

Newsletter of the EPP-CD Parliamentary Group in the Council of Europe

We must not fall into the trap of terrorists

At the start of the session week must avoid security excesses which PACE President Pedro Agramunt unduly limit our freedoms and reform the EPP-CD group started the ate a feeling of mistrust and fear



Terrorism: #NoHateNoFear initiative. "With it we all wish to encourage all players in society to stand firm against the terrorist threat by refusing to give in to hatred or fear", Mr Agramunt said.

He continued: "Certainly, terrorism must be combated, but this fight must be waged with due regard for the values which unite us: human rights, democracy and the rule of law. Strong words are of course needed, but on no account words of hatred and vengeance. We must ensure maximum security, but

among people. We must not fall into the trap of terrorists who seek to destabilise the foundations of our societies and destroy our ways of life by sowing the seeds of fear and hatred.

As an Assembly which brings together members of the national parliaments of 47 European states, we wish to rally as many people as possible – politicians, academics, journalists, representatives of civil society and ordinary citizens – to say a resounding "NO" to fear and hatred."

Dear Reader,

We are pleased that our Ukrainian colleague Nadiya Savchenko is free again and spoke to us in the PACE this week. Her release from Russian custody is also a success of the continuous efforts of the COE to de-escalate the Ukraine conflict. The solution to this conflict and the return to the rule of law, the protection of human rights as a prerequisite for a peaceful coexistence of the European peoples is not possible without Russia, a great country in Europe. We will therefore continue to seek dialogue with our Russian colleagues.



Greek Prime Minister Tsipras has reminded us that Europe as a community of values is more than the joint distribution of benefits. Even in the refugee question we Europeans must share challenges together. The lack of a solid legal foundation for harmonised immigration and asylum policies is no excuse for the member states, not to act like partners or not to participate adequately in the burden sharing.

Axel Fischer, MdB

President, EPP/CD Group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

#NoHateNoFear

The Migration Challenge in Europe and Greece

The migration crisis unsettled Europe as nothing else before. The EU's current institutional and legislative arrangements were clearly not up to the challenge of dealing with the huge influx of migrants, and the crisis laid bare the deep divisions among member states. The European reaction has been extremely feeble and uneasy. In addition, certain governments denied to implement the European decisions.

Common institutions, like Frontex and the European Asylum Support Office, could do little about it, as they were neither empowered nor sufficiently funded to play more than auxiliary roles. A solid legal foundation for harmonised immigration and asylum policies was sorely lacking, as member states had insisted on preserving much of their autonomy in this area. Of course, the terrorist attacks in Europe made the situation even more complicated.

The migration crisis found Greece in a phase of very timid recovery after



Rescue of refugees in the Mediterranean.
Foto: Irish Defence Forces

years of a painful fiscal consolidation. Unfortunately, the current Greek government, not only brought the Greek economy back to its knees but it also underestimated the situation and was totally unpre-

pared to deal with such a major challenge. But the EU has also failed to give substantial support to Greece or to ensure that the burden is shared among all states.

It is high time for Europe to assume its full responsibilities and for its member states to act like partners and participate in the burden sharing. No external frontier country – and especially Greece, which is in a profound economic crisis – can bear the burden alone. The protection of the Union's external frontiers is a core notion of the cohesion and identity of the Union itself. We need to overcome the divisions that tear us apart and to regain confidence in each other, as well as in our collective capacity to confront this major challenge. There can be no greater priority for 2016.

A contribution from
**Theodora
Bakoyannis**



"Sexualized content in the media should be restricted"

A Report on Fighting the Over-sexualisation of Children adopted by the Assembly by **Valeriu Ghiletschi**.

We know that children and families face multiple pressures in today's Europe. My focus in this report was the particularly harmful effects on children generated by the proliferation of sexual content, ease of access to unsuitable, pornographic, and even illegal content on the Internet.

The sharing of sexually explicit images via mobile devices or other means on the Internet has swept through Europe's schools, often leading to significant psychological trauma. These are just a few examples of subtle and unobtrusive sexual pressures that today's children face in an over-sexualised environment.

The recommendations and resolution arising from my report highlight the

importance of involving parents, primary educators of their children, educators and policy makers in a concerted effort to address material and practices that often both inappropriate and harmful for children.

I also call for action, and invite member States to strengthen their relevant legislation and policies, starting with in-depth studies and data collection on the issue. I recommend that sexualized content in the media and advertising sector should be restricted by law and supervised by specialised bodies. We must support parents as the



Valeriu Ghiletschi presenting his report.

education children receive from their parents at home by promoting programmes for children that highlight the dangers of an over-sexualised society.

Lebanon suffers from a complex crisis

A report on the Situation in Lebanon and challenges for regional stability and European security

by **Tobias Zech**.

Lebanon suffers from a complex crisis: the small country of 4 Million inhabitants hosts already some 1.6 Million of refugees from Syria, furthermore, there is the lack of a president, which almost makes the work of the government impossible. Currently, an agreement between the different players within the country does not seem possible.

Unless it can overcome the political crisis, Lebanon will not be able to deal successfully with the current refugee situation. The country's collapse would threaten the security of the whole region and of Europe. Lebanon is facing the biggest challenge in its history. Lebanon has to deal with three issues: the political parties have to elect the next president, they have to agree on a new electoral law and so they have to prepare the elections in June 2017.



The „governmental freeze“ was the main topic in the talks Zech (right) had with Joseph EL-Maalouf from Lebanese Forces and members of all the parties in the Lebanese parliament.

However to reach these goals Lebanon needs the financial and political support of the international community. It is the duty of the international community to stabilise this situation. The international community must not sit back and watch while the situation escalates, but must enhance Lebanon's stability.



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Our newly appointed rapporteurs

Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights



“How can inappropriate restrictions on NGO activities in Europe be prevented?”

Rapporteur: Aleksandra Djurović



“Protecting human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States”

Rapporteur: Yves Pozzo di Borgo

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy



“Women in public space: putting an end to sexual violence and street harassment”

Rapporteur: Françoise Hétto-Gaasch



“Promoting diversity and equality in politics”

Rapporteur: Killion Munyama



“Women's empowerment in the economy”

Rapporteur: Elena Centemero

Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media



“Co-ordination for efficient Internet governance”

Rapporteur: Andres Herkel

Monitoring Committee



“Functioning of democratic institutions in Poland”

Corapporteur: Thierry Mariani



“The honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania”

Corapporteur: Joseph O'Reilly

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development



“Jurisdictional immunity of international organisations and rights of their staff”

Rapporteur: Naira Karapatyan

The Assembly as a pan-European forum for dialogue

On Wednesday this week, we debated the role of the Assembly as a pan-European forum for interparliamentary dialogue and cooperation. The COE was founded on 5 May 1949 by the Treaty of London. At the be-

extremism, combating intolerance, hate and discrimination, protecting rights of national minorities, fostering social cohesion, as well as promoting inter-cultural dialogue require a concerted and effective response by all

The Assembly has to rebuild trust among parliamentarians from all 47 member States and reaffirm its role as a pan-European forum for interparliamentary cooperation, on a basis of mutual respect. In order to do



The members of the EPP-CD-Group.

ginning we had ten Member States, today there are 47.

As a statutory organ of the Council of Europe, the Assembly promotes co-operation among parliamentarians to achieve the goals of the Organisation to unite democracies, around common values and on the basis of their common heritage. Today, when Europe is facing numerous political challenges, both within and around its borders, and the Council of Europe witnesses a growing lack of cohesion and mutual trust among its member States, the Assembly has an indispensable role to play in overcoming and preventing new divisions in Europe through bridge-building and parliamentary diplomacy.

Dialogue and co-operation among parliamentarians, which are the very essence of parliamentary diplomacy, make a positive contribution to easing inter-state tensions, building confidence and finding feasible solutions to complex problems, namely those in the field of human rights, parliamentary democracy and the rule of law. Counteracting terrorism and radical

the Council of Europe's 47 member States.

Against such a background, the fact that, for two consecutive years, parliamentarians from one of the Organisation's member States, the Russian Federation, representing more than 140 million Europeans have not participated in the Assembly's work, limits the capacity of the Assembly to represent the rich plurality of views from across Europe. It also prevents the Assembly from contributing to shaping a unifying agenda for our Continent and the Council of Europe in order to preserve our common heritage, values and legal standards.

so, it should find ways to keep open the communication channels with the Russian parliament and explore all possibilities for dialogue offered by parliamentary diplomacy.

Our common interests in protecting human rights, democracy and the rule of law, both at national and international level, are stronger than the issues that divide us. We must shoulder our responsibilities to address – in a frank, open and committed manner – the difficult points and disagreements that exist among us in order to work together to resolve them and to continue building a Europe without dividing lines.



Functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey is under threat



We as the EPP-CD group are deeply concerned about the functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey.

In a debate on the functioning of democratic institutions in Turkey, the Assembly underlined that the latest developments pertaining to freedom of the media and of expression, erosion of the rule of law and human rights violations in relation to the anti-terrorism security operations in south-eastern Turkey constitute a threat to the functioning of democratic institutions and the country's commitments to its obligations towards the Council of Europe. We regret that peace talks to address the Kurdish issue collapsed in summer 2015, putting at

stake the process of enlarging the cultural and linguistic rights of the Kurdish community. We condemn the attacks and terrorist actions and violence perpetrated by the PKK, Daesh or any other organization that by no means can be tolerated.

We stress Turkey's right and duty to fight terrorism, but recall however that security operations must be carried out in line with international law, in accordance with the principle of proportionality and necessity. The right balance between security and individual liberties must be found in Turkey. Regarding the decision of the Turkish Grand National Assembly to strip the immunity of a large number

of parliamentarians from prosecution, we are worried about the potential political consequences of this decision, which could damage parliamentary life and undermine the healthy political environment that Turkey needs to face today's challenges. We urge Turkish officials to refrain from unduly interfering in the judiciary and challenging the rule of law.

Also in view of the freedom of expression and freedom of the media, we encourage Turkey to pursue its efforts to align its legislation and practices with Council of Europe standards and fulfill the remaining post-monitoring dialogue requirements.

Upcoming elections

Legislative elections

Belarus

11 September 2016



Legislative elections

Russian Federation

18 September 2016



Legislative elections

Georgia

8 October 2016



Legislative elections

Lithuania

9 October 2016



Presidential elections

Moldova

30 October 2016



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<https://www.youtube.com/user/eppcdgroup>

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All contributions that are specifically identified by the name of a representative only reflect the opinion of that special representative.

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