Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Resolution 2580 (2025)[1]

Progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure (January-December 2024)

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recognises the work carried out by the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) in fulfilling its mandate as defined in Resolution 1115 (1997) (modified) "Setting up of an Assembly committee on the honouring of obligations and commitments by member states of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee)". In particular, it welcomes the committee's work in accompanying the 10 countries under a full monitoring procedure (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Poland, Serbia, Türkiye and Ukraine) in their efforts to comply fully with the obligations and commitments they entered into upon accession to the Council of Europe. It also welcomes the efforts of the four countries engaged in a post-monitoring dialogue (Albania, Bulgaria, Montenegro and North Macedonia), as well as the countries subject to periodic monitoring of their membership obligations (Greece, the Netherlands, Spain and Sweden).

2. The Assembly takes note of the fact-finding visits carried out in 2024 and the findings by the respective co-rapporteurs with regard to Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Hungary, the Republic of Moldova, Poland and Türkiye.

3. The Assembly welcomes the positive developments and progress made during the reporting period in the countries under a full monitoring procedure or engaged in a post-monitoring dialogue; it expresses its concern about some negative developments and remaining shortcomings and urges all these countries to step up their efforts to fully honour their membership obligations and accession commitments to the Council of Europe. The Assembly stands ready and committed to co-operate and assist member States in this respect.

4. Regarding the countries under a full monitoring procedure:

4.1. with respect to Armenia, referring to its Resolution 2560 (2024) "The honouring of obligations and commitments by Armenia", the Assembly commends the continuous commitment of the country to its democratic development in spite of the considerable security challenges it is facing. It welcomes the inclusiveness and transparency of the legislative process that underlaid the reform of the Electoral Code and considers that the objective of holding genuinely democratic elections which win the confidence of the Armenian people has been largely achieved. The Assembly regrets that the political climate remains exceedingly polarised and antagonistic and calls on all stakeholders to improve the relationship between the parliamentary majority and the opposition. It calls upon the authorities to continue with the implementation of reforms regarding the justice system, the media and the freedom of expression;

4.2. with respect to Azerbaijan, with reference to its Resolution 2527 (2024) "Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Azerbaijan", the Assembly remains seriously concerned about the further deterioration of the state of democracy, the rule of law and human rights in the country. It remains concerned about the continuing crackdown on political and civil society activists, media representatives and other government critics. It exhorts the

1. *Assembly debate* on 27 January 2025 (2nd sitting) (see Doc. 16086, report of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee), rapporteur: Ms Zanda Kalniņa-Lukaševica). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 27 January 2025 (2nd sitting).

authorities to end retaliatory prosecutions and to immediately release all those who are detained on politically motivated charges. It calls upon the authorities to amend the Law on Political Parties, the Law on the Media and the relevant legislation concerning non-governmental organisations, in line with the recommendations of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission). The Assembly also strongly deplores the authorities' refusal to co-operate with the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT) and calls on them to resume without delay their co-operation with this body. Moreover, the Assembly deplores the lack of invitation to observe the 2024 early presidential and parliamentary elections. It notes with regret that, according to international observers, these elections did not meet international standards for democratic elections and were held under increased restrictions on freedom of expression, assembly and association. It also strongly condemns and considers unacceptable that, on 26 August 2024, the Azerbaijani Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared *personae non gratae* the 76 members of the Assembly who had voted in favour of Resolution 2527 (2024). It exhorts the authorities to immediately revoke this ban and to engage in a constructive dialogue with the Council of Europe's bodies – in particular the Committee of Ministers, the Secretary General and the Assembly itself – on all outstanding issues. The Assembly, referring to its Resolution 2517 (2023) and Recommendation 2260 (2023) "The humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh", and Resolution 2560 (2024), continues to follow the situation with detained representatives of Nagorno-Karabakh and all Armenian prisoners of war currently held in Azerbaijan, reiterating its call to Azerbaijan to release these people;

4.3. with respect to Bosnia and Herzegovina, referring to Resolution 2574 (2024) "The honouring of obligations and commitments by Bosnia and Herzegovina", the Assembly reiterates its satisfaction with the pace of reforms since 2022. The Assembly repeats its call on Bosnia and Herzegovina to honour its accession commitment and adopt a constitutional reform in line with the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5). It urges the authorities to ensure the proper functioning of the Constitutional Court and reform the High Judicial and Prosecutorial Council. It reiterates its call to eliminate all aspects of segregation and discrimination in education, and encourages the establishment of a common core curriculum in history while prohibiting the honouring of individuals convicted of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in the school curricula;

4.4. with respect to Georgia, the Assembly expresses its deep concern about the recent democratic backsliding of the country which has raised doubts about the country's commitment to international democratic norms and Euro-Atlantic integration, as well as its willingness to honour its membership obligations and accession commitments to the Council of Europe. It reiterates its position expressed in Resolution 2561 (2024) "Challenges to democracy in Georgia" with regard to the controversial Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, which is incompatible with European democratic, human rights and rule of law standards and norms. It calls upon the Georgian authorities to withdraw this law without further delay. The Assembly similarly expresses its concern about, and urges the authorities to withdraw, the Law on the Protection of Family Values and Minors, which is incompatible with international human rights standards, and in particular the European Convention on Human Rights. With regard to the parliamentary elections that took place on 26 October 2024, the Assembly deeply regrets that in several aspects these elections failed to meet European standards for democratic elections. The deficiencies noted, including widespread reports of pressure and intimidation of voters and an uneven playing field for election contestants that disproportionally favoured the incumbent ruling majority, undermined the trust in the outcome as well as the fairness of these elections. All reports of violations and alleged electoral fraud should be transparently and impartially investigated, and any irregularities encountered fully addressed;

4.5. with respect to Hungary, the Assembly reiterates its call on the Hungarian authorities to address the serious questions regarding the functioning of democratic institutions in the country as a result of the cumulative effect of measures that negatively affect the independence of the judiciary, the situation of the media and the transparency and accountability of State institutions. The Assembly emphasises again that the use of special legal orders must be restricted to that which is strictly necessary, proportionate and limited in time. In this respect, it notes that the "state of danger" was extended until March 2025, at which time it will have been in place for five years with only a few months of intermission. The Assembly calls on the Hungarian authorities to fully address the recommendations of the Venice Commission in its opinion on Act LXXXVIII of 2023 on the Protection of National Sovereignty. It remains concerned about the transfer of very large amounts of public funds to public interest asset management foundations, which lack guarantees of transparency and accountability, undermining public oversight on key institutions for educational and cultural policies;

4.6. with respect to the Republic of Moldova, the Assembly welcomes the continued implementation of the ambitious reforms needed to further its European integration and to honour its commitments and obligations to the Council of Europe. However, it regrets that these reforms are sometimes drafted in a rather hasty manner without proper consultation with all stakeholders involved. It urges the authorities to address these concerns, since an inclusive and transparent reform process is essential to ensure the broad support and acceptance of the reforms by the Moldovan population, which will ensure the irreversibility of these reforms. The Assembly especially welcomes continuing reforms to strengthen the independence and integrity of the judiciary and especially the vetting of all key judges and prosecutors. It condemns the unprecedented nefarious interference by the Russian Federation, and actors aligned to it, in Moldovan domestic politics and its electoral processes, which had a negative effect on the presidential election and constitutional referendum that took place in October and November 2024;

4.7. with respect to Poland, the Assembly strongly welcomes the ambitious reform programme that is being developed by the Polish authorities with the stated objective of implementing the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights with regard to the independence of the justice system and, in their own words, to restore the rule of law in the country. However, it takes note of the questions that have been raised about the compatibility of some of the aspects of these reforms with European standards and norms, and is concerned that the authorities, in their zeal to restore the rule of law, may be tempted to sometimes sidestep the very requirements of the rule of law itself. Given the sensitivity of these reforms, and mindful of the very polarised and contentious political environment in the country, the Assembly calls on the authorities to continue its close co-operation with the Venice Commission and to fully address all recommendations and concerns expressed in its opinions on the various judicial reforms;

4.8. with respect to Serbia, the Assembly remains concerned about the frequent organisation of early elections at short intervals and urges the authorities to adopt further amendments to the electoral legislation in order to address long-standing issues identified by the Venice Commission. It welcomes the ongoing reform of the judiciary and the progress in the implementation of the recommendations of the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and expects the authorities to swiftly address the remaining ones. It urges the authorities to take further measures to combat and prevent ill-treatment by the law-enforcement authorities and to show a genuine commitment to investigating and adjudicating cases of war crimes. It remains concerned about attacks and smear campaigns against journalists and independent media outlets, human rights defenders and civil society activists. The Assembly expects the Serbian authorities to continue peaceful dialogue with Pristina with a view to solving all outstanding issues and not to hinder the implementation of its recommendations included in its Opinion 302 (2024) "Application by Kosovo*[2] for membership of the Council of Europe";

4.9. with respect to Türkiye, the Assembly calls on the authorities to implement the judgments of the European Court of Human Rights fully and speedily and exhorts the authorities to release without delay Mr Osman Kavala, Mr Selahattin Demirtaş and Ms Figen Yüksekdağ Şenoğlu. It urges the authorities to implement, without delay and in line with the recommendations of the Venice Commission, the necessary reforms to restore an effective system of checks and balances and to ensure full independence of the judiciary. The Assembly reiterates its concerns regarding the ongoing crackdown on members of the political opposition and civil society as well as the restrictions on freedom of expression and media freedom. It calls on the authorities to put an end to all forms of reprisals against politicians, lawyers, journalists and civil society activists and to ensure a conducive environment for all civil society actors. In line with its Resolution 2528 (2024) "Allegations of systemic torture and inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment in places of detention in Europe", it calls upon the authorities to eliminate torture and physical ill-treatment in places of detention. The Assembly furthermore calls on the authorities to fully respect the results of the local elections of 31 March 2024 and, in particular, not to replace democratically elected mayors by governors appointed by the minister of the interior;

4.10. with respect to Ukraine, the Assembly commends the efforts by the Ukrainian authorities, and indeed the whole society, to ensure the functioning of the democratic and rule of law institutions in the country, in spite of the challenging situation presented by the ongoing military aggression by the Russian Federation. It welcomes the efforts of the co-rapporteurs to organise a monitoring fact-finding visit to Ukraine in the first half of 2025, which is essential for the proper conduct of the monitoring procedure in respect of Ukraine.

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

5. Regarding the countries engaged in a post-monitoring dialogue:

5.1. with respect to Albania, the Assembly congratulates the country on the progress made in honouring its obligations and commitments to the Council of Europe that allowed the Assembly to close the full monitoring procedure and open a post-monitoring dialogue. It expects that this positive trajectory will be continued and that consistent and tangible progress will be made in addressing the Assembly's recommendations with regard to the fight against corruption, the protection of minorities, media freedom and freedom of expression. In that respect, it especially calls upon the authorities to adopt the three remaining by-laws that are essential to implement the provisions of the 2017 Law on the Protection of National Minorities;

5.2. with respect to Bulgaria, the Assembly welcomes the efficient organisation of the seventh round of parliamentary elections held in the last three years but expresses its concern about the continuing absence of a breakthrough in the political impasse that underlies the recurrent political crisis. The Assembly calls on political forces to move beyond partisan divisions to break the cycle of short-term and caretaker governments and to establish lasting political solutions in order to avoid the institutionalisation of the political crisis. Political leaders and lawmakers are urged to introduce changes to the electoral system which might be more conducive to stable governments;

5.3. with respect to Montenegro, the Assembly welcomes the continuing commitment of the Montenegrin authorities to honour their obligations and commitments to the Council of Europe and to co-operate with the various Council of Europe bodies to achieve that goal. The Assembly takes note of the two urgent opinions on the prevention of corruption and on the Law on Seizure and Confiscation of Material Benefit Derived from Criminal Activity, and the three urgent follow-up opinions on Montenegro on the Law on the Judicial Council and Judges, the Law on the State Prosecution Service and the Law on the Special State Prosecutor's Office, released by the Venice Commission in 2024. It welcomes the reforms adopted in a short time period in order to meet the interim benchmarks for accession to the European Union. These reforms bring Montenegro closer to fully honouring its membership obligations and accession commitments and, as a result, closer to the end of the post-monitoring dialogue. The Assembly reiterates that for this to occur, Montenegro must fully address the remaining questions with regard to the independence of the judiciary, the trust in the electoral process, the fight against corruption and the media environment;

5.4. with respect to North Macedonia, the Assembly welcomes the swift formation of a new government after the last parliamentary elections and the new authorities' commitment to European integration. It invites all political forces to reach a consensus on the revision of the constitution that would allow the country to pave the way for its accession to the European Union. It encourages the authorities to step up the reforms launched to strengthen democracy, the rule of law and human rights in the country. In particular, it calls on the authorities to implement the outstanding recommendations of the Venice Commission and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR) concerning the reform of the electoral legislation as well as GRECO's recommendations from its Fourth and Fifth Evaluation Rounds. The Assembly is concerned about numerous cases of ill-treatment of persons deprived of their liberty by the police and the situation in prisons, especially in Idrizovo. It calls on the authorities to implement without delay the recommendations of the CPT that remain outstanding.

6. Regarding the countries that were subject to the procedure for the periodic review of membership obligations to the Council of Europe in 2024, the Assembly notes that, with regard to the Netherlands, the preparation of the report was interrupted due to the early parliamentary elections in the country and the lengthy period of government formation that followed, which led to an extension of the reference for the report for this country until March 2026. The Assembly also notes that the preparation of the reports on the honouring of membership obligations by Greece, Spain and Sweden have not yet started due to the co-rapporteurs' unavailability.

7. The Assembly welcomes the continuing remarkable close co-operation with the Venice Commission in the context of the parliamentary monitoring procedures, as evident from the high number of opinions requested and produced, as well as from the number of follow-up hearings organised with the participation of the Venice Commission's rapporteurs.

8. The Assembly acknowledges the efforts by the Monitoring Committee to strengthen its reactivity and ability to quickly respond to developments in member States that are not under a full monitoring procedure, engaged in a post-monitoring dialogue or subject to periodic review of their obligations to the Council of Europe. It considers that the Monitoring Committee has an essential role to play in detecting, at an early stage, developments in member States with respect to possible malfunctioning of democratic and rule of law

institutions which could affect the internal social and political stability of these countries and their democratic security. It invites the committee to continue its reflection on practical ways to increase its efficiency in the accomplishment of its tasks and its impact.

9. The Assembly is informed about the insufficient availability of rapporteurs, as well the impact of this situation on the committee's work. It welcomes the reflections by the committee on the ways to address this problem and in particular on ensuring that all candidates for monitoring rapporteurs are well aware of the various tasks required of a monitoring rapporteur, prior to their appointment. It suggests that availability to take on a rapporteur position should be considered as an important criterion for nomination of members to the Monitoring Committee by the political groups.

10. In order to strengthen the visibility and impact of the monitoring procedures in the countries concerned, the Assembly calls for the systematic translation of the monitoring reports and resolutions adopted by the Assembly into the language of the countries concerned.