



The Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention): Questions and answers



Council of Europe [leaflet](#) on the Istanbul Convention

At the initiative of the liberal president of PACE Rik Daems, during the June part-session the Parliamentary Assembly celebrated the 10th anniversary of the Council of Europe Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence (Istanbul Convention). The high-level panel participating in the debate included laureate of the 2018 Nobel Peace Prize Nadia Murad, Prime Minister of Belgium Alexander De Croo, President of the Romanian Senate Anca Dana Dragu, French Minister for Gender Equality Elisabeth Moreno and UN Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women Dubravka Šimonovic.

ALDE-PACE Vice-President and Head of the Dutch Delegation to PACE Petra Stienen delivered the following speech:

[...] Dear colleagues, trying to undermine or leave a human rights convention on the basis of upholding family values is adding insult to injury. Because how can anyone argue that it is part of upholding families, family values, to intimidate, assault, beat, stalk, rape or murder a woman? Will we accept in this house and in our national parliaments the polarisation around misconceptions on the Istanbul Convention? Or will we join forces across the aisle and work together to stop violence against women? Because that would indeed protect human rights and dignity of all of our families, whatever shape and form they have, all over the Council of Europe member states.

The ALDE group is pleased with the ratification by Lichtenstein and hopes many other states within the Council of Europe and beyond will sign and ratify this important human rights convention.

In the ALDE group we also believe, since violence against women is predominantly perpetrated by men, men's engagement in combating this human rights violation is crucial. Therefore, I have a special request to the male politicians in this Plenary: look up Article 12.4 of the Istanbul Convention, as it calls on all members of society, especially men and boys, to contribute actively to prevent violence against women. Please, dear male colleagues, online and in the hemicycle, take your responsibility and become an ally in ending the worldwide violation of women's rights and convince your governments to uphold, sign, ratify and implement the Istanbul Convention. More, video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Ahead of the debate, ALDE-PACE held an exchange of views on the state of ratification of the Istanbul Convention and heard reports from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Ukraine. Young people play an important role in shaping a world where violence against women is socially unacceptable. President of LYMEC Antoaneta Asenova-Bihlmayer and Vice-President of ILFRY Yevheniia Fedotova presented their organisations' efforts in promoting the Convention and women's rights.



ALDE REPORTS



Alfred HEER (Switzerland)

- **Observation of the parliamentary elections in Bulgaria (4 April 2021)**

AS/Bur (Doc. 15292) 21 June 2021

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

Damien COTTIER (Switzerland)

- **Covid passes or certificates: protection of fundamental rights and legal implications**

AS/Jur (Doc. 15309) 22 April 2021

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

Konstantin KUHLE (Germany)

- **Transparency and regulation of donations to political parties and electoral campaigns from foreign donors**

AS/Pol (Doc. 15302) 24 June 2021

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



QUESTIONS

Question to Mr Péter SZIJJÁRTÓ, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary, Hungarian Presidency of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe



Mr Damien COTTIER (Switzerland) -

On behalf of the ALDE Group, we would like to congratulate Hungary on taking over the Presidency and wish you a successful Presidency. On 11 June, European media ministers discussed the decline in the safety of journalists, recalling that violence against the media was an attack on democracy. They called on the Council of Europe to prepare the ground for national action plans on the safety of journalists and to lead a European campaign to protect journalism. What will the Hungarian chairmanship do to support this work? Also, in view of the



Mr Péter SZIJJÁRTÓ - Dear colleague, thank you very much for the questions you have raised. I myself have definitely participated in the recent meeting of ours in Cyprus, although it unfortunately took place in a hybrid but rather virtual

format which I think we should leave behind finally as we were able to come together here in person as well. I do believe that if you have a common understanding that the vaccination does protect ourselves and more and more people are being vaccinated, we should get rid of the virtual meetings and finally come together in person. This is how you can achieve some results. Those virtual meetings, let's say, have a very strong limitation on whether they make sense or not. Whether they can bring some deliverables.

When it comes to freedom of media and safety of journalists you can definitely count on us Hungarians. You might know our history, it's similar to the Polish. We had to fight against communist oppression even 31 years ago. That's when we got back our freedom, a part of which is freedom of expression, freedom of media. So you can definitely be sure that we will be true allies of yours in these efforts.

unfavourable developments in legislation and policies in several countries regarding the protection of another minority, the LGBTI people: can you tell us whether and how the Hungarian Presidency intends to commit itself to ensuring greater respect for the rights of this minority — to which, by the way, the speaker belongs? Thank you. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

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



Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine) - Dear Madam Secretary General, one of the key

world priorities today is the environmental policy and action to deal with the climate and sustainable challenges. Human rights and environment is one of the key priorities of our President of the Assembly and also of our political group. My question is what is the place of the environmental policy in the list of priorities of Council of Europe? Can the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe group and the European citizens hope that the Council of Europe will actively engage in the creation of a legally binding instrument on the subject in the near future? What is your position as Secretary General and will you support this initiative? Thank you. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

When it comes to the rights of minorities I can just refer to our own example in Hungary. In Hungary according to the legislation you cannot be discriminated based on a group or identity or minority you belong to. This should be ensured and secured all over Europe, that it doesn't matter what kind of group you belong to, to what aspect and under any categories or circumstances, you must not be discriminated. That's the most important task we have to ensure. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ - One of the priorities in the strategic framework that I have put together and sent to the deputies, to the Committee of Ministers, comprised an environment versus human rights as the new priority together with artificial intelligence. It's my clear priority as well that we work together to find a proper answer to one of the probably biggest challenges of our times.

Now coming back to the environment as such, I must confess when I came to the Council of Europe, this talking about environment and human rights and about possibly thinking of offering a specific legal instrument on that was, let's say, quite shy at the moment. Then came three presidencies one after the other. The Georgian first, Greek second and then German after that. All three embraced this policy. I think that was really at a very appropriate timing.

This is, I think, showing quite clearly when three presidencies one after the other are behind one important priority and when it's a new area where you need really to have all the stakeholders around, it is important that these priorities are upheld. I can only thank all three presidencies for their big work on that priority.

I must say that now no one questions whether we need to work on that. I know that the Parliamentary Assembly has been vocal as very often on many themes ahead of times or before because you have this capacity to think in the future, and then when time comes, to work together with the Committee of Ministers and others on that.

At this moment there were certain decisions that were taken in the Hamburg Ministerial. The work is underway for possibly finding elements for some legally binding and some non-legally binding parts of the future possible legal instrument.

Of course on that, the proper work needs to be done. If I recall well, the rendez-vous clause is for the next Ministerial to see how we go with the environment. To say that the whole organisation embraces it was supposed to happen last year. It's happening 12 months since last November until this November. We will have the biggest event that we have in the Council of Europe, which is the Democracy Forum dedicated to "can democracies and save the environment?". Because of Covid-19, it couldn't take place last year. It was very, I would say, intelligently decided by the stakeholders, who are partners for the Forum, to have each month

one theme related to this pertinent question. I hope that the pandemic will be easing or going away and that in November we'll have a big Forum as we always do on a very pertinent issue. I think we are on the right track. This shows how quickly we can all, when joining forces together, we can really put our forces and work. I think we've gone quite a while and certainly the Parliamentary Assembly and the President who embraced that from the very outset certainly makes a part of that important stakeholder and they were in order to give an answer appropriate to our mandate which is how environmental issues are related to human rights. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



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Monday 21 June 2021

Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee



Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine) - Firstly, in early April I had an opportunity to be a part of the election observation mission to Bulgaria. One of my take-aways was the exercise of the voting machines tested by 25% of voters and proved their overall efficiency in the digitalisation period. Secondly, I have to pay attention to the ongoing debates on the Istanbul Convention. I'd like to congratulate our Lichtenstein colleagues on the recent ratification of the Convention. A few days ago the ALDE Group, which I represent, conducted an extended discussion on the monitoring of the ratification and the implementation of the Istanbul Convention. Thirdly, I have to mention that ALDE has also started the group reflection and the work on the link between human rights and the environment. [More](#), video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Should politicians be prosecuted for statements made in the exercise of their mandate?



Mr Jacques MAIRE (France) – We were keen to listen to the extremely fair tone of our Spanish colleagues, who stated and demonstrated on many occasions that Spain is one of the strongest and most important democracies on our continent, and that it is based on a constitution according to which the unity of the country is a cardinal principle, and we fully recognise this. [...] We also recognise that illegal actions, including against the Spanish Constitution, were committed by the Catalan leaders in October 2017, that is a fact. However, we would like to emphasise, in line with your resolution, that the sentences are disproportionate, compared to the actions carried out [...] The ALDE group expects the Spanish authorities to reduce the sentences of the Catalan leaders. [...] Finally, I obviously support the part of the resolution that concerns

Turkey, where the ALDE Group fully supports the observations and proposals. [More](#), voting results, video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Tuesday 22 June 2021



Media freedom, public trust and the people's right to know

Mr André GATTOLIN (France) - This whole debate, this proposal on the rule of law and especially on the right to know, is essential. I would also like to pay tribute here to the memory of Marco Pannella, whom I knew well, who was a member of this House in the late 1980s and who was also a member of the ALDE Group in the European Parliament, because it was he who initiated this debate on the right to know. I believe that it is extremely important to develop it today as a right that allows all rights. There is no right without the ability to know, to have access to knowledge, and that is

essential. [More](#), voting results, video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

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Covid passes or certificates: protection of fundamental rights and legal implications



Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI (Estonia) - Half of European countries have introduced Covid-19 passport systems including my own country Estonia. This system should not be used to limit our everyday actions and, worse, deepen inequality and discrimination in our societies. [...] In less than three months after coming into effect, the Israeli Covid-19 vaccination certification system was abolished on 1 June, along with almost all the remaining Covid-19 restrictions in public places. I think this is what we should aim for: to use their certificates for as long as is necessary but not a moment longer. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Overcoming the socio-economic crisis sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic



Ms Reina de BRUIJN-WEZEMAN (Netherlands) - ALDE welcomes the recommendations on ensuring that funds made available to stabilise and strengthen the socio-economic situation are used to promote more inclusive and more sustainable development. [...] I find the recommendation of revisiting the fiscal requirements of the EU Stability and Growth Pact in line with the need to maintain spending, at least during the recovery period, very interesting [...] Vaccination seems to be the only way out of this crisis. I therefore welcome the addendum and the proposed amendment to insert a new Subparagraph 8.2.7 that calls to urgently expand production capacity of Covid-19 vaccines worldwide. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on children's rights



Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco) - The ALDE Group would like to thank you for your constructive and realistic work. We know that you have done this work with discernment, with all your heart and always in the best interests of children. When I think of the Lanzarote Convention, which came into force on 1 July 2010, I think that we collectively failed during this health crisis. We have been unable to ensure the protection of all young people, and many of them are on the list of those who have been left out of Covid-19. Two questions: did the urgency of the situation lead the authorities to take decisions too quickly, neglecting children? Has the impact of the confinement on their development and well-being been underestimated? [More](#),

[voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Wednesday 23 June 2021

Current affairs: The Situation in Belarus: a threat to the whole Europe



Ms Maria JUFEREVA-SKURATOVSKI (Estonia) - Dear colleagues, there is no question about it. We must strongly condemn the act of the Belarusian authorities in forcing a passenger plane to land on the 23rd of May and detaining Mr Protasevich and Ms Sapega. We cannot look past the violations of basic human rights and the use of violence. Not in this case nor in the previous incidents we have been observing for almost a year now. [...] President Alexander Lukashenko has been manoeuvring between the European Union and Russia for 25 years now. I sincerely hope that this game will not end up with a North Korea type of country in the middle of Europe. [More](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Enhancing participation of women from under-represented groups in political and public decision-making



Ms Nicole TRISSE (France) - we agree with many of the rapporteur's conclusions, particularly on the role that political parties should play in promoting greater diversity in candidacies. We also agree with the issues of educating the younger generation and involving men in this inclusive approach. However, we are opposed to sub-paragraph 8.2.4 of the draft resolution, which proposes quotas, with penalties for non-compliance, for each category of women mentioned. The report lists no fewer than nine such categories: women with disabilities, women from minority or immigrant backgrounds, women of modest social origin, LGBTI women, young women, women from Traveller or Roma backgrounds and women from rural areas. If we want an inclusive society, we should not highlight this or that difference, make more sub-groups and more sub-groups. [...] In summary, we in the

ALDE Group welcome the signal for plural and inclusive democracies. However, under cover of good intentions, we do not want to fragment society by encouraging the emergence of all kinds of communitarianism. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

The situation of Crimean Tatars

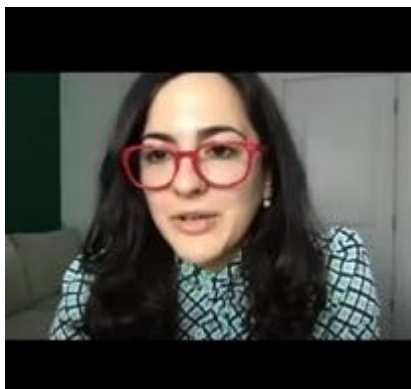


Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine) - I'm using this opportunity to highlight several conclusions from this outstanding report. The main conclusion is that we, as an international political institution, have to prevent the Russian Federation from legitimising the discriminatory rules and the breaches of the rule of law. [...] The rapporteur believes that Russia should be held accountable for human rights violations committed in this area, which is under its effective control. [...] The document also highlights Russia's disregard for resolutions on related issues, adopted through 2014-2019, as well as several United Nations resolutions. Relevant documents have repeatedly called on the Russian Federation to restore Ukraine's territorial integrity, apply Ukrainian legislation in Crimea and end discrimination against the local Crimean Tatar population. [More](#), [voting](#)

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Thursday 24 June 2021

For a European policy on diasporas



Ms Diana STOICA (Romania) - I strongly believe there's an urgent need to develop a European strategy on diasporas that should aim to enhance economic and cultural development. For example, the Romanian citizens who are now living and working abroad include people from all walks of life, from agriculture seasonal workers, to IT specialist, to doctors, nurses, entrepreneurs, and European public servants. [...] One of the interesting issues raised in the report is that the substantial economic contributions to their host countries should be accompanied by the right to participate in political processes while encouraging engagement with their countries of origins. At the same time, it's important to prevent any manipulation of diaspora

communities as vehicles for promoting expansionist policies and violating the sovereignty of other countries. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Current affairs debate: The need for an effective solidarity mechanism between European countries to relieve migratory pressure on front line countries

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Mr Damien COTTIER (Switzerland) - Migration is one of the main challenges of our century and we can see that the trend for international and internal displacement is on the rise. [...] This is obviously due to geopolitical tensions and there, the ALDE group would like to recall that the response to these crises can only be a political response. We need political will, we need a will for dialogue to resolve the political crises that generate many displacements, and this is unfortunately too often lacking in the current international climate. [...] It is a collective response that we must provide and the ALDE group supports efforts in this direction, and also the individual responsibility of each state to apply the law and provide a dignified reception for those entering within the borders of Europe. [More](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Combating Afrophobia in Europe



Ms Petra STIENEN (Netherlands) - Of course, not all of Europe is racist. Of course, many people are allies in this fight against racism, also within our own organisation. But at times I wonder how long people of colour and of African descent have to continue to do this emotional, taxing labour of sharing their experiences to convince others about the painful consequences of being on the receiving end of racism. [...] On concluding, we see this report as a call to all of us parliamentarians to play an active role in combating racism in all its forms. I have a question for Mr Momodou Malcolm JALLOW: what does he think would be a good follow-up to this report? How can we play an active role perhaps in a new chapter of European political parties for a non-racist society?

[More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Transparency and regulation of donations to political parties and electoral campaigns from foreign donors



Mr Michael Aastrup JENSEN (Denmark) - First of all, allow me to use this opportunity to congratulate our colleague Mr Konstantin KUHLE on a very excellent report but also a very timely report because one of the cornerstones of being in a European democracy. [...] When you have foreign actors trying to interfere in both elections and in referendums, you are not quite sure that you had the most democratic outcome of that election and referendum. When you can put that question mark on a democratic election, you can now also start to lose trust in the democratic cornerstones which should actually never be the subject of mistrust. Therefore, it's very important that the Council of Europe advocate and promote that we could put a stop to all this foreign involvement in elections.

[More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)