

PACE Session
15-19 April
2024 & more

IN THIS ISSUE:

Session
highlights

Election of the
Secretary
General of the
Council of
Europe

Rapporteurs

Questions

Speakers

Spring 2024 part-session highlights:

➤ Key PACE decisions supported by ALDE-PACE:

- **Kosovo:** we have given a favourable opinion on granting Council of Europe membership to Kosovo. "Our fight is not for countries, but for individual rights. This is a historical day from a liberal point of view," declared [Julian Bulai](#), leader of the ALDE group in PACE. [Béatrice Fresko-Rolfo](#), ALDE-PACE vice-president, contributed with a report on equality issues in Kosovo. We hope the Committee of Ministers will promptly follow up on PACE's decision.
- **Artificial Intelligence :** we have given the green light to the [Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence](#), but urged member states to apply its principles to public and private sectors alike. The convention is scheduled for formal adoption by the Committee of Ministers on 17 May 2024. Once adopted, it will become the first international treaty on AI.
- **A post-monitoring dialogue** will replace the full monitoring procedure in respect of Albania.
- **New judges elected to the European Court of Human Rights:** Mr Artūrs Kučs in respect of Latvia, Ms Úna Ní Raifeartaigh in Respect of Ireland, and Mr Alain Chablais in respect of Liechtenstein. ECHR judges are elected for a term of nine years.
- **5 May 2024 marks the 75th anniversary of Council of Europe:** stories from members states to recount the history and impact of the leading human rights, rule of law and democracy organisation in Europe. Watch [Julian Bulai](#)'s story from Romania.

➤ ALDE-PACE renews its long-standing commitment on the following subjects:

- **Justice for Ukraine:** we welcomed the passionate speech delivered by Ukrainian speaker Ruslan Stefanchuk, member of the ALDE Party family. Together with our Ukrainian delegates, we supported the call to use confiscated Russian state assets to compensate and reconstruct Ukraine. Liberating Ukrainian civilians and children held by Russia remains a priority; five ALDE members will meet the ICRC to discuss measures and strategies to facilitate their return.
- **Political prisoners:** in the war on democracy staged by the Putin regime, democratic countries must redouble efforts to free political hostages held by Russia and Belarus, notably Vladimir Kara-Murza and others facing imminent danger. A milestone report by Eerik Kross outlines concrete measures.
- **Environment as a human right:** alongside former rapporteur on the Reykjavik summit Fiona O'Loughlin, vice-president of the network for a clean and safe environment Rik Daems, and rapporteur Yuliia Ovchynnykova, we urged the Council of Europe to step up efforts to deliver a legally binding instrument on the environment as a human right.

- **Coming next:** during the June part-session, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe will elect a [new Secretary General of the Council of Europe](#) for a five-year term.

We thank all members who took part in the group's work, defended the liberal position in debates, presented reports and participated in our 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 & follow us on X [@ALDExPACE](#)

Didier Reynders: a liberal candidate in the race for Council of Europe Secretary General



BUREAU &
COMMITTEE
ELECTIONS 2024



During the April session, ALDE-PACE conducted interviews with the three candidates shortlisted by the Committee of Ministers for the position of Secretary General of the Council of Europe. While Alain Berset (Switzerland) and Indrek Saar (Estonia), representing socialist parties, have shown notable qualities, we were particularly pleased to welcome Didier Reynders, the sole liberal candidate in the race.

With his experience as the EU Commissioner for Justice, Minister for Foreign and European Affairs and Minister of Defence, he proposes a robust vision of the Council of Europe on the international arena. We wish Didier Reynders a successful campaign!

The Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly will interview the three candidates on 23 May ahead of the election by the Assembly on 25 June 2024.

A bold and committed vision for the Council of Europe on the international stage:

Learn more in [English](#) and [French](#) about Didier Reynders's vision, commitments, programme and campaign on social networks.

Endorsement by ALDE Party co-Presidents:



Full support for @dreyners as candidate for @coe Secretary General from European liberals!

Endorsement from our Co-Presidents @ilhankyuchuk @timmydooley
bit.ly/3UL2QLZ



On 6 May, ALDE Party co-Presidents Ilhan Kyuchyuk and Timmy Dooley expressed [the full backing of the European liberal family](#) to the candidacy of Didier Reynders.

“The Council of Europe plays an essential role in the protection and the promotion of human rights, democracy and the rule of law on the European continent, and therefore it requires strong leadership and experience to lead this Organisation at a crucial point in time, marked by challenges to European values, culminating in the Russian aggression against Ukraine,” declared ALDE Party co-Presidents.



ALDE REPORTS



Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco)

- **Application by Kosovo* for membership of the Council of Europe**

Opinion EGA ([Doc. 15965](#))

Report POL ([Doc. 15958](#))

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



Eerik-Niiles KROSS (Estonia)

- **Sanctions against persons on the "Kara-Murza list"**

JUR ([Doc. 15939](#))

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



Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine)

- **Towards Council of Europe strategies for healthy seas and oceans to counter the climate crisis**

SOC ([Doc. 15956](#))

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



QUESTIONS

Question to Mr Mihail POPȘOI, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova



Mr Lulian BULAI (Romania) - Thank you for your presence and congratulations on being

appointed as Minister of Foreign Affairs. It is a great pleasure for us



Mr Mihail POPȘOI - it is disappointing to see some of our citizens being willing to sell the national interests of the country for whatever material benefits or personal benefits that the Kremlin provides. It is unfortunate, we can only unmask this behaviour in the

hope that our citizens will be able to make a difference when it comes to elections.

And we are confident that our citizens know better, and we plan to show that in the referendum at the end of this year.

to have you here and congratulations on the great efforts and reforms and progress that Moldova has achieved in the past year. I was shocked to see the so-called Bashkana of Gagauzia shaking hands with Putin asking for more help in Moldova for that minority, so that is so disgusting and disappointing.

How can you cope with that level of efforts of destabilisation of Moldova from Russia's side? And, what else? Do you need more from us, the free world, in order to continue these reforms on a straight path towards the EU and how can we help more?

And, in that light, I wish you lots of good luck with the referendum that you are about to have this fall on Moldova's accession to the EU and also wish lots of good luck, with the presidential election, to Madame President Maia Sandu this fall.

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

The unity, the solidarity of the Moldovan people in support of the strategic goal of our country of being part of a peaceful and prosperous European family of nations, despite the worst efforts of the Kremlin to divide us, to build wedges in our society, we will continue to engage with our fellow citizens in the Gagauz autonomy.

In fact, they are one of the biggest recipients of European aid in the Republic of Moldova, and we will have to do a lot more in communicating the quantity and quality of their aid so that every citizen internalises the generosity of the European taxpayers. Because more often than not, some people in Gagauzia, but also in other regions of Moldova, go to a school that was rebuilt with Romanian funds, go to a small or medium enterprise that was opened with European funds, walk on a road that was built by either Americans or Turks, but end up praying to Putin like he's the lord and saviour, because primarily of the Russian propaganda that they've been allowed to live in for many many years, that Moldovan elites did not have the awareness and the political will to act and to provide the informational security to their citizens.

And in fact we've had situations where political leaders in Moldova, who are pretending to be pro-European, were actually benefiting from Russia propaganda as they were owning the rebroadcasting rights of federal Russian TV stations.

And it's not the fault of our citizens that they may not be aware or appreciate enough the support of the European Union, because sometimes they don't know about it, sometimes they take it for granted; it's our effort that we need to put more of to make sure that they internalise this support and we break through this wall of Russian propaganda that tried desperately to undermine Moldova's path towards the European Union.

So our goal is together with our friends and partners to be more active in communicating this support, in direct dialogue with our fellow citizens, not just in Gagauzia, but throughout the Republic of Moldova.

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

QUESTIONS

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



Mr Rik DAEMS (Belgium) – Secretary General, as you know recently the Court is under the

judgement in an environmental case. You know there is a lot more in the pipeline and given this judgement, we might expect, there is so many more to come.

This Assembly unanimously recommended to the Committee of Ministers to create a legally binding instrument concerning a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment. Even to the extent to



Ms Marija PEJČINOVIĆ-BURIĆ - Absolutely one of those, as I call them, emerging priorities, which have already existed, if we recall, also this Parliamentary Assembly calling for more action. I think that is also witnessing of a not really very new thing. I think,

what is new and probably what is reflected, I cannot comment on the cases as such, but on their impact.

I think what is different probably now than 10 years or five years ago is this pressure and clear environmental decline and climate change that we are witnessing, I think, from year to year. People probably thought that it would affect the equatorial part of the world or more southern part of Europe more, if we talk about the Council of Europe, but we can see that it affects really everyone everywhere from the North Pole to the South Pole.. Certainly, something has to be done.

There was a long discussion, and I know clearly that you were one of those who were very vocal on

QUESTIONS

include it in the Convention itself through a protocol.

My question is, what is the status of the work of the Committee of Ministers and the Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDDH) or other instruments in order to create this legally binding instrument and would you not think that it would be wise to have a protocol to the Convention which is well defined in order for the Court to render good judgements? Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Question to Ms Dominique HASLER, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Education and Sport, Liechtenstein chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers



Ms Valentina GRIPPO (Italy) – Minister, the protection of journalists is one of the Council of Europe's main

areas of activity, and one of the most important instruments for the protection of human rights.

However, the guidelines we produce often become ineffective in the face of events such as the Russian invasion of Ukraine, as you widely illustrated in your address speech.

Therefore, we have to remember the killing of journalists, opinion leaders and activists who are in prison or in exile, and the enormous damage this is doing not only to human rights, not only to the free flow of ideas in all of the countries of the Council of Europe, but is also weakening the role of the Council of Europe itself.

Therefore, we ask you what measures, specifically, are being taken and will be taken by the Committee of Ministers.

Also, as you mentioned at the important passage that we had yesterday here on Kosovo, we would like to know if you will support the raising of the issue of Kosovo during the next Committee of Ministers. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

putting a new instrument in place. I'm glad that the Reykjavik Declaration took the part of environmental degradation and its impact on human rights, democracy, and rule of law very seriously, and that our leaders decided to first task one of the working groups of the Committee of Ministers to reflect upon in what way, whether there is, as we always do, is there a feasibility study. If there is a need of a new instrument protocol to one or the other instrument that we already have or something else. I think this group is still working. Their deadline is by the end of this year. I'm very certain that they will come with proper deliberation on that. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



Ms Dominique HASLER – As mentioned in my speech, protecting journalists is a main priority within the Liechtenstein Presidency and I think we all know that European media have been the target of a growing number of threats and attacks in

recent years. These attacks, including murders, are an unacceptable assault on our democratic societies and crimes committed against journalists must be investigated quickly and transparently to ensure that they do not go unpunished. And of course for this we do need concrete actions and this is what you asked.

The Council of Europe's platform to promote the protection of journalism and the safety of journalists is, in my opinion, a unique instrument for direct dialogue between civil society and the member states. And I really urge all member states to fully cooperate with it.

The Committee of Ministers holds regular exchanges of views with representatives of the platform on how to respond to the numerous challenges which you mentioned before. And the last exchange took place in February this year on the theme of ensuring the reliability and quality of information and sustainable journalism in the digital era.

A very important and much-awaited new Recommendation on Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation – in short SLAPPS – was adopted two weeks ago, and our Presidency will strive to enhance freedom of expression and the safety of journalists, which I mentioned before is among our priorities. Liechtenstein is also a member of the Strasbourg Group of Friends on the Safety of Journalists and we will continue to engage actively in this group and other initiatives with the aim of keeping the safety of journalists as a prerequisite for the freedom of expression high on the agenda.

And Liechtenstein also continues to contribute financially to the platform that I mentioned before. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



GROUP
SPEAKERS

DEBATES

RESULTS

Monday 15 April 2024

Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee ([Doc. 15959](#))



Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN (Ireland) – [...] On 2 April, the Register of Damages for Ukraine opened for the submission of claims. We welcome this important first step, but we also call for efforts to be stepped up on a compensation mechanism and a system of accountability. This week we urge all of our member states that Russian state assets held by member states be used for the purposes of compensation and reconstruction of Ukraine. This week, we should also adopt a clear and unequivocal position on Kosovo's request for memberships within the Council of Europe. We sincerely hope that the Committee of Ministers will act with without further delay on the position of the Assembly. It's almost one year since our successful

Reykjavík Summit. It is time for evaluation, to take stock and to define our next steps to achieve the objectives of the summit. On the 9 April, the ECtHR adopted its first ruling concerning climate justice; this ruling clearly inaugurates the era of a new generation of human rights. [More, video EN | OV](#)

Joint debate: Relationship between the parliamentary majority and the opposition in a democracy ([Doc. 15946](#)); **Promoting the revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums** ([Doc. 15940](#))



Ms Denisa Elena NEAGU (Romania) – It is a very hard task to separate the opposition's rights from its responsibilities ([Venice Commission's checklist](#)). While such rights must be protected in a democratic state, we should keep in mind that with rights come duties and responsibilities, which should be discharged in a way that ensures the common good. [...] It is our duty, as elected representatives, to foster an environment of mutual respect and co-operation even in the midst of disagreement. [...] I urge each of you to embrace the principal outline in the revised [Code of Good Practice on Referendums](#). By integrating these principles into our national law and best practices, we strengthen our

democratic institutions and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring that every voice is heard and every vote counts. [More, voting results 1, 2 video EN | OV](#)

Tuesday 16 April 2024

Support for the reconstruction of Ukraine ([Doc. 15932](#))



Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine) – I'm so honoured to welcome from ALDE group the speaker of Ukrainian Parliament Ruslan STEFANCHUK with such a powerful speech. We vote a lot of resolutions in this Assembly. And you have to understand that it does influence the situation. On 2 April, the Register of Damage was opened to the public and only in the first week 1 000 Ukrainians filed the application for their lost apartments or house. [...] And you know how many thousands we expect in this category? Up to 600 000. But it's just the first category. But what comes next? [...] We need to establish the international trust, we need to transfer the Russian

assets, these 300 billion, to this trust. So it will be paid to Ukraine and to those who really deserve justice. [...] But also need at least 25 patriot systems to cover the whole Ukraine. We need to save lives, we need to save more of the infrastructure that is being destroyed every day every night, and we need this defence now. [More, voting results, video EN | OV](#)



Mr Iulian BULAI (Romania) – Countries and regimes change. People stay. And looking around in this Assembly, I noticed that actually more than half of the members present here have been born in countries that do not exist anymore. Therefore, our fight is not for countries but for individual rights. This is a historical day from a liberal point of view. We are defending the rights of individuals. Not of countries, not of ethnicities. Today's decision means more rights to 1.6 million people who lived the war, whose wounds are still healing and who are building a new future together. Today's decision is a starting point and we expect Kosovo to deliver on the agreed reforms and on the international engagements. Kosovo is ready and

deserves to enter the Council of Europe. At the same time, Kosovo has to ensure proper protection of the Serbian communities. [More, voting results, video EN | OV](#)

Wednesday 17 April 2024

Joint debate: Urgent procedure debate: "Alexei Navalny's death and the need to counter Vladimir Putin's totalitarian regime and its war on democracy" ([Doc. 15966](#));

Urgent procedure debate: "The arbitrary detention of Vladimir Kara-Murza and the systematic persecution of anti-war protesters in the Russian Federation and Belarus" ([Doc. 15967](#)); Sanctions against persons on the "Kara-Murza list" ([Doc. 15939](#))



Mr Ryszard PETRU (Poland) – The death of Alexei Navalny was one of the most important events in modern Russian history. A turning point. [...] The question is, what kind of lesson can we draw from this tragic event? Firstly, it has to be said. The Russian state bears full responsibility for killing Alexei Navalny. Secondly, most of those responsible for participating in the persecution of Navalny are well known. [...] All of them, should be on the list of human rights violators, sanctioned under European human rights sanctions regime. And thirdly, we must not forget about those who are fighting for a democratic Russia in prisons and gulags. Let me name a few of them. Let me start, of course, with the Vladimir Kara-Murza, Oleg Orlov,

Aleksei Gorinov, Sasha Skochilenko, Ilya Yashin, and for Belarus, [...] let me name just two of those fighting for a free and democratic Belarus: Maryia Kalesnikava, and Ales Bialiastki. [More, voting results 1, 2, 3, video EN | OV](#)

Freedom of expression and assembly of LGBTI people in Europe ([Doc. 15953](#))



Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco) – This report concerns two fundamental principles of democracy. Firstly, the right to express oneself without reprisals or censorship, which is of course a right, even if this right has its limits, such as incitement to violence. Secondly, the freedom of assembly, which is the right to meet for social, political or cultural purposes, in order to exchange, share and even express demands. [...] Our vision of a modern world and an advanced society is inclusive for everyone: a world where everyone has their rights respected and protected, where everyone can be who they are. As parliamentarians, we should be proactive in ensuring adequate protection for members of the rainbow community. Firstly, anti-discrimination

legislation to put an end to discrimination in access to employment, housing or education; secondly, legal recognition of same-sex relationships, including marriage and adoption, which is a key element in guaranteeing equal rights for LGBTI people; thirdly, and this is a human right, equal access to healthcare that respects identity and sexual orientation. [More, voting results, video EN | OV](#)



Ms Sabina ČUDIĆ (Bosnia and Herzegovina) – When we look at the situation and the fact that Albania has been under permanent monitoring procedures since 1995, this is in some way a historic day for Albania, considering recommendations of the authors to move away from the permanent monitoring and to enter the post-monitoring dialogue. [...] Of course, as we all know, the previous reports have always recognised the level of political crisis in Albania and the enormous level of political divisions within the country. We salute the easing of the political crisis, but the division, as the report underlines and as those of us who are familiar with the situation on the ground know, they have remained and they need additional work. [...] This report is not the end of monitoring but the beginning of

a long road of dialogue and close monitoring of the promised and promising, I would say, improvements in Albania. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Thursday 18 April 2024

Joint debate: Mainstreaming the human right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment with the Reykjavik process ([Doc. 15955](#)); Towards Council of Europe strategies for healthy seas and oceans to counter the climate crisis ([Doc. 15956](#))



Ms Liliana TANGUY (France) – For several years now, the ALDE group has been working alongside the Assembly to anchor recognition of the right to a healthy environment within the Council of Europe. [...] Our group broadly supported the adoption of Recommendation 2211 (2021), which called for the introduction of Additional Protocols to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Social Charter on a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. [...] ALDE-PACE shares the conclusions of the two rapporteurs and will lend its support. As a Member of Parliament for a coastal constituency in Brittany, I measure the impact of global warming on marine biodiversity and heritage on a daily basis. In this respect, the conclusion of the High Seas Treaty in 2023

is to be welcomed as it not only helps to fill the legal void but also guarantees better protection of biodiversity in international waters. [More](#), [voting results](#) 1, 2, [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Debate under urgent procedure: Draft Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence, Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law ([Doc. 15971](#))



Mr Damien COTTIER (Switzerland) – We can be proud that the Council of Europe is providing the framework for the first international Convention, the first legally binding international text on this subject. [...] This Convention is an excellent framework, which will then have to be fulfilled and used by the states, and in particular by our member states. In saying this, we are also highlighting, as the rapporteur said, the shortcomings of this Convention, which is sometimes the lowest common denominator and sometimes lacks a bit of ambition, if I may say so, when it comes to protecting fundamental freedoms and democracy, notably on the question of national security or the role of private companies. Let's remember that for all member

states, the European Convention on Human Rights continues to apply, and that it also applies in what is known as cyberspace or artificial intelligence even today. [...]. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Current affairs debate: Responding to the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and preventing further escalations in the Middle East following the recent Iranian attack against Israel



Mr Claude KERN (France) – After the barbaric terrorist attack of 7 October, after the actions of the Houthis and Hezbollah, the state of Israel was confronted at the end of last week with a massive attack by drones, cruise missiles and ballistic missiles launched directly from Iran. I strongly condemn it. [...] By taking this unprecedented action, Iran, which has been advocating the destruction of the state of Israel for forty years, has taken its destabilising actions to a new level. The risk of military escalation in the Middle East is high. I solemnly call for restraint and peace. My thoughts go out to all the peoples of the Middle East who are suffering the consequences of terrorist acts carried out by the Republic of Iran or its affiliates. [...] Of course, our hearts bleed when we see the images of destruction, the images of suffering that

afflict Gazans. [...] But in this forum of the Council of Europe, dedicated to human rights, I also want to call once again, forcefully, for the release of the 134 hostages still held by Hamas in the Gaza Strip, including four people abducted before 7 October. [More](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Friday 19 April 2024

The protection of children against online violence ([Doc. 15954](#))



Ms Sona GHAZARYAN (Armenia) – Sometimes, just a click can lead a child into the best forest of data that will shape the kid forever. We must ensure that strong security measures within the educational system are there to protect them, while also creating a space where they can feel safe to express themselves. There is not denying that the internet offers countless opportunities serving as a hub of information. However, it also poses risks to mental health and opens avenues for abuse, especially when children lack proper education on its safe usage. [...] Another point I would like to highlight here [that we discussed in the ALDE group, is the lack of safety for children on] Netflix and YouTube. [...] It is very evident for me that a single country cannot tackle this issue and challenges alone.

Therefore I strongly believe that we need international regulations together, and of course, education and literacy are the only keys to this solution. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)