, leader of the ALDE Party**. The ALDE Party Congress will be held from 19-21 November in Budapest. “We chose Budapest to remind us that government and laws must restrain power, ambition, and abuse,” underlined Sir Graham Watson.
- **Mr Mikhail Kasyanov**, former Prime Minister of the Russian Federation who co-chaired together with Mr Nemtsov the liberal RPR-Parnas Party, reported on the situation of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in his country and presented Russian liberals' common position denouncing the illegal annexation of Crimea and the Russian involvement in the conflict in east of Ukraine.
- Representatives of the **Friedrich Naumann Foundation, Prof. Dr. Jürgen Morlok**, head of the Board of Trustees, and **Mr Olaf Kellerhoff**, head of the Human Rights Department, outlined the activities of the Foundation and briefed the group on the situation of the German liberal party FDP.

As always, we wish to thank ALDE members who took active part in plenary debates, defended our position in committees, presented reports and attended group meetings. We welcome all new members who joined the group since January and wish them excellent work. We are also thankful to the team of trainees who assisted us during the session: Mr Arvid Plugge (IFLRY, Netherlands), Ms Anya Bazilo (Ukraine), Ms Mariëlle van Heumen (Netherlands) and Mr Filip Chraska (Czech Republic). A very warm and special thanks goes to Mr Peter Kallenberger for his unfailing support and commitment.

**ALDE endeavours to be the engine of the Assembly defending core European values**  
Visit our website: [www.alde-pace.org](http://www.alde-pace.org)

## Russia and Council of Europe Values: Challenges and New Paradigms



Sir Graham Watson, Mr Kasyanov, Mr Xuclà, Mr Guriev and Prof. Dr. Morlok

On the first day of the April part-session, 20 April 2015, ALDE paid tribute to Mr Boris Nemtsov, Russian opposition leader assassinated in February in Moscow, long-standing partner of the group and a friend of many of its members, by holding an exchange of views on the political situation in Russia. **Mr Jordi Xuclà**, president of ALDE-PACE, opened the debate by reminding that “the brutal murder of a leading opposition figure next to the Kremlin walls is a sad testimony of the climate of hatred and violence threatening those who dare to speak up against the undemocratic rule and the politics of war”.

**Mr Mikhail Kasyanov**, former Prime Minister of the Russian Federation who co-chaired together with Mr Nemtsov the liberal RPR-Parnas Party, pointed out that the Council of Europe values were systematically violated in today’s Russia, even though their respect was inscribed in the Constitution. He warned that his country was “moving towards a disaster and its course must be changed: for ten years we have been watching together how the democratic state was being destroyed”. Speaking about the Russian aggression in Ukraine, Mr Kasyanov stated that “Putin’s regime today does not undertake any efforts to achieve peace. Moreover, preparations for further aggression are going on along the border. Therefore I would invite you to follow this situation closely and be prepared to stick to your principled position. We should not trade the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine; if we back down, we should expect only more aggression”. According to Mr Kasyanov, only unified and principled European position could stop the processes drawing Russia closer and closer towards the fire of violence and tyranny.

**Mr Sergei Guriev**, Russian economist currently teaching at Sciences Po Paris who left his country as a result of a growing political pressure, praised the contribution of Mr Nemtsov as a key figure in “unifying and bridging two generations of the Russian opposition. His murder was meant as a clear message to all opposition politicians in the country, demonstrating that their activity may cost them life”. The scholar argued that the targeted sanctions supported by Mr Nemtsov and introduced by the Western countries following the illegal annexation of Crimea by the Russian Federation have brought certain results: “they did actually change the behaviour. Many people would say that the sanctions did not stop Mr Putin. They did not stop Mr Putin in Crimea because it was too late, but they did stop Mr Putin in Eastern Ukraine, because his plan was to annex many more parts of the country”. Mr Guriev also called on European societies to be more active in confronting Russian official propaganda in the field of information: “The current regime in Russia is based on censorship and propaganda; therefore it is crucial to present the facts, to stick to the values, to disclose the violations made by the regime, to disclose the corruption within the regime and to appeal to the Russian society”.

**Sir Graham Watson**, ALDE Party president, joined the calls on the European community to keep the pressure on the Russian authorities, but first of all to support the liberal partners in the country: “Most of all, let us support wholeheartedly Russia's Liberals. As Martin Luther King reminded us 'You always forget the words of your enemies. You never forget the silence of your friends'. Let us use every political opportunity to back our friends who stand up bravely to the pugnacity of Mr Putin.”

**Prof. Dr. Jürgen Morlok**, head of the Board of Trustees of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and **Mr Olaf Kellerhoff**, head of Human Rights Department at the Foundation, assured that German liberals would continue to support Russian free-thinking civil society activists and politicians whose role and ability to persuade in the current situation becomes crucial.

Following the debate, the liberal group, as well as many other PACE members, supported the nomination of Mr Boris Nemtsov for the 2015 Vaclav Havel Human Rights Prize annually awarded by the Assembly.



### Ms Olena Sotnyk (Ukraine)

**Social services in Europe: legislation and practice of the removal of children from their families in Council of Europe member States** (Doc. 13760), Rapporteur for opinion Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Wednesday 22 April 2015



### Mr Jordi Xuclà (Spain)

**Current affairs debate: The political and security situation in Ukraine and its implications** (introductory remarks), Wednesday 22 April 2015

**Post-monitoring dialogue with Monaco** (Doc. 13739), Rapporteur, Monitoring Committee, Thursday 23 April 2015



### Mr André Bugnon (Switzerland)

**Budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2016-2017** (Doc. 13743), **Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2016-2017** (Doc. 13744), presented the report on behalf of the committee, Thursday 23 April 2015

[Back](#)

## ALDE questions

\*translation

### Question to Mr Thorbjørn JAGLAND, Secretary General of the Council of Europe



Ms MATEU PI (Andorra)\* – Secretary General, what effective, practical measures can be taken following

the Luxembourg court's decision on 18 December not to approve the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights?



Mr JAGLAND – There is not much that the Council of Europe can do for the time being, because now the ball is very much in the EU's court. It must consider how it will respond to the opinion from the court in Luxembourg. We have good contacts with the European Union's leaders – I had a meeting with President Juncker and Commissioner Timmermans not so long ago – and we fully respect that they must have another internal discussion on how to respond to the opinion. However, two things are clear. First, the Lisbon Treaty is still valid and it states that EU accession to the Convention shall happen. Secondly, the European Commission is still committed to the process.

**Question to Mr Didier REYNDERS,  
Minister for Foreign Affairs and  
European Affairs of Belgium,  
Chairperson of the Committee of  
Ministers**

Ms TAKTAKISHVILI (*Georgia*)\* –



Minister,  
thank you for  
your appeal to  
release our  
colleague Ms  
Savchenko.  
You have  
been to  
Moscow  
twice. What

progress was made between the two meetings? Was there a different approach during your second visit? As far as we can tell, the authorities turn a deaf ear to our appeals – in fact, they are increasing the pressure instead.

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

Ms MATEU PI (*Andorra*)\* – Your



report is  
indeed very  
interesting,  
Commissioner  
. But in your  
foreword you  
refer to an  
issue that was  
discussed  
here only this

morning. You say that the Mare Nostrum operation was a political and financial burden and that the Triton operation is severely ill suited to needs. What solutions do you propose?



Mr REYNDERS\* – These visits to Moscow can have an important impact provided that we can also rely on debates and resolutions from the Council of Europe. The Committee of Ministers has done a lot. The measures have not led to Ms Savchenko's release, but at least members of her family have been able to see her; visits are possible today. When I met Mr Lavrov, he gave me details of her state of health and the conditions in which she is held. I have asked yet again for her release, although unfortunately there has been no progress on that to date.

Progress is being made, however, by a number of NGOs active on Russian territory. That is important in the circumstances. The NGO Memorial had been placed on a list of foreign agents, but action has been taken on that matter. In December, I asked for the issue to be dealt with and I raised it again in our last meeting. We have noticed some progress on that case and some others. I have had direct talks with my counterpart on the issue of both Ms Savchenko and the NGOs.



Mr MUIŽNIEKS – Mare Nostrum was unsustainable for one country alone, but the amount of financial resources needed are completely manageable for Europe as a whole. The key thing is that Europe jumps in to co-ordinate and finance this. Triton's financial resources are very small compared with those of Mare Nostrum. Its geographical scope is very small and its primary mission is not saving lives but border control. That is why I have urged a European Mare Nostrum, to save lives. Otherwise we will be faced with a huge graveyard on Europe's doorstep in the Mediterranean Sea by the end of this summer. The death season has begun – people are moving, and they are dying. I do not think we can in good conscience sit and watch them die by the tens of thousands. We need to act now, and a European Mare Nostrum is part of the answer. I gave the other parts of the answer in my introductory remarks

**Monday 20 April 2015**

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



Ms LUNDGREN (*Sweden*) Progress in Europe, as has been said already, is challenged: democracy, the rule of law and human rights are challenged from within. We have seen it in different ways – we see it in Ukraine, in the terrorist attacks in Paris and in other ways. I also saw the assassination of Mr Nemtsov on the streets of Moscow as part of the challenge. These actions must be properly addressed if we are to keep to our core values. I draw attention to the ongoing detention of our colleague, Nadiia Savchenko....We must also continue to address the question of the Russian attack on Ukraine – hybrid attacks that are ongoing in different ways...What is happening in the Mediterranean Sea really challenges our values. We say that we stand for human rights, but we are not safeguarding human rights when we see what is happening. We have to find other solutions. [Read more](#)

**Free debate**



Mr ZOURABIAN (*Armenia*) – The Council of Europe is first and foremost about democracy and human rights. It is about fair elections, protection of the opposition's right to oppose freely the ruling government and having constitutional safeguards against attempts by governments to establish dictatorships. The situation in some Council of Europe member states raises serious concerns about their commitment to core democratic values (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey, Russia and Ukraine). The Parliamentary Assembly and the Monitoring Committee should thoroughly access such processes in member states and make every effort to protect the rights of the opposition. [Read more](#)

**Tuesday 21 April 2015**

**Mass surveillance (Doc. 13734)**



Mr BÜCHEL (*Liechtenstein*)\* – I support the rapporteur's views completely. It is extremely worrying how much mass surveillance has increased recently. This report and others of its ilk are enormously important. Technology is still young, and we must work on finding a viable way of working and living together, bearing in mind all its consequences. Human rights, democracy and the rule of law are our values in the Council of Europe and we must ask ourselves whether they can be safeguarded in the virtual world. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2016-2017 (Doc. 13743),  
Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2016-2017 (Doc. 13744)**



Ms TAKTAKISHVILI (*Georgia*) – On behalf of the ALDE group, I wish to raise one specific issue concerning item no. 1 on the budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2016-2017. This deals with the freedom of the media and the liberty and freedom of journalists to decide to report on the activities of the Council of Europe. As you are aware, the Council of Europe's good practice was to invite and fund journalists who were interested in covering its major events, including the sittings of the Parliamentary Assembly. However, due to budgetary restrictions and a number of other considerations, this funding was cut several years ago. [Read more, voting results 1, 2](#)



Mr HEER (*Switzerland*)\* –We thought it was impossible in the 21st century to be confronted yet again with the kind of genocide that is occurring in Syria and Iraq as a result of the actions of Islamic State...In any military conflict, the real victims are the civilians, and I wish to thank countries such as Turkey, Jordan and the Lebanon, who are bearing the brunt of the responsibility. Others in western Europe are confronted with the influx of refugees in our countries, but the brunt of the burden is being borne by those countries because they are taking in most of the refugees. We have to provide the necessary financial support so that those refugees can live in something like decent conditions, with, for example, children having access to schools...As for the future, we can only bring about an improvement if we promote the culture of peace in these countries.

[Read more, voting results](#)

**Wednesday 22 April 2015**

**Current affairs debate: The political and security situation in Ukraine and its implications**



Ms ZELIENKOVÁ (*Czech Republic*) – The Ukraine crisis can be divided into military and economic aspects; both are crucial for the internal stability of Ukraine and for the development of its civil society. We are seeing a reminder of the downfall of the Soviet Empire in its military and economic context. It is also a warning that the post-war division of Europe into antagonistic blocs still lives on in the minds of some people. Russia’s leaders are still convinced about the existence of its sphere of influence and its right to apply the doctrine of limited sovereignty towards its neighbours...We should not be naïve. Instead of an endless search for non-existent solutions, we should help Ukraine to end the war and help with the transformation of the country. At the same time, we should demand the full implementation of reforms. [Read more](#)

**Discrimination against transgender people in Europe (Doc. 13742)**



Ms GAMBARO (*Italy*) – I should like to talk about the various legal standards that the Council of Europe – this prestigious institution – should help us to achieve in all COE countries, but particularly those where there is still an unpleasant degree of sexual discrimination in the 21st century. The recognition of gender identity must be the objective of our legislation and should apply across the European continent. I believe we need to take urgent action on cultural recognition, which ought to go hand in hand with the process of legal reform... As the Chair of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media I believe that that can be done by mounting a wide-ranging, hard-hitting awareness-raising campaign on gender identity. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Social services in Europe: legislation and practice of the removal of children from their families in Council of Europe member States (Doc. 13730)**



Ms FIALA (*Switzerland*)\* – Financial poverty should never be a justification for removing a child from their parents. We should try to support the poorest families. It is important for us to take on board the sensitivity and special circumstances of Roma children. We should ensure that that is our leading concern. The protection of the child should be done in the child’s best interests. We should not go for short-term measures, but should exchange best practice... On behalf of the ALDE Group, I ask delegates to follow the recommendations of our rapporteur. I ask them to do everything possible in their own countries to find appropriate ways of dealing with children, even in difficult circumstances and, if possible, to avoid separating children from their parents. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Debate under urgent procedure: Draft Additional Protocol to the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism (Doc. 13763, Doc. 13753)**



Ms TAKTAKISHVILI (*Georgia*) – It must be said that we do not see any particular need to adopt a new additional protocol, as Lord Tomlinson has said. We believe that law enforcement institutions could better exploit existing instruments, and that the European Convention on Human Rights provides sufficient guarantees to safeguard the rights and freedoms of citizens. However, if it has been decided to adopt an additional protocol, it is important that it makes specific reference, to the necessity of safeguarding the right to a fair trial for all people charged with terrorist acts. It is also important that the definitions that we adopt are clear enough to allow legal certainty for citizens who face the possibility of criminal prosecutions. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Debate under urgent procedure: The human tragedy in the Mediterranean: immediate action needed (Doc. 13764)**



Ms FIALA (*Switzerland*)\* – The terrible, dramatic situation in Europe's waters requires all of us to work on helping to alleviate the humanitarian situation. There has been such an increase in the number of deaths recently... It is with great pain that we must now admit that border countries such as Malta, Italy, Spain and all those along the southern shores are very much overburdened... We need humanitarian aid to be extended, we need administrative and legal assistance, and we need co-operation to be extended with North Africa. Anyone who says yes to globalisation must also say yes to joint global solutions to this issue. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Drones and targeted killings: the need to uphold human rights and international law (Doc. 13731)**



Mr GARÐARSSON (*Iceland*) –The advantage – so to speak – of using armed, unmanned drones for targeted killings has led to a rapid increase in the number of drone strikes in recent years. While the use of armed drones is not considered unlawful as such or believed to constitute a human rights problem, their increased use, with considerable unintended collateral damage and deaths among ordinary citizens, undeniably raises serious human rights and other international law issues that must be addressed... The report calls for: respect of the limits placed on targeted killings under international law; the laying down of clear procedures for authorising such strikes; constant supervision of the issue by a high level court; an evaluation by an independent body; and full and effective investigation into all deaths caused by armed drones. That is both appropriate and highly timely. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Post-monitoring dialogue with Monaco (Doc. 13739)**



Mr PASQUIER (*Monaco*) – Let me state unambiguously that I fully subscribe to the report's analysis and conclusions. What are those conclusions? "Fair" and "could do better"... The important thing today is that we maintain the constructive dialogue between the Council of Europe and Monaco that has existed in recent months and years. There is still progress to be made, I grant you that, but the seed that was sown when we joined the Council of Europe 10 years ago has borne fruit. I hope that we will continue to make progress and that you will offer us your advice so that we can deal with matters as best we can. [Read more, voting results](#)



Ms MATEU PI (Andorra)\* – We have before us a report that might strike you as routine and not particularly offensive, but it is nevertheless controversial. In theory, the report should not be problematic, because football is a societal phenomenon. It is a sport that attracts the masses who meet almost in communion from the five continents of the globe...I would like to refer the report back to committee in accordance with Article 37.1.d. of our rules. [Read more, voting results](#)

### **Friday 24 April 2015**

#### **Equality and non-discrimination in the access to justice (Doc. 13740)**



Mr XUCLÀ (Spain)\* – A report can never be summarised simply, but “justice for all” would be an appropriate way of describing its main thrust. The Council of Europe, with its 47 member States, is the house of democracy and contains many different realities. The draft resolution gives us pointers on how we can improve justice for all. There are the issues of education and economic resources; if there are problems with those, there are often problems with access to justice. [Read more, voting results](#)

#### **The effectiveness of the European Convention on Human Rights: the Brighton Declaration and beyond (Doc. 13719, Doc. 13719 Addendum)**



Ms MATEU PI (Andorra) – There is something particularly gratifying to us: the fact that the Court has done some of the homework requested in the declaration, with a streamlining of the backlog before it, and the fact that it is a little more straightforward in its internal procedures. On that, too, I agree with the rapporteur, as does my group, that there is a shortfall in our member States. We are somewhat responsible for that, as some have done their homework and others have not. We are dragging our feet in respect of some of the decisions and some of the protocols which we are not implemented in all the countries. [Read more, voting results](#)

[Back](#)