

January 2021 part-session highlights:

- PACE held its **first session since January 2020**. The session was organised in a “hybrid” format: delegations who could not attend Strasbourg sittings participated remotely. With sanitary measures and technical arrangements in place, the session allowed MPs to come together and forge European parliaments’ views on human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
- ALDE-PACE welcomed the establishment of a new **Complementary joint procedure between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly** in response to a serious violation by a member State of its statutory obligations. The group looks forward to working with newly elected Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly **Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis** (Greece) and Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe **Bjørn Berge** (Norway). ALDE thanked out-going DSG **Gabriela Battaini-Dragoni** (in office since 2012) and SG PACE **Wojciech Sawicki** (in office since 2011) for years of professional service.
- PACE reconfirmed **Rik Daems as the President of the Parliamentary Assembly**. Priorities of presidency: environment and human rights, Istanbul Convention and combatting violence against women, as well as emergence of new rights linked to artificial intelligence.
- ALDE-PACE elected four new Vice-Presidents: **Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo** (Monaco), **Yevheniia Kravchuk** (Ukraine), **Stephanie Krisper** (Austria) and **Fiona O’Loughlin** (Ireland).
- All 2020 committee mandates have been reconfirmed. **Mònica Bonell** (Andorra) replaced Jokin Bildarratz as a vice-chair of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons. Five sub-committees of the Assembly will also be chaired by ALDE members.
- **Situation of Alexei Navalny**: ALDE initiated an extraordinary plenary debate on the arrest and detention of Alexei Navalny and supported the initiative of ALDE President Jacques Maire to launch a separate report looking into the circumstances of Mr Navalny’s arrest and detention after his return to Russia. **Jacques Maire** and **Rik Daems** issued statements.
- ALDE bureau supported a **joint statement** on the near total abortion ban in Poland linking it to the erosion of democratic institutions in the country. “We urge Polish ruling coalition to respect the fundamental rights of all Poles to make autonomous decisions about their own bodies and reproductive abilities, which are at the very core of their fundamental right to equality and privacy concerning intimate matters of physical and psychological integrity”.

We wish to thank all members who took part in the group’s work in Strasbourg and remotely, defending liberal position in the plenary debates and committees, presenting reports and participating in group meetings. We welcome new members who joined ALDE-PACE since the last part-session and wish them good work.

ALDE endeavours to be the engine of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe defending the core European values

Visit our website: www.alde-pace.org

PACE Session
25-28 January &
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ALDE BUREAU

ALDE-PACE elected four new Vice-Presidents

On 25 January 2021, ALDE-PACE elected four new Vice-Presidents: Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo (Monaco), Yevheniia Kravchuk (Ukraine), Stephanie Krisper (Austria) and Fiona O'Loughlin (Ireland).

New Composition of ALDE-PACE Bureau President



Vice-Presidents:

Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO
(Monaco)



Marija GOLUBEVA
(Latvia)



Alfred HEER
(Switzerland)



Hovhannes IGITYAN
(Armenia)



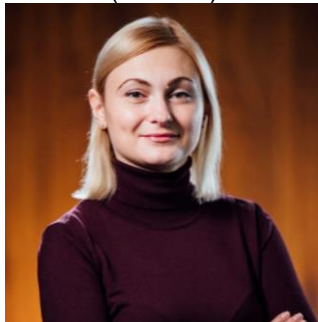
Michael Aastrup JENSEN
(Denmark)



Frantisek KOPRIVA
(Czech Republic)



Yevheniia KRAVCHUK
(Ukraine)



Stephanie KRISPER
(Austria)



Eerik KROSS
(Estonia)



Fiona O'LOUGHLIN
(Ireland)



Petra STIENEN
(Netherlands)



Treasurer: Michael Georg
LINK (Germany)



Ex officio:



Olivier BECHT (France)
Chair of the Committee on Culture,
Science, Education and Media

Ex officio:



Rik DAEMS (Belgium)
Former group Leader and President of
PACE



IN COMMITTEES

ALDE responsibilities in committees

As the third largest group of the Parliamentary Assembly, ALDE holds two committee chairmanships and five vice-chairmanships. ALDE members are also leading several sub-committees.

Committee Chairpersons:

- Olivier BECHT (France): Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media
- Michael Aastrup JENSEN (Denmark): Monitoring Committee

Committee Vice-Chairpersons:

- Monica BONELL (Andorra): 2nd Vice-Chairperson, Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons
- Claude KERN (France): 3rd Vice-Chairperson, Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy
- Edmon MARUKYAN (Armenia): 1st Vice-Chairperson, Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights
- Petra STIENEN (Netherlands): 1st Vice-Chairperson, Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination

Bureaux of Sub-Committees:

- Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN (France): Chairperson, Sub-Committee on Public Health and Sustainable Development (AS/Soc)
- Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco): Chairperson, Sub-Committee on Disability, Multiple and Intersectional Discrimination (AS/Ega)
- František KOPŘIVA (Czech Republic): Chairperson, Sub-Committee on the Rights of Minorities (AS/Ega)
- Stephanie KRISPER (Austria): Chairperson, Sub-Committee on Migrant Smuggling and Trafficking in Human Beings
- Martine WONNER (France): Chairperson, Sub-Committee on Children (AS/Soc)
- Jean-Pierre GRIN (Switzerland): Vice-Chairperson, Sub-Committee on Children (AS/Soc)
- Hovhannes IGITYAN (Armenia): Vice-Chairperson, Sub-Committee on Culture, Diversity and Heritage (AS/Cult)

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ALDE REPORTS



Michael Aastrup JENSEN (Denmark)

- **The progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure (January-December 2020)**

AS/Mon (Doc. 15211) 25 January 2021

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Jennifer DE TEMMERMAN (France)

- **Covid-19 vaccines: ethical, legal and practical considerations**

AS/Soc (Doc. 15212) 27 January 2021

[Video](#)



Alexandra LOUIS (France)

- **Restrictions on NGO activities in Council of Europe member States**

AS/Jur (Doc. 15205) 27 January 2021

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Jacques MAIRE (France)

- **The arrest and detention of Alexei Navalny in January 2021**

Current Affairs Debate, 27 January 2021

[Opening speech](#)

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Question to Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ, Secretary General of the Council of Europe



Mr Jacques MAIRE (France) A quick question, briefly, on the prospect of the

Hungarian Presidency, which begins just after the German Presidency, beginning approximately from 21 May. Have you had any dialogues? Have you had exchanges to prepare for it, and in what state of mind is it being prepared?

Secondly, I agree with my colleague Mr Aleksander POCIEJ on the situation of the Armenian prisoners of war. There have been quite a number of applications to the European Court of Human Rights. There is a real difficulty today concerning the treatment of Armenian prisoners by the Azerbaijani authorities. I think it would be important, even in the absence of an urgent debate, to have an update on this situation because it is of great concern to us. Thirdly, of course, the situation of Alexei Navalny since his return. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Question to Mr Heiko MAAS, Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs of Germany, Chair of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe



Damien COTTIER (Switzerland) First of all, we would be interested to hear more

from you about the progress of the European Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights: what is your prognosis on this matter?

Secondly, could you tell us more about the objectives and the results you expect from the multi-stakeholder conference on "No Hate Speech" that the Presidency of Germany will be organising in Berlin in February, which we are looking forward to,



Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ BURIĆ - Concerning Mr Navalny, his case also was probably one of the, if I may say, oldest among the three produced by the Court and it's up to the Committee of Ministers to follow up the case.

So far the case of Mr Navalny was not in the format of the ECHR but looking at all what surrounds the issue and the fact that Mr Navalny was arrested after coming back after the horrible poisoning and that it seems that he has been detained under the same accusation that the European Court rejected in its ruling. So certainly there should also be a follow-up by the Committee of Ministers in this case concerning Mr Navalny and the execution of the judgments. [...]

I turn now to the questions on Azerbaijan and prisoners of war.

What I can say in general - and I can assure you of this - is that, since the start of the conflicts that began at the end of the summer, the Council of Europe has been among the first, if not the first institution, to react. One Sunday morning, very early on, when war broke out, the three of us - the President of this Assembly at the time, the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers and myself - reacted and asked the authorities of both countries not to start a war because both countries, having been admitted to the Council of Europe twenty years ago, had at that time undertaken to resolve this problem, which already existed, by peaceful means. It goes without saying that this was not the case with the war. [...] Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



Mr Heiko MAAS – The question of progress on the European Union's accession to the Convention on Human Rights is one that I, as German Justice Minister, have already addressed in all its facets, including, incidentally, the two

courts, which do not play an insignificant role in this. We will be working on this issue with great commitment during our Presidency. The EU Treaty obliges the EU to accede quickly, and so we are glad that the EU's negotiations with the Council of Europe on accession to the Convention will be resumed in September during the German Presidency of the Council of the EU and will now be continued. [...] At the ministerial meeting in May, we want to take a clear decision on the implementation of the accession process, and we want to give this an additional political impetus.

As for the question of the multi-stakeholder conference [Unboxing Hate-Speech - European momentum for respect and solidarity 17-18 February] on dealing with hate speech from a European perspective, we think it is a major issue that human rights must also be taken into account on the Internet and that, unfortunately, this is not

a conference you mentioned in your speech?

Thirdly, what is your analysis of the medium-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis on the rule of law and freedoms in Europe? What, in your view, are the elements to which our Assembly will have to pay particular attention in the coming months? Thank you. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

the case everywhere [...] Finally, on the question of human rights, particularly with regard to the pandemic and the fight against the pandemic; I think we all know that the pandemic poses enormous challenges not only to our health systems but also to our political institutions, which is why it was all the more important to clarify once again the guidelines for Council of Europe Member States on the exercise of human rights even in a state of emergency during the pandemic [...] Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Question to Mr Didier REYNDERS, European Commissioner for Justice



Mr Hovhannes IGITYAN (Armenia) – Dear Mr Reynders, as you see, we have the same questions from many political groups. They are all about

possible cooperation because we and you are covering the same tasks. They are very important human rights and fundamental freedoms. They cannot be limited by position or by borders.

As you see, we have Member State countries which systematically ignore all our calls and resolutions and recommendations. What more we can do together with you? What is your vision of more efficient cooperation on this issue?

Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



Didier REYNDERS - As regards the question - which has also been raised by other speakers - of the European Union's relations with its members, I will not repeat what I have already

said about our cooperation in the context of the report on the rule of law. This cooperation with the Council and with the various Council bodies is excellent, but on accession it is an objective. We really want to relaunch the debate on the European Union's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights, because this would bring all the European institutions within the jurisdiction of the Convention at the end of the day. This is one of the major issues at stake. We know that there have been discussions on this subject, particularly on the basis of the various requests made by the Court of Justice of the Union in its opinion of December 2014, but we have resumed the path of negotiations. There have already been two new rounds of negotiations in September, October, and November. The first round straddled September and October and the second in November. I hope that we will have the opportunity to continue this work with a new round of negotiations scheduled for early February. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



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Monday 25 January 2021

Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee, Observation of the parliamentary elections in Georgia (31 October 2020)



Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI (Estonia) I express the greatest concern towards the situation related to the arrest and detention of anti-corruption activist Alexei Navalny in January, the arrest of his peaceful supporters, and more generally about the socio-political developments in Russia. [...] Another alarming situation is the worsening situation in Belarus, where the authorities continue to harass and pressure civil society activists and independent media.

on behalf of the ALDE group, I call on the ruling party and the opposition parties to launch large-scale negotiations and take the opportunity to work in parliament together. We do not support the initiative of the ruling party to withdraw budgetary funding and other

benefits from those parties which do not take up their mandates in parliament. We appreciate the creation of a committee to investigate violations that occurred during the last elections. [Read more](#)

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The progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure (January-December 2020) (Doc. 15211)



Mr František KOPŘIVA (Czech Republic) - I would like to stress the importance of reporters being able to visit the monitored countries. The situation in the Russian Federation is difficult due to the number of outstanding concerns like the lack of pluralism, independence of the judiciary, restrictive environment for activities of political extra-parliamentary opposition, civil society, human rights activists and journalists, restrictions on freedom of expression assembly, association, and religion as well as a number of problematic laws including the foreign agents law, the law on undesirable organisations or anti-extremist legislation. The current detention of Alexei Navalny and his spouse preceded by a poisoning attempt as well as arrests happening on peaceful

demonstrations in their support are worrying in light of the documentary Mr Navalny published. [...] I would also like to support the calls proposed in the report for Turkey to refrain from systematic persecution and investigation of dissenting voices and protect their fundamental freedoms. [Read more, voting results](#)

Tuesday 26 January 2021



The implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (Doc. 15123, Doc. 15123 Add.)

Mr Damien COTTIER (Switzerland) – While the primary responsibility for this work lies with the Committee of Ministers, the fact that our Assembly is closely monitoring these issues remains useful, necessary and important. [...] The role of national parliaments, and our responsibility, dear colleagues, as parliamentarians and members of this Assembly, is important in ensuring, at national level, the compatibility of our legislation with the European Convention on Human Rights and the effective execution of the Court's judgments. We must challenge and push our governments on this issue. [Read more, voting results](#)

Judges in Poland and in the Republic of Moldova must remain independent (Doc. 15204)



Ms Emilie Enger MEHL (Norway) - The ALDE group shares the concern about how legislative and administrative measures are putting the rule of law and independence of the judiciary at risk in Moldova and Poland. [...] The lack of independence of the judiciary is of course a problem for our principles and a threat to the European values that we all share and take pride in. But, but most of all, it affects the people that the judiciary fails to protect if the courts cannot be trusted to be independent and impartial. On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group we call on Moldova and Poland to listen to the messages from both the international society, and their own civil societies, and answer not with harassment of judges, undemocratic legal reforms and corruption, but with ensuring the independence of the judiciary, both in law and in

practice. [Read more, voting results](#)

Modification of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure – follow-up to Resolution 2319 (2020) on the Complementary joint procedure between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly in response to a serious violation by a member State of its statutory obligations (Doc. 15093)



Mr Jacques MAIRE (France) – Turning now to the subject of our speech, it is clear that, for us, this is an extremely important vote. An important vote, because it is both the end of a period of conflict and legal turmoil that ultimately damaged the reading and credibility of the institution, but it is also the beginning of a dynamic that will lead to a more united, more powerful, more impactful and probably more convincing Council of Europe when it comes to addressing the gaps and shortcomings that can be extremely significant in member states today. [...] However, this

tool must not be allowed to remain on paper only. We must be very conscious that it can and will

be used when necessary – exceptionally, of course, but when necessary. [...] We have this instrument which effectively enables us to have this last resort when other means that are not called into question – such as challenging credentials, for example – are not effective and when messages are not getting across strongly enough to our governments and parliamentary delegations. [Read more, voting results](#)

Wednesday 27 January 2021

Towards a Covid-19 vaccine: ethical, legal and practical considerations (Doc. 15212)



Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco) – The Director-General of the World Health Organization said: "The urgent and equitable deployment of vaccines is not only a moral imperative. It is also a health security, strategic and economic imperative.". Dear Colleagues, it is not a question in these troubled times of distributing good or bad points, of rewarding the country that is doing best. What we need to do today is to support this report, which proposes, in addition to fair access to vaccination, to ensure the independence of the bodies responsible for evaluating vaccines, to combat misinformation about them and, of course, to support high-quality trials for the vaccination of children. Through our vote, we shall emphasise that the spirit of international solidarity must prevail for the common good of all. [Read more, voting results](#)

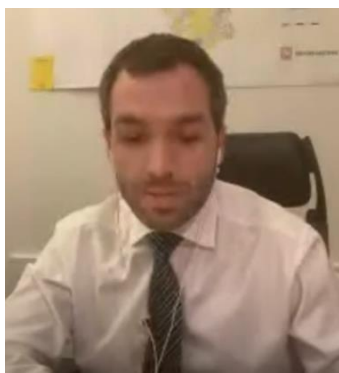
Current Affairs Debate: The arrest and detention of Alexei Navalny in January 2021



Ms Gyde JENSEN (Germany) - Today this is not a discussion about heroism. It is not a discussion about a man risking his life to fight corruption and the decay of the rule of law in his mother country. This is not a debate about Alexei Navalny per se, even though his story is a rather compelling one to tell. This, ladies and gentlemen, is the discussion plain and simple about upholding the rule of law and respecting human rights and our distinct duty as members of the Council of Europe to protect both. States coming together in their joined ambition to adhere to the rule of law and to respect human rights is the very purpose of this institution. Being a member means to submit oneself to the scrutiny of other member states and, most importantly, to the jurisdiction of the European Court of Human Rights. Being a member of this council means humble self-

commitment when it comes to upholding the rule of law and respecting human rights. And Russia, under President Vladimir Putin, has repeatedly failed to do both. [Read more](#)

Restrictions on NGO activities in Council of Europe member States (Doc. 15205)



Mr Konstantin KUHLE (Germany) - Let me be very clear regarding this issue: the possibility of NGO activities is not merely an additional feature in democratic societies and states, it has to be a core element in democratic societies of all Council of Europe member States. And when citizens make use of their rights, they are making use of their rights enshrined in the rules that we have given ourselves as an organisation. Articles 10 and 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights protect the right to freedom of association, of assembly, and of expression. [...] It is deeply concerning that in the Russian Federation the so-called foreign agents law is used to obstruct the work of NGOs. That is deeply concerning that the situation of NGOs has even worsened in the last two years in Azerbaijan and in Turkey, and it is

extremely worrying and concerning to which enormous extensive activities of NGOs in Hungary are restricted in the context of the anti-semitic and xenophobic campaigns against George Soros. [Read more, voting results](#)

Thursday 28 January 2021

Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of the Russian Federation

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Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI (Estonia) – It is not the first time in the past few years that were called to debate the issue of credentials of the Russian delegation. We do not take pleasure in this. The challenge of credentials is a tool we have at our disposal to send a very clear signal to our Russian colleagues. Progress must be made. We expect that. Full cooperation with the Council of Europe and the Assembly is part of membership obligations. Access of rapporteurs and election observers is not negotiable. Individuals subjected to restrictive measures adopted by the European Union may not remain members of this House. Tangible progress in democratic report must be demonstrated in the months to come. [...] What is very clear to us is that a lack of progress puts credentials at risk. Membership in a human rights organisation

brings responsibilities and that we expect that these responsibilities should be taken. [Read more, voting results](#)



Current Affairs Debate: Freedom of expression (Article 10 of the ECHR) under threat by "Big Tech" Companies

Ms Lesia ZABURANNA (Ukraine) – Big Tech companies dominate our model of life. They control the networks through which users exercise their rights on the internet. Tech giants provide these services to billions of users as it's for free. On the other hand they have already concentrated in their hands unrivalled power in the digital network, always with users. In this user space, with their personal data, they constantly track the internet. The monopoly of these companies has control over personal data of users, as the legal use in view to derive in benefit therefrom, undermines the basis of confidentiality and is one of the main problems of human rights protection in the modern digital age. [Read more](#)

Ethnic profiling in Europe: a matter of great concern (Doc. 15199)



Ms Petra STIENEN (Netherlands) - It strikes us at the ALDE group that there could have been a bit more mention of age and gender in this report, because whereas it appears that these criteria play a role in the higher percentages of identity checks of young men of, for example, bi-cultural background, that seems to lead to a self-fulfilling prophecy that certain groups are suspected to be more involved in crime than others, for example. [...] We do appreciate that the profiling of people on the basis of their sexual orientation was beyond the scope of this report. We believe, however, that many citizens in Council of Europe member states of the LGBTI community faced similar profiling from the police or other authorities. [...] To conclude, human rights organisations are increasingly concerned about the way police forces are

experimenting with data and algorithms with the aim of anticipating and preventing crime. The ALDE group believes that at PACE we could look into this in future work and take this phenomenon into account while we're drafting legal frameworks on how to deal with artificial intelligence. We also would like to hear an assessment of the rapporteur on how he thinks we can proceed on this topic. [Read more, voting results](#)

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Speeches: verbatim records of the Parliamentary Assembly

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