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Activities of the Assembly's Bureau and Standing Committee (19 April – 23 June 2024)

Progress report
Bureau of the Assembly
Rapporteur: Mr Ian LIDDELL-GRAINGER, United Kingdom, European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance

1. Introduction

At its meeting on 19 April 2024, the Bureau appointed me as rapporteur for this report, which covers its activities over the period from the last Bureau meeting of the second part-session of 2024 (Friday 19 April) to the pre-session Bureau meeting of the third part-session (Monday 24 June 2024).

The present report includes the decisions taken at the Bureau meetings held on 19 April 2024 in Strasbourg, and on 23 May 2024 in Vilnius. Chapter 2 presents a list of decisions taken by the Bureau over the reported period that require ratification at the opening of the third part-session of the Assembly. Chapter 3 presents a list of decisions that were either already ratified by the Standing Committee on 24 May 2024, or which do not require ratification. Chapter 4 presents the activities of the Standing Committee at its meeting of 24 May.

An addendum to this report will be issued after the Bureau meeting of 24 June, which will also include decisions to be ratified by the Assembly at the opening of the 2024 third part-session. Another addendum will be issued after the Bureau meeting of 28 June. It will only include the decisions to be ratified by the Assembly on the same day, notably the references and transmissions to committees which will have been approved by the Bureau.

The report of the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights presenting the conclusions of the committee on the lists of candidates submitted by Andorra, Austria, Finland and Serbia is published as Addendum 2 to this report.

The Bureau will hold its next meetings on 6 September 2024 in Paris, during the October part-session in Strasbourg, and on 28 November 2024 in Luxembourg. The Standing Committee will meet in Luxembourg on 29 November 2024.

2. Decisions of the Bureau requiring ratification by the Assembly

2.1. Election observation

2.1.1. Republic of Moldova – Presidential election and Republican Constitutional Referendum (20 October 2024)

On 23 May, the Bureau, subject to receiving an invitation, decided to observe this election and set up an ad hoc committee for this purpose composed of 20 members (SOC-6; EPP/CD-6; EC/DA-4; ALDE-3; UEL-1), as well as of the two co-rapporteurs of the Monitoring Committee, and authorised a pre-electoral mission.

2.1.2. Georgia – parliamentary elections (26 October 2024)

On 23 May, the Bureau decided to observe these elections and set up an ad hoc committee for this purpose composed of 30 members (SOC-9; EPP/CD-8; EC/DA-6; ALDE-5; UEL-2), as well as of the two co-rapporteurs of the Monitoring Committee, and authorised a pre-electoral mission.

2.2. 2024 World Forum for Democracy – "Democracy and Diversity – Can we transcend the divides?" (Strasbourg, 6-8 November)

On 23 May, the Bureau took note of the concept note and decided to set up an ad hoc committee of the Bureau to participate in the Forum.

3. Activities of the Bureau since the last part-session and decisions not requiring ratification by the Assembly

3.1. Follow-up to the second part-session of 2024 (Strasbourg, 15-19 April)

On 19 April, the Bureau approved the follow-up proposals to the second part-session, made by the Secretary General of the Assembly, as follows:

– Resolution 2538 (2024) "Promoting the revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums" (§ 10.4): instructed the secretariat to prepare the draft terms of reference of a Parliamentary Assembly Network of Election Observers

– Resolution 2540 (2024) "Alexei Navanly's death and the need to counter Vladimir Putin's totalitarian regime and its war on democracy" (§ 29): invited the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy to adopt the terms of reference of the new General Rapporteur on the Russian democratic forces

– Resolution 2544 (2024) "The honouring of obligations and commitments by Albania": decided to seize the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) for report on "Post-monitoring dialogue with Albania"

– Current affairs debate "Responding to the humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza and preventing further escalations in the Middle East following the recent Iranian attack against Israel": decided to seize the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy on this issue to be taken into account in the preparation of the report on "Situation in the Middle East"

– Resolution 2547 (2024) "The protection of children against online violence" (§ 9): decided to seize the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination for report, and the Committee on Social Affairs, Health, and Sustainable Development for opinion, on "Violent pornography"

3.2. Standing Committee in Vilnius (24 May 2024)

On 19 April, the Bureau took note of the draft agenda,

On 23 May, the Bureau took note of the request to hold a debate under urgent procedure on "The 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe: how to ensure the participation of all Europeans in the future of our Organisation?" tabled by Mr Oleksii Goncharenko (Ukraine, EC/DA) and 21 members of the Assembly. It decided to transform this request into a current affairs debate and to recommend to the Standing Committee to hold this debate, and appointed Ms Ingjerd Schie Schou (Norway, EPP/CD) as the first speaker. The Bureau also took note of the request by the leaders of the political groups to hold a current affairs debate on "Recent challenges to democracy in Georgia", decided to recommend to the Standing Committee to hold this debate, and appointed Ms Edite Estrela (Portugal, SOC) as the first speaker. It updated the draft agenda.

3.3. Organisation of the Parliamentary Assembly's part-sessions as from June 2024

On 19 April, the Bureau approved the modalities for the organisation of the work of the Assembly and of its part-sessions as from the June 2024 part-session, as presented in Doc. 15959 Add.3, ratified by the Assembly the same day.

3.4. Third part-session of 2024 (Strasbourg, 24-28 June)

On 23 May, the Bureau held an exchange of views on the organisation of the elections by the Assembly during the June 2024 part-session, and drew up the draft agenda.

3.5. Co-chairmanship in the Group of the Unified European Left

On 19 April, the Bureau took note of the modalities of co-chairmanship in the UEL Group, as presented in Doc. 15959 Add.3, ratified by the Assembly the same day.

3.6. Election of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe

On 23 may, the Bureau interviewed (in alphabetical order) Mr Alain Berset, Mr Didier Reynders and Mr Indrek Saar, candidates for the post of Secretary General of the Council of Europe (*in camera*).

3.7. Communications

On 19 April, the Bureau took note of the statement by the President of the Assembly. On 23 May, it took note of the communications by the President of the Assembly, the Secretary General and the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe and held an exchange of views with the Deputy Secretary General.

3.8. References and transmissions to committees

On 19 April, the Bureau considered and approved the references and transmissions to committees as presented in Doc. 15959 Add.3, ratified by the Assembly the same day.

During its meeting on 23 May, the Bureau considered and approved the following references and transmissions which were subsequently ratified by the Standing Committee.

3.8.1. References to committees

– Preserving European rural culture and heritage, Doc. 15974*:* reference to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for report*

– Eliminating gender stereotypes in the media, Doc. 15975*:* reference to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for report* and to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for opinion*

– The humanitarian situation of (mainly) children and women in Gaza, the West Bank and in Israel*,* Doc. 15977: reference to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report.*

3.8.2. Reply after consultation

– Self-determination and territorial integrity in the 21st century, Doc. 15816 Motion for a resolution*:* transmission to the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy *for information.*

3.8.3. Extension of a reference

On 19 April, the Bureau approved the following requests for extensions of references:

– Promoting inclusive participation in parliamentary and political life, Doc. 15291*:* extension until 27 June 2025

– The situation of national minorities in Ukraine (initial title: The ongoing worsening of the access of Ukraine's national minorities to education in their mother tongues: need for a follow-up to Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 2189 (2017)), Doc. 15334*:* extension until 3 October 2025

– Increasing members' active participation in and contribution to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly and its committees, Doc. 15518*:* extension until 20 June 2025.

On 23 May, the Bureau approved the following requests for extensions of references:

– Threats to life and safety of journalists and human rights defenders in Azerbaijan, Doc. 15521*:* extension until 31 December 2024

– Legal aspects of the accession of the European Union to the European Convention on Human Rights, Doc. 15014*:* extension until 31 December 2024.

3.9. Election observation

3.9.1. North Macedonia – Presidential and parliamentary elections (24 April and 8 May 2024)

On 23 May, the Bureau took note of the statement of the delegation.

3.9.2. Bulgaria: early parliamentary elections (9 June 2024)

On 19 April, the Bureau approved the list of members of the ad hoc committee to observe these elections and appointed Mr Oleksii Goncharenko (Ukraine, EC/DA) as its chairperson. On 23 May, it approved the updated list of members of the ad hoc committee to observe these elections (Appendix 1).

3.10. Ad hoc committee to participate in an event on "The role of national parliaments in supporting the Belarusians in exile" (Luxembourg, 6-7 June 2024)

On 19 April, the Bureau approved the list of members of the ad hoc committee to participate in the event and appointed Mr Paul Galles (Luxembourg, EPP/CD) as its chairperson (Appendix 2).

3.11. Ad hoc committee to visit the ICRC headquarters in Geneva as well as other Geneva based international organisations/agencies in the framework of the follow-up to Resolution 2529 (2024) "The situation of the children of Ukraine" (13 June 2024)

On 19 April, the Bureau approved the list of members of the ad hoc committee to participate in the visit. The Bureau approved the updated list by written consultation on 5 June (Appendix 3).

3.12. Analysis of the use made by the Assembly's political groups of their allocations for 2023

On 19 April, the Bureau approved the draft communication submitted by the Committee on Rules of Procedures, Immunities and Institutional Affairs.

3.13. Václav Havel Human Rights Prize

On 19 April, the Bureau took note of the prolongation, until 30 June 2024, of the deadline to submit candidatures for the 2024 edition of the Prize.

3.14. 2024 Vigdís Prize for Women's Empowerment

On 23 May, the Bureau took note of the list of the three candidates shortlisted.

3.15. Composition of the Monitoring Committee

On 23 May, the Bureau on the basis of a proposal by the Group SOC, nominated Ms Wanda Nowicka (Poland) as a member, subsequently ratified by the Standing Committee.

3.16. European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) – List of candidates in respect of Poland

On 19 April, the Bureau took note of the letter by the chairperson of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights.

3.17. Meetings elsewhere than Strasbourg and Paris

On 19 April, the Bureau authorised:

– The Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons to meet in Ljubljana, on 17-18 October 2024;

– the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development and the Network of Contact Parliamentarians for a healthy environment, to hold a meeting in Lisbon, on 12-13 September 2024;

– the Sub-Committee on the European Social Charter of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development to meet in Vilnius on 3-4 July 2024.

4. Activities of the Standing Committee (Vilnius, 24 May 2024)

The Standing Committee:

– heard an opening speech by Ms Viktorija Čmilytė-Nielsen, Speaker of the Seimas;

– heard a welcome address, on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the Council of Europe, by Professor Vytautas Landsbergis, First Head of State of the re-established independent Lithuania;

– held an exchange of views with Mr Gabrielius Landsbergis, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, President of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe;

– ratified the credentials of a new member of the Assembly submitted by the French delegation;

– approved the changes in the composition of Assembly committees;

– took note of the draft agenda of the third part-session of the Assembly (24-28 June 2024);

– ratified the references proposed by the Bureau;

– held a current affairs debate on “Recent challenges to democracy in Georgia” and heard statements by Mr Shalva Papuashvili, the Speaker of the Parliament of Georgia, and Ms Veronika Bílková, Vice-President of the Venice Commission and member in respect of Czechia;

– held a current affairs debate on “The 75th Anniversary of the Council of Europe: how to ensure the participation of all Europeans in the future or our Organisation?”;

– heard a statement by Ms Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, Leader of the Belarusian democratic forces;

– adopted the following texts on behalf of the Assembly:

Recommendation 2275 (2024)	Ending the detention of “socially maladjusted” persons
Resolution 2548 (2024)	Children in the world of work: eradicating harmful child labour
Recommendation 2276 (2024)	Children in the world of work: eradicating harmful child labour
Resolution 2549 (2024)	Cultural heritage and climate change
Recommendation 2277 (2024)	Cultural heritage and climate change
Resolution 2550 (2024)	Quality education for children with special education needs: challenges of the pandemic, war and digitalisation
Recommendation 2278 (2024)	Quality education for children with special education needs: challenges of the pandemic, war and digitalisation

– decided to hold its next meeting in Luxembourg on 29 November 2024.

Appendix 1 – List of members of the ad hoc committee for the observation of the early parliamentary elections in Bulgaria (9 June 2024)

Chairperson / Président: Mr / M. Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Ukraine (EC/DA / CE/AD)

Socialists, Democrats and Greens Group / Groupe des socialistes, démocrates et verts (SOC)

– Mr / M. Saša MAGAZINOVIĆ, Bosnia and Herzegovina / Bosnie-Herzégovine
– Ms / M^{me} Kate OSBORNE, United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni
– Mr / M. Yunus EMRE, Türkiye
– ZZ
– ZZ
– ZZ

Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD) / Groupe du Parti populaire européen (PPE/DC)

– Mr / M. Corneliu-Mugurel COZMANCIUC, Romania / Roumanie
– ZZ
– ZZ
– ZZ
– ZZ
– ZZ

European Conservatives Group and Democratic Alliance (EC/DA) / Groupe des conservateurs européens et Alliance démocratique (CE/AD)

– Mr / M. Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Ukraine
– Mr / M. Morten WOLD, Norway / Norvège
– ZZ
– ZZ

Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) / Alliance des démocrates et des libéraux pour l'Europe (ADLE)

– Mr / M. Mehmet AKALIN, Türkiye
– Mr / M. Damien COTTIER, Switzerland / Suisse
– ZZ

Group of the Unified European Left (UEL) / Groupe pour la gauche unitaire européenne (GUE)

– Ms / M^{me} Sevilay ÇELENK ÖZEN, Türkiye

Co-rapporteur.e.s AS/Mon (ex officio)

– Ms / Mme Deborah BERGAMINI, Italy / Italie, EPP/CD (excused)
– Ms / M^{me} Thórhildur Sunna ÆVARSDÓTTIR, Iceland / Islande, SOC (excused)

Venice Commission / Commission de Venise

– Mr / M. Michael JANSSEN, Legal Advisor / Conseiller juridique
– Ms / M^{me} Katharina PABEL, Austria / Autriche, representing the Venice Commission / représentante de la Commission de Venise

Appendix 2 – List of members of the ad hoc committee to participate in an event on "The role of national parliaments in supporting the Belarusians in exile" (Luxembourg, 6-7 June 2024)

Chairperson / Président: Mr / M. Paul GALLES**,** Luxembourg **(**EPP/CD / PPE/DC)

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons / Commission des migrations, des réfugiés et des personnes déplacée

– Ms / M^{me} Larysa BILOZIR, Ukraine (ALDE / ADLE)
– Mr / M. Christian BUCHMANN, Austria / Autriche (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)
– Mr / M. Paul GALLES, Luxembourg (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)
– Mr / M. Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Ukraine (EC/DA / CE/AD)
– Ms / M^{me} Octavie MODERT, Luxembourg (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)
– Lord Simon RUSSELL, United Kingdom / Royaume-Uni (EC/DA / CE/AD)
– Mr / M. Birgir THÓRARINSSON, Iceland / Islande (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)
– Ms / M^{me} Ana TSITLIDZE, Georgia / Géorgie (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy / Commission des questions politiques et de la démocratie

– Ms / M^{me} Marietta KARAMANLI, France (SOC)
– Mr / M. Kimmo KILJUNEN, Finland / Finlande (SOC)
– Mr / M. Bogdan KLICH, Poland / Pologne (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)
– Mr / M. Arminas LYDEKA, Lithuania / Lituanie (ALDE / ADLE)
– Mr / M. Serhii SOBOLIEV, Ukraine (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)
– Ms / M^{me} Lesia VASYLENKO, Ukraine (ALDE / ADLE)
– Mr / M. Emanuelis ZINGERIS, Lithuania / Lituanie (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)

Appendix 3 – List of members of the ad hoc committee to visit the ICRC headquarters in Geneva as well as other Geneva based international organisations or agencies, in the framework of the follow-up to Resolution 2529 (2024) on "The situation of the children of Ukraine" (13 June 2024)

Chairperson / Président: Mr / M. Theodoros Rousopoulos, Greece / Grèce (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)

Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy / Commission des questions politiques et de la démocratie

Members / membres:

– Mr / M. Piero FASSINO, Italy / Italie (SOC)

– Ms / M^{me} Zanda KALNIŅA-LUKAŠEVICA, Latvia / Lettonie (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)

Sustitute / remplaçante:

– Ms / M^{me} Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO, Monaco (ALDE / ADLE)

Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights / Commission des questions juridiques et des droits de l'homme

Members / membres:

– Ms / M^{me} Lucia PLAVÁKOVÁ, Slovak Republic / République slovaque (ALDE / ADLE)

– Ms / M^{me} Lesia VASYLENKO, Ukraine (ALDE / ADLE)

Sustitute / remplaçant:

– Mr / M. Damien COTTIER, Switzerland / Suisse (ALDE / ADLE)

Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development / Commission des questions sociales, de la santé et du développement durable

Members / membres:

– Ms / M^{me} Olena KHOMENKO, Ukraine (EC/DA / CE/AD)

– Mr / M. Simon MOUTQUIN, Belgium / Belgique (SOC)

– Ms / M^{me} Minna REIJONEN, Finland / Finlande (EC/DA / CE/AD)

– Mr / M. Georgios STAMATIS, Greece / Grèce (EPP/CD / PPE/DC)

Sustitutes / remplaçantes:

– Ms / M^{me} Larysa BILOZIR, Ukraine (ALDE / ADLE)

– Ms / M^{me} Saskia KLUIT, Netherlands / Pays-Bas (SOC)

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons / Commission des migrations, des réfugiés et des personnes déplacées

Members / membres:

– Ms / M^{me} Lise SELNES, Norway / Norvège (SOC)

– Mr / M. Oleksii GONCHARENKO, Ukraine (EC/DA / CE/AD)

Sustitute / remplaçant:

– Mr / M. Pierre-Alain FRIDEZ, Switzerland / Suisse (SOC)