



**Provisional edition**

Friday 28 April 2023, morning

## Official report of debates

### Opening of the sitting num 14

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Good morning, everyone.

The meeting is now open.

Dear colleagues,

The next item of business this morning is the presentation of and debate on the report by Mr Andrej HUNKO and Mr Joseph O'REILLY, on behalf of the Monitoring Committee, on "San Marino's compliance with the obligations of membership of the Council of Europe" (Document 15737).

We will finish the list of speakers at about 10:45 a.m., after which we will hear the reply of the Committee and take the necessary votes.

They have 5 minutes each to present their reports, and 5 minutes to reply to speakers at the end of the general debate.

As Mr Joseph O'REILLY is absent, you will have a little more time, Mister Andrej HUNKO.

I give you the floor, Mister Rapporteur.

### Debate: The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by San Marino

**Mr Andrej HUNKO (Germany, UEL, Rapporteur):** Thank you very much, Madam President,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today we are talking about San Marino, truly a fascinating microstate, an enclave surrounded by Italy, whose democratic and republican structures go back centuries. It is, in fact, the oldest republic in the world, and it has been highly interesting to write this report.

San Marino was selected on 3 February 2021, in the framework of this so-called periodic review procedure in which all Council of Europe States participate, and initially Mr Viorel-Riceard BADEA and I were chosen as rapporteurs.

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In this report:

1. Speeches in English, French, German and Italian are reported in full in English.
2. Speeches in other languages are summarised from the interpretation and indicated by an asterisk (\*).
3. Speeches in German and Italian are available in full on the Assembly's website.
4. The text of the amendments is available at the document centre and on the Assembly's website. Only oral amendments or oral sub-amendments are reproduced in the report of debates.
5. Corrections should be handed in at Room 1081 not later than 24 hours after the report has been published.

We were in San Marino on 24-26 October last year. Unfortunately, Mr Viorel-Riceard BADEA had to leave the Assembly in January of this year because he had other commitments, and Mr Joseph O'REILLY stepped in, as it were, as a transitional co-rapporteur at short notice. But Mr Joseph O'REILLY is currently undergoing medical treatment and cannot be here, so I am here now as the only rapporteur, so to speak.

San Marino joined the Council of Europe in 1988 and, as I said, the structures of San Marino go back a long, long time - even partly to relics from the Roman Empire. It has always been a republic, it has a strong democratic and liberal tradition and the difficulties that arise for such a microstate with 35 000 inhabitants on a relatively small area are just characteristic difficulties for a microstate.

There is a clear political will in San Marino to overcome these difficulties within the framework of the obligations of the Council of Europe; there is a very proactive democratic and diplomatic tradition, which has also led in history to the fact that San Marino could survive as a state at all. The Italian unification, Napoleon, Mussolini - these are all huge challenges for such a small state but it has survived and this goes back to a tradition of great, very proactive diplomacy.

At the heart of San Marino is the parliament, the so-called Grand and General Council. One point that we have listed here is that the members of parliament in San Marino – if you work mainly in the private sector – are not compensated. That is a weakness we think should be overcome, because it also leads to an imbalance in San Marino between the Parliament on the one hand and the Executive on the other hand.

One problem of such a microstate is, of course, the question of conflict of interest and corruption, because people know each other very quickly and there is a very fast proximity between different structures in the judiciary, for example. There was a fourth Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) report on this, which was evaluated very, very positively. We are also calling here for the fifth GRECO report, which will then deal with governments, to be tackled soon.

We have made a few small proposals – all of them, so to speak, in a context of respect for the truly democratic and constitutional traditions of this small country – which we believe could still be improved. Democracy, after all, is never a finished thing, but a thing that can always be improved. We suggest, for example, that different religions should be able to register, that foreign residents should also be able to participate in local elections after five years, as is the case in other European countries, and some other suggestions that we are still making.

All in all, as I said, from our point of view it was a very, very inspiring and a very positive visit that we had there.

I would like to thank above all also the colleagues here and the institutions in San Marino and of course also the secretariat, Mr Bas Klein, for the great co-operation.

I am now looking forward to the discussion.

Thank you very much.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mr Andrej HUNKO.

In the general debate, I call Mr Marco NICOLINI on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left.

You have the floor.

**Mr Marco NICOLINI (San Marino, UEL, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you, Chair.

I will need even less than 3 minutes to express my impressions of this report. And indeed as a member of the majority of government, I think I can limit myself to showing our gratitude.

I want to thank the two current rapporteurs, Mr Andrej HUNKO and Mr Joseph O'REILLY, and also the previous rapporteur, Mr Viorel-Riceard BADEA, for the great work that they did over a few months, based on the study of secular institutions in meetings with all politicians in the majority, in opposition, extra-parliamentarians, in meetings with trade unions, with the leaders of our Court, with NGOs, and all the rest, all the meetings you had.

In short, for all the activities that have allowed them to understand our country and give a face to a small but complex institution system.

I also thank the two members of the San Marino delegation, Mr Gerardo Giovagnoli and Ms Marica Montemaggi, one from the majority and one from the opposition, for their work in the Monitoring Committee.

Above all, however, I want to give a more general thanks to the Council of Europe and to the philosophy that drives the periodical review. I am happy that so many young people are here so they can hear what the real importance of the Council of Europe is, because even in such a positive report, practically devoid of critical issues, San Marino will learn something and try to improve itself furthermore, in order to continue to be an island of democracy, which also could be an example for the large and problematic countries - that are the ones which create friction and conflict among themselves and within themselves - which do not respect, sometimes, democratic principles, and sometimes not even the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights.

The way to make the hard work behind the monitoring mission effective in this specific case is not to look at the many positive aspects highlighted in the report, but to try to put a stop to the few flaws that are in it.

The Parliamentary Assembly has my word that the delegation will put all the pressure on the government and the parliament to take every step in this direction.

Thank you, everybody. Thank you, Chair.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister NICOLINI.

Mr Stefan SCHENNACH has the floor on behalf of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group.

You have the floor.

**Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you very much, Madam President.

Dear Colleagues,

On behalf of my political group, I would like to congratulate Mr Andrej HUNKO and all the previous rapporteurs on this report, which immerses us in a microstate that is also the oldest sovereign state and the oldest republic.

When a state is so small, one of the very important things is to truly create the separation of powers. When there is too much family connection between the executive, the legislature and the judiciary, then the separation of powers gets a little bit out of control.

What Mr Andrej HUNKO has also said here – what I find particularly important in this report – is that the Grand and General Council, its members, who have many tasks, is only a part-time parliament. That is, it is not clarified vis-à-vis the private sector that the members of the Grand and General Council also get the time made available for this from their companies. In the public sector, this is clearer, but I think much more needs to be done here.

We also see in San Marino that the executive doesn't wait that long for the parliament, but governs by decrees, and that is not a good democratic development. As the previous speaker Mr Marco NICOLINI says – and I have no doubt about this – the deputies of San Marino are doing everything to implement these recommendations.

They have also followed the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) recommendations with the ethics committee for the members of the Grand and General Council. At the same time, one would have to sharpen here, perhaps, a little bit more that there are also appropriate punishments with serious misconduct. That is missing at present.

Then, dear Mister Marco NICOLINI, an important question is the enforcement of women's rights in San Marino. Another question is how you deal with religious minorities; the other, how to deal with people who do not have San Marino citizenship.

These are questions of essential human rights. I understood that with citizenship in San Marino it's not so easy, otherwise you would be the same as Italy, and because everything surrounding is Italian.

I can only say hats off to you, San Marino. Hats off to you for what you are doing as parliamentarians. As the report takes San Marino seriously, we also take you seriously in your efforts.

I can only congratulate you.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** *Danke schön* ["Thank you" in German], Mister Stefan SCHENNACH.

Ms Isabel MEIRELLES has the floor on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

**Ms Isabel MEIRELLES (Portugal, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you, Madam President.

Dear Colleagues,

First of all, I must thank the rapporteurs on behalf of my political group of the European People's Party for this very precise and exhaustive work on San Marino's compliance with the obligations arising from its membership of the Council of Europe.

The Monitoring Committee has reviewed San Marino's compliance with its obligations and its democratic institutions and the rule of law in great depth. San Marino's unique and robust system of democratic institutions and the rule of law is well suited to its historical democratic heritage and the characteristics of its microstate status. At the same time, as already mentioned, there are peculiarities of these governmental structures that have also raised concerns about the effectiveness of the system of checks and balances in the country and the potential vulnerability of its democratic institutions and representatives to corruption and conflicts of interest.

Thus, the Commission makes a number of recommendations aimed at strengthening the system of checks and balances and the resilience of democratic institutions, including improving the working conditions of members of the Grand and General Council and, in particular, achieving greater equality between men and women. In this area, much remains to be done: for example, the proportion of women in the national parliament is only 33% and in the private sector 22%. Unemployment among women is 10.56% and among men only 4.7%.

In order to maintain its independence as a sovereign state in an increasingly interconnected and interdependent world, San Marino has nevertheless integrated fully into the international community and harmonised its institutions and legal framework with international standards. San Marino is to be commended for its efforts, despite the already noted difficulties of its microstate status, to ensure that its democratic institutions and legal framework still comply with international standards, in particular its obligations as a member State of the Council of Europe.

That is why we support this report.

Thank you and congratulations for this work.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Ms Isabel MEIRELLES.

I call Ms Valentina GRIPPO, on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

**Ms Valentina GRIPPO (Italy, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you, Chairman.

Colleagues,

As has been well said in the introductory report and as has emerged in the discussions of the Monitoring Committee, we are talking about a state whose democratic institutions not only have a very old tradition. It is the oldest sovereign state in existence in the world, as well as the oldest constitutional republic in the world. We are talking about a state, albeit a small one, of 30 000 inhabitants, where the issues of recognition of human rights, of recognition of democratic rights, are of a totally different nature than those we normally find ourselves discussing in this courtroom.

Of course, we appreciate very much the work of rapporteur Mr Andrej HUNKO and the others who worked on this report to emphasise how, even where democratic systems work, and people's rights are basically guaranteed. It is important to check and monitor the criticalities of those mechanisms, precisely because, where democracy works, we can make benchmarks, case studies to understand how to consolidate those democratic rules that we then have to consolidate so that states can respond in situations where, alas, the picture is much more complex and where essential rights are not guaranteed.

It is important to have explained how it is important to guarantee the balances between the powers and therefore the mechanism of the captains regent who are at the head of the executive but at the same time dictate the organisation of the [Grand and General] Council and therefore, in a way, reset to zero that necessary difference and distinction between powers that in a democracy is the guarantee of the balances.

Just as we agree it is right to have emphasised that given also the role that San Marino has assumed over the years in its own international politics, beginning with its presence here since 1988, in its role as an economic player in the world, how much perhaps the time has also come to professionalise the role of those who sit on the governing body so that they can emancipate themselves in part from their work and can dedicate themselves to this role in a more structured way.

One thing that has also struck me is the emphasis you have given to direct institutional consultation mechanisms, which need to be increased especially in their own consequences.

In general, thank you for the work. I express on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group our support for the report. We thank the whole group for their work.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Ms Valentina GRIPPO.

After the speakers on behalf of the political groups, we move on to the general list.

I give the floor to Ms Marica MONTEMAGGI from San Marino.

**Ms Marica MONTEMAGGI (San Marino, SOC):** Thank you Chairman, thank you to the speakers.

I want to immediately address my thanks to the speakers Mr Andrej HUNKO and Mr Joseph O'REILLY, and also to Mr Viorel-Riceard BADEA who previously worked on this, as well as to the officials.

I take this opportunity to thank everybody immediately for the work of these months.

I understand that it is not easy to approach what the issues and dynamics of a small state like San Marino are, which has 34 000 inhabitants, a size and interpersonal relations comparable to those of a small city, but with the complexities and responsibilities of a large state.

I believe that the visit and the meeting therefore with the authorities and civil society were fundamental in understanding precisely how important the balance of power is to guarantee independence and democracy.

Our history shows the ability and will of our small and free land to maintain itself as a republic.

Your report, objective and sharable, will allow us to dissect the issues and your concerns, and must lead us (political forces of majority and opposition) to an important internal political debate, so that freedom of expression, especially that of the citizens, is always guaranteed and not stifled by government action; so that our parliament can have the dignity it deserves, and not just curb the action of a government that too often acts by decree; so that civil society, which gathers in organisations or associations, can feel that it is truly an active part, alongside institutions and authorities, and are not excluded or silenced or feel threatened.

I would like to emphasise that if we have made great strides in recent years with regard to civil and women's rights, we owe it in part to the strong push from civil society.

Your report underscores just that: we have a great many tools of direct democracy through which citizens, or even a single citizen, can propose public interest actions directly to heads of state, so that they can take their petitions to the Grand and General Council during their term of office. And these instruments of democracy must be guaranteed, preserved and not dispersed because they are not implemented.

So I very much welcome your exhortation, just as I welcome your recommendation for effective independence of media authority.

We have historically lived through some very dark periods. I am referring to the moral question that erupted in the 2000s in which politics was also directly involved; I am referring for example to the Conto Mazzini case that you talk about in the report, which strongly shook public opinion and institutions and still represents a wound that is not completely closed; to the vulnerability of relations between the powers of the state; to the difficult and controversial independence of the judiciary, all factors that have contributed to urging a necessary regulatory revision, as well as your own monitoring.

So as a country we only want and need to go down one road, that of respecting the values of democracy, of transparency, of complying with the principles of those supranational and international bodies to which we belong and to which we want to belong.

It is not enough to announce democracy; we need to keep it alive, and to do that we need to always and constantly strive and never take any right for granted.

I thank the rapporteurs again for this great opportunity for discussion.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Ms Marica MONTEMAGGI.

I give the floor to Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO from Ukraine.

You have the floor.

**Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** Dear colleagues,

Dear rapporteur,

I want to congratulate you on a very positive report. It is always a pleasure to hear about a report that has no problems.

As rightly said, the only concern that we have heard is regarding the reimbursement and the possible payments for those who represent the state. We have learned, it is a very interesting fact that, unfortunately, those who represent San Marino, representatives of the San Marino State, are not paid for their job. I think, of course, there is definitely a risk of having certain corruption risks. This is something that I think, which is in the report, is important.

Other than that, I just want to, one more time, congratulate the rapporteur for the report and the San Marino delegation.

Thank you.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO.

The floor is given to Ms Arndís Anna KRISTÍNARDÓTTIR GUNNARSDÓTTIR. Sorry for the pronunciation.

You have the floor.

**Ms Arndís Anna KRISTÍNARDÓTTIR GUNNARSDÓTTIR (Iceland, SOC):** Thank you, Madam President.

As a citizen of another small state, I would like to address a bit the issues of small states and their challenges.

Among small states in Europe, Iceland is unique as well, for its extremely small population of about 380 000 people, geographical isolation, and relatively strong economy.

As noted in the draft resolution, we are discussing here the characteristics of San Marino as a very small state, microstate even, which have resulted in a very close proximity between the citizens and their political and governing structures. An equally close distance between the different branches of powers, which are often intertwined.

Small countries are not smaller versions of large countries. Differences between large and small states are not merely quantitative but also qualitative. In most cases, human, financial, and material resources in small states are limited, with the most important resource constraint being the shortage of human resources and the special social ecology that comes with it. Limited human resources in terms of small population have an impact on the functioning of the government, the private sector as well as the non-governmental sector.

Consequences of smallness for governance can be identified in four paradoxes relating to size, generalist administration versus specialist, informal versus formal governance, and centralisation versus decentralisation.

The shortage of human resources is one of the paradoxes of small states, meaning that the scarce human resources of a small state may work as an advantage and a disadvantage at the same time. For example, although there are fewer people to do the work, communication channels are shorter and there is more space for individualised decision making. In a small state, administrative processes are more personalised and the distance between different levels of government is smaller, which makes co-ordination processes faster.

Small states have unique social, political, and administrative characteristics, and they have to live with contradictory pressures.

Public organisations in small states face contextual issues that are significantly different from those of large countries, such as the high importance of individuals, multi-functionalism, and reliance on informal networks.

My point here is that the smallness of a country poses challenges, but also entails strengths that can be actuated to deal with the challenges.

It is clear from the report of Mr Andrej HUNKO and Mr Joseph O'REILLY that the particularities of a small state, in this case a microstate, have to an extent been utilised to create a developed system of democratic and rule of law institutions.

I thank the rapporteurs for the interesting report, and commend the state of San Marino for continuing on this path.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much, Ms Arndís Anna KRISTÍNARDÓTTIR GUNNARSDÓTTIR.

The floor is for Ms Hripsime GRIGORYAN from Armenia.

... Is she not here?

The list of speakers is, therefore, exhausted.

I call for the reply of the committee for 5 minutes.

Mr Mr Andrej HUNKO, to respond to the speakers, you have the floor.

**Mr Andrej HUNKO (Germany, UEL, Rapporteur):** Thank you very much, Madam President,

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for the friendly and interesting discussion, and perhaps a few thoughts and additions.

On the subject of small states, and Iceland – we also just talked about it – is after all also a small state that has a specific democratic tradition. I think what is special about San Marino and Iceland is not only are they small states that have special problems, but also that they have maintained a centuries-old republican tradition at a time when there have been quite different and terrible dictatorial developments in Europe. That really challenges my respect as well, so to speak.

Perhaps another addition, because it has not yet been mentioned. In San Marino there is a special system of representation of the state with the two *Capitani*, the *Due Capitani*, who rotate every six months to represent the state of San Marino, as well as a president, but as a duo, to represent the state internationally. This is also a very old tradition that arouses a lot of sympathy in me.

Women's rights have been mentioned. Of course, San Marino has traditionally been somewhat conservative, but recently there was a referendum there that liberalised the abortion law significantly. The right to make such developments by referendum also shows that this country can modernise itself, so to speak, and is also making progress along this path.

However, small states, whether they are large or small, have the same voting rights in the UN and also in the Council of Europe, in the Committee of Ministers, and that is also important. I am thinking, for example, of the treaty that came into force in the UN to ban nuclear weapons, after which 50 states ratified it, among them San Marino, and thus this number was reached. There is the same voting right, and that should also be respected. I am also grateful in this case, because I support this treaty.

Overall, as I said, I have been to San Marino twice. I also went to San Marino outside of this mandate in September 2020, because there was also a special situation there with regard to the pandemic, totally interesting discussions.

San Marino has also developed a creative way to deal with a very difficult situation. For me, it was a great experience. I am pleased that the colleagues from San Marino here are also reacting so positively to the critical points in this report.

I ask for your approval. Once again, thank you very much for the good co-operation.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister Mr Andrej HUNKO.

Mister Giuseppe FASSINO, you have the floor for 3 minutes.

**Mr Giuseppe FASSINO (Italy, Chairperson of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by member states of the Council of Europe):** Dear colleagues,

Earlier we discussed the periodic report. This is the fifth periodic report after the adoption of a new method of drafting our reports.

As Mr Marco NICOLINI has already pointed out, the idea of following the obligations of all member States of the Council of Europe has fully demonstrated its advantages. I remind you that before, the Monitoring Committee only reported on countries that had made specific commitments upon accession.

We have changed and are applying periodic monitoring to all Council of Europe member States. In my opinion, it is necessary to verify the respect of our statute, of the democratic rules, of the rule of law in all countries, whether they have a long democratic tradition or countries that are younger in their democratic life.

Moreover, these new methods allow us to better verify and know the specific conditions of each country, especially in the case of microstates, like San Marino. It is obvious that the monitoring activity has shown different problems more specific to a small country.

For example, the fact that the authorities are closer to the citizens is very positive.

At the same time, it is more difficult to maintain a clear distinction between the legislative and executive branches.

In a country that is very small, the reciprocal influence of the media is greater.

There are specific conditions that are good to look at. I think that the relationship that Mr Andrej HUNKO pointed out is very clear. I think that he has given an absolutely correct vision.

I congratulate Mr Andrej HUNKO for his report. I also congratulate the San Marino authorities who have co-operated to make this report.

I hope that the report can be approved unanimously in our Council of Europe.

Thank you.

## **Vote: The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by San Marino**

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mr Giuseppe FASSINO.

The discussion is closed.

The Monitoring Committee has presented a draft resolution to which no amendments have been tabled.

We shall therefore proceed to vote on the draft resolution contained in Document 15737. A simple majority is required.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I ask for the results to be displayed.

*The draft resolution contained in Doc. 15737 is adopted.*

Congratulations.

The next item of business this morning is the debate on the report, on behalf of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and the Media, on "Young people and the media" (Doc. 15726), to be presented by Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, and the oral opinion presented by Ms Sevinj FATALIYEVA on behalf of the Social, Health and Sustainable Development Committee.

We should have finished the list of speakers by about 12.30 p.m., and then we will hear the reply from the committee and take the necessary votes.

Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK, I remind you that you have 7 minutes to present your report and 3 minutes to reply to speakers at the end of the general discussion.

You have the floor, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK.

## **Debate: Youth and the media**

**Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE, Rapporteur):** Thank you, Madam Chair, dear colleagues.

Our work on the report on youth and the media that I present for adoption today was initiated more than two years ago in January 2021, with a motion for a resolution tabled by our former colleague Ms Tamar TALIAHVILI. She accomplished most of the preparatory work, but had to leave the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Pace having been appointed as the permanent representative of her own country Georgia to the Council of Europe. And actually, Tamar is here with us in this Parliamentary Assembly, let us greet her. It is very good that representatives of the Committee of Ministers are coming to hear their previous reports.

Therefore, Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN had the honour to take over in December 2022. Unfortunately, Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN had to return to Ireland yesterday; I will present her report to you, as a chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media.

This report has two aims.

Firstly, to assess the current challenges and opportunities associated with access, exposure and engagement of young audiences with a wide variety of mainstream and non-mainstream digital news sources.

Secondly, to provide member States with specific guidelines and recommendations in this respect.

Let me briefly inform you why we launched this report. For youth, social media is the preferred means of communication and creative expression and their go-to source of information, games and entertainment in general. Social media is also a tool for young people who increasingly want to have their say on today's issues and global challenges, such as human rights, environmental protection, sustainable development and peace.

Clearly, the development of digital networks has opened up a wealth of creative, educational, inclusive, diverse and revolutionary opportunities for youth empowerment. But technological change also throws up recent challenges, such as information disorder and regulatory gaps in digital spaces, mis- and dis-information, manipulation, incitement to violence, online harassment, isolation in "filter bubbles" and belief in conspiracy theories.

By design, technologies are likely to trigger addictive user behaviour, especially among the young. The safety issues related to illegal content, including cybercrime, pornography, cyberbullying and violence are also wide-ranging. There is also an economic dimension. Young people are involved in a variety of paid and unpaid economic transactions on the internet, including "aspirational labour" through creative expression on social media. These forms of free labour generate power asymmetries in the digital economy that lead to structural inequalities. Combating these kinds of labour exploitation is vital.

We need to be aware of these dangers and develop strategies to counter them while upholding young people's fundamental rights. The balance between freedom and regulation is fundamental and this is what we want to achieve with this report.

I wish to highlight some of the major issues raised by the report.

First, the news media usage. Social media is becoming the primary gateway to news and information. Young adults are more likely to come across news incidentally and they tend to prefer non-traditional new sources such as social media and blogs. The fact that professional journalists are not always perceived as relevant

news sources is concerning. Credible information also depends on credible journalists and there are ways to raise the profile of independent, community and local media projects by providing public funding to introduce reliance on advertisement.

In this respect, public service media play a crucial role in fostering professional journalists, but it is also up to the media themselves to bring their news formats, products and delivery up to date. And to find new ways of engaging and interacting with young audiences, including young people from minority backgrounds, who are deliberately turning to social networks.

Second, digital self-determination. Communicating online, watching videos and keeping up with the news at a fast pace has become the norm, with all the attendant security, digital privacy and reputational issues. Facebook repeatedly made misleading statements about the size of its audience, whereas TikTok literally pumped personal data out of the network by unlawfully collecting dates of birth, phone numbers and email addresses, as well as information on sexual orientation and religious beliefs and even the biometric data of millions of young users. This is why member States of the Council of Europe should align their national legislation with the standard set by the Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data, Convention 108 and its modernised version. This means, for example, introducing strict penalties for social media platforms when they engage in unfair commercial practices and collect and use data about minors for commercial purposes.

A major step that has been made at the EU level was the recent Digital Services Act; it would be a good idea to also extend its legislation to non-EU countries.

Third, harmful content: cyberbullying and toxic content are widespread in all European countries. Pornographic content is sadly a distinct but important part of cyberbullying. The dissemination of non-consensual pornography, such as upskirting, spycams, revenge porn and stolen images, but also the spreading of fake porn and deepfakes, are a rapidly growing phenomenon in Europe.

Intermediary service providers need to comply with the requirement to reduce the amount of this illegal content on their sites, notably through a "trusted flagger" mechanism, whereby entities who have been awarded the status in the member State on the basis of their expertise submit notices, and are treated as a priority.

A fourth issue is aspirational labour. Young people are contributing to a change in the economic landscape, providing labour for free in the hope of future payoff. They take risks and provide unpaid and underpaid labour with no guarantee of future earnings. A regulatory framework should be developed to correct the unbalanced power relationships between young people and corporate platforms with for-profit business models.

These are the most striking aspects of the report. The recommendations in the draft resolution seek to respect a balance between autonomy and responsibility. It is the duty of states, regulators, educators, civil society and private platforms to ensure that the young people of today are the informed and responsible adults of the future.

I thank you and urge you to support this report and resolution.

**Ms Edite ESTRELA (Portugal, SOC, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK.

Ms Sevinj FATALIYEVA, you have the floor to present the oral opinion of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development. You have 3 minutes, please.

**Ms Sevinj FATALIYEVA (Azerbaijan, EC/DA, Rapporteur for opinion):** Thank you, Madam Chair.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It's my pleasure to speak here on behalf of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development and the rapporteur for opinion Ms Ruth JONES. I would like to praise the rapporteur Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN for her well documented report on youth and media.

I appreciate the excellent approach to the topic, which has increasingly become an area of concern for a great number of parents and educators in the world and has been even truer during the Covid-19 pandemic and lockdowns. Internet and digital platforms have become the most widely used means of communicating and assessing and disseminating information in a broader sense.

The analysis benefits-risks of the increased use of digital media is thoroughly described.

I agree that social media is an important tool for young people who increasingly have their say in today's crucial issues and global challenges, including the environment, sustainable development, and human rights.

Nevertheless, social media also present risks that can be harmful for young people, such as disinformation, manipulation, incitement to violence, online harassment, and belief in conspiracy theories, to name but a few.

As the rapporteur pointed out, I'm also concerned by the rise of exposure to pornography and deepfakes, including pornographic ones that can be detrimental to the psychological development of children and young people.

I welcome the reference to this issue, because deepfake pornography can have devastating and lasting impacts, such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Concerning these suggested solutions, I do believe that it is useful to have robust overarching legislation, but at the same time we should be balanced in the way that we approach the targeted audience use, avoiding paternalistic lessons about the use of digital tools. This is simply because we cannot criticise youth for doing what quite a lot of us do. Who can say that they are not at all in the trend for news snacking?

Consider for example politicians who are always online, actually as is so often the case, digital skills and critical thinking are the basic means to tackle information disorder and harmful content.

The issue of routinely scrutinising for cyber bullying is a very sensitive and touchy one, because confidence is a key word for a good relation between healthcare professionals and young patients.

On the practical level, we are wondering how this can be done. Sometimes for young people, it is the only entry door to support, so there is an essential preliminary requirement for them. Healthcare professionals should be specifically trained.

In the past decade engagement on digital platforms and social media has been a crucial part of many young people's civic and political engagement. That was even truer in 2020, when the Covid-19 pandemic forced many activities to move online.

Finally, I want to stress that for many young people, social media is a critical part of their civic development that they are not getting from traditional media.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much, Ms Sevinj FATALIYEVA.

Now in the debate I call first Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU from Cyprus, who speaks on the behalf of the Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group - you have the floor.

**Mr Constantinos EFSTATHIOU (Cyprus, SOC, Spokesperson for the group):** Thank you, Mister chair.

Dear colleagues,

It is correctly stated that rapid technological advances and digital transformation have changed every aspect of our daily lives, affecting our financial, physical, mental, and social well-being.

In this digital environment, the production and dissemination of information through online media outlets has become mainstream, shedding the characteristics of traditional media, mainly those of accuracy and neutrality.

While most of us have experienced the drastic shift from traditional to digital media, this is not the case for the younger generations, which were born and were raised in the digital era.

However, technological change does not only bring advantage. It will also brings many risks and challenges.

According to the rapporteurs, many young people have not been taught media literacy and do not have good news consumption. They are easy targets for misinformation, manipulation, and exploration.

Offered global connection, endless information, and instant communication, our youth today has possibilities that we could only imagine in terms of their social engagement, entertainment, but also in terms of new opportunities to education and work.

However, with benefits come many risks. The challenge arising from the current digital media culture are countless and multifaceted.

Youth and small children are especially vulnerable because they lack the necessary awareness as well as tools and solutions to protect themselves against the many threats they face.

New strategies need to be developed based on equal access, broader knowledge, and the responsible engagement on their own life.

Action plans should focus on incorporating media education in school curricula that address specific issues such as cybercrime, pornography, tech obsession, and gaming addiction.

Raising awareness and developing the necessary skills should start at an early stage and age. At the same time, digital literacy could adapt to all ages separately, mindful of our generation gap.

Of course, the biggest challenge is whether we can make policy and decisions, adopt relevant legislation, and implement appropriate measures faster than the speed of technological advancements - or are we doomed to remain reactive to development and progress?

In the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe Resolution 2314 of 2019, we agreed that our children are the digital natives, and that our priority is to inspire them to become digital citizens and assume their responsibilities.

In this respect we must help them separate between good, evil, truth and lies, information from misinformation.

It is why we agree with the rapporteur when she states that the challenge of a sustainable equilateral approach is to strike a balance between ensuring minors' safe social media use and digital self-determination and, at the same time, protecting them from potentially harmful behaviours and other dangers, dangers emanating and coming from those who control the media and the flow of information.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mister Constantinos EFSTATHIOU.

Next we are going to listen to Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO from Ukraine, who speaks on behalf of the Group of the European People's Party.

You have the floor.

**Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO (Ukraine, EPP/CD, Spokesperson for the group):** Dear colleagues,

This report is important. It says lots of positive things about the role of media for youth but also mentions many negative very dangerous moments, when young people are suffering from social media.

One of these very negative impacts is the impact of social media on the mental health of young people.

According to all the statistics we see that social media contributes incredibly to depression, anxiety, or feeling loneliness, and also the inability to communicate with others in normal life, not only in a digital world.

Another very important negative impact on youth comes from the use of violence in the media. This is where I want to place special emphasis, because when we look at the numbers of which of the social media are most used by young people, we will see that usually it's TikTok, it's Instagram. When we look at what kind of policies they have...and they will have policies which will say that they prohibit the use of violence and any calls for discrimination or propaganda or anything militaristic.

Despite all of this, there is a lot of propaganda and the use of violence where children and teenagers are used for PR purposes of the war.

Something that really concerns many Ukrainians is how Russia is using social media and TikTok accounts to spread information about the Wagner terrorist groups. When we look at how many hashtags with Wagner or anything about Mr Vladimir Putin that TikTok is using, we will be shocked.

It looks like, unfortunately, the policies that exist in social media are not fully fulfilled. I think it's very important that we, in this Parliamentary Assembly, make a call [that] all the social media platforms implement non-violent policies, where terrorist groups simply won't be allowed to be viewed by anyone - including children, who are in a very dangerous group via this impact.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO.

Now I call in the debate Ms Sona GHAZARYAN from Armenia, who speaks on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe.

You have the floor.

**Ms Sona GHAZARYAN (Armenia, ALDE, Spokesperson for the group):** Honourable Chair,

Dear Colleagues,

I would like to express my gratitude, first of all, to Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK for taking the floor for her speech.

I would also like to thank Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN for her excellent analysis on the topic of youth in media.

Media can provide young people with an excellent platform for networking, for self-expression. It can be a good platform to gain new skills and knowledge.

However, dear friends, it can be a source of mental health issues, as Ms Yelyzaveta YASKO mentioned. It can violate young people's privacy and personal data, and promote illegal content. That should be a priority for us as members of national parliaments.

It is critical that young people be aware and informed about the regulators; that they are here or are to be here to protect their rights.

For us as lawmakers, it should be essential to keep in mind that we should maintain a delicate balance between freedom and regulation. We must ensure that young people's creative potential in the digital environment is not hindered or economically exploded.

It is also important to note that children and young people are faced with an information overload, be it TikTok, Instagram, a bunch of influencers, visual blockers, promoting sometimes even very harmful narratives on social media, such as toxic advertising, pornography, and body shaming. Regulating this harmful content is critical.

Furthermore, in the digital ecosystem, cyberbullying, online harassment and cyberaggression come in various forms, including hacking into other accounts, disseminating photos or videos online, spreading dangerous materials online, etc. Young people must be protected from such behaviour.

It is also the responsibility of us states, lawmakers, regulators, educators, civil society, platforms, and private platforms, to ensure that young people are well-informed and responsible adults in the future.

Friends,

We should work together to protect our young people.

As a conclusion, I would like to quote our friend Ms Petra STIENEN, who put it very nicely in our political team meeting. She nicely noted that media is like a knife: you can cut a cake with it, but you also can kill a person with it. This is all about the matter of usage.

I call on us to work with people to use the media properly.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Ms Sona GHAZARYAN.

Next in the debate I call Ms Nicole HÖCHST from Germany, who speaks on behalf of the European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance.

You have the floor.

**Ms Nicole HÖCHST (Germany, EC/DA, Spokesperson for the group):** Mister President,

Dear Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The topic of young people and the media is an area of great tension. I would, therefore, like to focus on a few points that, in my opinion, cannot be emphasised highly enough.

First, dealing with the media has to be taught and learned. Adolescents must develop a sense of whether they are being manipulated by the media, who might benefit from it, and for what reason. They must learn to do research and not blindly fall for propaganda or so-called fact finders and desired but fabricated truths.

That is, adolescents must learn to form their own opinions. That is very difficult when, for example, as in times of Corona lockdowns, they are thrown back on pure media consumption and do not have to listen to opposing positions, nor do they have to think or discuss along with them.

My second point concerns physical and mental health. In times of digitisation, children and adolescents are already showing psychological and physical damage from sitting still for hours in front of a digital device, which is increasingly being used for school lessons, media consumption, and leisure time.

Movement, however, is not only absolutely beneficial to physical health, but also to the neuronal networking of the brain. In other words, the less pupils and adolescents move, the more under-complex thought processes are demonstrably structured, and the more health problems accumulate.

Third, teaching and learning. The uncontrolled proliferation of digital media in the classroom threatens the educational opportunities of many students. Good teaching is characterised by direct contact between competent teachers and students who have sufficient time for their students, and by good lesson preparation. Online learning and the use of media merely offer a supplement to this, and cannot replace the analog conditions for good teaching.

We see opportunities and limits in the future use of artificial intelligence in schools and media, for example, in the form of language models such as ChatGPT. In any case, students must be empowered to use this medium critically and competently, just like everyone else. Against this background, it is more urgent than ever to impart and consolidate a good general education and the ability to think analytically that makes this possible.

Children and adolescents need humanistic education and independent thinking that is not guided by outside interests in order to deal confidently with digitality and media.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Madam Nicole HÖCHST.

Next in the debate I call Ms Jódís SKÚLADÓTTIR from Iceland. And she speaks on behalf of the Group of the Unified European Left - you have the floor.

**Ms Jódís SKÚLADÓTTIR (Iceland, UEL, Spokesperson for the group):** Mister President,

Dear Colleagues,

Our group supports the spirit of this resolution and thanks the rapporteur and her team for the important work on this timely and comprehensive report.

We consider it important to underline that even if the media empower youth and even if young people use social media far more than older people, youth and young people should equally be given enough opportunity and stimulated to participate in real life through other means than the internet.

We urge consideration of some additional points which benefits all users of online media.

Member States should ensure that the implementation of legislation in respect of freedom of information requirement is prioritised.

Member States must resist the criminalisation of Journalism and protect journalists and their sources from politically motivated persecution.

Member States must be vigilant to covert manipulation and soft pressure, as well as the misuse of anti-terror legislation.

We urge to be more cautious when it comes to the call to provide financial support to fact checking initiatives to counteract mis- and disinformation.

Practice and experience show that these measures can be intentionally or unintentionally used to take us down the slippery slope towards censorship of public debate, whether done through political pressure or disguised as fact-checking efforts to counter misinformation and disinformation.

The sinister reality about so-called fact-checking initiatives, as we have particularly noticed during elections, times of war, and more recently during the Covid-19 pandemic is that political opponents, unpopular ideas, and diverse voices can be silenced in the name of preserving truth.

Media organisations should be encouraged to maintain high standards in public debate so as to avoid misinformation and disinformation.

This Assembly has taken a strong stance against this and in particular against the silencing of journalists for simply reporting truthful information. Censorship, we know, can take place without the need for any official ban.

Thank you, Mister President, for allowing me to make my first contribution to this Assembly.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** May I congratulate you on your maiden speech in this Parliamentary Assembly, Madam Jódís SKÚLADÓTTIR. We are looking forward to hearing from you more often in the future. Well done.

Now in the debate I call Ms Luz MARTINEZ SEIJO from Spain.

You have the floor.

**Ms Luz MARTINEZ SEIJO (Spain, SOC)\*:** Thank you Mister President,

First of all I want to congratulate the rapporteur – Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN – great job. Sorry you're not here. I want to congratulate you not only for the relevance and timeliness of the report, but also because of its multifaceted impact on young people.

It's a fact that more and more information is available, we have different resources and technologies, and young people are increasingly proficient with digital formats – much more than the adult population. They access information adults cannot find and discover new options and potential. It is positive that so much information flows and is increasingly accessible.

However, there is an increasing amount of harmful content and families, parents or adults can't be standing over the shoulders of young people, supervising them and trying to prevent them accessing damaging information, or the kind of information which they don't have enough education or the capacity to understand. That is why it is important that we have filters, and we create safeguards in order to prevent misinformation and manipulation, and also put in place filters for certain damaging messages that could affect the development of young people. We need filters to protect the principles and values that we champion here in the Council of Europe, the democratic values of respect, tolerance and equality.

The best tool here is education: schools should help with developing a civic and critical mindset, allowing young people to distinguish truth from lies, the value of balance and being able to reason and to think before acting, and not necessarily taking new information at face value, but checking first.

Social media are a space of communication and a socialisation for young people, and have become all the more so in the wake of the pandemic. They are a basic tool for communication, but also for conflict and even bullying among young people. Once again, this is at times an adverse and difficult environment, one that adults cannot supervise. There is a need for privacy and space for young people, including on social media where young people have their own username and password. But at the same time, just as networks have a role in socialisation, they can damage many young people. We have even got private messages which are

made public, we have got the kind of content which is damaging, which ridicules and even harasses young people. There is direct or indirect intimidation via computers, email mobile phones, forums, social media and blogs, and the like.

These are very common practices, with a lack of face to face contact. Messages stay online for a long time, often available to an undesired audience whose access is difficult to control.

So, new problems need a new form of action, interdisciplinary action.

It is the education system which needs to give us the necessary instruments to provide education for democratic citizenship, the content needed to reach civic proficiency, as well as protocols for zero tolerance of any form of bullying – and that includes cyberbullying.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** *Many thanks [in Spanish],* Ms Luz MARTINEZ SEIJO.

Now in the debate, I call Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA from Ukraine - you have the floor.

**Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA (Ukraine, EPP/CD):** Thank you, dear President.

I would like to congratulate the committee and the rapporteur who is replaced today by Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK. All the Secretariat has been working on the numerous issues which are linked to democracy, and at the same time the absence of democracy.

Sometimes the controlling functions which are linked to the media are banning freedom of speech. At the same time, in the world in which we live, we cannot distinguish what democracy is or what is happening to the roots and causes of non-implications of democracy.

We really have to take control measures. Sometimes it is also linked to religion or views or drama which is happening to youngsters and to people who are still in search of their own identities and personalities. This is also a question of democracy.

Surely, the current different crises we're facing - for instance the armed conflicts or the revolutions or anything which have the implications of the European Charter of Human Rights, for instance Article 11, the right for peace demonstrations - those calls were emerging from social media, from the media of the new generations. They were calling the people on the streets for democracy to exercise their rights, and those were youth representatives in the first place.

One of the greatest examples was very well known in the modern history of our continent, which is the Revolution of Dignity from 2014 in Ukraine. It overlapped further to various kinds of Russian aggression, and touched upon, colleagues - according to the UN estimations with the recent great invasion of February 2022 - 94 states and 1.7 billion people on planet Earth. It does have implications in media, in democracy, and in the understanding of youth.

I also want to congratulate and to inform you, dear colleagues, about our new laws on youth which we implemented just a couple of years ago, given an opportunity for funded project.

I would like to congratulate the Council of Europe and the Parliamentary Assembly for the Council of Europe for its continuous support of youth and media projects, which are rolling.

Even even our interventions are the part of media, in the part of how we articulate our values and decisions.

Thank you to the committee, to the rapporteur, and to you, the President.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Ms Mariia MEZENTSEVA.

Now we are going to listen to Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV from Azerbaijan - you have the floor.

**Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV (Azerbaijan, ALDE):** Thank you, President.

Dear colleagues,

Youth and the media have always been connected with each other, and the media, by essence, signifies youth. The history of the press also demonstrates that it was created and moved forward even in the most complicated times, usually by young, energetic people. However, modern, already digitised, network media with wings that make it possible to fly to the most distant expanses such as the internet, of course, are more than ever associated with young people.

In other words, young people unconditionally dominate the modern media space both as users and as creators. Needless to say, if we study social networks from the most approximate statistical point of view, it will be determined that people over 40–50 years old make up a small proportion compared to young people.

Well, what is the level of content control in youth media, notably in electronic media which have long surpassed print media in coverage and speed? This is not about political control and censorship, but about literary, spiritual, scientific and cultural editing.

Currently, there is practically no such control. Therefore, in the space of electronic media, along with materials of a high intellectual level, extremely useful and high from a scientific and artistic point of view, we often come across works that belittle the taste of the illiterate, simplistic, flawed, insufficiently trained masses, and present primitiveness as the norm.

Nonetheless, there is a more dangerous trend: the spread of deliberately destructive, false, misleading and harmful materials. Certainly, much more dangerous materials that incite and promote aggression, cruelty, crime and various addictions are aimed at children, adolescents and young people, whose consciousness is easier to influence.

How to protect young people from these in the media? Currently, the media space is like a door without a lock, a stage without a curtain. Once everyone opens this door, the whole landscape will appear before them without any obstacles. That is, it seems impossible to protect young people from the harm they might face in the media space.

In my opinion, the way out is to remove anonymity, so that some order appears, and more responsibility and accountability in joining this common space for all, in posting materials. Mechanisms of registration on the internet and verification of this reality should be developed.

In this case, since the person addressing the youth and the whole society is known in the media, his ability to make any speech that may entail legal liability will be at least as limited as possible. The modern mass media are the most important and indispensable place for young people to express themselves. However, protecting young people from unwanted influence in this empty space is a responsibility and a duty that should always be kept in focus.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you Mr Rafael HUSEYNOV.

Next in the debate, I call Ms Boglárka ILLÉS from Hungary.

You have the floor, Madam.

**Ms Boglárka ILLÉS (Hungary, EC/DA):** Thank you, Mister Chair,

We are experiencing difficulties which we, our generation, believed we would never see and never experience. The priorities among problems and challenges were totally changed. Unfortunately, we could not focus on those questions which were previously the most important, for example, how the media affects our life, mostly the development of youth and children. I would like to congratulate the rapporteur on choosing this very important topic because the media is not only surrounding us but it has become an integral part of our lives.

Hungarian young people aged between 15 and 29 have more and more information communication devices in their homes and tend to have more of their own devices.

In 2012, a narrow third of young people aged between 15 and 29 in Hungary had a smartphone. By 2020, almost everyone did.

When we talk about the dangers of the digital world, we have to think first about the quality and quantity of time spent with digital tools. I think the key distinction between a book or a toy and TV or a tablet play session seems to be in who is controlling the youth or the child's attention, because the lack of conscious observance can lead to the development of rudimentary problems that later cause other health-damaging effects.

Although the internet offers many opportunities for young people to form relationships with others, the possibility of loneliness is still there because of the majority of digital conversations instead of personal relationships. I think we have to bear this in our minds or we always have to ask ourselves the question while we are dealing with this critical issue and we are looking for the answers.

Will it be enough? Will it only be a symptomatic treatment or have we found the real roots of the problem and a real solution?

Because I think the right question to ask is whether interactivity has an impact on children and youth's developing abilities to pay attention and self-regulate. It is necessary to form sustaining communities in order to reduce the risk of loneliness and to have a meaningful life and personal conversations.

Thank you for your attention.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Ms Boglárka ILLÉS, it's a beautiful name. Well.. I have to do with "Tiny KOX".. that's..

Next in the debate, I call another person with a beautiful name: Mr Stefan SCHENNACH from Austria - you have the floor.

**Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC):** Thank you, Mister President.

First of all, I have to say I was really deeply impressed by this report that Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN has presented here. It is to the point, but it also shows two sides.

One, it increases the opportunity for young people to participate politically, but it also increases the risk of manipulation. On the one hand, if we look at countries like Iran, for example, we only get the information through the social web. On the other hand, we have member States where the government has complete control over the media. This is the only way young people can get other information, and of course, we have a huge danger of manipulation here.

Right-wing and extreme right-wing parties in Europe in particular know how to play this piano magnificently. I can only tell of one example. In Austria, a report came that refugees had attacked a supermarket in the province of Styria, with 8 000 duplications within one hour. The police responded to that. Not a single supermarket had been raided in the entire country. That [fact] was only forwarded 115 times.

This is an extreme way to manipulate. What we need is to learn in school the competence to deal with the social web and the internet. In many cases parents can't do that because they don't have the knowledge themselves. We need to protect children and young people from bullying, for example. We need to tell them what photos and what is not advisable to upload, because the internet doesn't forget anything. The providers, here we need a legal system. Reports that are false, reports that spread hate must also be deleted. We need a European, if not an international, legal situation here.

It must also be clear that these many influencers, who all have advertising contracts in the background... Young people do not realise at all that they are victims of advertising manipulation, which is also a very important point. The last one, last but not least, if you go on TikTok in such a free and friendly way, that this has something to do with siphoning off data and that another state, China, has access. Here we need not only a European, but an international solution as far as data protection and TikTok is concerned.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much, Mr Stefan SCHENNACH.

And now I call in the debate Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA from Ukraine - you have the floor.

**Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA (Ukraine, ALDE):** Thank you, dear Mister President, dear colleagues,

First of all, thank you very much Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK and Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN for this excellent work.

Today's debate is very important for us as parliamentarians from different perspectives.

First,

Young people are our future and they will decide what Europe, our countries, will look like, what values will be cherished and how society will develop. But it's our duty to prepare them, to train them properly, to ensure their rights are guaranteed and fulfilled, their minds are clear and open to pursue the journey of humanity in strong democratic path, with values of equality, diversity, freedom, mutual respect, solidarity and rule of law.

Media literacy and digital hygiene will definitely safeguard our democracies, our values we stand for, the human rights of speech and expression.

I strongly support the call of the Parliamentary Assembly on operators to ensure the protection of young people's data and privacy and to regulate illegal content.

There must be boundaries.

The internet is global. This means the responsibility for what content is being shared and offered for easy access should be a global common responsibility. This means strengthening our cyber security borders in our countries, their close collaboration strengthens the recognition of the digital and data integrity violation.

This means also putting more efforts to the protection of the personal data of young people in digital environments, which are at serious risk of altering, manipulating, and exploitation.

This is about the human right to be safe within physical and digital environments. We, in Ukraine, know very well how easy it is to brainwash people digitally, especially using social media bot forms, paid bloggers and influencers to change their opinion, not on buying or not buying certain things, but on very serious issues: national security and territorial integrity.

Young people, especially without proper education or training, can be easily [influenced] in many ways, also with Russian propaganda on the war. So the work on their re-integration and mental recovery from all the Russian media propaganda processing will be on us.

It will be serious mental re-integration. And the media can play a positive role here, not stigmatising, but supporting, educating, explaining, and helping.

I am optimistic and believe that new media can bring and empower young people, can sustain true democracy and fundamental freedoms in real ethical and respectful discussion on its common duty of states and regulation.

So thank you very much.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, dear Ms Yuliia OVCHYNNYKOVA.

Next in the debate, I call Ms Iryna KONSTANKEVYCH from Ukraine - you have the floor.

**Ms Iryna KONSTANKEVYCH (Ukraine, EC/DA):** Mister Chairman,

Dear Colleagues,

Russia's war against Ukraine has shown that the aggressor carries out activities not only on the battlefield but also in the information space. One of the forms of Putin's strategy is to destabilise Ukrainian society through the minds and souls of young people. Russian propaganda penetrates the information space of Ukraine and distorts reality, spreading racist information and speeches. Russian propaganda acts in a powerful way in the countries of the Western world.

In February 2023, the Russian youth subculture Redan spread rapidly in Ukraine through social networks. Members organised mass brawls in public places. Their provocation among youth, established by police and cyber police, was an attempt by Russian propagandists to conduct another psychological information operation and seize the opportunity to profile youth to destabilise Ukraine.

Youth is a risk group that is most often influenced by Russian propaganda in the media. We see all the dangers at the state level. We are trying to counter them, appropriate institutions have been created.

However, it is difficult to resist the powerful Russian propaganda machine. Russia spends a lot of money and can take advantage of huge propaganda opportunities in the media. Russian propaganda in the information space is powerful and toxic. Ukraine and the world around it see takeovers in front of them. Therefore, it is important to emphasise and jointly create safe conditions for young people in the information space, teach them media consumption skills and support the creation of new media projects.

All this is an integral part of training in a secure information environment and, at the same time, the security of Western democracies and the rule of law.

PACE has shown unity on many issues concerning the isolation of Russia for its aggression. Protecting young people in the media space should be the next step.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** *Thank you, dear Ms Iryna KONSTANKEVYCH. [in French]*

Next in the debate, I call Ms Tarja FILATOV from Finland.

... but I do not see her in the hemicycle.

*Then the next speaker is Mr Simon MOUTQUIN from Belgium. [in French]*

*The floor is yours. [in French]*

**Mr Simon MOUTQUIN (Belgium, SOC):** Thank you, Mister President.

I would like to warmly thank the rapporteur and the person who brought the report today.

I believe that the issue of access to reliable information on social networks has become crucial today. Today, of course, more measures are needed so that young people can consume quality content and spot fake information.

I would like to remind you, to remind us, that we didn't have to wait for social networks to propagate "fake news", nor for young people to be harassed, or to see the development of addictions in our youth. No, in fact, social networks are only an amplifier of the realities of our society. They exacerbate the worst and the best.

You are right to underline the creative potential of young people that we must also thank today. We must thank them, these young influencers who, with their knowledge and their creativity, also spread information, sometimes critical thinking, and allow young people to stay connected to realities.

Of course, TikTokers, YouTubers or influencers can be sources of misinformation but, again, they are only the simple reflection of our society. Nothing is black or white. We should rather encourage and accompany, rather than stigmatise and generalise.

While populists are finally taking hold everywhere on the continent, in governments sometimes, they too propagate false information and refuse the many nuances of our society. So, I ask myself the question: aren't some politicians sometimes more dangerous than influencers?

In the same way, it is, of course, important to question the relations between social networks, information and private companies, but again, let's look at our society. Don't some TV channels, media groups, belong to billionaires who also influence the quality of information?

Moreover, as a rapporteur on the mental health of young people, I recognise that social media can have a negative impact on the illusions they provide, on a false sense of well-being, but they can also sometimes bring young people out of their isolation, promote encounters or enable expression. As such, behind this debate between "Youth and the media", I think that we too, as political leaders, have a big job to do in reconnecting with youth so that they feel more listened to and less marginalised.

Social networks certainly create illusions, but it is also because the reality of young people today is not always happy: the climate crisis, anxiety, confinements, the fact of accepting to be who you are. Finally, this is also what needs to be brought to our attention: the fact that an entire youth in Europe no longer feels connected to the political world, because they also live in fears that are legitimate and that they express on social networks.

I really encourage us to work on this question of the link between the youth and the future that we promise them, which, unfortunately, is not always rosy.

I thank you for this.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** *Thank you, dear Mister Simon MOUTQUIN. [in French]*

Now I call in the debate Ms Olena MOSHENETS from Ukraine - the floor is yours.

**Ms Olena MOSHENETS (Ukraine, ALDE):** Thank you.

I thank the rapporteur for raising such an important topic at today's meeting.

Uman: a Russian missile hit a residential building and 10 people died.

Dnipro: Russia killed a two-year-old child and a woman.

Ukrainka: a 13-year-old girl was injured.

These are the first headlines I saw this morning. "Not enough, the building should be destroyed to the foundations", and "Ukrainians should suffer", were the comments from ordinary Russian social media users.

After killing Ukrainian civilians in Uman, the Russian Ministry of Defense published a post with the caption: "Right on target", meaning our children and people.

There is a well-known saying: "when arguments end, the guns begin".

It illustrates how the Russian military and political mission kills Ukrainians and distorts reality with the help of powerful manipulation, fake news, misinformation and propaganda. The youth is extremely vulnerable to digital threats.

As the resolution states, young people are exposed to a large amount of information and narratives promoted on social networks. This is used by the aggressor state to influence a whole generation of Ukrainians. Meanwhile, surveys conducted in Ukraine show a lack of critical-thinking skills among young people. This leads to a serious problem. Working on an information space that is free of Russian influence is the priority for the Ukrainian side. In particular, the Ministry of Culture and Information Policy of Ukraine has a centre for strategic communication that has been developing state communications for two years to counter disinformation, refute Russian manipulation, and strengthen the resilience of Ukrainians to external information threats.

Information threats know no borders and reach even the most remote corners. To prevent such manipulation, we need to develop media literacy and a media ecosystem that will provide high-quality news and improve critical thinking among young people across Europe.

Thank you for your attention.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for your intervention.

Now I call in the debate Mr Percy DOWNE from Canada, from our observer state Canada.

Percy, you have the floor.

**Mr Percy DOWNE (Canada):** Thank you, Mister President.

I would like to thank the rapporteur for her report, which highlights important trends in information sharing.

In my remarks I would like to address social media bias.

With the increased adoption of media platforms as such as YouTube, Twitter, Facebook and TikTok, the consumption of news has shifted from the more legacy-media space to digital spaces.

A recent report from a Statistics Canada survey found that in our country the most common method for following news and current affairs by Canadians was the internet, with 80% of respondents following the news on the internet.

However, younger Canadians, aged 15 to 34, were even more likely to rely on online news, with 95% choosing the internet as their main source of information.

With this reliance on online sources, concerns over the effect of new media bias are intensified.

It is difficult to eliminate bias completely, but back in the days of newspapers with large circulations, we were at least forced to see articles beyond our preferred topic or opinions. When I opened my newspaper every morning, I read editorials that sometimes did not reflect my personal views. It gave me an understanding about other positions, and it gave me a more objective and comprehensive understanding of the various issues of the day.

The same experience was with TV news, which was at a set time. A recent study investigated how different social media affects what they call "filter bubbles formations", where users become intellectually isolated due to overexposure to ideas that align with their pre-existing beliefs.

Among its conclusions, it found that users with more extreme views were shown less-diverse content, and at a higher click-through rate than users with less-extreme views.

This means that social media was creating filter bubbles in an effort to improve users' experience, potentially leading to the amplification of a single narrative and the reinforcement of one's own bias.

Of course, we all know that social media may also cause the spread of disinformation and low quality content, which is why regulation is essential.

In Canada we are currently considering two bills related to regulating social media platforms. We are trying to find the right balance of protecting free speech and preventing the harm that platforms may cause, which is why we are paying close attention to the recommendations and examples shared in this forum.

Thank you for your report and for this discussion today.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** And thank you, dear Mr Percy DOWNE, for your contribution.

I may use this opportunity to thank the whole Canadian delegation which has been here with us during the week with a large quantity and – I do not know if I am allowed to say – with also a large quality. We are most happy to have you here.

And now we are going to listen to another observer state representative, Mr Héctor VASCONCELOS from Mexico - you have the floor.

**Mr Héctor VASCONCELOS (Mexico)\*:** Mister President,

In this session I will only outline one negative effect of digital media on young people.

Paradoxically, the greatest technological progress humanity has ever witnessed has brought with it an unprecedented way of relating to the media, particularly for the new generations.

What we are seeing is the abandonment of consumption of traditional print media – such as books, magazines, and newspapers – giving way to an increasingly overwhelmingly consumption of digital media on various electronic devices: cell phones, computers, or televisions.

The implications of the new way of consuming this information and consequences for younger generations are harmful, and in my opinion have not yet been sufficiently considered.

I will mention just a few of them:

Individual freedom of choice, which is a central element of post-enlightenment western civilisation, is beginning to be abandoned. We are now placing our trust in an algorithm which restricts the viewer to the digital content that it presents to us. Inputs for critical thinking are affected by a system that equates priority issues with banal issues, or serious research with fake news.

On top of all of this is the sheer mass of content to which young people are exposed. According to recent studies, about 5 seconds is the average attention span of users. That is the time they spend looking at a message, a photograph, or a video.

So what can we expect from a generation which is incapable of concentrating on a subject for more than a few seconds, or a few minutes. What is humanity's fate to be, if its young people are not able to read *The Divine Comedy* or *King Lear* in their entirety, but not able to focus their attention on Beethoven's 9th Symphony, or Marla's 2nd, or listen for more than 4 hours to *Tristan and Isolde*?

This implies that the society of the future will be bereft of the most intense and meaningful experiences of human kind.

The very decency of civilisation drifts when its new generations are incapable of enjoying its highest expressions, or when its appreciation ceases to be a matter of their own judgment, and becomes something that is dictated by a machine.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Many thanks, Héctor [*in Spanish*]

May I also use this opportunity to thank the Mexican delegation for being present during this week also in a large quality and a large quantity.

I had the pleasure to meet with your delegation during the week.

Thank you very much for being here with us and contributing.

You spoke about having an attention of 5 seconds but you had our attention for a full 180 seconds - nowadays that means something!

Next in the debate, I call Mr John HOWELL from the United Kingdom - you have the floor.

**Mr John HOWELL (United Kingdom, EC/DA):** Thank you very much, Mister President.

I have to say that, and I confess this, that I feel very old in participating in this debate.

I also feel a very strange to this subject, because I do not use any social media. I have given up the use of social media, because of the aggression and of the hatred that was shown on it to me and to my colleagues.

I admit fully that there is a crucial role that we have to play in designing the rules that apply to social media, particularly for young people.

If there is one sentence in the resolution today that I think is most important, it is this: "the Parliamentary Assembly considers it vital to ensure safe social media use for young people". The emphasis on the word "safe" there is, I think, absolutely crucial.

One of the major points that I would like to make is in relation to the news media, and to the potential that there is for disinformation and inaccurate reporting.

We are all used to newspapers taking a particular political stance. I would not wish to challenge that, and I would not wish to challenge that in relation to social media either.

In relation to social media, it should be clear where that political stance is coming from. That is very difficult to know with established media. I used to work for the British Broadcasting Corporation, but I find when I look at it, at its social media, that it is very difficult to tell what is a real news piece and what is a piece of misinformation.

I think this report also rightly points to the addictive nature of these technologies and asks us to take a view on them. With that, it also takes a view on radicalisation and particularly on the role that pornography can play in all of this.

I do think that one of the most important areas is in relation to consumers. Young people use these channels to buy a lot of goods for themselves and for their families. What is hidden behind that consumerism is sometimes dangerous, and sometimes one of the things that we should take action against.

In conclusion, I think that this paper addresses a lot of good information on this, and I fully support it.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Mr John HOWELL.

Now we are going to this to Ms Arndís Anna KRISTÍNARDÓTTIR GUNNARSDÓTTIR.

You have the floor.

**Ms Arndís Anna KRISTÍNARDÓTTIR GUNNARSDÓTTIR (Iceland, SOC):** *Thank you, Mister President [in French].*

Thank you to the rapporteurs for this interesting and important report.

I have not prepared a speech for this topic, apologies to our amazing interpreters here.

I would just like to emphasise one thing in this discussion, which is our responsibility and opportunities to educate our children. It is of course very important to make sure that our children are safe on the internet, but they also need to be educated, not only about the dangers and challenges of technology and the internet, but also about the things that they are curious about and they seek information on, from people other than their parents or their teachers if this is not guaranteed.

Research that was done in Iceland showed that children and young teenagers get their sexual education from pornography, unfortunately. This is their first contact, very often. I think it was the vast majority of children that got their first information on sexual education from pornography.

Of course, we need to find ways to protect our children from things that they are not ready to understand, but we also need to be aware of our responsibility in educating our children early enough about the things that they are naturally curious about.

This is the point that I would like to emphasise here, as there is, of course, no solution in trying to limit access to information that people, including children, are determined to find and reach. So we need to take this role extremely seriously. This is the only point I want to make in this discussion.

Thank you again to the rapporteurs.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you for this most relevant addition to the debate.

Next on my list is Ms Lisa Marie Ness KLUNGLAND from Norway.

I do not see her on her seat. Is she sitting somewhere else?

As that is not the case, we come to the last speaker in our debate. That's, again, the speaker of our observer state Mexico.

I give the floor to Mr Éctor Jaime RAMÍREZ BARBA.

**Mr Éctor Jaime RAMÍREZ BARBA (Mexico)\*:** Mister President, a very good morning to you.

We celebrate this particular resolution that has been submitted by the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, led by Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN, on the topic of youth and the media.

The digital world is a tool that has had a positive impact on humankind, but there are very concerning issues that involve young people. It is important for public authorities to guarantee the protection of data and the regulation of illegal content, like pornography and the quality of information they are exposed to.

The pandemic, of course, led to young generations turning even more so to the digital world for recreation, academic activities, and family life. The use of technology has become absolutely indispensable to keep us connected as well, but it has also also made us susceptible to misinformation and disinformation.

Instant connectivity and immediate responsiveness overstimulate the brain, causing technology addiction. What's more, the information overload of influencers who disseminate disinformation, toxic advertising, fake news and even illegal content creates a vulnerable environment so that young people can restrict their daily use and discriminate correctly the information that they are bombarded with.

We support the Assembly to guarantee the safe use of social media for young people and promote a correct use in social, economic and political life, since it is absolutely indispensable for their physical and mental health.

They must also feel represented politically, and all sources of information on digital platforms must provide quality information and are properly age-controlled.

Young people are the main drivers of sharing, production and information, i.e. content creators. This could be considered aspirational work that does not require specific studies. According to a study on influencers carried out by Morning Consult, 54% of young people between 13 and 38 years of age want to become influencers on digital media.

In Mexico, according to the 2020 INEGI study, 14.5% of young people from 12 to 17 use the internet and 89% of them use these types of ICT technologies daily.

It is necessary to focus, to have a regulatory framework in all countries to guarantee the safe use of these types of platforms and young people's self-determination, as well as protecting ourselves from toxic content and behaviour. This is a human right that will protect the correct social, human, and political development of this population group, not only in Europe but throughout the world.

Thank you very much.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much Mr Éctor Jaime RAMÍREZ BARBA [*in Spanish*] for your contribution to the debate.

That ends the list of speakers.

I'm happy that we could accommodate everybody.

I now call Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK to reply to the debate in your position as rapporteur; you now have 3 minutes.

**Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media):** Thank you, dear Colleagues,

I'll try to be even briefer.

Thank you for participating in this debate.

It's always good to see so many people on Friday, at the last debate of the session. It just proves again that the topic that was chosen and the report that was written is very relevant.

It's even more relevant for us, for you to work and to speak on this topic, because we have youngsters on the balcony of this building, listening to a part of this conversation.

Actually, what we do is for you: for your safety, for you to feel confident in your life.

That's about this institution. It does do practical things. We're doing practical things for you.

We'll come back to our national parliaments and maybe, you know, work on a national level to ensure a safe space for young people in social media, and in the countries where they live.

I totally agree with many things that were said, especially about media literacy. I myself am leading a project in Ukraine about media literacy. For young people, it's extremely important. My daughter is still not a teenager, is pretty small, but you never know when it is that they stop watching cartoons and go to the other things that we're talking about today!

Thank you again for for these contributions.

I will pass them to Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN, because she did a great job on this report.

I want to assure you that our Committee will be working on this topic more. We already have another motion for a resolution tabled about yourh and democracy, so we will continue.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you, Madam Yevheniia KRAVCHUK.

Let's see if the President of the Committee wants to speak.

You have 3 minutes.. but.. well, so we gain 3 minutes.

Thank you very much also for your promise that you will pass the compliments to Ms Fiona O'LOUGHLIN.

The Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media has presented a draft resolution [Doc. 15726] to which 3 Amendments and one sub-Amendment have been tabled.

I remind you that speeches on amendments are limited to 30 seconds.

I understand that the Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media wishes to propose to the Assembly that Amendments 2 and 3 to the draft resolution (Doc. 15726), which were unanimously approved by the Committee, should be declared as agreed by the Assembly.

Is that so, Madam Yevheniia KRAVCHUK?

## **Vote: Youth and the media**

**Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media):** That's correct.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you so much.

Does anybody object?

As that is not the case, I declare:

*Amendments 2 and 3 to the draft resolution have been agreed.*

I now would like to call Ms Sevinj FATALIYEVA to support Amendment No. 1. As she is not with us, it will be Mr Stefan SCHENNACH to propose Amendment No. 1.

You have 30 seconds.

**Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC):** We have an Amendment from the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development and a sub-Amendment from the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media.

The original Amendment of the Social Committee means "provided that they receive specific training", we mean the young people, "and are given them time to analyse the situation".

Mister President, should I also now speak about the sub-Amendment from the Culture Committee? No.

Okay then, because I had also moved this, so I stay.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** That's a wise decision.

I call Madam Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK to support the sub-Amendment.

**Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK (Ukraine, ALDE, Chairperson of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media):** [Maybe you have to turn off yours... yeah it's slow, a bit, the technical stuff is much slower than us].

So the sub-amendment basically is very short. We just want to replace the word "provided" with the following words "while ensuring", which we believe would be more accurate.

Thank you.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much Ms Yevheniia KRAVCHUK.

Does anybody wish to speak against the sub-amendment?

What is Mr Stefan SCHENNACH's opinion on the sub-amendment?

**Mr Stefan SCHENNACH (Austria, SOC):** We agree.

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Thank you very much.

The Committee is obviously in favour.

I shall now put the sub-amendment to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

*The sub-amendment is adopted unanimously.*

We now come to the main Amendment 1 as amended.

Does anybody wish to speak against the Amendment as amended?

I do not see any.

The opinion of the Committee is in favour.

I shall now put the Amendment as amended to the vote.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

I call for the results to be displayed.

*The Amendment as amended is adopted unanimously.*

We now will proceed to the vote on the draft resolution contained in Document 15726 as amended.

A simple majority is required.

The vote is open.

The vote is closed.

May I ask for the results to be displayed?

*The Resolution is adopted unanimously.*

Congratulations

*[Applause]*

## **Debate: Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee (continued)**

**Mr Tiny KOX (Netherlands, UEL, President of the Assembly):** Our next business is to consider the changes proposed in the membership of committees. They are set out in Document Commissions (2023) 04 Addendum 2.

Are the proposed changes in the membership of the Assembly's committees agreed to?

I don't see any objection.

*They are agreed to.*

The next item on this morning's Agenda is the continuation of the debate on the Progress Report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee (Doc. 15745, Addendum 3).

At its meeting this morning, the Bureau has proposed several references to committees. They are set out in Document 15745, Addendum 3.

These references must be submitted for ratification by the Assembly in accordance with Rule 26.3.

Are there any objections to these references?

I do not see any.

*As there are no objections, the references are approved.*

I now propose that the other decisions in the Progress Report (Doc. 15745 Addendum 3) be ratified. Are there any objections?

I do not see any.

*The progress report is approved.*

We now, dear colleagues, have come to the end of our business.

I would like to thank the members of the Parliamentary Assembly, and particularly the rapporteurs of the committees for their hard work during the part-session.

I want to thank you all for the dignified way in which we held our debates the whole week and the important decisions we have taken together.

I have noticed that many of them have been taken unanimously or, like this resolution, with a large majority, which shows that, in my opinion, we do act as in an *agora*, one of the major *agoras* of Europe.

I would especially like to thank the vice-Presidents who chaired during this part session: Ms Edite ESTRELA, Mr John HOWELL, Ms Elvira KOVÁCS, Mr Armin LASCHET, Mr Marco NICOLINI, Ms Ingjerd SCHOU, Ms Maja VUKIĆEVIĆ, and Mr Ahmet YILDIZ.

I would also like to thank the staff and the interpreters, both permanent and temporary, who have worked so hard to make the part-session a success.

The third part-session will be held from 19 to 23 June 2023.

Our Standing Committee will meet in Reykjavík. The "Road to Reykjavík" is now coming to an end, and there will be a road after Reykjavík.

So I hope to see you all back in June in this hemicycle.

The sitting is closed.

I would remind members to return their voting cards to the dedicated box at the entrance of the chamber - I don't know where it is, but there is a dedicated box and it's waiting for your voting cards.