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Activities of the Assembly's Bureau and Standing Committee (7 April 2025)

Progress report
Bureau of the Assembly
Rapporteur: Mr Andrej HUNKO, Germany, Group of the Unified European Left

1. Decisions of the Bureau of 7 April 2025 requiring ratification by the Assembly

1.1. References and transmissions to committees

The Bureau considered and approved the following references:

– *Migrants' and refugees' access to healthcare,* Doc. 16112, motion for a resolution: reference to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons *for report* and to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for opinion;*

– *The deterioration of women's rights in Afghanistan: a need for global response,* Doc. 16115, motion for a resolution: reference to the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination *for report* and to the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons *for opinion*;

– *Draft Additional Protocol to the Convention on human rights and biomedicine concerning the protection of human rights and dignity of persons with regard to involuntary placement and involuntary treatment within mental healthcare services*, Doc. 16117, request for an opinion from the Committee of Ministers: reference to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report*;

– *Towards a family-friendly Europe: policy recommendations for demographic renewal*, Doc. 16121, motion for a resolution: reference to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report*;

– *The need to modernise the International Humanitarian Law*¸ Doc. 16122, motion for a resolution: reference to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*;

– *Use of artificial intelligence by parliaments: risks and opportunities*, Doc. 16123, motion for a resolution: reference to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*;

– *Threats to the International Criminal Court*, Doc. 16124, motion for a resolution: reference to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*;

– *Draft Third Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters*, Doc. 16139, request for an opinion from the Committee of Ministers: reference to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*;

– *Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2026-2027*: reference to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs *for report*;

– *Draft Protocol amending the Council of Europe Convention on the Prevention of Terrorism*, Doc. 16143, request for an opinion from the Committee of Ministers: reference to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*.

1.2. Election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights

The Bureau took note of the report drawn up by the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights following interviews with candidates for the post of judge in respect of Monaco and the Slovak Republic, subject to ratification by the Assembly through the Progress report (Doc. 16140 Add. 2).

1.3. Composition of the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)

On the basis of a proposal by the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group, the Bureau nominated Ms Oana Murariu (Romania) as a member.

1.4. Composition of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs

On the basis of a proposal by the Group of the Unified European Left, the Bureau nominated Ms Sevilay Çelenk Özen (Türkiye) as a member.

The Bureau nominated Mr Andries Gryffroy (Belgium, NR) as a member.

1.5. Composition of the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights

On the basis of a proposal by the Group of the Unified European Left, the Bureau nominated Mr Ettore Antonio Licheri (Italy) as a member.

1.6. Election observation

1.6.1. Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections

The Bureau approved the revised terms of reference of the Alliance (Appendix 1).

1.7. European Dialogue on Internet Governance (EuroDIG) meeting, Strasbourg, France, 12-13 May 2025

The Bureau decided to set up an *ad hoc* Committee of the Bureau to participate in this event, composed of members appointed by the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy and the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media.

The Assembly is invited to ratify these Bureau decisions.

2. Other decisions by the Bureau

2.1. Second part-session of 2025 (Strasbourg, 7-11 April)

2.1.1. Requests for debates under urgent procedure

The Bureau took note:

– of the request to hold a debate on *Opinion on the draft Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law*: decided to recommend to the Assembly to hold this debate, and to refer the matter to the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development *for report*;

– of the request tabled by the Monitoring Committee: *The situation in Georgia and follow up to Resolution 2585 (2025) 'Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Georgia'*: decided to recommend to the Assembly to hold this debate, and to refer the matter to the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) *for report*;

– of the request tabled by the Group of the European People's Party (EPP/CD): *The arrest of the Mayor of Istanbul and the state of democracy and human rights in Türkiye*: decided to recommend to the Assembly to hold this debate, and to refer the matter to the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) *for report*;

– of the request tabled by the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Group (ALDE): *Russian war of aggression against Ukraine: the need for accountability, avoiding impunity*: decided to recommend to the Assembly to hold this debate, and to refer the matter to the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights *for report*;

– of the request tabled by Ms Zeynep Yildiz and other members of the Assembly: *An urgent call for an immediate end to the humanitarian blockade of Gaza and the reinstatement of the ceasefire*: decided to recommend to the Assembly not to hold this debate.

2.1.2. Requests for current affairs debates

The Bureau took note of the requests of the five political groups to hold current affairs debates on:

– *Protests and rallies in the Western Balkans and Central Europe*: decided to recommend to the Assembly to hold this debate and appointed Mr George Papandreou (Greece, SOC) as the first speaker;

– *An urgent call for an immediate end to the humanitarian blockade of Gaza and the reinstatement of the ceasefire*: decided to recommend to the Assembly to hold this debate and appointed Mr Paul Galles (Luxembourg, EPP/CD) as the first speaker.

2.1.3. Draft agenda

The Bureau updated the agenda of the part-session.

2.2. Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and of the Standing Committee (31 January-6 April 2025)

The Bureau approved the Progress report (Doc. 16140).

2.3. Election observation

2.3.1. Assembly of Kosovo[1]: elections (9 February 2025)*

The Bureau approved the report of the observation mission (Doc. 16146 rev).

2.4. Consultation of committees

The Bureau approved the following proposals:

– *Balancing innovation and regulation: ensuring new technologies serve democracy and human rights,* Doc. 16111, motion for a resolution: transmission to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for consultation*;

– *Regulating social networks: a democratic imperative*, Doc. 16127, motion for a resolution: transmission to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for consultation*;

– *Advancing a shared European vision through arts and leadership education*, Doc. 16132, motion for a resolution: transmission to the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media *for consultation*.

2.5. Extensions of references

The Bureau approved the following extensions of references requests:

– *Protecting human rights in and through sport: obligations and shared responsibilities,* Doc. 15750, motion for a resolution, reference 4738 of 26 May 2023 – validity: 26 May 2025: extension until 30 June 2025;

– *Countering discrimination based on religion and protecting freedom of religion and belief in Europe* (former title: Global rules to eliminate all forms of religious oppression), Doc. 15700, motion for a resolution, reference 4726 of 28 April 2023 – validity: 28 April 2025: extension until 28 April 2026.

1. *All reference to Kosovo, whether to the territory, institutions or population shall be understood in full compliance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1244 and without prejudice to the status of Kosovo

2.6. Communications

The Bureau took note of the communication by the President of the Assembly and held an exchange of views with the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

Appendix – Revised terms of reference of the Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections[2]

The Parliamentary Assembly has been committed to election observation since 1991, providing essential recommendations that have helped shape the electoral legislation of member States and informed the endeavours of both the Monitoring and the Political Affairs Committees.

Confronting emerging challenges that threaten electoral integrity and undermine public trust in democratic processes, the Assembly has decided to take a more proactive stance in advocating for activities aimed at enhancing the legal frameworks and improved electoral practices in member States. In 2022, its Elections Division co-initiated the Council of Europe's Electoral Cycle, in 2023 it organised the Bern Conference on "Elections in times of crisis", which drew on the synergies of various stakeholders, including members of International Election Observation Missions (IEOM), electoral management bodies, civil society organisations, and academic institutions.

In response to the "Reykjavik Principles for Democracy" adopted at the Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government (16-17 May 2023) and the subsequent Riga Declaration which committed the Assembly to "strengthening its initiatives to uphold the integrity of elections", the Assembly has realigned its activities, including by incorporating intergovernmental election cooperation in its structures as of January 2024 to enhance support for member States throughout the electoral process. It is now also managing the Council of Europe Electoral Cycle and focusing more on the preparation and follow-up to the Assembly's thematic reports on topics such as foreign interference, crisis situations, migrant portrayal in campaigns, reconstruction of Ukraine, etc.

In this context, the creation of a Parliamentary Network of election observers in 2024, renamed Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections in 2025, will facilitate cross-cutting dialogue on electoral issues and will formally represent the Assembly in external forums, without altering the operational mechanisms of existing election observation missions (EOMs) or new cooperation activities. The terms of reference for the Alliance are delineated below.

Aim of the Alliance

1. In accordance with Resolution 2538 (2024) "Promoting the revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums", the Parliamentary Assembly decides to create the Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections to enable a more effective exchange among PACE observers, reinforce electoral activities and enhance the visibility of the Assembly's electoral endeavours in light of post-Reykjavik Summit and the addition of a co-operation component.

2. In particular, as platform of exchange, the Alliance should:

2.1. foster exchange of information on electoral activities and election observation missions (EOMs) between PACE observers;

2.2. promote the Council of Europe reference standards in electoral matters, in particular:

– Venice Commission's Code of good conduct in electoral matters, Revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums and its legal opinions on (draft) legislation on elections, referendums and political parties,

– The Committee of Ministers' Recommendations in electoral matters,

– The European Court of Human rights' case-law on the right to free and fair elections as set out in Protocol 1, Article 3,

– PACE Resolutions related to electoral matters, as well as

– PACE Guidelines for the observation of elections by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Declaration of principles for international election observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers,

– PACE reports on election observation.

2.3. organise dedicated seminars;

2.4. ensure the representation of the Assembly in external activities in the field of elections;

2. Approved by the Bureau and ratified by the Assembly on 28 June 2024 and revised by the Bureau on 7 April 2025.

2.5. promote visibility of the Assembly's activities in the field of elections, including its contribution to the Council of Europe Electoral Cycle.

3. The Bureau of the Assembly remains responsible for the appointment of PACE ad hoc committees to observe elections and referenda in line with the Assembly's Rules of Procedure (Appendix XIII).

Composition of the Alliance

1. The Alliance shall be composed of members approved by the Bureau of the Assembly, as follows:

1.1. in respect of the member States of the Council of Europe: members of the Parliamentary Assembly on the basis of candidatures presented by the political groups and taking into account active participation in PACE election observation missions, gender balance and regional balance. The Bureau of the Assembly shall approve additional members to the Alliance from among the representatives and substitutes of the Assembly who do not belong to any political group upon proposal of the Bureau of the Network;

1.2. in respect of the parliaments with Observer, Partner for Democracy or Special Guest status with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: one member of parliament for each unicameral parliament, and one member of each Chamber for bicameral parliaments, appointed by the parliamentary delegation;

1.3. a representative appointed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;

1.4. a representative appointed by the Venice Commission.

2. The President of the Assembly, the Chairpersons of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, of the Monitoring Committee and of the Committee of Legal Affairs and Human Rights, the chairpersons of political groups, the General Rapporteur on Democracy, as well as the representatives of the Assembly in the Council for Democratic Elections of the Venice Commission (members and substitutes), shall be ex officio members of the Alliance.

Working methods of the Alliance

1. In terms of application of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, the Alliance shall follow the rules applicable to sub-committees of the Assembly (article 49 of the Rules), except as otherwise provided.

2. The working languages of the Alliance shall be English and French.

3. The Bureau of the Alliance shall be composed of one member designated by each political group and approved by the Bureau of the Assembly. The Chairperson of the Alliance shall be designated among the members of the Bureau of the Alliance on the basis of an agreement reached among the political groups ensuring the rotation amongst political groups. The chairperson and the vice-chairpersons of the Alliance shall remain in office until the opening of the next ordinary session of the Assembly. They may serve for one further term, consecutive or not. A chairperson or vice-chairperson of the Alliance designated in the course of a session for an incomplete term may be designated for maximum two further terms.

4. The costs of participation of members of the Alliance in its meetings and events shall be borne by the respective national parliaments.

5. The Alliance shall develop co-operation with all Council of Europe parties active in electoral matters within the framework of the Council of Europe Electoral Cycle, in particular the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM) and the Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM).

6. The Alliance shall actively co-operate with national parliaments and parliamentarians in and beyond Europe, as well as parliamentary networks and regional and international parliamentary assemblies, including but not limited to the Assembly's partners in the framework of the International Election Observation Missions, in particular the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ ODIHR), OSCE PA, EP and NATO PA.

7. The Alliance shall also co-operate with other international organisations, election management bodies, NGOs as well as representatives of the media and the academia dealing with electoral matters.

8. The Alliance shall periodically, and at least once a year, report to the Bureau of the Assembly of its activities, which shall approve its proposals.