June 2019 part-session highlights:

- Rik Daems unanimously put forward as candidate for Senate by Open Vld. Congratulations, ALDE-PACE President!

- ALDE-PACE welcomed French LREM representatives as full members of the group: “Today a strong delegation of new French MPs joined our group to reinforce the voice of liberal, progressive and centrist parliamentarians in the Assembly. Together we will work to consolidate the vision of Europe as a fair, free and open society based on the values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law,” stated ALDE-PACE President Rik Daems

- ALDE has secured a firm third position among the political groups of the Assembly. Strong of 90 members, in January 2020 ALDE will increase the number of seats in the committees on Monitoring, Rules of Procedure and the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights. The group will also have the opportunity to nominate two committee chairpersons and five vice-chairpersons. This is the strongest result since 2011!

- In a public statement and a letter Rik Daems congratulated Ms Marija Pejčinović Burić (Croatia), newly elected Secretary General of the Council of Europe who will take office in September. One of the key areas where ALDE-PACE expects rapid and tangible progress is the setting up of a joint mechanism of reaction in cases of violation of the Council of Europe’s Statute by a member state: “We came up, I think, with something which is potentially important because the procedure that is put on the table can be initiated by the Parliamentary Assembly alone. So, it gives this Assembly more power than it has today, because this Assembly solely can trigger a procedure which forces the Committee of Ministers, at the end of the day, to take a position, to take a decision”, declared Rik Daems in the plenary debate.

- During the June part-session after five years of absence, the Russian delegation was allowed to resume work in the Parliamentary Assembly. The restoration of rights comes with demands to fully cooperate with Council of Europe’s organs and comply with PACE’s resolutions. ALDE’s position remains unchanged: being part of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe is not an empty word; it comes with clear obligations set in the resolutions concerning territorial integrity of Ukraine, peace in the region and the state of democracy and human rights in Russia.

- ALDE-PACE paid tribute to Boris Nemtsov, Russian liberal opposition leader murdered in Moscow in 2015, and supported the conclusions of the report pointing at the lack of investigation efforts and calling on the “Russian authorities to reopen and continue their investigation of the murder”. This special report was initiated in 2016 by Kerstin Lundgren (Sweden), former ALDE-PACE Vice-Chair.

We wish to thank all members who took part in the group’s work in Strasbourg, defending the liberal position in the plenary debates and committees, presenting reports and participating in group meetings. We welcome new members who joined ALDE-PACE since the last part-session and wish them good work. We thank IFLRY for excellent cooperation. Finally, a very warm and special thanks goes to Peter Kallenberger for his unfailing support and commitment.

ALDE endeavours to be the engine of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe defending the core European values

Visit our website: www.alde-pace.org
Mart van de VEN (Netherlands)

- Budget and priorities of the Council of Europe for the biennium 2020-2021 (Doc. 14903)
- Expenditure of the Parliamentary Assembly for the biennium 2020-2021 (Doc. 14901)

Rapporteur AS/Pro, 25 June 2019

Ms Reina de BRUIJN-WEZEMAN (Netherlands)

- Ending coercion in mental health: the need for a human rights-based approach (Doc. 14895)

Rapporteur AS/Soc, 26 June 2019

---

Question to Ms Amélie de MONTCHALIN, Secretary of State attached to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs of France, in charge of European Affairs, representing the French Presidency of the Committee of Ministers

Mr Sylvain WASERMAN (France)*

On behalf of the ALDE group, after thanking you for being here today, I wanted to ask you about the ECHR. President Emmanuel Macron, in October 2017, was the first French President to address the ECHR, thereby demonstrating a very strong attachment of France and many of us to the ECHR. My question is simple: at a time when the decisions we hold Ms MONTCHALIN – You are indeed asking me about the effectiveness and sovereignty, in essence, of this European Court of Human Rights which, as we know, is a pillar of the Council of Europe. We believe that there is, with the dialogue of judges, between the ECHR and the Superior Courts, the Supreme Courts of the Member States of the Council of Europe, something to pursue that can give much more strength to this ECHR. We believe, indeed, that if we manage to improve the application of the European Convention on Human Rights at national level, we will be able to protect citizens much more broadly, even at national level, so that recourse at European level is reduced—not because Human rights are less protected, but because national courts are more active on a number of principles. I believe that this is the principle of subsidiarity—which we know so well about the European institutions—which would be put in the right place. The entry into force of Protocol 16, which allows the Superior Court to request the European Court of Human Rights to give its opinion on the application or interpretation of the Convention, is precisely a valuable tool to move in this direction and to improve judicial dialogue. I am pleased, moreover, that the first request for an opinion in the case of this protocol was made by the French Court de Cassation. I think that this is an interesting signal of the mobilisation we are making, well before our presidency, on the interest of this procedure. The ratification of this protocol by as many States that are members of this convention as possible should in my opinion be encouraged, and I believe that this is potentially a key area of work for you as parliamentarians to ensure that this dialogue between judges is carried out successfully. The network of...
could have a major impact on citizens – who may no longer benefit from the protection of the ECHR – what concrete actions do you intend to take during the French Presidency to strengthen and support the action of the ECHR? Thank you, Madam minister.

Question to Mr Marcelo REBELO DE SOUSA, President of Portugal

Ms Melisa RODRÍGU (Spain)* - The last GRECO report told us that Portugal is the country which is doing the least for the fight against corruption. Amongst the recommendations drafted by the Council of Europe with a view to guaranteeing the independence of institutions, Portugal ignored 50% of those rules and only partially implemented, only partially, 40% of them. It is also well known that the government has placed high-ranking officials and family members from the main party in important positions. So, President, what do you intend to do so as to ensure that Portugal takes the fight against corruption more seriously?

Mr Marcelo REBELO DE SOUSA - That was a very important subject, which I mentioned in my speech and which is very topical. There have been GRECO recommendations concerning transparency in public life in different areas. As far as the status of judges is concerned –and we will vote– it took time. It has taken time to negotiate with the judiciary, with the Union Associations representing judges, and we will vote next week, before the end of the legislature, on the new status of judges. Similarly, with the Public Prosecutor's Office, which is a very important institution, for the fight against corruption, we will approve today or tomorrow in Parliament the new statute of the Public Prosecutor's Office.

The concerns are precisely as follows: to affirm a rational principle of the independence of judges and courts, to affirm the autonomy of the public prosecutor's office and to strengthen its resources in terms of functional and financial status.

At the same time, there is the problem, which you mentioned, of transparency in political life. This requires other measures, which are addressed, for example, to Members of Parliament or of officials in the public administration. It was a long negotiation that took four years. You know, it is very difficult to debate and vote on this type of measure. I am a suspect, since I have always supported them, before becoming President of the Republic, as a professor of law, but I admit that it is a long and difficult negotiation, on incompatibilities, on the property status. At the same time, there is the problem, which you mentioned, of transparency in political life. This requires other measures, which are addressed, for example, to Members of Parliament or of officials in the public administration. It was a long negotiation that took four years. You know, it is very difficult to debate and vote on this type of measure. I am a suspect, since I have always supported them, before becoming President of the Republic, as a professor of law, but I admit that it is a long and difficult negotiation, on incompatibilities, on the property status.

Well, these transparency laws are going to be passed –this is the part of the recommendation that was not followed last year, it took time– before the end of this legislature. I myself –you know, the Head of State has no power to present bills– informally, I have submitted to the government a regulation bill which is very topical.

That was a very important subject because populisms appear very often because of this type of argument. It is easy to say that the system is “rotten” where it has examples of crises concerning transparency in public life and sanctions for political leaders. Well, these transparency laws are going to be passed –this is the part of the recommendation that was not followed last year, it took time– before the end of this legislature. I myself –you know, the Head of State has no power to present bills– informally, I have submitted to the government a regulation bill which is very topical.

I hope that all these laws are passed, I have to enact them. This is the first time that lobbying, which was not settled in
Portugal, neither at the level of the parliament, nor at the level of the government, nor at the level of local or regional authorities. This is a very important step, in my opinion, decisive for the quality of democracy in Portugal. It is not enough to look back, to say what we have done from a dictatorship to change, to enforce a democratic Constitution, to replace revolutionary military power, to have a strong political system. Democracy must be permanently recreated. That means a lot more quality in our democracy. This means that many of the recommendations of GRECO that have waited until now will be observed, I hope, by the end of July, through the approval and promulgation, if necessary, of laws concerning transparency in public life and also the status of magistrates, judges and the public prosecutor.

Monday 24 June 2019

**Strengthening the decision-making process of the Parliamentary Assembly concerning credentials and voting (Doc. 14900)**

Mr Rik DAEMS (Belgium) - Our group will be voting in two parts: in conscience, one part who thinks that the price to pay is too high, the job is principally not done, they will vote against it; the other part who thinks that, although they do not like the report, they do not like the trade-off, but think it is, to some extent, justified to get the new procedure giving more power to this assembly, they will vote in favour. In the middle, we will have some amendments being tabled and, we hope, that we can find a few amendments that we've tabled some of them ourselves in order to still ameliorate this report. It's not minor things - it's some of them are very important - but we will get to it once we get to the amendments. As far as I'm concerned as a group's leader, respecting the fact that we have two portions in our group - one who thinks that the price is justified, the other one who does not think - I, as a group leader, out of respect for my group, at the end will abstain. [Read more, voting results](#)

Tuesday 25 June 2019

**Progress report of the Bureau and the Standing Committee (Doc. 14911, Doc. 14911 Add. 1, Doc. 14911 Add. 2, Doc. 14912)**

Mr Martin POLIAČIK (Slovak Republic) - I don't like the way she introduced the Russian delegation, but I would like to see her introduce a European Parliament delegation into this very Hemicycle one day, because that would actually strengthen this institution. That is something that we are really looking forward to in the future [...] On behalf of ALDE I welcome the steps being taken by the Bureau, especially regarding the revision of the code of conduct in accordance with the resolution on promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment [...] It is the very word 'progress' that can be discussed in this Hemicycle. Are we really progressing if a country that has had seven chances, with seven documents passed in this Hemicycle, to do better, to uphold human rights, to uphold the rules when it comes to democracy and the rule of law, has not done anything, to show a gesture, that they understood that they have made mistakes [...] I don't think, ladies and gentlemen, that we are progressing. We need to do something about it and make this institution proud again. [Read more](#)
Mr Goran BEUS RICHEMBERG (Croatia) – The actual budgetary aggression made by the Russian Federation taught us, I hope, a lot about the vulnerability of our budget and the needs of our structures in accomplishment of our mission. Therefore, we are very in favour of keeping all main activities and programmes, which are carrying this institution for 70 years. What we are not comfortable with is a proposal of the Secretary-General, and I have to admit that we were shocked by the proposal to cut down, very radically, the budget targeting youth activities and the Youth Department. Youth networks across Europe have developed extremely important activities counting on support of the Council of Europe […] Me, personally, I have entered this hemicycle for the first time in my life as a youth activist leading the group of people who would like to learn more about democracy, rule of law and protection of the human rights. Our approach is now so non-generous to young people we would like to warn that the future of this institution cannot be even imaginable without young people and their role. And setting up a new face of the future of this institution and the basic principles we are standing on, young people are those who will create a future of Europe and the values we share. So, don't stop the activities in that direction to help them to learn to be more active citizens, to participate and to solve our continent. Read more, voting results 1, 2

Ms Petra STIENEN (Netherlands) - I would like, on behalf of the ALDE party, to reiterate that we are really pleased with both reports and urge everybody to vote in favour of the resolutions […] We would like to ask the Rapporteur whether she believes more research needs to be done on the cost aspect of gender-based violence and whether PACE can play a part in this. We recognise the observations of the Rapporteur on the increase of challenges against the Istanbul convention based on false information and deliberate misinterpretation of the topic of gender and gender-based violence. We are pleased with the suggestions in the report about the role national parliaments can play in monitoring procedures. Is there a possibility to collect data of progress in this regard, so we can learn from each other? Read more, voting results 1, 2

Wednesday 26 June 2019

Ms Béatrice FRESKO-ROLFO (Monaco) - I would now like to turn to the moral code that should guide our actions. With regard to ethical principles, only consent should be privileged. It must remain the essential condition for care. And to guarantee this right, States are obliged to establish a legal and administrative framework with an efficient control mechanism […] We must give priority to the will of patients and develop a local mental health policy dominated by the need to respect consent. To provide patients with care as close as possible to their homes, with the condition of success being an increase in human and financial resources. Read more, voting results
Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of the Russian Federation (Doc. 14922)

Mr Martin POLIAČIK (Slovak Republic) - Today, the credibility of this very community is at stake. We at ALDE, fully support the notion that no one should be excluded from dialogue and we should keep close contact even with those we strongly disagree with. Talking, explaining ourselves and diplomacy, in general, should be a tool used to achieve mutual understanding [...] At the same time, once we establish rules and principles, we need to stick to them. We need to be able to support and justify the values that they are based on and be persistent in enforcing their observance. The delegation of the Russian Federation is back in this hemicycle after 5 years and - it is only fair to say it - not with their homework done. Read more, voting results

Daphne Caruana Galizia's assassination and the rule of law in Malta and beyond: ensuring that the whole truth emerges (Doc. 14906)

Mr Jacques MAIRE (France)* - Daphne Caruana Galizia, through her investigations, disturbed Maltese political actors, she was tracking corruption and her revelations highlighted personalities in the government but also in the opposition. She paid for her actions with her life, and her death raises suspicions about the government's involvement. [Some steps forward have been made [...] But these advances are insufficient. That is why the ALDE Group supports the rapporteur's proposals, which go in two directions: - First, to ensure that justice is done for Daphne Caruana. This now requires the establishment of an independent public inquiry if the current investigation is not completed quickly; - Then ensure that Malta urgently implements the recommendations of the Venice Commission and GRECO, in order to ensure a better functioning of the Parliament. Read more, voting results

Thursday 27 June 2019
Joint debate: Ending violence against children: a Council of Europe contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (Doc. 14894); Stop violence against, and exploitation of, migrant children (Doc. 14905)

Ms Melisa RODRÍGUEZ (Spain)* - Exploitation of children is one of the most serious issues we've ever had to deal with here and it is something we shall continue to deal with in future with all the seriousness it deserves. This is a tragedy and what is tragic is that we come back to this time after time and we still do not manage to eradicate sexual violence. We actually find that one fifth of all children in Europe suffer from some kind of violence. [...] We can't just say "look, these are children, they don't vote, they don't matter". Quite the opposite: each and every one of us does its utmost to fight for the future of our countries and that means for the children of our countries. Read more, voting results 1, 2

Post-monitoring dialogue with Bulgaria (Doc. 14904)

Mr Jokin BILDARRATZ (Spain)* - There are issues – and we completely agree in ALDE – that need to be treated with special sensitivity, and this has also been transmitted to us from minority groups in Bulgaria. The treatment towards minorities that are the main target of hate speech. It's important to encourage, to motivate Bulgaria, so that it continues to work in the right direction. Towards that main goal that we all share: for no country to be under monitoring. However, we think that maintaining dialogue is very important, in order to overcome the problems that exist. During this year, we'll work with the Bulgarian institutions so that next year, we achieve important advances. Read more, voting results
Shedding light on the murder of Boris Nemtsov (Doc. 14902)

Mr Martin POLIÁČIK (Slovak Republic) - The ALDE group urges Russian authorities to create the conditions for an independent and effective investigation into this shameful crime. We are happy that this report is finally discussed, although we think it would deserve a more prominent time slot on this agenda. We do remember the unusual length of the reference of this motion signed by 53 members of the Assembly. It took more than a year to finally appoint a rapporteur. It is in the interest of all, and in first instance the Russian people, that you'll support his allies in Russia and continue his fight. The people of Russia deserve a just and free society where opposing positions are shared without fear of prosecution and death. Democracy will prevail in the end. Read more, voting results

Friday 28 June 2019
Situation in Syria: prospects for a political solution? (Doc. 14889)

Mr Olivier BECHT (France)* - For more than eight years, we have been experiencing the consequences of the Syrian crisis in Europe. Through migratory flows, but also through terrorism led by the Islamic State, which has hit several of our countries. As we are experiencing a heat wave in France, it is worth remembering that the origin of the Syrian crisis lies in a climatic event. That of a terrible drought that struck the country from 2006 to 2011, plunging many populations, particularly in the countryside, into precariousness and poverty. The regime's inability to respond to this economic crisis lead to a revolt by rural and peri-urban populations - a revolt that has itself been crushed by the regime in violence [...] Of course, it is not up to our Assembly to interfere in the peace process initiated within the framework of the UN. However, given the implications of this conflict for the stability of the Mediterranean basin, and therefore of the whole of Europe, we can only support the rapporteur's recommendations. Read more, voting results

Pushback policies and practice in Council of Europe member States (Doc. 14909)

Mr Gusty GRAAS (Luxembourg)* – Many facts and injuries with regard to the refugees listed in this report point to the very difficult situation in some countries. This is all the more regrettable when it comes to facts that have occurred in a Council of Europe member country. In addition, it must be stigmatised that Member States of the European Union use inhumane means towards refugees, either by punishing boats that provide assistance to migrants, or by sending migrants back without acceptable reasons, or by housing refugees in very poor – even sometimes terrifying – conditions [...] In conclusion, the ALDE Group believes that coercive measures must be taken to ensure that refugees are provided with a dignified framework and that refoulement is carried out while respecting legal channels. Read more, voting results