

Nyt fra Europarådet

Opdatering marts og kalender april
Pressemeddelelse DK 4/05, 1. april 2005

Council of Europe to set up new forum on the role of the media in times of crisis

Kyiv, 11.03.2005 – Media and communications ministers from across Europe have agreed to set up a regular forum allowing government experts and media professionals to exchange views on the rights and responsibilities of journalists in times of crisis.

The ministers have also asked the Council of Europe to create a new award for media organisations which have played a major role either in preventing or resolving conflicts, or in promoting understanding and dialogue.

These two projects are part of a new action plan for Council of Europe-led co-operation in the field of the media and new communication services, which was adopted at the end of a two-day ministerial conference in Kyiv.

The action plan also calls on the 46-nation Council of Europe to design strategies to help its member states encourage the media – in particular public service broadcasters – to actively promote participation in democratic processes, especially through new forms of communication technology.

The ministers also adopted a political declaration and three separate resolutions – one on each of the main themes of the conference – as well as a separate resolution calling on the Council of Europe to draw up a new action plan for assisting media reform in Ukraine.

Further information is available at www.coe.int/2005-media

Interior Ministers promote new legal “tools” to fight terrorism and organised crime

Warsaw, 18.03.2005 - European Interior Ministers today pledged their backing to three new Council of Europe conventions designed to stop the actions of terrorists and organised criminals. In a resolution adopted at the end of their conference in Warsaw, the ministers urged the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers to give the green light to a convention on the prevention of terrorism, a convention on money-laundering and the financing of terrorism and a convention on human trafficking. They pledged to make every effort in their countries to ensure signature, ratification and implementation of the new treaties. The ministers also called for all three to be ready in time for the Council's Warsaw Summit on 16 and 17 May 2005 and added that the Summit should strengthen the Council's role in preventing and controlling terrorism and organised and serious crime.

Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski told the conference that a perfect and precise legal system was needed to beat criminals who now had no difficulties working across international borders. Co-ordination and solidarity was needed to guarantee success, he said. Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis said Europe must “sharpen its tools in the fight against terrorism and organised crime” and urged ministers to support the Council's work in the field. “We cannot afford to wait for more terrorist attacks before taking action. We cannot wait for another Madrid or Beslan,” he said. “We need to move quickly and translate standards into action.”

For more information, see our special file: <http://www.coe.int/2005-warsaw>

Council of Europe/European Union backing for steps to improve mutual co-operation

Strasbourg, 17.03.2005 – High-level representatives from the Council of Europe and the European Union expressed their support for a number of concrete measures aimed at boosting co-operation between the two organisations.

The participants at the 21st Council of Europe/EU Quadripartite meeting in Brussels yesterday(*) underlined the key role of multilateral organisations in tackling modern-day problems, and expressed their hope that the forthcoming Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government (Warsaw, 16-17 May 2005) should lay the foundations for a new institutional set-up in Europe.

In particular, the participants:

- agreed to begin work, as soon as possible, on the arrangements for the EU's accession to the European Convention on Human Rights;
- stated their willingness to strengthen coherence between the Council of Europe's conventions and the EU's legal acquis;
- backed an EU proposal for a review of consultation and co-operation mechanisms at all levels;
- expressed their support for a memorandum of understanding setting out arrangements for enhanced co-operation and political dialogue in concrete terms;
- welcomed the recent appointment of a European Commission representative to the Council of Europe.

New joint projects in the South Caucasus, Ukraine and South-East Europe were also discussed, as were a number of topical issues including the recent elections in Moldova and forthcoming votes in Armenia and Azerbaijan.

 (*) The Council of Europe representatives at the Quadripartite meeting were Secretary General Terry Davis and Jan Trzuszczynski, Secretary of State at the Polish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, representing the Chairmanship of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers. The EU was represented by Luxembourg's Foreign Minister Jean Asselborn, representing the Presidency of the Council of the European Union, the High Representative for the CFSP and Secretary General of the Council, Javier Solana, and External Relations Commissioner Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

Vedtagelser på mødet i Den Parlamentariske Forsamlings stående komité (Paris, 18. marts):

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| REC 1695 | Draft Council of Europe Convention on action against trafficking in human beings |
| RES 1426 | Candidates for the European Court of Human Rights |
| REC 1696 + RES 1427 | Plans to set up a Fundamental Rights Agency of the European Union |
| REC 1697 | European Federation of Research and Informations Centres on Sectarism (FECRIS): request for consultative status with the Council of Europe |
| RES 1428 | The situation of the deported Meskhetian population |
| RES 1429 | Asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Turkey |
| RES 1430 | Industrial hazards |
| RES 1431 | Initiation of a monitoring procedure and post-monitoring dialogue |
| RES 1432 | Procedures for elections held by the Parliamentary Assembly other than those of its President and Vice-presidents. |

Moldova elections generally complied with international standards but concerns remain

CHISINAU, 7 March 2005 – The 6 March parliamentary elections in Moldova were generally in compliance with most OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and other international election standards. They did however, fall short of some key commitments, particularly regarding campaign conditions and media access, concluded the International Election Observation Mission, in a statement today.

The Mission, consisting of some 500 observers, was a joint undertaking of the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) and the European Parliament.

“The fact that these elections generally complied with OSCE standards was undercut by negative aspects of unequal campaign conditions and constrained media coverage that were already noted in the 2003 election and have no place in a democracy,” said Kimmo Kiljunen, Head of delegation of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, who was appointed by the OSCE Chairman in Office to lead the short-term observation.

“We regret that Moldova has not lowered its threshold as the Council of Europe recommended already in 2001. This has influenced the result and the balance of the new Moldovan parliament,” said André Kvakkestad, who headed the PACE delegation.

Marianne Mikko, Head of the European Parliament delegation said: “Although there have been a lot of problems during the election campaign, the people of Moldova have shown that they want to be a part of a democratic Europe. It is the clear wish of the European Parliament to build on this desire and assist Moldovans in the future development of their democracy.”

“Restrictive regulations on the campaign and media made it difficult for voters to get basic information about the contestants. The OSCE and the Council of Europe have already suggested changes to the election code to address these and other shortcomings. They should be dealt with without delay,” said István Gyarmati, Head of the OSCE/ODIHR Mission.

The Observer Mission noted that a competitive and pluralistic party system gave voters a genuine choice. Print media offered diverse political views and the Central Election Commission sought to increase campaign coverage in broadcast media, albeit somewhat belatedly. Over 2,000 domestic observers followed the elections and there was an increased number of women candidates.

Shortcomings included obstruction of parties' campaign activities, instances of harassment of candidates and opposition media, reports of pressure on public employees not to campaign in support of opposition parties and instances of abuse of public resources. Furthermore a number of courts failed to respect the legal deadlines to rule on complaints.

Election day was calm and orderly, with observers making a positive assessment of the polling in 80.4 per cent of the 1,400 polling stations visited. There were some cases of overcrowding and presence of unauthorized persons during the vote and the count. Observers also noted inconsistency in how rules were applied, for instance regarding supplementary voter lists, stamping of identity documents and control mechanisms during the count.

Authorities fail adequately to address electoral shortcomings

SKOPJE, 28 March 2005 – The second round on 27 March in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, whilst well conducted generally in the majority of the country, in some areas again did not meet key OSCE and Council of Europe commitments and standards for elections, guaranteeing universal and equal suffrage

and ensuring the secrecy of the ballot. In the period between the two rounds of local elections and on polling day the authorities failed adequately to address the shortcomings identified in the first round, despite some remedial effort.

This is the conclusion of the International Election Observation Mission, which published its findings today. Some 260 observers from 31 countries observed the partial second round on behalf of the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights, (OSCE/ODIHR). They were joined by representatives from the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

A second round for the local elections was held in 57 municipalities. Between the rounds the observers noted that legal deadlines were respected for announcing initial results and deciding on complaints and appeals. However, delays in announcing results in some municipalities undermined public confidence in the results. Reports of intimidation of election officials and others, as well as sporadic violent attacks on party activists, contributed to a negative atmosphere.

The authorities made some effort to address first round irregularities, changing some electoral boards where the conduct of voting had been problematic, and opening criminal investigations against persons who had been involved in electoral malfeasance. At the same time, the authorities did not act consistently to remedy cases of obvious malpractice and in many instances municipal election boards voted on complaints exclusively according to political party interests.

The continuing lack of more decisive intervention by the relevant authorities against intimidation of voters and election board members has led to a culture of impunity in some municipalities, undermining confidence in the rule of law and the ability of election bodies to protect the legality of the process.

Afgørelse i nordiske menneskerettighedssager

22. marts M.S. v. Finland (no. 46601/99): violation of Article 6 § 1 (right to a fair hearing).

22. marts Toimi v. Sweden (no. 55164/00): Friendly settlement (right to a fair hearing).

Møder i april 2005

(hvor intet andet er nævnt, holdes mødet i Strasbourg)

- 31. marts-1. Rundbordsmøde: European Ombudspersons (København)
- 5.-7. Ministerkomitéen
- 7.-8. Justitsministerkonference (Helsingfors)*. Temaer: Seeking legal solutions to debt problems, the social mission of the criminal justice system, draft European prisons charter, combating terrorism (opfølgning af vedtagelse på det seneste møde den 9.-10. oktober 2003 i Sofia)
- 7.-8. Konference: The European Population Conference 2005
- 20. Ministerkomitéen
- 21.-22. Konference: Transfrontier co-operation (Warszawa)
- 25.-29. Session: Den Parlamentariske Forsamling

* Europarådets pressemeddelelse udsendes mandag den 4. april. Det finske justitsministeriums pressemeddelelse kan ses på www.om.fi/30527.htm

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