



Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

<https://pace.coe.int>

COUNCIL OF EUROPE



CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

2025 ORDINARY SESSION

First part

27 – 31 January 2025

**TEXTS ADOPTED
BY THE ASSEMBLY**

Provisional versions

Table of contents

Opinion

Opinion 304 (2025)	Opinion on a draft convention for the protection of the profession of lawyer (Doc. 16102)
------------------------------------	---

Recommendations

Recommendation 2288 (2025)	The need for a renewed rules-based international order (Doc. 16087)
Recommendation 2289 (2025)	Addressing risks to human rights and the rule of law posed by mercenaries and private military and security companies: a call for comprehensive regulation (Doc. 16092)
Recommendation 2290 (2025)	Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship (Doc. 16090)
Recommendation 2291 (2025)	Overcoming age-based discrimination against older persons (Doc. 16091)

Resolutions

Resolution 2580 (2025)	The progress of the Assembly's monitoring procedure (January-December 2024) (Doc. 16086)
Resolution 2581 (2025)	The need for a renewed rules-based international order (Doc. 16087)
Resolution 2582 (2025)	The absolute and urgent need to end the humanitarian crisis for women, children and the hostages in Gaza (Doc. 16093)
Resolution 2583 (2025)	Addressing risks to human rights and the rule of law posed by mercenaries and private military and security companies: a call for comprehensive regulation (Doc. 16092)
Resolution 2584 (2025)	Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship (Doc. 16090)
Resolution 2585 (2025)	Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Georgia (Doc. 16104)
Resolution 2586 (2025)	Immigration, one of the answers to Europe's demographic ageing (Doc. 16072)
Resolution 2587 (2025)	The urgent need for free and fair elections in Belarus (Doc. 16105)
Resolution 2588 (2025)	European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine (Doc. 16106)
Resolution 2589 (2025)	Women in the economy: employment, entrepreneurship and gender-responsive budgeting (Doc. 16068)
Resolution 2590 (2025)	Regulating content moderation on social media to safeguard freedom of expression (Doc. 16089)
Resolution 2591 (2025)	"Long Covid" and access to the right to health (Doc. 16088)
Resolution 2592 (2025)	Overcoming age-based discrimination against older persons (Doc. 16091)

Opinion
304



Opinion 304 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Opinion on a draft convention for the protection of the profession of lawyer

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly warmly welcomes the finalisation of the draft Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer (hereinafter the “draft Convention”) by the Committee of Experts on the Protection of Lawyers (CJ-AV) and the European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ).

2. It shares the view of the European Court of Human Rights that the specific situation of lawyers gives them a crucial position in the administration of justice as intermediaries between individuals, the public and the courts. They, therefore, play a key role in ensuring that the courts, whose mission is fundamental in a democratic State based on the rule of law, enjoy public confidence. However, for members of the public to have confidence in the administration of justice, they must have confidence in the ability of the legal profession to provide effective representation and necessary legal support and assistance. Lawyers are protagonists in the justice system, directly involved in its functioning and the defence of a party.

3. The Assembly has consistently considered lawyers as human rights defenders and observed, with increasing concern, the rising number of cases in which lawyers became targets of attacks solely because they exercised their professional duties.

4. The Assembly refers to its extensive work on the protection of lawyers, who play a central role in protecting human rights, particularly the right to a fair trial, and in implementing the rule of law, including [Resolutions 1660 \(2009\)](#) “Situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States”, [1685 \(2009\)](#) “Allegations of politically motivated abuses of the criminal justice system in Council of Europe member States”, [1891 \(2012\)](#) “The situation of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States”, [2095 \(2016\)](#) “Strengthening the protection and role of human rights defenders in Council of Europe member States”, [2348 \(2020\)](#) “The principles and guarantees applicable to advocates”, [2513 \(2023\)](#) “Pegasus and similar spyware and secret State surveillance” and their related Recommendations, and in particular [Recommendation 2121 \(2018\)](#) “The case for drafting a European convention on the profession of lawyer”.

5. The Assembly considered, in particular, that the harassment, threats and attacks against lawyers demonstrated the need to reinforce the legal status of the Committee of Ministers’ Recommendation No. R(2000)21 to member States on the freedom of exercise of the profession of lawyer by translating its provisions into a legally binding instrument with an effective control mechanism. The Assembly thus called on the Committee of Ministers to draft and adopt a convention on the profession of lawyer based on the standards set out in Recommendation No. R(2000)21, taking into account the existing soft law instruments and reinforcing guarantees in relation to fundamental issues such as access to a lawyer and lawyers’ access to their clients, legal professional privilege and the confidentiality of lawyer-client communications.

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 January 2025 (7th sitting) (see [Doc. 16102](#), report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Vladimir Vardanyan). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 January 2025 (7th sitting).



6. The Assembly notes with satisfaction that the draft Convention is designed to introduce structured legal protection of the profession of lawyer and the right to practise the profession without fear of discrimination, improper hindrance or interference or being subjected to attacks, threats, harassment and intimidation. It establishes professional rights of lawyers, specifies the relevant aspects of their freedom of expression and certain protective measures. Despite the existence of other international legal instruments pursuing similar aims, including the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), the United Nations Basic Principles on the Role of Lawyers, Recommendation No. R(2000)21 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the freedom of exercise of the profession of lawyer, and the United Nations Human Rights Council Resolution 44/9 on the independence and impartiality of the judiciary, jurors and assessors, and the independence of lawyers, the draft Convention will become the first-ever international treaty on this matter.

7. Once adopted and after its entry into force, the Convention will also be open for accession by any non-member State of the Council of Europe at the invitation of the Committee of Ministers. The Assembly considers that the Convention's global reach will further reinforce the Council of Europe's status as a leading international organisation in the protection of human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

8. The Assembly is mindful that the draft Convention was prepared taking into consideration the great variety of legal systems and ways the legal profession is organised in member States of the Council of Europe and beyond. It appreciates the inclusive drafting process, which involved government representatives, experts, and legal practitioners, with contributions from non-governmental organisations, including several professional associations of lawyers.

9. The Assembly appreciates that its proposals contained in [Recommendation 2121 \(2018\)](#) are largely reflected throughout the text of the draft Convention. It considers it particularly significant that the draft Convention's key provisions (Articles 6, 7 and 9.3) will apply not only to lawyers authorised to practise the profession under national law but also to individuals denied or revoked the qualification of lawyer or licenses, as well as those recognised by international courts and bodies as competent to act in proceedings before them (Article 2.3). This will cover persons who may not be licensed lawyers but represent applicants before the European Court of Human Rights, United Nations human rights bodies and/or other relevant fora, such as representatives of NGOs and academics. This extended scope will enhance the effectiveness of the guarantees provided by the draft Convention, particularly in cases where national authorities could seek to bypass them by misusing lawful procedures. The draft Convention not only meets the standards established in the jurisprudence of the European Court of Human Rights and in other relevant international documents, but it also develops them by establishing new, higher standards, thereby providing real added value for the protection of the rights of lawyers.

10. The Assembly also welcomes the stipulation in the draft Convention (Article 4) of legal standards for the functioning of professional associations of lawyers as independent, self-governing bodies.

11. The Assembly is particularly satisfied that the draft Convention establishes a robust mechanism for monitoring its implementation (Article 10) and equips it with adequate tools to ensure the effectiveness of the process. The Assembly is pleased to note that it will be informed of the implementation of the Convention (Article 15) and findings of inquiries undertaken under the urgent procedure (Article 13.3). This will provide valuable input for the Assembly's continued work on upholding human rights and the rule of law.

12. The Assembly regrets that the draft Convention contains no specific provisions on the use of secret surveillance, including spyware such as Pegasus, against lawyers. Whilst Article 6.3 (b) of the draft Convention obliges parties to ensure that lawyers can communicate confidentially with their clients or prospective clients, its general terms may not be sufficient to exclude the risk posed by the use of modern secret surveillance tools to the right to practise the profession of lawyer without interference. Referring to its [Recommendation 2258 \(2023\)](#) "Pegasus and similar spyware and secret State surveillance", the Assembly proposes that specific provisions regarding this matter be included in a future Council of Europe convention on the acquisition, use, sale and export of spyware.

13. The Assembly invites the future Group of Experts on the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer (GRAVO) to engage in a regular, mutual exchange of information on all issues pertaining to the situation of lawyers and their role in upholding human rights and the rule of law with its competent committees.

14. The Assembly notes that although the CJ-AV expressly considered that none of the provisions of the draft Convention should be subject to reservation, no relevant prohibition related thereto was introduced. In consequence, pursuant to customary international law (as reflected in Article 19 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties), the draft Convention – as presently drafted – could be subject to reservations upon signature, ratification, acceptance, approval or accession, contrary to the clear intention of the CJ-AV expressed in its report of the 8th meeting (13-15 May 2024) (document CJ-AV(2024)08).

15. Agreeing with the CJ-AV that none of the provisions of the draft Convention should be subject to reservation and noting that only the full implementation of the draft Convention will allow to fulfil its purpose, the Assembly proposes the following amendment to the draft Convention:

15.1. in Chapter V, add the following article: “No reservation may be made in respect of the provisions of this Convention.”

16. Considering that the draft Convention mostly reflects the Assembly’s proposals contained in its past recommendations, the Assembly is of the view that the draft Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of the Profession of Lawyer can be adopted by the Committee of Ministers and opened for signature and ratification, as soon as possible.

Recommendations
2288 to 2291



Recommendation 2288 (2025)¹

Provisional version

The need for a renewed rules-based international order

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly draws the Committee of Ministers' attention to its [Resolution 2581 \(2025\)](#) "The need for a renewed rules-based international order", in which it takes stock of the current challenges to the rules-based international order as established following the Second World War. The shift towards multipolarity, with groups of countries coalescing around diverging approaches and visions as regards values, systems of governance and the international order itself, is accompanied by the rapid rise of authoritarianism, nationalism, isolationism, unilateralism and pure power politics. This phenomenon has been underscored by the Russian Federation's ongoing war of aggression against Ukraine, which constitutes a grave and blatant violation of the rules-based international order. The world is currently facing the highest number of conflicts since the end of the Second World War, and the United Nations Security Council is struggling to fulfil its primary responsibility of ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security due to the irreconcilable positions and interests of its permanent members.

2. This context of global instability and insecurity is all the more worrying as, in addition to the maintenance of international peace, the world faces a number of other distinct and interrelated challenges that can only be addressed through concerted action, ranging from climate change and environmental degradation to mass migration, growing inequalities, global health risks, food and energy crises, terrorism and violent extremism, the rise of artificial intelligence and its impact on all aspects of society, and the exploration of space.

3. The Assembly strongly supports the renewal of the multilateral system of global governance, which should continue to be based on respect for international law and the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. Co-operation among international organisations sharing these universal values and principles will be essential to safeguard multilateralism and to ensure that the momentous challenges ahead can be addressed for the benefit of humanity.

4. Founded in 1949 as a peace project, the Council of Europe has made an outstanding contribution to strengthening rules-based multilateralism by promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law and contributing to creating a single European legal space, through the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5) and its interpretation by the European Court of Human Rights, and more than 200 other conventions. By strengthening democratic standards, the protection of human rights and respect for the rule of law, the Council of Europe contributes to democratic security and the promotion of international peace within the meaning of the Charter of the United Nations.

5. For these reasons, the Assembly makes a resolute call for strengthening the partnership between the Council of Europe and the United Nations, in line with the position taken by the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe at their Fourth Summit in Reykjavik in 2023, when they committed to strengthen "the role of the Council of Europe in the evolving European multilateral architecture and in global governance by enhancing its external dimension, through its liaison offices and through a new engagement based on its core values with democracies in the world and its southern neighbourhood".

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2025 (3rd sitting) (see [Doc. 16087](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Ms Dora Bakoyannis). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2025 (3rd sitting).



6. The Assembly refers to its [Recommendation 1367 \(1998\)](#) “Reform of the United Nations”, in which it already recommended to the Committee of Ministers to “recognise that the Council of Europe is a regional organisation within the meaning of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, on the basis of its contribution to democratic security in Europe, and the observer status it enjoys in the United Nations General Assembly”, and to “examine practical possibilities for the Council of Europe, including the Parliamentary Assembly, to be effectively present at the United Nations General Assembly’s sessions in New York”. In the current international context, these recommendations become even more relevant.
7. In light of the above, the Assembly calls upon the Committee of Ministers to:
 - 7.1. take appropriate steps to seek recognition of the Council of Europe as a regional organisation within the meaning of Article 52, Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations, in view of the role played by the Council of Europe in ensuring democratic security;
 - 7.2. strengthen co-operation between the relevant Council of Europe and United Nations bodies, in particular as regards the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, their respective work in the field of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, as well as issues such as environmental protection, the benefits and risks of new technologies and artificial intelligence, the role of youth and gender equality;
 - 7.3. consider updating the 1971 Arrangement on Co-operation and Liaison between the Secretariats of the United Nations and the Council of Europe to better reflect the potential areas of synergy and co-operation between the two organisations in the face of current challenges.
8. Finally, the Assembly reiterates its [Recommendations 1659 \(2004\)](#) “Strengthening of the United Nations” and [2150 \(2019\)](#) “Strengthening co-operation with the United Nations in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, in which it invited the Committee of Ministers to find modalities for establishing a Council of Europe representation at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. It therefore strongly supports the proposal of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to establish a liaison office of the Council of Europe at the United Nations Headquarters in New York and urges the Committee of Ministers to take the necessary steps in this direction without delay.



Recommendation 2289 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Addressing risks to human rights and the rule of law posed by mercenaries and private military and security companies: a call for comprehensive regulation

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Referring to its [Resolution 2583 \(2025\)](#) “Addressing risks to human rights and the rule of law posed by mercenaries and private military and security companies: a call for comprehensive regulation”, the Parliamentary Assembly reiterates its concern about the erosion of States’ authority, loss of democratic oversight and accountability, and the impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations, which result from the increased use of private military and security companies (PMSCs), including those registered or operating within the territory of the Council of Europe member States.
2. The Assembly believes that numerous reports of grave human rights violations perpetrated by PMSCs call for stronger regulation of this industry. Although their deployment might serve legitimate purposes, such as providing security and expertise to international organisations and humanitarian workers, some States might be keen to use their services simply to hide their involvement in military operations by invoking plausible deniability and prevent victims of abuses from obtaining compensation and seeking justice.
3. Notwithstanding the fact that matters relating to national defence do not fall within the scope of the Council of Europe, the Assembly notes that the scarcely regulated operation of PMSCs poses grave risks to the rule of law and protection of human rights. Therefore, pending the outcome of works of the United Nations open-ended intergovernmental working group to elaborate the content of an international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of PMSCs, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to examine the feasibility of drawing up a Council of Europe convention governing the use of private military and security companies, ensuring accountability, victim redress, and adherence to international human rights standards.
4. The Assembly believes that such a legally binding regional framework should address, at minimum, issues associated with PMSCs’ licensing, registration and oversight and require the introduction of effective remedies for victims of possible human rights violations and developing training programs aimed at preventing such abuses. The initiative on the creation of a legally binding regional framework would complement ongoing efforts within the United Nations by providing a robust regional framework tailored to the specific challenges faced by member States. PMSCs might operate in a grey area where human rights would fall on deaf ears, due to a plausible deniability from the State. As PMSCs are already wreaking havoc on the European continent, the Council of Europe should reinforce trust in its role as a defender of democratic values and human rights, while setting an example of leadership that inspires confidence in multilateral mechanisms and rule of law.
5. Finally, the Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 5.1. endorse, on behalf of the Council of Europe, the Montreux Document on pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for States related to operations of PMSCs during armed conflict;

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2025 (4th sitting) (see [Doc. 16092](#), report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Andrea Orlando). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2025 (4th sitting).



5.2. pending the adoption of a convention, draw up a draft recommendation to member States, focused on mitigating risks to human rights, democracy and the rule of law posed by private military and security companies;

5.3. intensify political dialogue with the United Nations, in line with the Reykjavik Declaration, by ensuring that the Council of Europe contributes to the open-ended intergovernmental working group to elaborate the content of an international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of private military and security companies.



Recommendation 2290 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly, referring to its [Resolution 2584 \(2025\)](#) “Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship”, underscores that history education is key to enabling democratic debate and sustaining and strengthening pluralism and democratic values in society. Moreover, multiperspectivity and the appropriate handling of controversial and sensitive issues in history lessons can be a powerful tool to support peace and reconciliation in societies. By learning about difficult history from the angle of human rights and democracy, using interactive and co-operative learning methodologies, young people will gain confidence and competency in discussing complex and controversial historical events affecting their communities and societies from a multi-perspective and nuanced point of view.
2. The Assembly welcomes the political momentum provided by the 2023 Standing Conference of Ministers of Education for the renewal of the civic mission of education, and emphasises that the Council of Europe guiding principles for quality history education and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture are excellent tools to be further promoted and broadly implemented in member States as part of the new Council of Europe Education Strategy 2024-2030 “Learners First – Education for Today’s and Tomorrow’s Democratic Societies” and the European Space for Citizenship Education.
3. The Assembly considers that education for democratic citizenship should be part of school curricula both as a distinct compulsory subject, and as part and parcel of other relevant subjects, such as history teaching, during all stages of formal education (primary, secondary, and higher education), as well as in vocational training and non-formal education. Partnerships between formal and non-formal education – including sites of remembrance, museums, archives, audio-visual sector, civil society, and artists – can provide valuable opportunities for teachers and learners to co-create history lessons and exercise competences for democratic culture outside a formal setting.
4. The Assembly accordingly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:
 - 4.1. support the different Council of Europe activities relating to history education, ensuring synergies between the different strands of the intergovernmental programme and the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe; and encourage all member States which have not yet done so to join the Observatory;
 - 4.2. encourage creating further links and transversality between the Council of Europe activities on culture, heritage, education and youth;
 - 4.3. provide support and assistance to member States in reviewing their education policies and integrating in national education curricula the Council of Europe guiding principles for history education and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2025 (5th sitting) (see [Doc. 16090](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Luz Martinez Seijo). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 January 2025 (5th sitting).





Recommendation 2291 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Overcoming age-based discrimination against older persons

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Referring to its [Resolution 2592 \(2025\)](#) “Overcoming age-based discrimination against older persons”, the Parliamentary Assembly congratulates the Committee of Ministers for adopting Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2 to the member States on the promotion of human rights of older persons.
2. Welcoming the update of the course on anti-discrimination of the Council of Europe Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP), the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to consider adding a module on age-based discrimination.
3. In order to protect and promote the human rights of older persons and to eliminate the discrimination they face, including in the field of healthcare, as well as to combat the stereotypes, prejudices and bias against older persons that lie at the root of such discrimination, the Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to:
 - 3.1. as so decided in 2019, keep under review the implementation of Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2, in particular with the aim of identifying and remedying existing gaps in this field, considering in this context the desirability and feasibility of a specific legal instrument at European level which would provide a framework for the protection of the human rights of older persons;
 - 3.2. consider preparing a recommendation on preventing and combating ageism, following a similar approach to that of Recommendation CM/Rec(2019)1 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on preventing and combating sexism;
 - 3.3. be represented and participate actively in the ongoing discussions in the United Nations Human Rights Council, on developing an international legally binding instrument on the rights of older persons.

1. *Assembly debate* on 31 January 2025 (9th sitting) (see [Doc. 16091](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Andrea Eder-Gitschthaler). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 31 January 2025 (9th sitting).



Resolutions
2580 to 2592



Resolution 2580 (2025)¹

Provisional version

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 4 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 [Resolution 2560 \(2024\)](#), 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. The Assembly calls upon the authorities to continue with the implementation of reforms regarding the justice system and in the fields of media and 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, rule of law and human rights in the country. It remains concerned about the continuing crackdown on political

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).



and civil society activists, media representatives and other government critics. It exhorts the 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 Media and the relevant legislation concerning NGOs, 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 its 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 \(2023\)](#) on “The humanitarian situation in Nagorno-Karabakh”, and the [Resolution 2560 \(2024\)](#) on “The honouring of obligations and commitments by Armenia”, 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 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 \(2024\)](#) 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 disproportionately 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 and proportionate and must be 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 5 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. The Assembly 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, which undermines 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. The Assembly 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 law enforcement authorities and to show a genuine commitment to investigating and adjudicating war crimes cases. It remains concerned about attacks and smear campaigns against journalists and 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 [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 and Mr Selahattin Demirtaş as well as 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 [Resolution 2528 \(2024\)](#), it calls upon the authorities to eliminate torture and physical ill-treatment in places of detention. The Assembly furthermore calls on 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.

2. *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.

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 with 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 the parliamentary elections held in the last three years but expresses its concern about the continuing absence of a breakthrough in the political impasse that underlays 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 the end of the post-monitoring dialogue. The Assembly reiterates that for that to happen, Montenegro is expected to 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 its way 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 Cooperation 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 outstanding recommendations of the CPT.

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 were interrupted due to the early parliamentary elections in the country and the lengthy period of government formation that followed, leading 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 participation of the Venice Commission 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 the 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 the practical ways to increase its efficiency and impact in the accomplishment of its tasks.

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.



Resolution 2581 (2025)¹

Provisional version

The need for a renewed rules-based international order

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In 1945, determined to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, world leaders decided to create the United Nations, to ensure respect for international law, to maintain international peace and security and to promote social progress and better standards of life. Since then, the United Nations has been the cornerstone of the multilateral system of global governance, which has been enriched by a number of other international organisations and informal fora with specialised mandates and varying geographical coverage.
2. Founded in 1949 as a peace project, the Council of Europe has made an outstanding contribution to strengthening rules-based multilateralism by promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law and contributing to creating a single European legal space, through the European Convention on Human Rights (ETS No. 5), whose interpretation by the European Court of Human Rights has made it a “living instrument” and a “constitutional instrument of European public order”, and more than 200 other conventions.
3. Almost eight decades later, the international context has profoundly changed. The effectiveness of the rules-based international order is being increasingly challenged by a shift towards multipolarity, with groups of countries coalescing around diverging approaches and visions as regards values, systems of governance and the international order itself. This process is accompanied by the rapid rise of authoritarianism, nationalism, isolationism, unilateralism and pure power politics.
4. The world is currently facing the highest number of conflicts since the end of the Second World War, and the United Nations Security Council is struggling to fulfil its primary responsibility of ensuring the maintenance of international peace and security due to the irreconcilable positions and interests of its permanent members.
5. The Russian Federation’s war of aggression against Ukraine marked the most brutal violation of the rules-based international order in recent history, with the Russian Federation trying to change the territorial borders of a neighbouring sovereign State, using violence against civilians as an instrument of war and threatening the use of nuclear weapons. Such acts constitute a flagrant breach of the United Nations Charter and underscore the urgent need for comprehensive accountability mechanisms and an immediate cessation of hostilities.
6. The Assembly reaffirms that no acquisition of territory by the threat or use of force shall be recognised as lawful, and calls upon all States to refrain from any action that might be interpreted as legitimising the seizure or annexation of territory in violation of international law.
7. Furthermore, the international community has proved incapable of stopping the escalation of violence in the Middle East, which began with an appalling terrorist attack by Hamas and other militia groups against Israel on 7 October 2023 and has escalated into a major regional conflict, resulting in more than 40 000 deaths and a humanitarian crisis of apocalyptic proportions in Gaza.
8. In addition, the result of the 2024 presidential election in the United States raises significant concerns about the direction of the United States foreign policy and the impact it might have on the multilateral system.

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2025 (3rd sitting) (see [Doc. 16087](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Ms Dora Bakoyannis). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2025 (3rd sitting).
See also [Recommendation 2288 \(2025\)](#).



9. This context of global instability and insecurity is all the more worrying as, in addition to the maintenance of international peace, the world is facing a number of other distinct and interrelated challenges that can only be addressed through concerted action, ranging from climate change and environmental degradation to mass migration, growing inequalities, global health risks, food and energy crises, terrorism and violent extremism, the rise of artificial intelligence and its impact on all aspects of society, and the exploration of space.

10. In order to counter the threats to the European way of life, protect democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and preserve Europe's position in the world, Council of Europe member States should strive for an open rules-based international order of realism, rather than an ever-shrinking club of "like-minded" countries, while ensuring that any State engaging in acts of aggression or grave breaches of international law is held accountable and does not benefit from unmerited diplomatic or economic privileges.

11. The Parliamentary Assembly firmly believes that a renewed commitment to international law and to the reform of the multilateral system of global governance is necessary to address these challenges effectively. The ability to resist the destabilising forces that seek to replace international law with the rule of force, and the capacity to renew and reinvigorate the rules-based international order, will determine the resilience not only of democracies, but of the world as a whole.

12. In light of these considerations, the Assembly welcomes the adoption on 22 September 2024 by the United Nations General Assembly of Resolution A/RES/79/1 "The Pact for the Future", which demonstrates the commitment of the international community to reform the rules-based international order in order to meet the grave challenges we face. The Assembly therefore urges all States to implement the 56 actions contained in the Pact for the Future, and in particular to:

12.1. ensure the strictest respect for international law, including the United Nations Charter, international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as well as the resolutions of the United Nations Security Council and the United Nations General Assembly;

12.2. uphold the mandate of the International Court of Justice and comply with its decisions;

12.3. refrain from the threat or use of force, or acts of aggression; respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity, within internationally recognised borders, of all States;

12.4. commit to reforming the multilateral system and its institutions through an inclusive approach, to ensure:

12.4.1. a reform of the United Nations Security Council, enlarging its membership to increase its representativeness and giving a stronger role to under-represented and unrepresented regions, such as Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia-Pacific; revising its working methods; and reconsidering the use and scope of the veto power by permanent members, to avoid any abuse;

12.4.2. revitalising the work of the United Nations General Assembly, which should be entrusted with stronger powers in matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security, especially when the United Nations Security Council fails to reach a common position, including in cases where a permanent member exercises its veto power to shield itself from accountability;

12.4.3. a reform of the international financial and economic institutions, including the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, to grant developing countries with stronger representation and voting powers in their decision-making bodies, as well as easier access to financing and credit, and to identify sustainable ways to restructure their debt;

12.5. significantly strengthen actions aimed at addressing the global challenges of climate change and environmental degradation, as well as the global governance of artificial intelligence.

13. The Assembly further urges all States to promptly accede to the International Criminal Court for those countries that have not yet done so, and to co-operate fully with the International Criminal Court and comply with its orders for those countries that have already acceded, in particular with a view to ensuring accountability for war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression.

14. The Assembly recalls that, at their Fourth Summit in Reykjavik in 2023, the Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe reiterated their commitment to strengthening "the role of the Council of Europe in the evolving European multilateral architecture and in global governance by enhancing its external dimension, through its liaison offices and through a new engagement based on its core values with democracies in the world and its southern neighbourhood".

15. In line with the Reykjavik Declaration, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:
 - 15.1. engage in a dialogue with countries from the Global South and make use of all available institutional and diplomatic channels to ensure the largest participation possible in the enlarged partial agreements of the Council of Europe;
 - 15.2. support a greater role for the Council of Europe as a partner of the United Nations in strengthening rules-based multilateralism and for matters related to democratic security, maintenance of peace, and the protection of democracy, human rights and rule of law, including through the recognition of the Council of Europe as a regional organisation within the meaning of article 52, Chapter VIII of the United Nations Charter;
 - 15.3. strengthen the strategic partnership between the Council of Europe and the European Union, as well as the Council of Europe's co-operation with other multilateral organisations, in Europe and beyond.
16. The Assembly pays tribute to the extraordinary achievements of the European Court of Human Rights through its case law, including its important contribution to international law as one of the foundations of multilateralism. With a view to fostering an harmonious interpretation and development of international law, it invites the Court to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral relations and dialogue with the International Court of Justice, the different United Nations human rights mechanisms, as well as with regional human rights courts such as the Inter-American Court of Human Rights and the African Court of Human and Peoples' Rights.
17. Furthermore, with a view to strengthening Europe's leadership internationally, the Assembly urges the Council of Europe member States which are also members of the European Union to:
 - 17.1. pursue more vigorously the political and economic integration of the European Union, using the relevant Council of Europe standards and instruments on democracy, human rights, and the rule of law;
 - 17.2. adopt concrete measures to follow up the European Union's Strategic Compass for Security and Defence adopted in 2022 and the Council Conclusions on EU Security and Defence adopted in 2024, in order to ensure that the European Union can successfully defend its physical borders, its citizens, its security, and its founding values against both military and hybrid threats, by reducing its dependence on non-European allies and strengthening Europe's capacity to respond decisively to any aggression against its member States or partner countries;
 - 17.3. accelerate the European Union enlargement process while focusing on defusing tensions and disputes, countering interference by malign third actors, strengthening Europe's democratic security, and speaking with one voice internationally.
18. The Assembly welcomes the European Union's reaffirmed determination to accede to the European Convention on Human Rights as enshrined in Article 6(2) of the Treaty on the European Union and its commitment to the European Convention on Human Rights and the European Court of Human Rights, including the effective and timely execution of its judgments as laid down in the European Union's priorities for cooperation with the Council of Europe in 2025-2026.
19. Being convinced of the importance of parliamentary diplomacy and the need for a greater involvement of parliaments in the conduct of international relations and in support of multilateralism, the Assembly welcomes Action 55 of the Pact for the Future, in which world leaders "recognize the importance of the United Nations engagement with national parliaments and relevant stakeholders, while preserving the intergovernmental character of the Organization". Consequently, the Assembly resolves to:
 - 19.1. continue its regular contacts with the United Nations institutions and agencies, promoting the involvement of national parliamentarians in the work of the United Nations and the implementation of its mission;
 - 19.2. enhance its dialogue and co-operation with national parliaments, especially of those countries under direct threat or experiencing aggression, in particular in areas such as foreign relations, democratic security, confidence building and conflict prevention;
 - 19.3. continue to act as an inclusive and representative platform for parliamentary dialogue, reaching out beyond Council of Europe membership;
 - 19.4. strengthen dialogue with other international parliamentary assemblies, such as the European Parliament, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe Parliamentary Assembly, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly, as well as the Inter-Parliamentary Union;

19.5. review and, where necessary, enhance the effectiveness of its co-operation agreements with other international parliamentary assemblies or organisations.



Resolution 2582 (2025)¹

Provisional version

The absolute and urgent need to end the humanitarian crisis for women, children and the hostages in Gaza

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly has condemned in the strongest possible terms, from the outset, the appalling terrorist attack by Hamas and other militias against Israel on 7 October 2023. It continues to do so. The murders, hostage-taking and all other crimes committed, not least sexual assaults, during this attack constitute a complete violation of human rights and human dignity, for which the perpetrators must be held accountable. The Assembly reiterates its call for the immediate release to their families and homes of all hostages still held in captivity, and calls on Hamas to grant the International Committee of the Red Cross access to those hostages without delay. The Assembly welcomes the conclusion of a three-phase ceasefire agreement to suspend military operations in the Gaza Strip and facilitate the exchange of hostages and prisoners. It welcomes the implementation of its first phase, from 19 January 2025, as a crucial and positive step forward and calls on all parties to respect this commitment so that the three phases are fully implemented and lead to a long-lasting peace.

2. The military campaign launched by Israel in Gaza in response to the attack on 7 October continued for 15 months, causing an unimaginable humanitarian crisis. The whole Gaza strip is under control by the State of Israel, and especially besieged northern Gaza. During Israel's military campaign, more than 46 000 people have lost their lives and more than 109 000 civilians have been injured, including large numbers of women and children, who make up 70% of the victims. The hostages are exposed to the same humanitarian crisis as the civilians in Gaza, further compounded by their captivity. Many medical and humanitarian workers have died, including 265 people working for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). A conservative estimate is that 120 000 people have died from ailments and diseases which could not be properly treated or managed, due to the severe damage to the healthcare system in Gaza. Entire sections of the infrastructure of society in Gaza – homes, schools, hospitals and medical facilities – are now completely destroyed or unable to function. In recent months the conflict has escalated to other areas, such as Lebanon, Syria and the West Bank where the same pattern and effects of attacks on civilian areas and humanitarian aid structures can be observed.

3. The Assembly cannot remain silent concerning the fact that women and children are without any shadow of doubt the main innocent victims of the conflict, as was also apparent in the horrific 7 October attack on Israel. In May 2024, the Gaza Ministry of Health put the number of children killed in this period at 14 100 and on 16 September published a list containing the names of 11 000 dead children who were able to be identified. These figures do not include the many more children who are missing, detained, buried under rubble, separated from their families or without any family, or those who have lost their lives indirectly as a result of the conflict. At the same time, the entire population of Israel, including children, has been subject to continuous, indiscriminate rocket attacks targeting the civilian population. According to United Nations special rapporteurs, more than 183 women a day are giving birth without pain relief, while hundreds of babies have died because of the lack of electricity to power incubators.

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2025 (4th sitting) (see [Doc. 16093](#) and [add.](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Saskia Kluit). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2025 (4th sitting).



4. The Assembly points to the responsibilities of Hamas, not only for the massacre of 7 October but also for its protracted refusal to free the hostages unconditionally, as called for by the United Nations, and to give the Red Cross the access it needed to them.

5. The Assembly refers to its [Resolution 2524 \(2024\)](#) adopted on 23 January 2024 “Recent developments in the Middle East: Hamas’ terrorist attack on Israel and Israel’s response” in which it pointed to the loss of thousands of lives, massive displacement and widespread destruction of civilian objects and infrastructure in Gaza and voiced its sorrow and dismay at the staggering number of innocent casualties in the Gaza Strip. It also notes that many parliamentarians spoke in favour of an immediate ceasefire in the current affairs debates on the “War in Gaza: ensuring the release of the hostages, the implementation of an immediate ceasefire and the provision of humanitarian aid” and on the “Situation in the Middle-East: escalation of violence and mounting humanitarian crisis, particularly in Gaza”, held respectively on 27 June and 1 October 2024.

6. Today, the Assembly expresses its deep concern that the humanitarian situation in Gaza – which was already under stress before October 2023 and clearly dire at the time of [Resolution 2524 \(2024\)](#) – has deteriorated further as a result of the 15 months of military operations in Gaza. The Assembly cannot accept that this humanitarian crisis could be portrayed or seen as inevitable or be allowed to become the “new normal”. The incessant bombing and ground operations of Israel are only adding to the death toll of innocent civilians. The coming winter will exacerbate the already inhuman and degrading living conditions of the people of Gaza and the hostages held by Hamas, who are subjected to an infernal cycle of suffering. The Assembly cannot remain silent while thousands of children continue to die and suffer life-altering injuries on a daily basis, especially in a situation where they have no means of escape and no access to even the most basic humanitarian services or assistance. This represents a blatant violation of children’s rights under the UN Convention on the rights of the child, 1949 Geneva Conventions and 1977 additional protocols.

7. The Assembly underlines that humanitarian organisations working in Gaza – whose ability to work on the ground is severely hampered, if not almost totally disrupted – sounded the alarm at two hearings held by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development on 13 and 30 September 2024. They reported that the majority of people in the Gaza Strip have little or no access to basic foodstuffs and hygiene products, drinking water, electricity or heating. 90% of the population has been displaced at least once and some even up to 15 times. Every displacement results in loss of necessary goods, contacts with family and relations, and in worse living conditions. People are living in makeshift shelters made from plastic tarpaulin which will be unusable in winter, having already been partly destroyed by the recent rains. They are concentrated in small, overcrowded areas, where rubbish is piling up because it cannot be disposed of or treated. As a result, preventable diseases and infections have spread among the already vulnerable population. At the same time, the Assembly must point out that over 120 000 Israelis have been evacuated from their homes near the borders with Gaza and Lebanon during the war, and that over half of these have still not been able to return home safely.

8. The healthcare system is on the brink of collapse due to the widespread destruction of medical infrastructure and the lack of supplies of essential goods resulting from administrative and physical restrictions imposed by the parties to the conflict, particularly the State of Israel. As a result, the population and hostages in Gaza have often no access to essential medicine such as insulin or blood pressure medication. In a situation where potentially fatal injuries are common, surgical dressings and essential medicines are hard to come by and there are no longer enough blood supplies to meet even half of the needs. Surgery, when it can be performed, is mainly carried out in field hospitals set up in tents.

9. The Assembly refers to the United Nations General Assembly Resolution of 12 December 2023 demanding a ceasefire and humanitarian access to Gaza. In Resolution 2024/2508(RSP) adopted on 18 January 2024 on “the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the need to reach a ceasefire and the risks of regional escalation”, the European Parliament also called for a permanent ceasefire and for full, rapid, safe and unhindered humanitarian access to the Gaza Strip. On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued an order stating that “Israel must, in accordance with its obligations under the Genocide Convention, in relation to Palestinians in Gaza, take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II of this Convention” and “take immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip”. To this day this order has not been acted upon or implemented. On 21 November 2024, the International Criminal Court issued two warrants of arrest for Mr Benjamin Netanyahu and for Mr Yoav Gallant for crimes against humanity and war crimes committed from at least 8 October 2023 until at least 20 May 2024.

10. Echoing and reinforcing these calls, and in the light of the further dramatic deterioration in the humanitarian situation in Gaza, the Assembly urges all parties to the hostilities, in particular Israel to:
 - 10.1. reach a permanent and unconditional ceasefire;
 - 10.2. pending such a ceasefire, ensure that attacks do not destroy more civilian lives and civilian infrastructure, in particular hospitals, refugee zones and schools. The Assembly stresses that these are important protections under international humanitarian law;
 - 10.3. refrain from using civilian infrastructure and humans as a shield;
 - 10.4. ensure that attacks do not harm humanitarian personnel and structures and guarantee that humanitarian missions and their staff can carry out their work in safety and under appropriate conditions;
 - 10.5. immediately and unconditionally repeal the ban on UNRWA imposed by Israel;
 - 10.6. ensure strict and immediate compliance with international humanitarian law and standards, including with the principles of humanity, distinction and proportionality, at all times, in particular to
 - 10.6.1. immediately grant full, rapid, safe and unhindered access by humanitarian aid organisations to the Gaza Strip and to ensure that the adequate supply of essential goods in the Gaza Strip, such as food, water, medical equipment and medicines, fuel and shelter, is guaranteed for all Palestinians, in particular women and children, and for the hostages in Gaza;
 - 10.6.2. respect the “deconfliction” zones and ensure safe working conditions for humanitarian aid workers;
 - 10.6.3. protect civilians, in particular women, children and other vulnerable groups, especially wounded children with no surviving family;
 - 10.6.4. ensure that neonatal care facilities are established and protected at all times;
 - 10.6.5. enable the stabilisation of the condition of the most seriously wounded;
 - 10.6.6. immediately and unconditionally facilitate medical evacuations, in particular of children and their families and of pregnant women and their families;
 - 10.6.7. provide adequate, permanent areas where families can stay and children can play in safety.
11. The Assembly reiterates the importance of free press in a democratic society and the responsibilities of the parties to the conflict in guaranteeing safety for journalists, especially when working in zones of military conflict. Journalists are entitled to protection as civilians under international humanitarian law. The Assembly calls on Israel to immediately allow access to the Gaza Strip by local and foreign journalists and by international organisations responsible for providing information or carrying out investigations, and to facilitate their safe work.
12. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to comply with their obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide and to use their influence in every way possible to remind the parties to the conflict of obligations under this convention and of the need to respect minimum humanitarian standards including those set out in the Geneva Conventions. In particular, the following basic principles should be respected: civilians must be spared from military strikes; the wounded and sick must be collected and cared for; impartial humanitarian organisations must be able at all times to offer their services to alleviate suffering without this being considered as interference; and certain acts against protected persons, including women and children, are prohibited at all times and in all places.
13. In this context, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member and observer States, as well as States whose parliament enjoys observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly, to play an active role in addressing the current humanitarian emergency in Gaza and its future consequences, in particular as regards:
 - 13.1. the support to and provision of emergency humanitarian aid without delay, including the allocation of sufficient funding for NGOs and international structures delivering humanitarian aid, enabling them to strengthen their workforce;
 - 13.2. the restoration of vital infrastructure, in particular hospitals and those needed to deliver humanitarian aid, to immediate working order;
 - 13.3. the provision of emergency food aid;

- 13.4. the provision of appropriate physical and mental healthcare for the children, women, healthcare providers and medical and humanitarian staff who are suffering and will continue to suffer from the trauma caused by armed conflict;
- 13.5. the construction of safe emergency shelters and decent housing for families and children;
- 13.6. the provision of education without incitement for hatred. and activities in safe physical settings for children and the reconstruction of schools as soon as possible;
- 13.7. the removal of rubbish and the restoration of sewage and sanitation systems;
- 13.8. the reception of persons requiring medical evacuation and the provision of specialised medical care within their countries to those persons.

14. The Assembly considers that the observer and partner for democracy status with the Assembly brings with it the duty and responsibility to uphold the values of the Council of Europe. The humanitarian crisis existing today in Gaza is in great disregard to these duties and responsibilities. The Assembly therefore urges Israel and Palestine whose parliaments enjoy respectively observer status and partner for democracy status with the Assembly, to do everything in their power to end without any further delay this conflict and put a stop to the suffering of the people in Gaza, including that of the hostages, thereby demonstrating with this resolute action their full commitment to the values of the Council of Europe in the field of human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

15. The Assembly will closely monitor the follow-up given to its above-mentioned requests to all parties to the hostilities, including for an immediate, permanent and unconditional ceasefire, the immediate release of all hostages and concrete and immediate measures to end the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. It refers to the possibility of returning to this question at a forthcoming part-session, with a view to assessing whether further steps are necessary in the light of the commitment shown to the values of the Council of Europe by States whose parliament enjoys observer status with the Assembly.



Resolution 2583 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Addressing risks to human rights and the rule of law posed by mercenaries and private military and security companies: a call for comprehensive regulation

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Since the beginning of the 21st century, particularly in the context of the Global War on Terrorism, non-State actors, such as private military and security companies (PMSCs), mercenaries and foreign fighters have become increasingly involved in military operations. Although these entities are clearly distinct from one another, and in particular the deployment of PMSCs can often serve legitimate aims, the Parliamentary Assembly notes with concern the scarcity of international regulation governing their operation, which negatively affects the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law.
2. Following the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation on 24 February 2022, Russian private military companies, the very existence of which is prohibited under Russian law, such as the Wagner Group and Redut, carried out numerous acts of torture and extrajudicial executions, including mass executions, of Ukrainian prisoners of war and civilians, and targeted attacks on civilian infrastructure. In line with its previous resolutions, notably [Resolution 2556 \(2024\)](#) “Legal and human rights aspects of the Russian Federation’s aggression against Ukraine”, the Assembly considers that the Russian Federation bears full international responsibility for these actions because of its acknowledged links and financial and operational support extended to the Wagner Group during its participation in the war, including the use of pardoned convicts as fighters and co-ordination on the ground with the regular forces. It further notes that these so-called “Russian private military companies” should be distinguished from PMSCs, which are registered and operate within the legal framework of their home States.
3. The Assembly firmly rejects statements made by senior representatives of the Russian Federation, describing members of the International Legion for the Defence of Ukraine as “mercenaries”. The Assembly considers that under international law and international humanitarian law, members of the International Legion for the Defence of Ukraine are clearly to be regarded as members of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, benefitting from full legal and humanitarian protection afforded to lawful combatants. The Assembly reiterates its full support for Ukraine’s independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders.
4. The Assembly reiterates the concern it expressed in [Recommendation 1858 \(2009\)](#) “Private military and security firms and erosion of the state monopoly on the use of force”, about the erosion of the States’ authority, loss of democratic oversight and accountability, and impunity of perpetrators of human rights violations resulting from the increased involvement of PMSCs. It further pointed out possible conflict of interests when PMSCs stand to benefit from prolonging conflicts to increase their profits.
5. Notwithstanding the adoption of the Montreux Document on pertinent international legal obligations and good practices for States related to operations of private military and security companies during armed conflict, which sums up legal obligations under existing international law and provides best practices related to

1. *Assembly debate* on 28 January 2025 (4th sitting) (see [Doc. 16092](#), report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Andrea Orlando). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 28 January 2025 (4th sitting). See also [Recommendation 2289 \(2025\)](#).



PMSCs' activities, and the establishment by the United Nations Human Rights Council of an open-ended intergovernmental working group tasked with preparing an international regulatory framework governing PMSCs, the Assembly notes with concern that the regulatory landscape on this matter remains scarce.

6. Despite repeated allegations of severe violations of human rights or humanitarian law and crimes committed by PMSC personnel, the existing regulatory gap often prevents victims from obtaining redress or seeking justice. Some States are deliberately using PMSCs to conceal their involvement in conflicts. Deployment of PMSCs allows States to conduct military operations without the same level of public scrutiny or approval processes required for deploying regular armed forces, thus removing one of the essential democratic checks on the use of force. Given the functioning of PMSCs as private corporations, their activities are often exempted from public scrutiny and lack the same chain of command and disciplinary procedures as regular armed forces. Corporate interests thus risk prevailing over the public good in sensitive policy areas.

7. In States with fragile institutions, deploying PMSCs can further undermine State authority, contributing to the erosion of the rule of law and democratic governance.

8. The Assembly shares the concern of the United Nations Working Group on the use of mercenaries that violations by mercenaries and mercenary-related actors are escalating in scale and intensity while accountability remains mostly absent.

9. The Assembly also acknowledges the increased involvement of PMSCs in humanitarian missions, providing security for NGOs and international organisations. The growing security challenges in conflict zones and the limited capacity of some States to provide adequate protection for humanitarian workers increase the demand for private military and security contractors, who offer their clients access to specialised expertise, flexibility and rapid deployment. Nevertheless, the involvement of PMSCs in humanitarian missions blurs the lines between military and humanitarian actors. This may negatively affect the perceived neutrality and independence of humanitarian work and undermine the trust of local communities.

10. The Assembly notes that the existing rules of customary international law of State responsibility, as codified in the International Law Commission's Articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts, establish a high threshold for attributing actions of non-State actors to States themselves, requiring the exercise by the State of "effective control" over the non-State actor.

11. Addressing these issues requires robust international and domestic regulatory frameworks to ensure that PMSCs' activities align with democratic principles and respect human rights. The Assembly therefore reiterates that only a legally binding instrument could adequately guide States in managing the PMSC industry and mitigate risks of human rights violations and democratic erosion posed by the unregulated operation of such companies. Pending the adoption of such an instrument, the Assembly reminds States of their existing positive obligations under international human rights law, associated with licensing, contracting, operating and deploying PMSCs.

12. The Assembly considers that under international human rights law, the following should be regarded as minimum requirements incumbent on States whenever licensing, contracting, operating or deploying PMSCs:

12.1. to enact legislation regulating PMSCs, including criteria for their licensing and registration, and oversight mechanisms, and establishing precise accountability mechanisms for PMSCs and their personnel for human rights violations;

12.2. to require PMSCs to comply with international standards applicable to business and human rights, such as the United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and ISO 26000:2010 (Guidance on social responsibility);

12.3. to vet, train, instruct, and supervise PMSCs personnel, in particular when contracting services involving the use of coercive measures, such as combat operations, guarding or transporting prisoners, and conducting interrogations;

12.4. to require a human rights impact assessment to be conducted before authorising PMSCs operations;

12.5. to establish an effective legal framework enabling swift, transparent and impartial investigations of any allegations of human rights violations committed by PMSCs where such PMSC are registered in the State, operate in its territory or in a territory under that State's jurisdiction, or are employed by that State, and to provide any victims with proper means of redress;

- 12.6. to take such measures as may be necessary to establish jurisdiction over crimes committed by their nationals who are part of PMSCs personnel deployed in other States, irrespective of whether such PMSCs are registered or employed by the State in question or operate in a territory controlled by that State;
 - 12.7. to require PMSCs to maintain insurance sufficient to provide an adequate compensation to victims of human rights violations committed by these companies;
 - 12.8. to provide appropriate and regular training and instructions to PMSC personnel on compliance with international human rights law and international humanitarian law;
 - 12.9. to require PMSCs to establish internal human rights protection policies and compliance mechanisms;
 - 12.10. to publish information on the public procurement of PMSC services, allegations of human rights violations and their consequences, thus facilitating external oversight;
 - 12.11. to require PMSCs registered or operating within their territory to adhere to the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers and to endorse the Montreux Document.
13. The Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member and observer States who have not yet done so, to:
- 13.1. ratify the United Nations International Convention against the Recruitment, Use, Financing and Training of Mercenaries;
 - 13.2. endorse the Montreux Document;
 - 13.3. actively lead and co-ordinate with the United Nations open-ended intergovernmental working group, proposing a concrete timeline and commitments to expedite the development and adoption of an international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of PMSCs, to promote a human rights-oriented approach to the issue of PMSCs and prepare a binding instrument aimed at regulating the relations of States with PMSCs and laying down minimum standards for the activity of these companies, in line with the present Resolution.
14. The Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member and observer States to:
- 14.1. actively lead and co-ordinate with the United Nations open-ended intergovernmental working group, proposing a concrete timeline and commitments to expedite the development and adoption of an international regulatory framework on the regulation, monitoring and oversight of the activities of PMSCs;
 - 14.2. promote a human rights-oriented approach to the issue of PMSCs;
 - 14.3. prepare a binding instrument aimed at regulating the relations of States with PMSCs and laying down minimum standards for the activity of these companies, in line with the present Resolution.



Resolution 2584 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Multiperspectivity in remembrance and history education for democratic citizenship

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The importance of history teaching has been affirmed by the Council of Europe Summits of Heads of State and Government in 1993, 1997 and 2005, and its relevance for democratic citizenship and stability is well captured in the motto of the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe: “Teaching History, Grounding Democracy”. A well-designed history education is essential to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the past and apply it to evaluate with a critical eye the present, as it develops the capacity to differentiate between facts, memories, interpretations and perspectives, and to detect and analyse distortion and propaganda.
2. At a time when historical narratives are increasingly distorted to justify aggression - most notably in the context of the ongoing war waged by the Russian Federation against Ukraine - the role of critical, evidence-based history education in countering disinformation has become vital. Referring to its [Resolution 2558 \(2024\)](#) and [Recommendation 2280 \(2024\)](#) “Countering the erasure of cultural identity in war and peace”, the Parliamentary Assembly emphasises the perils of politicising history and highlights the power of history education to build resilience against the misuse of narratives justifying aggression, human rights abuses, and territorial claims.
3. The Assembly holds that the inclusion of sensitive and controversial parts of history in school curricula, the consideration of multiple perspectives and the analysis of historical sources can play a role in reinforcing democratic culture within a society and fostering respect for different opinions, pluralism, tolerance and diversity. Taking students out of the classroom to learn *in situ* from historical places and sites of remembrance should be part of this process. The Assembly firmly believes that history education should be a key part of human rights education and a foundation for young people to develop democratic citizenship.
4. However, delivering quality history education in schools can be very challenging due to overloaded curricula, traditional teaching practices and, in many instances, highly centralised education systems. History teachers may struggle with addressing multiple coexisting perspectives; they may lack adequate training and even though they may have deep knowledge of their discipline they often have limited time to work on the overall historical context with students, and limited access to teaching and financial resources. Moreover, in many countries, initial teacher training does not include the development of competences in delivering citizenship education.
5. The Assembly values the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture developed by the Council of Europe and welcomes the political momentum provided by the 2023 Standing Conference of Ministers of Education for the renewal of the civic mission of education. The Education Strategy 2024-2030 “Learners First – Education for Today’s and Tomorrow’s Democratic Societies” aims to establish a European Space for Citizenship Education to exchange good practices and implement existing Council of Europe instruments and tools.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2025 (5th sitting) (see [Doc. 16090](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Luz Martinez Seijo). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 January 2025 (5th sitting). See also [Recommendation 2290 \(2025\)](#).



6. Education systems must adapt to social changes and respond with new curricula and interactive methodologies to new demands – not only to meet emerging job requirements but also respond effectively to the growing diversity of societies. They should also contribute to countering the erosion of democratic values, particularly among young people in Europe. For these reasons education for democratic citizenship should be provided as a distinct compulsory subject, be included in other relevant subjects, such as history teaching, during all stages of formal education (primary, secondary, and higher education), and form a constituent part of vocational training and non-formal education.

7. With all these considerations in mind, the Assembly calls on member States of the Council of Europe to undertake a strategic policy review aiming to incorporate the Council of Europe guiding principles for history education and the Reference Framework of Competences for Democratic Culture throughout their education policies, and in particular:

7.1. concerning curricula, to:

7.1.1. introduce education for democratic citizenship as a distinct compulsory subject and incorporate competences for democratic culture in other relevant subjects such as history teaching during all stages of formal education;

7.1.2. provide for more flexibility of history curricula to enable teachers to develop a learner-centred and competence-based approach alongside chronological and knowledge-based teaching;

7.1.3. allow sufficient space and time to properly consider the complexities and implications of the 19th and 20th century history, aiming to deepen students' understanding of the challenges of the present time, including as regards sensitive history and remembrance;

7.1.4. include in history curricula the study of different forms of totalitarian regimes as well as other violent ideological movements which have devastated Europe in the 20th and 21st centuries, as serious violations of human rights that people in Europe have suffered, with a particular focus on the ways in which distorted historical interpretations can be deployed to justify acts of aggression in the present day;

7.2. concerning methodologies, to:

7.2.1. stimulate critical thinking through learning how to evaluate historical sources and make well-informed judgments;

7.2.2. develop human rights-based analysis of historical events, multiperspectivity in history education, and critical consideration of different standpoints;

7.2.3. foster interactive pedagogies and co-operative learning in small groups, acknowledging cultural differences and multiple identities among learners in a class;

7.3. concerning measures to create a supportive and enabling environment for teachers and learners, to:

7.3.1. include the competences for democratic culture in teacher education and vocational training, multiply teachers' opportunities for professional exchange and development and provide a range of different teaching resources and guidance – including the Council of Europe guiding principles – available in local languages;

7.3.2. guarantee free access to virtual learning environments and to open educational resources;

7.3.3. promote collaborative learning projects, for instance to facilitate contacts between students and survivors of totalitarian regimes and violent ideological movements, or victims of terrorist groups, and transnational networking and co-operation in the field of education for democratic culture and history teaching;

7.4. concerning synergies between formal and non-formal education, to:

7.4.1. facilitate partnerships between schools, cultural institutions and other relevant stakeholders, such as sites of remembrance, museums, archives, civil society, artists and associations of victims of terrorist groups, to co-create history lessons; this requires time and financial resources for visits and joint projects, as well as training and curricular support for teachers to prepare for the wider historical context this will involve;

7.4.2. grant funding and autonomy to museums and remembrance sites to develop as “safe learning spaces for democracy”, co-creating educational projects based on thorough academic research, a human rights-based analysis and multiple perspectives, aiming *inter alia* to foster intergenerational dialogue within local communities and accompany visitors towards fresh perspectives and a more nuanced understanding of the past.



Resolution 2585 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Challenge, on substantive grounds, of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegation of Georgia

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls that by acceding to the Council of Europe on 27 January 1999, Georgia agreed to honour several specific commitments listed in Assembly [Opinion 209 \(1999\)](#), as well as the obligations incumbent on all member States under Article 3 of the Statute of the Council of Europe (STE No. 1): compliance with the principles of pluralist democracy and the rule of law as well as respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms of all persons placed under its jurisdiction.
2. In its [Resolution 2561 \(2024\)](#) “Challenges to democracy in Georgia”, the Assembly already expressed its deep concern at the continuing and rapid backsliding of democracy in Georgia. Noting that the 26 October 2024 parliamentary elections would be a *de facto* referendum on Georgia’s democratic trajectory and foreign alignment, the Assembly reiterated its commitment to co-operation and dialogue with all forces and civil society in Georgia “to reverse the recent backsliding and to uphold the honouring of Georgia’s membership obligations and commitments to the Council of Europe”.
3. The latest developments confirm the Assembly’s concerns. The findings of the Assembly’s election observation delegation “raise concerns about the correctness of the election results, namely whether the election results truly reflect the will of the voters. Additionally, serious doubts persist regarding whether the electoral environment provided the necessary conditions for a fair election, enabling voters to make an informed choice free from intimidation and undue pressure. This is reflected in the response from the opposition and civil society, which have expressed deep mistrust in both the results and the institutions and continue to challenge the outcome of the election”. Following the elections, large demonstrations erupted in Georgia, with opposition parties boycotting parliament and asking for a rerun of the vote.
4. Street demonstrations took even larger proportions following the announcement that the government would suspend Georgia’s European Union accession process. This decision, which is contrary to the ruling party’s electoral promises, has resulted in a social crisis characterised by a complete breakdown of trust in the political institutions of the country in the eyes of the Georgian society, which compromises their legitimacy. It is also bound to have an impact on the introduction of much needed reforms that would help tackle Georgia’s democratic backsliding.
5. The Assembly condemns the human rights abuses committed by the police, including the brutal use of force against demonstrators, in violation of freedom of assembly, in the context of a progressive erosion of fundamental rights and freedoms, the dismantling of democratic safeguards, the shrinking space for civil society and the politicisation of State institutions that began well before these elections. It also condemns the misuse of the judicial system to deter and retaliate against protesters, journalists and opposition figures, issues which so far remain unaddressed by the authorities.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2025 (6th sitting) (see [Doc. 16104](#), 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; see also [Doc. 16107](#), opinion of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, rapporteur: Ms Petra Bayr). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 January 2025 (6th sitting).



6. In this respect, the Assembly asks the Georgian authorities to take into account the recommendations to be made by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) in its urgent Opinion on the Law on Administrative Offenses, requested by the President of the Assembly. Likewise, the Assembly reiterates its call on the authorities to repeal the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence in its current form, to protect freedom of assembly and expression and to ensure accountability for human rights violations and end stigmatisation of NGOs, as highlighted also by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights during his visit to Georgia in January 2025.

7. In the Assembly's view, Georgia's political deadlock and breach of trust between the authorities and civil society can be overcome only through:

7.1. a clear recommitment of the Georgian authorities to Council of Europe values and standards and further European integration in line with the European aspirations of the majority of the Georgian people;

7.2. a reinforced process of engagement with the Council of Europe, involving the Georgian authorities as well as a wide range of other Georgian stakeholders;

7.3. an inclusive political process in Georgia involving all stakeholders and social actors, including opposition and civil society, to urgently address the deficiencies and shortcomings noted during the recent parliamentary elections;

7.4. the organisation of new genuinely democratic parliamentary elections, held under strict international monitoring and conditions of political independence of State institutions and election administration;

7.5. ensuring accountability for all law enforcement officials involved in violent crackdowns against peaceful protesters, beatings, mistreatment, torture and arbitrary arrest;

7.6. the release of all political prisoners.

8. In this regard, the Assembly recalls the visit which the Secretary General of the Council of Europe carried out in Tbilisi in December 2024, following which a number of initiatives were launched.

9. Similarly, the Assembly recalls that its co-rapporteurs of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee) visited Georgia in January 2025, and met interlocutors from the Georgian institutions, as well as all political forces, NGOs and civil society.

10. Developments since the 26 October 2024 parliamentary elections, including violations of the freedom of assembly and expression and the crackdown on the opposition and civil society, are in contradiction to Georgia's membership obligations and accession commitments to the Council of Europe. The Assembly therefore needs clear assurances from the authorities that they are genuinely committed to reversing the democratic backsliding and fulfilling their membership obligations.

11. In the light of these considerations and as a signal of its own openness to maintaining dialogue, the Assembly, pending a reconsideration of the Georgian delegation's credentials and an overall re-assessment of the situation in the country at its April 2025 part-session, decides to ratify at this part-session the credentials of the Georgian delegation while, at the same time, insisting that the Georgian authorities:

11.1. immediately initiate an inclusive process involving all stakeholders and social actors, including the ruling majority, opposition and civil society, to urgently address the deficiencies and shortcomings noted during the recent parliamentary elections and to create an electoral environment that is conducive to genuinely democratic new parliamentary elections to be announced during the coming months;

11.2. take immediate and effective steps to enable Georgia to resume the European integration process, in line with the European aspirations of the people, and to accelerate with determination the necessary reforms;

11.3. put an immediate end to police brutality and human rights abuses, effectively investigate these practices and end the misuse of legal proceedings as a means of deterring or retaliating against protesters, journalists and civic leaders, and fully respect the right to freedom of expression and assembly;

11.4. step up co-operation with the Council of Europe and engage in good faith in the process initiated by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe;

- 11.5. address, without delay, the concerns and recommendations of the Assembly expressed in [Resolution 2438 \(2022\)](#) and [Resolution 2561 \(2024\)](#), including the recommendation to revoke the Law on Transparency of Foreign Influence, and the concerns about the Law on Administrative Offences, which should be addressed by taking into account the urgent opinions of the Venice Commission;
 - 11.6. release all political prisoners before the 2025 April part-session of the Assembly;
 - 11.7. continue to engage fully with the Assembly's monitoring procedure and work to ensure that monitoring mechanisms function effectively during the pre-election period, thereby strengthening timely warnings against any democratic decline.
12. At the same time, as a clear sign of its condemnation of the police brutality and other human rights abuses, which so far have not been addressed by the authorities, the Assembly resolves to suspend the following rights of the members of the Georgian delegation:
- 12.1. right to be full member or alternate of the following committees: the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, the Monitoring Committee, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, the Committee on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights and the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities, and Institutional Affairs;
 - 12.2. right to be a member of election observation committees;
 - 12.3. right to be appointed rapporteur;
 - 12.4. right to be a candidate for the office of the President of the Assembly, chairperson or vice-chairperson of a committee or a sub-committee;
 - 12.5. right to represent the Assembly in Council of Europe bodies by Bureau decision, and right to represent the Assembly on an occasional basis (by Bureau or committee decision) at events, meetings, conferences organised by Council of Europe bodies, international organisations or interparliamentary assemblies.
13. The Assembly further resolves to explore ways of strengthening the participation of Georgian extra-parliamentarian opposition and civil society in its actions with regard to Georgia, including within the framework of the Monitoring Committee.
14. The Assembly will have the opportunity to reconsider the credentials of the Georgian delegation, including the suspension of the above-mentioned rights, at its April 2025 part-session, in the light of progress achieved in relation to the issues mentioned in paragraph 11, under the conditions provided for in Rule 9 of its Rules of Procedure



Resolution 2586 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Immigration, one of the answers to Europe's demographic ageing

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that, in the past decade, the global refugee population has more than doubled, reaching more than 36,4 million refugees, according to the data of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). In most cases, refugees in Africa, who were fleeing war, persecution and climate crisis, were not able to reach Europe or North America and took shelter in neighbouring countries. By UNHCR's calculations, in 2023, Uganda recorded 1,6 million people of concern including 1,5 million refugees. Another country, Ethiopia, which was at the crossroads of several of the world's largest refugee crisis, was the host to over 900 000 refugees, and Chad, was the 10th largest host community for refugees with more than 700 000 refugees recorded in 2023. Most had escaped conflict in Eritrea, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan.

2. Migration pressure has become a key issue for Europe. European solidarity to host refugees has been limited, but there have been some countries that have provided sanctuary. 3,4 million refugees are hosted in Türkiye including 3,3 million Syrians under temporary protection. Germany hosts 2,5 million refugees, which largely include people from Syria and Ukraine. Poland, as a country sharing a border with Ukraine, accommodates nearly 60% of all refugees from there. Sadly, however, there are countries that have refused to contribute to the common effort of receiving asylum seekers.

3. The Assembly deplores the fact that the rising populist discourse blames migrants for public policies' failures. For political reasons, non-European migrants are left without any chance to integrate in a host community. Many countries in Europe are confronted with considerable changes due to population ageing and the newly arriving migrants could, if given such an opportunity, integrate, work, and live decently in Europe, contributing like all other European citizens to strengthening the society they live in.

4. Europeans are living longer than ever before, and the age profile of society is rapidly developing. Due to demographic ageing, the proportion of people of working age in Europe is shrinking, while the number of older people is expanding. Several countries experienced a worrying reduction in the youth and working age cohorts as opposed to the exponential growth of the number of retirees, many of whom were reaching the fourth age, often associated with dependency. This pattern will continue in the next few decades, as the post-Second World War baby boom generation completes its move into retirement.

5. At a personal level, physical and cognitive impairments brought on by ageing increase dependency. These impairments may lead to reduced mobility, resulting in increased vulnerability and, often, social isolation and loneliness. The help of social care workers might be of vital importance in meeting older dependent people's daily transport or care needs and in ensuring a minimum of social contact, which, alongside healthcare, improves emotional well-being. It should be noted that long-term care in Europe is very often provided by informal carers such as family members and friends – mainly spouses and children, whose care work is not recognised.

1. *Assembly debate* on 29 January 2025 (6th sitting) (see [Doc. 16072](#), report of the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, rapporteur: Ms Kate Osamor). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 29 January 2025 (6th sitting).



6. Demographic ageing will have profound implications, not only for individuals, but also for public services, business and civil society, impacting, among others: health and social care systems, labour markets, public finances and pension entitlements. Demographic indicators that describe the latest developments for an ageing Europe show that, in the timespan of 50 years, the old age dependency ratio is projected to more than double. The old age dependency ratio for the European Union-27 was 25,9% in 2001. It will reach 56,7% by 2050, when there will be fewer than two persons of working age for each older person. As a result, the elderly population will require increasing support to meet their needs and the future generations will find themselves having to bear the costs for an aged society with less social security and a weaker public welfare system.

7. The Assembly is convinced that the current demographic ageing requires, therefore, positive action to help support an increase in birthrates and assist parents with child upbringing. More generous policies are needed to raise fertility rates at national and European levels. This is, however, not sufficient. Adequate integration policies for newly arriving persons are needed to bridge the population pyramid gaps due to rapid demographic ageing. Specific measures must, therefore, be taken to avoid severe macro-economic and social implications, for the benefit of all.

8. The Assembly therefore calls Council of Europe member States, as a matter of priority, to develop effective policies and initiatives to ensure the well-being and quality of life for the elderly population. Countries need to build a “longevity society”, which aims to promote healthy ageing and to exploit the advantages of longer quality lives. It requires a cultural shift, investments in research, and the development of social policies that empower older citizens towards a more inclusive, healthy, and prosperous society for all generations.

9. In parallel to that, States should strive to improve their policies promoting migrants’ general integration and social cohesion. Comprehensive, gender-responsive and multidimensional integration policies must be implemented, from the regularisation of undocumented migrant workers in the informal economy to the promotion of direct and targeted aid in local communities and job training. Failure to address migrants’ integration needs would lead to negative outcomes, including social tension, cultural clashes, and economic disparities, with a decline in overall well-being for all.

10. The Assembly strongly encourages member States to support programmes aimed at building bridges between various communities. In this context, public authorities should consider investing in relevant capacity building measures for civil society organisations. Promoting engagement within existing social infrastructures, such as membership of sports associations or participation in local festivals and events, can also lead to more sustainable integration.

11. The Assembly strongly believes that intergenerational and intercultural co-operation programmes can improve community connections because there is no development without intergenerational balance. Intergenerational learning for children brings higher self-esteem and helps them make new friendships. As for the older adults, they feel valued, their health and fitness improve and they are less isolated and learn new skills, including the use of new technologies. Finally, their general physical well-being improves. Communities, families and family networks together benefit from intergenerational learning, thanks to the social inclusion that is brought by intergenerational solidarity.

12. The Assembly underscores the importance of developing European programmes to support non-formal education and to provide space for inter-cultural and inter-generational solidarity. Adequate recognition and resources are needed to help newly arriving persons socialise and get access to public services or informal support. Creating spaces for informal meetings, where intergenerational and intercultural contact is possible, should be key in developing policies at the local, national and international levels.

13. The Assembly calls upon member States to put into practice its [Resolution 2502 \(2023\) “Integration of migrants and refugees: benefits for all parties involved”](#), acting in particular to:

13.1. establish a new social contract, which sets out the rights and responsibilities of all parties involved in the integration process. Acceptance of this new social contract depends on the existence of democratic practices that build social support. Highlighting the rights and responsibilities for the newly arriving populations provides clarification from the start and builds trust and respectful co-operation between local communities and the beneficiaries of resettlement programmes;

13.2. support mentoring programmes and integration guides;

13.3. develop nationwide interpretation services to support integration;

13.4. enhance education, from language training to democratic citizenship and human rights education;

- 13.5. improve recognition of skills obtained abroad;
- 13.6. take into consideration the special needs of vulnerable groups, such as women, children, including unaccompanied children, elderly people, persecuted religious minorities, people with disabilities, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex (LGBTQI+) community, stateless people and others, who need specific support in order to successfully integrate into the host country;
- 13.7. create spaces to bring migrants, refugees and the local community together;
- 13.8. improve financial settings, with a person-centred approach to integration support and adaptation of national services to take into account specific needs and circumstances;
- 13.9. develop targeted housing policies for affordable and decent accommodation;
- 13.10. invest in social cohesion with partnerships between private investors, public authorities and civil society organisations;
- 13.11. match migrant skills with job opportunities to support access to the labour market;
- 13.12. develop effective communication strategies to support integration, including a more positive narrative towards refugees and asylum seekers;
- 13.13. ensure respect for refugees' and migrants' dignity in the media, while avoiding messages that are stigmatising, xenophobic, racist, alarmist or inaccurate;
- 13.14. develop welcoming programmes at municipal level, emphasising diversity as an advantage;
- 13.15. enhance public health support for vulnerable refugees and migrants.

14. Urban planning needs to be reconsidered towards enhancing multicultural and intergenerational solidarity at local level. Projects aimed at bringing together the ageing population and the newly arriving migrants and refugees need to be supported, including through specific actions to facilitate the integration of refugees and migrants and to help elderly people cope with loneliness and dependency due to old age. Bringing different generations together is essential.

15. Care-related challenges in the urban and rural settings would need special consideration. Immigration can be one means through which Europe could fulfil its current and future labour shortages in care provision occupations, thereby decreasing the caregiver support ratio. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), foreign-born workers already make up around 20% of the current caregiver workforce, or even more, taking into account the large informal and home-based care provision. In general, most foreign-born long-term care workers immigrated through non-economic channels, including family reunification, student visas, general migration routes for non-specialised workers, and international protection.

16. The Assembly strongly encourages member States to develop policies to attract high-skilled migrants to enhance Europe's capacity to meet future challenges. The European Union member States and candidate countries should support the implementation of the EU Blue Card (Directive (EU) 2021/1883 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 20 October 2021 on the conditions of entry and residence of third-country nationals for the purpose of highly qualified employment), which is a work and residence permit for non-European Union/European Economic Area nationals that provides comprehensive socio-economic rights and a path towards permanent residence and European Union citizenship.

17. Finally, States should foster positive communication and information in local communities and counter hate speech in public discourse. A shift from emergency approaches to tackle immigration to structural and sustainable approaches is crucial.



Resolution 2587 (2025)¹

Provisional version

The urgent need for free and fair elections in Belarus

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Free and fair elections constitute the very foundation of democratic government and a cornerstone of representative democracy. By electing representatives from among themselves to form governing bodies, citizens exercise their right to be represented in the political decision-making process. The right to vote and to stand for election is a fundamental human right, indispensable for the effective functioning of democracy, and for the protection of individual freedoms and liberties.
2. The so-called presidential election organised in Belarus on the 26 January 2025 exemplifies the blatant contempt of the regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka for basic democratic norms and international law that has characterised the three decades of his rule.
3. This disregard for international law is made clear in Lukashenka regime's participation in the Russian Federation's large-scale aggression against Ukraine, a most serious violation of international law which led the Parliamentary Assembly to suspend all relations with the Belarusian authorities on the basis of its [Opinion 300 \(2022\) "Consequences of the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine"](#), and its continued weaponisation of migrants as a tool for hybrid war against neighbouring States.
4. Since the fraudulent elections of 2020, the Lukashenka regime has systematically implemented measures that in their design and implementation have entirely eroded all vestiges of the key pillars of democratic society in the country.
5. The Assembly refers to the assessment of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) in its Opinion of 24 October 2022 that amendments to the Constitution adopted by referendum in Belarus on 27 February 2022 provided no reasonable limitations on the term of office of Mr Lukashenka. It further refers to the Interim Opinion of the Venice Commission of 23 March 2021 that assessed that *ad hominem* term-limit waivers for incumbent presidents violate international legal principles.
6. The Assembly reaffirms its consideration that any country that extends presidential term limits beyond the usual two terms of four or five years constitutes a significant departure from democracy and the rule of law.
7. The Assembly recognises the invaluable role played by international election observers in providing credible and reliable election assessments, and reaffirms that in a truly democratic system, international scrutiny, transparency and accountability shall be encouraged. The decision to neither invite election observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe to observe the 2024 so-called parliamentary and local elections, nor the so-called presidential election of 2025 is in contradiction of international commitments made by Belarus and is a further indication of the state of the democratic space and of civil and political rights and freedoms in Belarus.
8. The unprecedented number of politically motivated arrests, detentions, and the widespread intimidation of opposition figures, journalists, activists and human rights defenders has forced over 500 000 Belarusians to flee the country, many of whom face continued repressions via trials *in absentia*, the confiscation of property, the inability to renew identification documents, threats to family, and the abuse by Belarusian authorities of

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 January 2025 (7th sitting) (see [Doc. 16105](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Ryszard Petru). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 January 2025 (7th sitting).



Interpol alert systems to harass dissidents. The regime's repression has a disproportionate impact on young people including politically motivated expulsions and arrests as well as the suppression of their rights to education, expression and participation.

9. The Assembly is alarmed by the continued transnational repression of the Lukashenka regime, and calls attention to the politically motivated criminal trials *in absentia* of 31 May 2024 against 20 scholars, political experts, journalists, experts and opposition politicians and their labelling as individuals involved in extremist activities. Among those arbitrarily detained are partners of the Council of Europe who have been prosecuted for peacefully and bravely exercising their rights, and even for merely exercising their professional activities.

10. The Assembly deplores that over 1 200 political prisoners remain detained in Belarus, including prisoners without any possibility to communicate with those outside for indefinite periods of time, and who experience torture, inhuman or degrading treatment, acts of physical or sexual violence, a lack of basic medical care and privacy, a lack of a fair trial, psychological pressure and discrimination.

11. The overall policy of political repression has led to the adoption of legislation that effectively bans the registration and operation of opposition democratic political parties and the presentation of alternative presidential candidates. All opposition political figures are imprisoned or abroad. Three opposition candidates from the 2020 presidential election remain incarcerated, while the 2022 constitutional amendments of Mr Lukashenka extended age limits and residence qualifications for presidential candidates to effectively prohibit any Belarusians in exile from presenting a candidacy.

12. The widespread and systematic nature of the persecution against the civilian population conducted by the Lukashenka regime may amount to crimes against humanity, and the Assembly acknowledges the referral, in September 2024, of the Republic of Lithuania to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to investigate these alleged crimes.

13. In this context where freedoms of speech, assembly and association are curtailed; opposition political parties are dissolved, and their leaders persecuted; the freedom of the media is not respected; where there is no redress against these violations and no credible domestic or international election observation is allowed – it is clear that free and fair elections cannot be held.

14. The Assembly reaffirms its unwavering commitment to supporting the rights, freedoms, and safety of the Belarusian people while standing in solidarity with all those affected by the crimes of the Lukashenka regime, and its support for the Belarusian democratic forces, led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, and its structures – the Office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the United Transitional Cabinet, and the Coordination Council, as an elected representative body of Belarusian democratic society – who are leading efforts for a democratic future for Belarus.

15. It underlines that co-operation with representatives of Belarusian democratic forces and civil society remains a priority for the Council of Europe, as articulated in the Reykjavik Declaration of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in May 2023.

16. In this context, the Assembly welcomes the development of the activities of the Council of Europe Contact Group on Cooperation with Belarusian Democratic Forces and Civil Society, the establishment of an Information Point for Belarusian People in Vilnius in November 2024, and the regular dialogue established by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, including on the issue of the death penalty.

17. The Assembly recalls its own pioneering resolve set out in its [Resolution 2530 \(2024\)](#) "A democratic future for Belarus" to further promote the participation of representatives of Belarusian democratic forces in its work. The Assembly welcomes, as a clear demonstration of this commitment, the establishment of a representative delegation of Belarusian democratic forces for the 2025 Session of the Assembly.

18. The Assembly reiterates its ambition to welcome a future democratic, independent, sovereign, peaceful and prosperous Belarus as a member of the Council of Europe.

19. In light of these considerations, deploring the further deterioration of human rights, rule of law, and democratic standards in Belarus, the Assembly:

19.1. stresses that democratic elections are not possible without respect for human rights, in particular freedom of expression, assembly and association;

19.2. considers that the so-called elections organised in Belarus on 26 January 2025 do not meet the minimum international standards for democratic elections and lack any democratic credibility;

- 19.3. considers that there are no grounds for recognising the legitimacy of Aliaksandr Lukashenka as president.
20. In line with the recommendations set out in its [Resolution 2530 \(2024\)](#), the Assembly believes that, with a view to honouring its obligations under international law, aligning itself to Council of Europe values and preserving its sovereignty and independence, Belarus should:
- 20.1. cease all repressive measures designed to silence dissent and ensure the unconditional and immediate release of all political prisoners and provide for their rehabilitation;
 - 20.2. declare an amnesty for all those arrested on political grounds;
 - 20.3. immediately put an end to all acts of torture or inhuman and degrading treatment, whether in public, citizens' homes or any place of detention;
 - 20.4. ensure the organisation of free and fair elections, together with the respect of civil and political rights and freedoms, in line with the recommendations set out in Assembly [Resolution 2371 \(2021\)](#) "Urgent need for electoral reform in Belarus" and recommendations made by the Venice Commission and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe;
 - 20.5. enable a peaceful transfer of power after the organisation of free and fair elections;
 - 20.6. impose an immediate moratorium on the death penalty and take steps toward its permanent abolition.
21. The Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:
- 21.1. reject the legitimacy of the so-called elections in Belarus of 26 January 2025, to make clear their non-recognition of the election of Aliaksandr Lukashenka to the post of President of Belarus, and take decisive steps to broaden and intensify targeted sanctions against the regime and those who support its unlawful activities;
 - 21.2. in line with the Reykjavik Declaration of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe of May 2023, continue and intensify support for the structures of the Belarusian democratic forces, led by Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya;
 - 21.3. maintain and expand efforts to investigate human rights abuses in Belarus and actively support mechanisms that ensure accountability for those responsible;
 - 21.4. explore measures to facilitate entry and stay in safe and dignified conditions for Belarusian citizens who flee the Lukashenka regime, in line with the Assembly [Resolution 2499 \(2023\)](#) "Addressing the specific challenges faced by the Belarusians in exile"; take measures to help them preserve their language, culture and identity; and refrain from returning them to Belarus as long as they are at risk of persecution;
 - 21.5. in line with Assembly [Resolution 2509 \(2023\)](#) "Transnational repression as a growing threat to the rule of law and human rights", establish mechanisms to track incidents of transnational repression and ensure that partners of the Council of Europe, human rights defenders, journalists and activists, are better protected from the risk of transnational repression;
 - 21.6. promote justice and accountability for crimes against humanity committed against Belarusians by the highest military-political leadership of Belarus;
 - 21.7. support the referral of the Belarus situation by the Government of Lithuania to the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.



Resolution 2588 (2025)¹

Provisional version

European commitment to a just and lasting peace in Ukraine

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Council of Europe is the institutional embodiment of the ideal of peace and unity on the European continent. However, this ideal continues to be dramatically challenged. For more than a decade, Ukraine has bravely defended itself against Russian aggression that began in 2014 and escalated into an unprovoked, full-scale war of aggression in 2022.
2. The Russian Federation continues to violate international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, through the continuation of its aggression, its attacks on critical infrastructure and civilian populations, the displacement of millions of people, the illegal deportation of children, human rights violations, in particular against the population in the temporarily occupied territories of Ukraine and executions of prisoners of war.
3. The Russian Federation has also strengthened its military co-operation with States seeking to undermine the international rules-based order, notably through agreements with Iran and the deployment of soldiers of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea ("North Korea") in this war of aggression. Hybrid warfare tactics employed by the Russian Federation through cyber-attacks, arson, disinformation campaigns and sabotage further threaten European security, including its energy and communications infrastructure. The Russian Federation's efforts to interfere in the political processes of Council of Europe member States also pose a growing threat to democratic security in Europe.
4. The Bürgenstock Summit on Peace in Ukraine, organised by Switzerland on 15 and 16 June 2024, based on the Ukrainian peace formula, was the most significant diplomatic initiative to date to inspire a future peace process. Its Joint Communiqué outlined several key priorities for achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in Ukraine: nuclear safety and security, food security and a human dimension. The follow-up conference held in Montreal in October 2024 defined concrete steps to support the return of prisoners of war, unlawfully detained civilians and deported children.
5. Intensified diplomatic efforts towards peace should support and complement the principle of "peace through strength" as outlined by the Ukrainian authorities. The principle stresses, *inter alia*, that sustainable peace negotiations can only be conducted from a position of resilience and robust defensive capacity, and that a just and lasting peace can only be secured by adequate security guarantees for Ukraine. Any peace negotiations must involve Ukraine and respect its right to determine its own future.
6. In a rapidly evolving geopolitical environment, now is a critical juncture for Ukraine and for Europe. European leaders should reinforce European unity and strengthen European support for Ukraine. They should act urgently and maximise efforts to support a just and lasting peace in Ukraine, Europe's long-term security and Ukraine's European future.
7. Continued support to Ukraine is also crucial in order to strengthen its capacity to effectively uphold human rights, the rule of law and democracy, which remain key to its resilience, recovery and reconstruction.

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 January 2025 (7th sitting) (see [Doc. 16106](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Ms Miapetra Kumpula-Natri). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 January 2025 (7th sitting).



8. In light of these considerations, the Parliamentary Assembly:
 - 8.1. refers to its previous resolutions addressing the full-scale aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, which constitutes a blatant violation of Ukraine's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It reaffirms its unequivocal condemnation of this war of aggression;
 - 8.2. strongly condemns the Russian Federation's recourse to North Korea to provide troops to fight against the Ukrainian army, which is an escalation of the war of aggression and a further violation of international law;
 - 8.3. calls for unwavering European commitment and unity in support of Ukraine and a just and lasting peace;
 - 8.4. believes that a just and lasting peace in Ukraine is indispensable for the security of the entire European continent and more broadly, the world;
 - 8.5. stresses that any peace negotiations must involve Ukraine and respect its right to determine its own future, including its sovereign right to continue its integration into the European Union as well as membership in other international organisations;
 - 8.6. considers that any settlement must uphold the principles of international law, including the right to national sovereignty and territorial integrity as well as the right of the victim of aggression to full reparation or compensation of the damage caused;
 - 8.7. reiterates the need to ensure accountability in the context of the Russian Federation's aggression, notably through the establishment of a comprehensive compensation mechanism and a special tribunal to prosecute Russian and Belarusian leaders for the crime of aggression against Ukraine;
 - 8.8. recognises that a position of resilience and robust defensive capacity is necessary to conduct sustainable peace negotiations ("peace through strength");
 - 8.9. reiterates its solidarity with the Ukrainian people, pays tribute to their courage and resilience and calls for the immediate return of prisoners of war, unlawfully detained civilians and deported children, as well as the safe return of forcibly displaced persons, including children;
 - 8.10. calls for increased humanitarian assistance to address the urgent needs of civilians affected by the war of aggression;
 - 8.11. recognises and supports the tireless efforts of civilians, volunteers and NGOs in their support of Ukrainian society;
 - 8.12. recognises that the People's Republic of China (PRC) is a decisive enabler of the Russian Federation's war of aggression against Ukraine and calls upon the PRC to cease providing a lifeline to the Russian war machine;
 - 8.13. recognises that Vladimir Putin shall be held accountable for the numerous acts of terror that have been committed against the civilian population under his rule.
9. The Assembly also refers to its [Resolution 2558 \(2024\)](#) and [Resolution 2540 \(2024\)](#), which address, *inter alia*, Vladimir Putin's totalitarian regime and its war on democracy, as well as the necessity to counter the erasure of cultural identity in war and peace; it believes that a lasting peace is only possible if the Russian Federation abandons its imperial ambitions and performs decolonisation.
10. The Assembly reiterates the need for the member States of the Council of Europe to prioritise investment in their own defence industries, ensuring that the production and development of military equipment and strengthening co-operation in this field enhance European self-reliability and defence autonomy, which will also strengthen regional security.
11. Consequently, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States, as well as relevant European institutions and international partners to:
 - 11.1. remain resolute and united to secure Ukraine's future within a stable, secure, and united Europe, as the outcome of the war against Ukraine will strongly impact the future of European and global security;
 - 11.2. maintain and, where necessary, enhance their comprehensive support to Ukraine, including political, economic and military support, to strengthen Ukraine's position in any future peace negotiations and to uphold regional security and European values;

11.3. strengthen the current sanctions regime against the Russian Federation, its allies, and their political and military leaderships, as outlined in [Resolution 2557 \(2024\)](#), by adopting the following measures:

11.3.1. reduce the oil price cap, enlarge the listing of the Russian “shadow fleet” vessels and improve the actions taken against them, and completely ban the import of liquefied natural gas and pipeline gas from Russia;

11.3.2. enlarge the scope of sanctions to target a wider range of Russian economic sectors, pipeline gas and agricultural, metallurgical and nuclear industries;

11.3.3. identify and improve targeted sanctions on individuals associated with Russian elites, including those who may directly or indirectly benefit from the war or are involved in the deportation, forcible transfer and unjustifiable delay in the repatriation of Ukrainian children, civilians and prisoners of war, to ensure they cannot exploit economic or legal loopholes to circumvent the existing sanction regime;

11.3.4. harmonise national legislations and strengthen co-ordination efforts among national authorities responsible for enforcing the implementation of sanctions;

11.3.5. double efforts to reduce sanctions circumvention, including through secondary sanctions against third countries and other economic actors facilitating it;

11.4. in the context of accountability, establish without delay a comprehensive compensation mechanism, including the already established and fully functional Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, a future international claims commission and an international compensation fund, to ensure full reparation for victims and guarantee that those responsible for these illegal actions bear the financial costs of their wrongdoing;

11.5. finalise negotiations with a view to establishing a special tribunal to prosecute Russian and Belarusian leaders for the crime of aggression against Ukraine;

11.6. ensure that all frozen Russian State assets are transferred to the international compensation fund, once it is established, in order to use them to compensate Ukraine and natural and legal persons affected by the Russian aggression in Ukraine;

11.7. support the initiation of a comprehensive reconstruction plan for Ukraine, to be undertaken with European and international partners, encompassing, *inter alia*, the rebuilding of infrastructures, including restoration of the environment and removal of war debris, support for displaced persons, and the promotion of democratic institutions, human rights and rule of law;

11.8. increase humanitarian assistance to address the urgent needs of civilians affected by the war of aggression, and support civil society in Ukraine;

11.9. continue international support for demining efforts in Ukraine to address the significant threat posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance to civilian safety, agricultural recovery and economic development in the liberated areas;

11.10. strengthen measures to counter Russian disinformation and promote accurate information about the war and its consequences.

12. Moreover, the Assembly commends Ukraine for its achievements in implementing the Council of Europe Action Plan “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction” 2023-2026, and its progress in the European Union accession process, despite an unprecedented wartime situation, and stresses that adhering to European standards of human rights, democracy and the rule of law will further strengthen Ukraine’s democratic security and resilience and contribute to a peaceful future.

13. The Assembly further calls on Council of Europe member States and international partners to seek the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples adopted by the United Nations General Assembly [Resolution 1514 \(XV\)](#) of 14 December 1960, in the Russian Federation, starting from the condemnation of massive violations of human rights and the rights of indigenous peoples of the Russian Federation.

14. Furthermore, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States in particular to step up their support for the Council of Europe Action Plan “Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction” 2023-2026 and further prioritise strengthening Ukraine’s capacity to effectively uphold human rights, rule of law and

democracy, which remains key to Ukraine's resilience, recovery and reconstruction and to its progress in the accession process to the European Union, and to also enhance their assistance concerning the children of Ukraine.

15. The Assembly reaffirms its unwavering resolve to support peace, justice and the rule of law in Ukraine and across the continent.



Resolution 2589 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Women in the economy: employment, entrepreneurship and gender-responsive budgeting

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Women have always had their place in the economy and arguably have a longer experience than men in managing the relationship between production of goods and services and management of available resources, on a day-to-day basis. Recognition of this place, however, is not widespread and has been ignored as in other areas such as science, the arts and literature. In a history of advances and setbacks women have come a long way to affirm their economic value and independence. Nevertheless, as in all the other dimensions of equality between women and men, there is still a long way to go, globally.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly last addressed the subject of women's place in the economy in 2018, with a report entitled "Empowering women in the economy" which led to [Resolution 2235 \(2018\)](#). The rapporteur, Ms Elena Centemero (Italy, EPP/CD), identified main areas requiring action (gender pay gaps leading to pension gaps, difficulties in accessing employment, slower career progression, gender segmentation, glass ceilings) and stressed the fact that "equality between women and men in the economy is a precondition for advances in other spheres, including public and political life".
3. A 2023 study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) highlights notable advancements in two critical areas. Firstly, in the distribution of childcare responsibilities, where approximately 40% of fathers in several countries now take parental leave, albeit for systematically shorter periods than their female counterparts. Secondly, progress has been observed in transparency, particularly concerning gender pay gaps. In 55% of the 37 OECD member countries, private firms are now required to report on gender pay gaps.
4. Despite all the expert evidence and facts, the still ongoing negative impacts and fallout from recent crises, including the global Covid-19 pandemic and the economic consequences of the conflicts in and outside Europe, have shown the fragility of progress towards gender equality and how much remains to be done. This is particularly evident with respect to the persisting imbalance of care responsibilities, still assumed mainly by women both in the home and in institutions, and the lack of financial recognition for this type of work. So slow progress is coupled with a real risk of backsliding, especially in the current context. The Assembly considers that more account should be taken of research that shows women's potential, and more action taken to accelerate change.
5. Due to the persistent lack of recognition of their rightful place in the economy, women face greater discrimination compared to men. Both conscious and unconscious gender biases operate to their disadvantage, particularly in recruitment processes where women are asked to prove their dedication, determination and leadership abilities to a greater extent than their male counterparts. Moreover, the caregiving responsibilities that women predominantly assume, and for which they are seen as indispensable, tend to raise doubts about their perceived ability to perform efficiently within the economic sphere.

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 January 2025 (8th sitting) (see [Doc. 16068](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Sena Nur Çelik Kanat). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 January 2025 (8th sitting).



6. Although the number of women with higher education qualifications has risen, young women remain less likely than young men to choose Science, Technology, Engineering, or Mathematics (STEM) as fields of study at graduate level. The existence of gender gaps in fields of tertiary study indicates that young women often do not build on good school performances to enter higher education in fields with better employment prospects, such as STEM and artificial intelligence (AI)-related studies. The OECD explains this in part by the lack of self-confidence girls have in their mathematics and science abilities during school, and the lack of role models for girls in STEM and AI fields, which means that young girls have little evidence to disprove the notion that mathematics and science are somehow more “masculine” disciplines.

7. The Assembly calls on European leaders to respond to one of the greatest challenges in establishing women’s place in the economy, which is changing mindsets. There must be a willingness on all sides to break the glass ceilings and mend the “broken rung” – the first step up into managerial positions for women. Those who have succeeded must act as champions and role models, showing that their achievements are attainable by many other girls and women.

8. Equality must be championed in all aspects of daily life, with particular attention to ensuring that traditions, identities, and gender-specific cultural differences are not used to perpetuate existing inequalities. There is a need to address the negative impacts of the intersectionality of gender and other grounds of discrimination and to combat racism and all forms of intolerance that disproportionately affect women, especially those from diverse groups and disadvantaged backgrounds. Furthermore, inclusive approaches to diversity must be prioritised and concerted efforts should be made to challenge and dismantle pervasive stereotypes.

9. The Assembly also calls for gender to be mainstreamed in all policies and budgets and all areas of government and governance and for adequate funding to be earmarked for equality. Cross-cutting policies must ensure continuity in support for women’s equal participation in all areas. More disaggregated data is needed to identify root causes of inequality and clarify the orientations that should be taken, enabling evidence-based policy analysis that can more accurately address specific disparities and inform targeted interventions for achieving gender equality.

10. In light of the above considerations, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States as well as observer States and States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly to improve their law and policy with respect to gender-responsive budgeting. In particular, governments should:

10.1. ensure that gender-responsive budgeting is mandated in the budget law and budget documents and clearly defined within public finance management systems at the national, regional and local levels, and that gender-responsive budgeting tools are embedded at all stages of the budget cycle;

10.2. develop and introduce clear guidance and tools coupled with capacity building of public officials at all levels, to identify gender gaps through gender analysis and take specific action to address and close these gaps;

10.3. strengthen the accountability of budget execution with respect to gender equality and monitor results using gender impact assessment;

10.4. build the capacity of supreme audit institutions to audit expenditure through a gender lens and to evaluate whether intended gender outcomes have been achieved;

10.5. ensure that budgets are grounded in evidence-based policy analysis, and publish regular, real-time expenditure reports that are publicly accessible, enabling parliament, civil society, and the general public to see how resources are allocated to gender equality;

10.6. take steps to ensure that women can participate in budget discussions and have their voices heard.

11. With regard to employment, the Assembly calls on member States to make more efforts to:

11.1. impose pay transparency to expose gender pay gaps, and carry out effective reviews of these gaps in all public services and private business, accompanied by sanctions where differentiation persists;

11.2. develop and implement laws and policies to identify, eliminate, and sanction racism and all forms of intolerance and discrimination including intersectional discrimination against women from diverse groups in the labour market, which hinder their economic empowerment, and address the specific needs of disadvantaged groups;

- 11.3. eliminate conscious gender bias in recruitment, training and promotion processes, and learn to recognise and screen out unconscious bias;
 - 11.4. ensure through legal measures, awareness-raising campaigns and media visibility that the workplace is seen as a safe space for everyone, and in particular women who are often the targets of multiple and persistent “micro-aggressions” and other forms of gender-based harassment;
 - 11.5. recognise the value of types of employment where women are in a majority, first and foremost in care and medical fields, and reward these skills and competences at their true value;
 - 11.6. promote women’s participation in traditionally male dominated sectors, such as STEM fields, as well as in emerging sectors like the digital and green economy, by implementing targeted training and mentoring programs, to improve gender balance in the labour market and foster a more inclusive digital and green future;
 - 11.7. develop specific grant programs for women entrepreneurs starting businesses and start-ups, with accessible application requirements for diverse backgrounds, along with support and advisory services to guide them through the application process, and provide financial literacy training;
 - 11.8. ensure that technology used in human resources management takes into account diversity and intersectionality, and that automated decision making does not generate discrimination;
 - 11.9. adopt measures to improve gender balance in leadership roles across the economy, including on corporate boards, senior management, and public-sector decision-making positions.
12. With regard to care and family responsibilities, the Assembly calls on member States to:
 - 12.1. enact legislation to support paid parental leave for both parents, flexible working arrangements and caregiving leave for those caring for children, elderly or disabled family members;
 - 12.2. provide affordable and accessible, high-quality childcare and elderly care services, reducing the caregiving burden that often falls disproportionately on women;
 - 12.3. promote the equal sharing of responsibilities through public awareness campaigns and policies such as paid paternal leave, in particular to encourage and incentivise men to share caregiving duties;
 - 12.4. introduce tax breaks or subsidies for families that employ caregivers or provide in-home care services;
 - 12.5. create programmes that ensure all children have access to universal early education to allow parents, particularly women, to engage in the workforce;
 - 12.6. ensure that leave for care responsibilities does not affect pension rights;
 - 12.7. include unpaid work in national statistics by gathering quantitative and qualitative data, particularly time use surveys.
 13. Concerning education, the Assembly calls on member States to:
 - 13.1. ensure that from the earliest age, school curricula avoid the gender bias and stereotyping which lead children to channel their energies into gendered and stereotyped roles and, in particular, lead to girls losing their confidence in their abilities in science and mathematics;
 - 13.2. provide equal opportunities for girls and boys to experience a broad range of theoretical and practical studies in different areas, and reinforce programmes such as job-information days or career fairs in schools for both parents and students and early work experience through education programmes and apprenticeships, to encourage girls’ interest in science-related subjects;
 - 13.3. organise extra-curricular activities to enable girls to discover and exercise technological skills and computing competencies, such as computer coding in non-competitive, game-based surroundings;
 - 13.4. provide training and further training for teachers to enable them to recognise and address their own conscious or unconscious gender bias.
 14. Finally, the Assembly calls on all Council of Europe member States as well as observer States and States whose parliaments enjoy observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly to use the research and tools at their disposal to collect more disaggregated and intersectional data on gender-based discrimination in the economy in order to better address it at all levels, and to take into account the evidence showing that if the full potential of women were realised, national incomes would rise considerably in the short and medium term.



Resolution 2590 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Regulating content moderation on social media to safeguard freedom of expression

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Social media have become an online agora where users come to exercise their right to freedom of expression and information in many ways. These include posting their own content and enjoying the content posted by others, getting informed and informing others, and communicating with other users.
2. The right to freedom of expression is not an absolute right; social media are legally obliged to remove any illegal content when they become or are made aware of its existence on their services. Moreover, it is incumbent upon social media to combat the dissemination of harmful content.
3. Social media companies are also bearers of fundamental rights, such as the right to property and freedom of enterprise, and therefore they have a say in how users can use their services and what content they can post. The content moderation rules included in their terms and conditions allow for social media companies to demote, demonetise, restrict access to, or remove a concrete content item because of its incompatibility with their terms and conditions. In extreme cases, social media companies can suspend or even terminate a user's account. Their terms and conditions have a contractual character, and users are bound by them on a take-it-or-leave-it basis.
4. The major social media companies, mainly US owned, have a global reach; their content moderation policies and their commercial or ideological decisions about content to promote or demote may have an immense influence on public opinion and on choices of billions of people. It is, nevertheless, incumbent upon them to respect the laws of the country in which they provide their services.
5. Given the potential impact on societal behaviours and on the proper functioning of democratic processes that the information and communication flow on social media *de facto* has, it is incumbent upon the State to establish the fundamental principles and institutional framework that may correct the power imbalance resulting from the unequal contractual relationship and ensure the effective protection of the right to freedom of expression.
6. It is imperative, however, that public regulation of content moderation does not have a chilling effect on free speech and is not intended to impose the views of the political power in place and censorship on opinions or ideas which may conflict with the ruling majority's vested interests. Moreover, national regulations should not place undue burdens on social media, which could result in an overzealous approach to content removal. These regulations and their implementation must uphold freedom of expression and carefully assess the necessity of any restrictions.
7. The risk of restrictive content moderation policies is increased by the lack of transparency in their implementation. Social media have been accused of a practice called "shadow banning" whereby they delist or demote content dealing with controversial issues without notifying the user in question, making that content invisible to other users. This devious, hidden practice should be forbidden: it deprives users of the possibility to defend effectively their right to freedom of expression.

1. *Assembly debate* on 30 January 2025 (8th sitting) (see [Doc. 16089](#), report of the Committee on Culture, Science, Education and Media, rapporteur: Ms Valentina Grippo). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 30 January 2025 (8th sitting).



8. The press and the media in general use social media as a platform for disseminating information to the public. It is therefore essential that content moderation practices do not unduly impact media and journalistic content that respects professional standards and the national regulatory framework.
9. Content moderation is increasingly carried out by automated means. Artificial intelligence tools are much more efficient than human moderators in processing at a high speed the colossal amount of content circulating on the web, to identify prohibited content. They lack to date, however, the capacity to fully understand the subtleties of human interaction (humour, parody, satire, etc.) and to assess the content in its context.
10. For this reason, human moderators must remain the cornerstone of any content moderation system and be responsible for making decisions in cases where automated systems are not up to the task. However, human moderation can be biased and lead to inconsistencies among countries due to cultural differences; it is therefore imperative to establish clear and comprehensive standards and to guarantee appropriate training, to ensure that all moderators have the requisite knowledge of both the applicable legislation and the company's internal guidelines, as well as of the language and the context of the country from which the content originates. However, in the event of a military conflict between two countries, moderators from one country party to the conflict should not moderate content originating from the other.
11. Regrettably, despite their fundamental role, human moderators' working conditions are inadequate, they are overexposed to disturbing content that can cause them serious mental health problems and they suffer from restrictions on their freedom to speak out about the problems they encounter at work.
12. Generative artificial intelligence tools allow to produce synthetic content that is virtually indistinguishable from human generated content. Such content can be highly misleading, be a tool of disinformation and manipulation, and instigate hatred and discrimination, among other dangers. It is essential that users are made aware of content that appears to be genuine, but which is in fact not. In this regard, watermarking techniques are particularly beneficial but have several drawbacks, including their lack of interoperability among social media services.
13. Independent assessment of terms and conditions and content moderation policies and their enforcement, also with a view to identifying and promoting best practices, could help to ensure their consistency with principles which uphold a human rights-based approach to content moderation.
14. The establishment of clear and transparent rules for conflict resolution is essential to ensure the protection of users and to minimise the risk of being subjected to a potentially biased decision by the social media company, or of being forced to pursue costly legal action against a multinational corporation with enormous financial resources at its disposal.
15. The establishment of independent out-of-court dispute settlement bodies to assess content moderation decisions may prove beneficial in enhancing compliance with fundamental rights. Collaboration between social media companies in establishing such bodies could also hopefully facilitate dispute resolution.
16. As stated by the Assembly in its [Resolution 2281 \(2019\) "Social media: social threads or threats to human rights?"](#), social media companies should employ algorithms that promote the diversity of sources, topics and views, guarantee the quality of information available, and thereby reduce the risk of "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers".
17. In light of these considerations, the Assembly calls on the Council of Europe member States to review their legislation to better safeguard the right to freedom of expression on social media. In this respect, they should in particular:
 - 17.1. require that social media uphold users' fundamental rights, including freedom of expression, in their content moderation policy and implementation practices;
 - 17.2. require that social media platforms provide justification for any measure taken to moderate content provided by the press or media service providers prior to its implementation and allow them an opportunity to reply within an appropriate timeframe;
 - 17.3. in co-operation with the press or media organisations, implement a system of verification of media and journalist accounts, together with robust mechanisms to protect them from online harassment, hacks and fraud, and develop social media guidelines for press or media organisations on the publication of information on sensitive issues, with a view to avoiding unnecessary moderation restrictions on this type of content;

17.4. provide for minimum standards for the working conditions of human moderators, including a requirement of adequate training to carry out their often stressful tasks and of access to proper psychological support and mental healthcare when needed;

17.5. sign and ratify the Council of Europe Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law (CETS No. 225, "Vilnius Convention") and adopt or maintain measures to ensure that adequate transparency and oversight requirements tailored to the specific contexts and risks are in place to meet the challenges of the identification of content generated by artificial intelligence systems;

17.6. require that content generated by artificial intelligence is disclosed as such by those initially posting it and that social media implement technical solutions allowing for such content to be easily identified by users, and encourage collaboration between social media companies to ensure the interoperability of watermarking techniques for content generated by artificial intelligence;

17.7. require that out-of-court dispute settlement bodies, when established, are independent and impartial, have the necessary expertise, are easily accessible, and operate according to clear and fair rules, with certification of these requirements by the competent national regulatory authority;

17.8. promote, within the Internet Governance Forum and the European Dialogue on Internet Governance, reflection on the possibility for the internet community to develop, through a collaborative and, where appropriate, multi-stakeholder process, an external evaluation and auditing system aimed at determining whether algorithms are unbiased and respect the right to freedom of expression, and a "seal of good practices" which could be awarded to social media whose algorithms are designed to reduce the risk of "filter bubbles" and "echo chambers" and to foster an ideologically cross-cutting, yet safe, user experience.

18. The Assembly calls on social media companies to avoid measures that unnecessarily restrict the freedom of expression of users. They should, in particular:

18.1. directly incorporate principles of fundamental rights law, and in particular freedom of expression, into their terms and conditions;

18.2. use caution when moderating content that is not obviously illegal;

18.3. provide users with terms and conditions that are readily accessible, clear and informative on the types of content that are permissible on their services and the consequences for non-compliance, and which are understandable to the wide span of users notwithstanding differing levels of digital literacy and reading proficiency;

18.4. notify users without undue delay of any moderation action taken on their content, providing a comprehensive account of the rationale behind the decision, accompanied by a reference to the internal rules which have been applied;

18.5. refrain from shadow banning users' content and notify users of every instance of demotion or delisting;

18.6. ensure that automated content moderation processes are subject to human oversight and to rigorous and continuous evaluation to assess their performance;

18.7. make available a system for handling complaints that is easily accessible, user-friendly, and allows users to make a precise complaint;

18.8. give human moderators appropriate training and working conditions which pay attention to the heavy psychological stress they are submitted to, and ensure adequate protection of their health;

18.9. refrain from permanent deletion of content (including its metadata) that has been removed in accordance with legal obligations or with terms and conditions, in particular when the content in question may serve as evidence of war or other crimes;

18.10. ensure that the artificial intelligence systems they develop or use uphold Council of Europe standards, including the new Framework Convention on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights, Democracy and the Rule of Law; algorithms should be designed to respect the right to freedom of expression, and to encourage plurality and diversity of views and opinions while ensuring a safe user experience, their operation modalities should be disclosed and users duly informed on how these algorithms filter and promote content;

18.11. collaborate with other online services with the aim of ensuring the interoperability of watermarking techniques for content generated by artificial intelligence;

- 18.12. collaborate with journalists and fact-checking organisations to effectively combat disinformation with information that adheres to the ethical and professional standards of journalism;
- 18.13. promote and support the creation of independent out-of-court dispute settlement bodies, and abide by their decisions and recommendations;
- 18.14. support the work of independent third-party oversight bodies and abide by their decisions and recommendations;
- 18.15. ensure that decisions related to content moderation are duly motivated and that researchers have access to full information on the legal base and reasoning behind each decision.



Resolution 2591 (2025)¹

Provisional version

“Long Covid” and access to the right to health

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly notes that “long Covid”, characterised by the continuation of symptoms or the development of new symptoms three months after the initial infection with SARS-CoV-2 (which caused the Covid-19 pandemic) and the persistence of these symptoms for at least two months without any other explanation, affects a large and growing number of people throughout Europe and the world, and has considerable impacts on public health, the economy and the quality of life of those affected.
2. This disease, which manifests itself through a variety of symptoms such as chronic fatigue, neurological disorders and other physical and mental complications, can in some cases be comparable to myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome. It causes major physical and mental challenges, affects social and professional relationships, and leads to increased psychological distress. Patients are often confronted with a limited understanding of their condition by the medical community and those around them, making their experience even more difficult.
3. The Assembly expresses its concern about the socio-economic impact of this disease which can be massively disabling for millions of people and can manifest itself with visible or invisible disabilities. With policy makers and the healthcare sector focused initially on containing, and then preventing a recurrence of the Covid-19 pandemic and today on other emerging health issues, the millions of patients with “long Covid” have become a huge blind spot.
4. The Assembly regrets that, to date, there is no single, consensual definition of “long Covid”, although most countries broadly adhere to international guidelines. A clearer and more disaggregated definition of “long Covid” could help to improve clinical management and to better target policies.
5. The Assembly also regrets that no solution has yet been identified to ensure patients' recovery and cure, as research is still in its infancy to understand the causes and consequences of the disease.
6. The Assembly is concerned about the limited access to healthcare for people with “long Covid”, resulting from insufficient investment in biomedical research and weakened healthcare systems. It points out that Article 11 of the [European Social Charter \(ETS No. 35 and ETS No. 163\)](#) enshrines the right to protection of health.
7. The Assembly refers to its [Resolution 2373 \(2021\) “Discrimination against persons dealing with chronic and long-term illnesses”](#) in which it urges member States of the Council of Europe “to strengthen capacities for screening and prevention with respect to chronic and long-term illnesses and to adopt a holistic approach, which is regularly reviewed and adjusted and involves all sectors of the administration to promote the well-being of individuals, fight against inequalities and take vulnerabilities into consideration. The authorities must fight against diagnostic delays so that, after a certain period, which should not be longer than one year, each patient is able to exercise their rights again without hindrance”.

1. *Assembly debate* on 31 January 2025 (9th sitting) (see [Doc. 16088](#), report of the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development, rapporteur: Ms Carmen Leyte). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 31 January 2025 (9th sitting).



8. Recognising the need to adopt a human rights-based approach in the fight against “long Covid”, the Assembly calls on Council of Europe member States to:
 - 8.1. ensure sufficient funding for biomedical research so that a common definition and terminology are established, and effective treatments are available to ensure an adapted, safe and sustained recovery that reduces long-term disability;
 - 8.2. adopt public policies co-ordinated at national level and defined in collaboration with people suffering from “long Covid” to meet their medical, social and professional needs;
 - 8.3. set up transdisciplinary centres of expertise for diagnosis, treatment and prevention in order to facilitate access to care for people suffering from “long Covid”;
 - 8.4. work with the health sector to disseminate information and provide specific training for medical staff on “long Covid”;
 - 8.5. run, in partnership with civil society, public awareness campaign on “long Covid”, with a view to ensuring an understanding of the disease which will in turn protect the possibility for those affected by it to enjoy as normal a life as they can, free from stigmatisation and with their rights and freedoms fully respected and facilitated;
 - 8.6. recognise that “long Covid” should fall within the scope of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in order to allow access to social security, disability benefits and compensatory aids;
 - 8.7. ensure equitable access to healthcare for people suffering from “long Covid”, in particular children and young people, and for the States Parties to the Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine (ETS No. 164, Oviedo Convention) to take the necessary measures to give effect to the provisions of its Article 3;
 - 8.8. promote flexible policies for patients with “long Covid”, both in the workplace and in educational institutions, to ensure that they are able to continue their work or education under appropriate conditions;
 - 8.9. encourage international co-operation in the fight against this disease.
9. Finally, the Assembly also reiterates its strong encouragement to the Council of Europe member States which have not yet ratified the revised European Social Charter to do so as soon as possible.



Resolution 2592 (2025)¹

Provisional version

Overcoming age-based discrimination against older persons

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Human rights should not be denied or reduced with age. As established in international human rights treaties, they are universal and must therefore apply equally to everyone. Older persons should have the rights, resources and facilities allowing them to remain full members of society, on the basis of the principles of autonomy, equality, independence, participation and respect for every person's dignity.
2. Ageism – defined as stereotypes, prejudice and discriminatory practices on the basis of age – reinforces the perception that inequalities and discrimination against older persons are natural or inevitable, which is not the case. Older persons have to face a discourse drawing attention to the consequences of a demographic shift towards an older population, the growing “burden” they represent, and the “high cost” of ensuring their equality of human rights.
3. Age-based discrimination is as harmful as any other form of discrimination. Older persons experience age-based discrimination in all areas of life, especially in the workplace, and in access to services, education, and healthcare.
4. A less protective legal framework on and in response to age-based discrimination, in comparison with other grounds for discrimination, is not justified and should be remedied. Alongside robust legislation prohibiting discrimination on grounds of age in all areas of life, a wide range of measures should be put in place to combat ageism in society.
5. Older persons are not a homogeneous group, and it is important to apply an intersectional approach to prevent and combat the ageism and the discrimination they encounter.
6. The negative narrative around age and ageing in society needs to be challenged and changed in order to counter age-based stereotypes, prejudice and discrimination. Ageism as a socially acceptable phenomenon should be challenged through a range of channels, including awareness-raising measures, improved legislation and policies, education, intergenerational interventions, and research and data collection on its manifestations and effects, including an analysis of intersectional discrimination affecting older persons (for instance migrants, LGBTI persons, women, persons with disabilities, persons with ethnic minority background, etc.).
7. The Parliamentary Assembly underlines the need to meet target 10.2 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aims to empower and promote the social, economic and political inclusion of all, “irrespective of age” and other characteristics, by 2030. In addition to SDG 10 (reduce inequalities), other SDGs are relevant for older persons: SDG 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), SDG 1 (end poverty), SDG 5 (achieve gender equality) and SDG 8 (promote decent work for all).
8. The Assembly welcomes the Pact for the Future, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in September 2024, and its call to promote intergenerational solidarity, dialogue and engagement, including with and among children, youth and older persons, in policy and decision-making processes.

1. *Assembly debate* on 31 January 2025 (9th sitting) (see [Doc. 16091](#), report of the Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, rapporteur: Ms Andrea Eder-Gitschthaler). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 31 January 2025 (9th sitting). See also [Recommendation 2291 \(2025\)](#).



9. The Assembly refers to Recommendation CM/Rec(2014)2 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on the promotion of human rights of older persons and a 2019 report on its implementation which recommended further efforts to tackle age-based discrimination.

10. The Assembly furthermore refers to its [Resolution 2168 \(2017\)](#) and [Recommendation 2104 \(2017\)](#) “Human rights of older persons and their comprehensive care”; [Resolution 2510 \(2023\)](#) “Closing the digital divide: promoting equal access to digital technologies”; [Resolution 1793 \(2011\)](#) “Promoting active ageing – capitalising on older people’s working potential”; and [Recommendation 1796 \(2007\)](#) “The situation of elderly persons in Europe”. It also refers to attention to [Resolution 504 \(2024\)](#) and [Recommendation 517 \(2024\)](#) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, on “Ageing communities – ensuring access to quality social care for older persons”.

11. The Assembly acknowledges the pioneering role played by the Council of Europe, given that the European Social Charter (ETS No. 35), revised in 1996 (ETS No. 163), and in particular its Article 23 “The right of elderly persons to social protection”, is the first human rights treaty to specifically protect the rights of older persons, requiring State Parties to adopt legislation to combat age-based discrimination in all areas. The Charter states that such legislation should cover sectors such as access to goods, facilities and services, including insurance and banking products. In a statement from 2023, the European Committee of Social Rights indicated that the Charter requires a commitment to identifying and eliminating ageist attitudes and laws, policies and other measures which reflect or reinforce ageism. Also in 2023, the Council of Europe published a major study on the use of the European Social Charter in combating ageism against older persons in order to ensure that the Charter remains at the forefront of this fight.

12. The Assembly considers that national bodies responsible for equality issues should include preventing and combating discrimination against older persons in their mandate and activities and be granted the necessary resources in this respect.

13. The Assembly calls on the member and observer States of the Council of Europe and States whose parliament enjoys observer or partner for democracy status with the Assembly:

13.1. with regard to the general approach, to:

13.1.1. apply a human rights-based approach to combat ageism against older persons, shifting to a right holders model that guarantees equality, dignity, autonomy and participation at all stages of life;

13.1.2. accordingly devise and put in place specific measures to prevent ageism and combat stereotypes against older persons, through education, information and awareness-raising activities which could include events to mark the International Day of Older Persons (1 October);

13.1.3. support and fund civil society organisations working to combat ageism;

13.1.4. provide opportunities for intergenerational solidarity and partnerships, and activities to connect younger and older generations, for the benefit of all, harnessing the wisdom, experience and talents of the older generation, as a societal asset;

13.2. with regard to laws and policies, to:

13.2.1. review legislation to include a specific prohibition of age-based discrimination against older persons, and modify or repeal any laws with direct or indirect discriminatory effects;

13.2.2. ensure that equality and anti-discrimination laws and policies address structural discrimination, and multiple and intersectional discrimination against older persons in all areas of life, covering in particular autonomy (legal capacity), independent living, employment, political representation, access to justice, goods and services, healthcare, housing and quality care;

13.2.3. accept Article 23 of the European Social Charter if this is not already the case;

13.2.4. ensure that monitoring and enforcement bodies and mechanisms are in place as regards laws and policies on age-based discrimination against older persons;

13.2.5. consider establishing an independent commissioner and/or a minister for the rights of older persons;

13.3. with regard to social care and healthcare, to:

13.3.1. ensure that the principle of non-discrimination on the basis of age is integrated in health care and other public policies and programmes;

13.3.2. ensure that implicit and explicit bias and ageism are eliminated in the design, development, use and evaluations of artificial intelligence technologies in the fields of healthcare and social care;

13.3.3. support and build the knowledge and capacities of healthcare and social care professionals about the perspective, experience and needs of different groups of older persons, including women, LGBTI persons, persons with disabilities, people with ethnic minority background, and migrants;

13.3.4. grant access to affordable and quality institutional long-term care;

13.4. with regard to access to information, redress and justice, to:

13.4.1. ensure that older persons have full and easily accessible information about their rights and redress mechanisms;

13.4.2. establish appropriate redress mechanisms and support the access of older persons to justice, including through the provision of free legal aid and appropriate legal proceedings;

13.4.3. support the work of equality bodies and ensure their ability to receive and bring forward complaints concerning age-based discrimination against older persons;

13.4.4. raise awareness among and provide training for relevant staff on this area of discrimination, for example through the Council of Europe Programme on Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (HELP);

13.5. with regard to data collection and research, as a tool to measure the situation and inform policy making, to:

13.5.1. review data collection approaches to eliminate any inherent age bias, and collect equality data disaggregated by different age sub-groups alongside other characteristics, without age limits, such as sex, gender, disability, ethnic minority, migrant background, sexual orientation and gender identity, allowing for an analysis of age discrimination as a phenomenon in itself as well as its interaction with other factors;

13.5.2. conduct quantitative and qualitative research into intersectional discrimination affecting older persons, including women, LGBTI persons, migrants, persons with ethnic minority background or persons with disabilities;

13.6. with regard to digitalisation and access to goods and services, to:

13.6.1. combat the digital divide which may affect older persons, by providing universal and affordable access to relevant tools and technologies, along with tailored capacity building and empowerment among the older members of society, to allow for their meaningful and safe use of Information and communication technologies and digital services, in line with the United Nations General Assembly Global Digital Compact;

13.6.2. ensure that public services, especially relating to financial and other essential support, can be accessed through both online and offline means;

13.6.3. ensure that implicit and explicit bias and ageism are identified and avoided throughout the design and use of artificial intelligence technologies applied to public goods and services;

13.7. with regard to the participation of older persons in the decisions that concern them, to:

13.7.1. put in place the necessary and appropriate methods and mechanisms to allow older persons to exercise their full legal capacity, autonomy and voice in all matters affecting them as individuals;

13.7.2. actively seek the involvement of older persons and their representative organisations when considering and reviewing legal and policy measures which affect them and their rights.

14. The Assembly supports the United Nations Decade for Healthy Ageing (2021-2030) and encourages Council of Europe member States to address ageism with specific measures aiming to make tangible progress by the end of the decade. It thus invites members States to work towards the elimination of ageism and actively participate in the Global Campaign to Combat Ageism. The Assembly supports, moreover, the consideration of a United Nations convention on the rights of older persons.