

PACE Session
27-31 January
2025 & more

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January 2025 part-session highlights:

- **Commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the liberation of the Auschwitz-Birkenau camp.** “Auschwitz-Birkenau is a symbol of the abysmal Nazi political project based on dishonour and dehumanisation in a methodical and radical way, turning people into numbers. Our organisation was founded to fight against the aberration put to practice by this extreme ideology...”, [watch the address](#) by ALDE-PACE group leader Iulian Bulai.
- **Situation in Georgia.** ALDE-PACE met with representatives of Georgian liberal forces and civil society to discuss the ongoing political crisis in the country. Later this week, the Parliamentary Assembly called for the organisation of new genuinely democratic parliamentary elections, an immediate end to police brutality and the release of all political prisoners. Sabina Ćudić (ALDE, Bosnia and Herzegovina) has been appointed as a new co-rapporteur on the Monitoring of obligations and commitments by Georgia.
- **Renewed commitment to Ukraine:** Damien Cottier (ALDE, Switzerland) has been appointed as a new co-rapporteur on the Monitoring of obligations and commitments by Ukraine. On 30 January, ALDE-PACE unanimously supported the conclusions of an urgent debate “European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine”. ALDE has continued to raise awareness about Russia’s unlawful detention of Ukrainian civilians. On 30 January, a joint committee hearing on this issue was held with the participation of two ALDE rapporteurs, Eerik Kross and Yevhenii Kravchuk. We welcome the progress announced by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe toward the establishment of a [Special Tribunal for Ukraine](#).
- **Urgent debate on Belarus.** We thank our General Rapporteur for a Democratic Belarus Ryszard Petru (ALDE, Poland) for highlighting the situation in the country on the occasion of an urgent debate. On Monday, ALDE-PACE met with the newly appointed delegation of Belarusian democratic forces. We are happy to continue cooperation with those fighting for a democratic European future of their country.
- This January, we were honoured to meet with prominent liberal leaders **Xavier Bettel**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg and Chair of the rotating presidency of the CoE Committee of Ministers, and **Elena Lasconi**, leader of Romania’s liberal party USR and a candidate for President of Romania.
- The January session was also a time to say goodbye to two bureau members, Franzi Hoop and Bjarni Jonsson. Thank you for your hard work and commitment!
- We were happy to welcome a delegation of young liberals: Bram Roodhart, President of IFLRY & Aura Arbulu Vasquez, Executive Director of IFLRY, as well as Even Gabriel André Diot, Secretary General of LYMEC & Marten Lennart Porte, Treasurer of LYMEC. We look forward to your contribution to our reflection on “Democracy and Youth,” with Sonja Ghazaryan serving as PACE rapporteur.

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 [@ALDEPACE](#)

Elections & appointments



ELECTIONS &
APPOINTMENTS

Bureau of the ALDE group in PACE:



On 27 January 2025, **Rian Vogels**, VVD, Head of the Dutch delegation to PACE, was elected Vice-President of the ALDE Group. Congratulations Rian Vogels!

ALDE keeps leading positions in PACE Committees with:



Bertrand Bouyx (France), President of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy ([POL](#))

Lesia Vasylenko (Ukraine), 1st Vice-President of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights ([JUR](#))

Claude Kern (France), 2nd Vice-President of the Monitoring Committee ([MON](#))

Fiona O'Loughlin (Ireland), 1st Vice-President of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media ([CULT](#))

Tamara Vonta (Slovenia), 3rd Vice-President of the Committee on Migration, Refugees, and Displaced Persons ([MIG](#))

Franziska Hoop (Liechtenstein), 2nd Vice-President of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination ([EGA](#))

Delegation leaders **Bertrand Bouyx** (France) and **Bernadeta Coma** (Andorra) have been elected Vice-Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly.

In sub-Committees, we welcome the appointment of:

Damien Cottier (Switzerland) as the chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights;

Yevheniia Kravchuk (Ukraine, ALDE) & **Sona Ghazaryan** (Armenia) as the chairperson and vice-chairperson accordingly of the Sub-Committee on Youth and the Society of the Future.

We also congratulate **Yuliia Ovchynnykova** (Ukraine) who becomes the new PACE General Rapporteur on Local and Regional Authorities of the Parliamentary Assembly.

Michael Link (Germany) will continue to represent PACE on the Council of Democratic Elections of the Venice Commission, as a substitute member.





Featured
topics

Situation in Georgia



On Monday 27 January, ALDE-PACE met with representatives of Georgian liberal forces and civil society. We commend the courage of our Georgian colleagues who travelled to Strasbourg to bear witness to the deep political crisis unfolding in their country, the police brutality against opponents of the regime, and the unwavering aspirations of the Georgian people for democracy and European integration. It is impressive to see the strong popular mobilisation that has been going on in the country since 28 October 2024, despite increasing repression. The Georgian delegation welcomed by ALDE included Zurab Girchi Japaridze, leader of Girchi – More Change, Giorgi Vashadze, leader of "Strategy Aghmashenebeli", Marika Mikiashvili, International Officer of Droa!, Salome Samadashvili, Political Secretary of Lelo for Georgia, Tinatin Khidasheli, former Minister of Defence and President of the think tank Civic IDEA, as well as human rights defenders. The debate on the [credentials](#) of the Georgian delegation to PACE held later this week served as a political wake-up

call, exposing the widening gap between Georgia's commitments as a Council of Europe member state and the country's democratic backsliding.

ALDE members discuss international politics with Xavier Bettel

On 27 January, we had the honour of meeting with Xavier Bettel, Deputy Prime Minister of Luxembourg, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade, who currently chairs the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, to discuss pressing international political challenges. His leadership in promoting democracy, multilateral cooperation, and European unity is invaluable in these turbulent times. As global tensions rise, Xavier Bettel's commitment to strengthening international partnerships and defending liberal values remains vital. We look forward to our continued collaboration on key issues, from supporting Ukraine to strengthening the rule of law across Europe.



We wish well-deserved victory to the liberal candidate Elena Lasconi in Romania



During the January session, we also had the pleasure of welcoming Elena Lasconi, leader of Romanian liberal party USR and candidate for the country's presidency. Romania is an important player in a pivotal and sensitive region, where strong and responsible leaders are particularly needed to defend the European vision and liberal values. The repeat presidential election will kick off on 4 May 2025.



ALDE REPORTS



Iulian BULAI (Romania)

- **Observation of the parliamentary elections in Georgia (26 October 2024)**

Rapporteur AS/Bur ([Doc. 16079](#))



Ryszard PETRU (Poland)

- **Urgent debate: The urgent need for free and fair elections in Belarus**

Rapporteur AS/Pol ([Doc. 16105](#))



Valentina GRIPPO (Italy)

- **Regulating content moderation on social media to safeguard freedom of expression**

Rapporteur AS/Cult ([Doc. 16089](#))



QUESTIONS

Question to His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW I



Mr Iulian BULAI (Romania) - Your All Holiness, on behalf of the Liberals in the House, welcome to this Assembly. I'm very happy to see you here. And



His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch BARTHOLOMEW I - about the artificial intelligence issue. In light of these concerns, looking at the Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence of the Council of Europe, the Ecumenical Patriarchate observes notable progress in addressing crucial ethical and social concerns raised by this fast growing technology.

on behalf of my group, I have three remarks and one question.

First of all, I'm very happy that you have been condemning firmly the Russian aggression in Ukraine and that you had the courage to tell Patriarch Kirill to either confront the dictator or step down, but not legitimise the war in Ukraine by the image of the Russian Orthodox Church. So that is very important. Thank you.

Secondly, I'm very happy that you have fully recognised the Ukrainian Autonomous Independent Orthodox Church. That is really important.

And thirdly, I just read the news yesterday that His Sanctity Pope Francis was open to finding a common date for celebrating Easter. I really hope that Your Holiness and His Sanctity will find the right wisdom in order to make that happen in the coming period, as this is a very divisive celebration for millions of Europeans.

Now, I have a question also for you. Your All Holiness, as artificial intelligence becomes increasingly integrated into daily life and shapes the way humanity interacts with creation, how do you envision the Orthodox Church addressing the ethical and spiritual implications of artificial intelligence, particularly in terms of safeguarding human dignity, freedom and people's relationship to God?

Thank you for receiving this question and for your information, and for the information of all of you, you should be aware that this question has been formulated with the help of artificial intelligence. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Artificial intelligence has immense potential for positive transformation in environmental protection, education, and health care, offering innovative pathways to solve significant human problems.

At the same time, from invasions of privacy to rising inequalities and possible compromise of institutions, this great tool also contains inherent risks.

The basic focus of the Convention on Human Rights, democratic values and legal systems can be complemented by many Christian values and principles.

Technical progress must support human development and serve the welfare of all.

Therefore, implementation of artificial intelligence requires respect of individual dignity, safeguard of fundamental freedoms, and advancement of social equity. Inasmuch as they mandate careful study of artificial intelligence systems and their wider impact on society, the established standards of openness and responsibility of the Convention show great relevance.

The methodology of Huderia provides a specific means for risk identification and reduction, calling for careful evaluation of artificial intelligence applications on the basis of ethical consequences and technical performances. In this context, the orthodox Christian tradition would underline moral discernment and direction along with scientific research and development.

The Ecumenical Patriarchate invites all nations to participate in this important project for the sake of supporting and shaping a technological growth that satisfies the universal needs of humankind, including the protection of human rights and religious freedom for those facing persecution and injustice, particularly religious minorities who have historically endured discrimination. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

QUESTIONS

Question to Mr Xavier BETTEL, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of Luxembourg, Chair of the Committee of Ministers



Ms Sabina ČUDIĆ
(Bosnia and Herzegovina)
a) – Dear Minister,
thank you for your lively and inspiring

introduction.

In one of your interviews, you said you want to say "Europe first". While considering that we are in the Council of Europe, we want to say, well, for us, "Council of Europe first".

In light of emboldened, we would say, extremist forces around the world and growing challenges to



Mr Xavier BETTEL - I think that punishment should be the last.

Sometimes we have the feeling we start to punish and then we start to discuss, which is for me, personally, an error. We should always have goals. And if goals are not fulfilled, then to say that we cannot accept this and this

and this. But very often we punish and then we start to discuss.

You spoke about Europe first. I just said that when I have the replica to America first, should be Europe first. But my replica of America first is not America alone. Because Trump's elector, when they voted for Trump, a lot of them voted for him because they were against inflation, because the prices rose in the United States. And believe me, if the answer to all the questions is new taxes for imports, at the end of the day, America will have big inflation. And this is, I think, not what Donald Trump wants either.

So we need discussions, we need negotiations. The fact is we just as the European Union, very often, and I see it as a member of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs, we are 27 around the table. I wouldn't say we have 27 positions

human rights, do you think that the Council of Europe should use this opportunity to take an even stancher stand and more deliberate stand towards the perpetrators of those violations and use increasingly its mechanisms not only for dialogue but also for punishment of those member states who fail to meet the standards of the Council of Europe? Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

and we have 46 here, but very often we have blocks of four or five different positions. And at the end of the day, foreign affairs, it's just when we have unanimity. [...] But I prefer, I'm honest, I prefer to have long discussions and trying to find compromises than having one person deciding everything for all the others. I think the answer of President Trump, is that we should see where we can find agreements. But believe me, America first doesn't mean America alone, because America wouldn't be able also to stay alone. We are partners and I still believe that we will be partners. We had already four years of Donald Trump's presidency. We were able to continue to work on and you see that Europe is still functioning [...]. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

QUESTIONS

Question to Mr Alain BERSET, Secretary General of the Council of Europe



Ms Franziska HOOP (Liechtenstein) – On behalf of the ALDE, I would like to

thank the Secretary General for his comments and also for your efforts to set up an office in New York, as we have been increasingly calling for. Since taking office as Secretary General, you have repeatedly referred to an action plan. How exactly do you plan to involve the Council of Europe in the creation of an action plan for democracy and what will be the concrete added value? Thank you very much. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)



Mr Alain BERSET – First of all, thank you for the positive assessment of what we have done to develop our network, including in New York. I have been able to say this before: I think this is important because with the Council of Europe we really have an organisation that can bring something very concrete. For *accountability*, against impunity. That is very important. And I believe that at the moment, when we see that many international organisations are blocked, it is important to help develop something with our work. So thank you very much for this element.

Second element, you asked the question about the Action Plan for Democracy. Thank you very much for that. My aim with this action plan is not to draw up a report or have one drawn up - 10 pages, 10 measures, we publish it and it's done - that would be too easy. We need much more. I believe it should be more of a process. It has to be a process that really lasts, with as much integration as possible from all possible stakeholders.

We have already started. Last year, I had the opportunity to hold consultations with all the ambassadors at the Council of Europe. It was very interesting, yes, a kind of brainstorming session, if I can put it that way. It was very interesting and it allowed us to focus a bit on what we can do, what we can't do and how we will move forward.

And as I said before: At the right moment - and it will soon be the right moment - it must be possible to really do this together, also with the Parliamentary Assembly, so that we can develop this together. We need time to really be able to do in-depth work. And that will come soon. And I can assure you that at this moment - I think in the first half of the year - we will be able to discuss it again with the relevant commissions and also with the authorities and also with the Council of Europe as an institution.

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

QUESTIONS

Question to Mr Luc FRIEDEN, Prime Minister of Luxembourg



Ms Larysa BILOZIR (Ukraine) - dear Prime Minister Frieden, First of all, I would like to express my gratitude to your country



Mr Luc FRIEDEN - My country fully supports Ukraine, will continue to strongly support Ukraine, not only because we want to defend Ukraine, but because you are defending us and you are defending the principles for which this organisation

was created.

If international law is violated, if the basic principles on which the world after the Second World War –

and to you for being a reliable partner to Ukraine for fruitful co-operation and support.

My question would be what specific measure can Luxembourg take to expand its military and humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, who daily fights for its survival against Russia as an aggressor?

And as it is Luxembourg's presidency, I would also like to use this opportunity to ask for your country's facilitation in ensuring accountability for the Russians involved in the abduction and unlawful adoption of Ukrainian children by creating, according to the recommendations of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, a joint registry for individuals to be sanctioned. Video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

our part of the world after the Second World War – has been established are violated, it is our duty, regardless of the size of the country, to stand by those who are the victims of such aggression.

And that is the reason why my government, and I would say the large majority of the people of Luxembourg, fully stand behind all efforts to support Ukraine – militarily, financially, humanitarian aid and we will be there also to help one day the reconstruction of Ukraine.

This is our moral duty, but it's also about fundamental principles. [...]

Therefore, we will also be on the side of Ukraine when we look for ways to find a solution to end this war. But that can only be done with Ukraine. It cannot be done by others talking on behalf of Ukraine. Only Ukrainian people and the representatives of Ukraine can decide what is the best course for Ukraine. [...]

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



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Monday 27 January 2025

Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee; Observation of the parliamentary elections in Georgia (26 October 2024) ([Doc. 16079](#)); The progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure (January-December 2024) ([Doc. 16086](#))



Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine) – [...] About Georgia: Just ask yourself truly, did the situation get better after the election day? No, it got worse. Should we react to that? What should we say to these people who are protesting right now on the streets? Do we legitimise the violation of their rights when they are being taken to prison or arbitrarily arrested or beaten on the street by unknown armed guys? Yesterday, we had so-called elections in Belarus. Well, guess what, if Georgia loses the freedom of media and the opposition forces it can eventually turn to Belarus. So we should be firm on that. Also, I would like to refer to Mr Xavier BETTEL's words about the situation with Ukraine and the aid to Ukraine that the peace form and that the peace negotiations should include the Ukrainian interest. Well, I want to add to that, it has to include the

European interest, it is a war on the European continent and Europe has to be united on just peace for Ukraine. [More](#), [vote Doc 16086](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Tuesday 28 January 2025

The need for a renewed rules-based international order ([Doc. 16087](#))



Ms Larysa BILOZIR (Ukraine) – Dear colleagues, it's high time we demonstrate our unity. We have to ensure adherence to international law, create a special tribunal for the crime of aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, support the work of the International Criminal Court and uphold the ruling of the International Court of Justice. It is important to reconsider the membership of Russia in the UN Security Council, a country that violates international law by invading sovereign states and to reconsider the use of veto power by permanent members. Believe me, colleagues, Ukraine, like no other nation, understands the importance of raising the Security Council's global influence, as well as the cost of inaction. Let us choose action. Let us choose reform. Let us choose a future rooted in justice, accountability and rules. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#)

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

The absolute and urgent need to end the humanitarian crisis for women, children and the hostages in Gaza ([Doc. 16093](#), [Doc. 16093 Add.](#))



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

Mr Gusti GRAAS (Luxembourg) – After the progress made in Lebanon, this second ceasefire agreement in the region represents an opportunity, even if the geopolitical fragility remains. [...] On behalf of my group, I would like to reaffirm that the two-state solution is an essential and indispensable step towards lasting peace in the region. The immediate need is to put an end to the macabre toll of victims - children, women, civilians, hostages. In the humble measure of our parliamentary diplomacy, let's work to ensure that this ceasefire, still temporary today, goes down in the history of this battered region. Finally, with regard to the report, I must confess that some of my colleagues have expressed reservations about the positions taken, which could be perceived as lacking balance. Our vote will obviously depend on the outcome of the various amendments... [More](#), [voting](#)

Addressing risks to human rights and the rule of law posed by mercenaries and private military and security companies: a call for comprehensive regulation ([Doc. 16092](#))



to justice and advocate reparation. [...] [More](#), [voting results](#) [Video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Mr Petri HONKONEN (Finland) – Private military and security companies pose major challenges in terms of human rights transparency and accountability. Their activities, which are often poorly supervised, compromise the legitimate monopoly of states on the use of force and expose populations to unacceptable abuses. The resolution before us therefore responds to an urgent need. It aims to fill the legal vacuum in which these companies operate and sets out clear rules to govern their activities. This is an important step towards protecting human rights and strengthening the rule of law. The resolution proposes concrete measures which have the support of the ALDE Group. The introduction of strict authorisation and control mechanisms should ensure transparent supervision of the activities of these companies, rigorous investigations into human rights violations, and guaranteeing victims effective access

Wednesday 29 January 2025

Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship ([Doc. 16090](#))



Ms Yulia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine) – This report deals with the very core of the Council of Europe and democracy: a need to remember our past, learning from history, and educating people how to be true citizens of democratic nations. These are the key ingredients of Europe as a project of peace. Peace that comes with and from knowledge, values and actions to protect our world from wars. [...] And now we have been witnessing how Russia is trying to undermine the whole world by brutal falsification and fabrication of the whole history from before and after World War II. And it is not just about Ukraine or Georgia, Moldova or Belarus, Slovakia or Hungary, Germany or France. A well-designed history education is essential for gaining a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the past... [More](#), [voting results](#), video [EN](#) | [OV](#)

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Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Georgia ([Doc. 16104](#))



Mr Eerik-Niiles KROSS (Estonia) – The Georgian state and Georgian people took a treaty-bound obligation in 1999 to honour the values of the Council of Europe: democracy, the rule of law, human rights. Yet in November 2024, the *de facto* Prime Minister of Georgia, upon freezing the accession process to Europe, declared that calls from the Council of Europe and from European institutions to uphold those values are, and I quote, "blackmail and manipulation, which is utterly disrespectful to our country and society". It's clear that the majority of Georgians and obviously the majority of Europeans think exactly the opposite. [...] Yesterday at the committee when we discussed this resolution, the representative of the ruling party told us basically there is no police brutality in Georgia, there are no political prisoners in Georgia, and there is no need and there will be no new elections in Georgia

before 2028. That, of course, makes the conditions set in this resolution somewhat moot. But the whole group supports this resolution for the sake of agreement between political groups. Our message to the Georgian people who are waiting and to the regime are in the conditions set in this resolution. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Immigration, one of the answers to Europe's demographic ageing ([Doc. 16072](#))



Lord Michael GERMAN (United Kingdom) – Increasingly strident populist voices promote fear and prejudice, which at least in part leads to the backsliding on integration spoken about yesterday by the Council of Europe's Secretary General. And integration is an important feature in this proposal before us. But shouting down the populist voices only amplifies their position. We need to change the narrative and the way we think and speak on these matters. [...] The most important issue here is that we must be honest with our voters. An ageing Europe requires migration in order to satisfy the needs of our people. [...] And the traditional answer from governments has been: we need to train more people born in the country to meet our needs. And that's perfectly proper. But that takes time and the need

for this workforce is now. So the equation we had before is a simple one. [...] We need to use less rhetoric and more persuasion. We need an immigration plan for Europe which is collaborative in achieving these needs. Change narrative. This narrative must be about rejecting fear and prejudice and instead promoting trust, decency and the common good. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#)

Thursday 30 January 2025

Debate under urgent procedure: Opinion on a draft convention for the protection of the profession of lawyer ([Doc. 16102](#), [Doc. 16094](#))



Ms Lesia VASYLENKO (Ukraine) – in many parts of the world, legal professionals face increasing pressure, intimidation and even persecution for no other crime than merely doing their job. In Georgia, Belarus, Russia, in occupied territories of Ukraine, under the effective control of Russia, we have legal professionals fighting for the rights of human rights defenders and for people wishing to live in freedom from oppressive regimes. These lawyers are consequently marginalised, targeted and threatened by these very regimes. They are branded as enemies of the state. They are disbarred, they are thrown into prisons next to their own clients and they are simply unable to defend themselves. This is not right. Lawyers must be able to work without fear. This convention provides a backbone for legal professionals to fall back on when their own rights are being

breached and when they find themselves unable not only to defend their clients, but also to defend themselves. [More](#), [video](#) [EN](#) | [OV](#) [voting results](#)

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Debate under urgent procedure: The urgent need for free and fair elections in Belarus
([Doc. 16105](#))



Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine) – Let's be honest, it wasn't an election. You can't even put "election" in quotes. It was a reappointment for the seventh time that Lukashenko did to himself. And let's be honest, no resolution will call new elections. It will not happen until the Kremlin regime resigns. Because Belarus is totally controlled, – diplomatically, economically – by the Russian Federation. Lukashenko gave in the sovereignty of its own country, and betrayed his own people to be in power for so long. That was his price. Lukashenko gave also the territory to use for the aggression against Ukraine. And he has to be punished as well. And he also is responsible for the forced disappearances of Ukrainian children. [...] We do hope that we will see, not just the delegation [of democratic forces of Belarus], but we will see a democratic Belarus

as a member of the Council of Europe. But for this, we need to help Ukraine to beat Russia and then Belarus will be a democratic country and will be part of our community [...]. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Debate under urgent procedure: European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine
([Doc. 16106](#))



Baroness Sal BRINTON (United Kingdom) – Next month is the third anniversary of Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine [...] Dear colleagues, peace can only be built through strength and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe believes that we must continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with Ukraine providing defence assistance as well as humanitarian, infrastructure and civil support too. But it is more than that. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) stands for the rule of law, for human rights, and protecting true democracy. And so this is our battle too. In downtown Vilnius, it is impossible to miss the sign that the liberal mayor of Vilnius put on his highest city building, "Vladimir PUTIN. The Hague awaits". It does. Accountability will come to the Russian Federation and to PUTIN in particular. He

even boasts that he has removed 700 000 children from Ukraine. But abduction and abduction of children in war is a heinous war crime. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Women in the economy: employment, entrepreneurship and gender-responsive budgeting
([Doc. 16068](#))



Ms Sona GHAZARYAN (Armenia) – It's an honour to stand here before you to address an issue of timeless relevance and urgent contemporary importance: women in the economy [...] The report we are discussing today offers the solution, and I would like to bring your attention to the solutions. One of them is gender-responsive budgeting. This isn't merely an abstract concept. It's a practical framework for transformative changes. By consciously directing public resources, we can address the gender disparities at the source. Think about it. How can we expect women to excel in their careers if public budgets overlook crucial investment in child care, maternity leave and tailored upskilling programmes? [...] The report underscores a crucial truth. Achieving gender equality is in the economy. It's not just a moral obligation.

It's an economic necessity. [More](#), [voting results](#), [video EN](#) | [OV](#)

Regulating content moderation on social media to safeguard freedom of expression [\(Doc. 16089\)](#)



Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco) - The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe would like to express its support for the quality of the rapporteur's proposals, which form a solid basis for progress on this issue. However, we feel it is essential to stress one fundamental point: removed content, including its metadata, must not be permanently deleted. Indeed, such content can represent valuable evidence for documenting serious crimes or war crimes. Deleting them would deprive victims and the justice system of essential means of establishing the truth and accountability. Similarly, it is vital that users have the right to challenge decisions made by platforms. Too often, citizens are faced with a lack of clarity and inaccessible remedies when content is moderated by the platform, or an account suspended.

We need to guarantee clear, predictable and fair procedures. [More, voting results, video EN | OV](#)

Friday 31 January 2025

“Long Covid” and access to the right to health [\(Doc. 16088\)](#)



Baroness Sal BRINTON (United Kingdom) – Ignoring the long-term health, economic, and well being of at least 22 million people in Europe and 70 million globally has significant consequences for the individuals, their families and the economy. Many are denied recognition as disabled people because of health and governmental attitudes. Those living long term with Long Covid face underfunded specialist clinics or none at all. Worse, some clinics believe that this should be treated only as chronic fatigue and depression and don't even test for neurological, respiratory, and other key symptoms. Laura SPINNEY's 2016 book *Pale rider: the Spanish flu of 1918 and how it changed the world* discovered that some doctors understood that many people, especially young adults and children who did survive

the Spanish flu, were facing chronic fatigue, shortness of breath and neurological illnesses afterwards. But sadly, our societies have forgotten the lessons that we learned after the Spanish flu. The hospital that I attend for my main autoimmune disease, rheumatoid arthritis, has found that since December 2019 their patients with autoimmune disease have increased fourfold and is rising. This is an invisible part of Long Covid. [More, voting results, video EN | OV](#)



Overcoming age-based discrimination against older persons [\(Doc. 16091\)](#)

Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco) - The Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe salutes the remarkable work carried out by the rapporteur. The subject she has tackled with such commitment concerns us all, or will eventually concern each and every one of us. This report sheds light on an issue of major importance: prejudice, stereotypes and discriminatory behaviour against people because of their advanced age. This misperception limits their professional opportunities, whether in terms of promotions, salary upgrades or even further training, from which they benefit far less than their younger colleagues... [More, voting results, video EN | OV](#)

Free debate



Mr Iulian BULAI (Romania) - There is a great and exciting year waiting for us. We'll be having elections in Kosovo. And on behalf of the Liberals, I have to share with you my hope that after this moment the country will be accepted as a full member of the Council of Europe. [...] I would also like to speak on the Romanian situation, as I'm, of course, Romanian, and I really hope that during the coming presidential elections, there will be no state interference in our presidential elections in order to modify the election results. If that would not convene the government parties. [...] Now, at the end of my speech, I would like to say that I'm very happy that we have, with the great majority of votes, ratified the credentials of the Georgian delegation and that we have reiterated our call on the release of the 55 political prisoners of Georgia. We have asked them to refrain from violence

against people protesting in the streets, and we have also asked them to be willing to announce new elections during the coming months. I think that these are very reasonable elements that we have almost in unanimity agreed upon. And I really hope that by the end of April, we'll have a clearer situation and a renewal of the Georgian engagement for its European path and its commitments to the values of the Council of Europe. [More, video EN](#) | [OV](#)

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