

Council of Europe

2014 : Second Session

Part one

Activities of the PACE (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe)

The second 2014 session of the Council of Europe took place from 7th to 11th of April in Strasbourg, France.

Due to the situation in Ukraine, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) decided to remove the Russian delegation's voting rights but not to annul their credentials.

Mr Kurz, Austrian President of the Committee of Ministers, and Mr Fischer President of Austria, addressed the Assembly. The PACE decided to grant partner for democracy status to the Kyrgyz Parliament and listened to the annual activity report by the Commissioner for Human Rights M. Nils Muiznieks. Other highlights included a report on prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe, a debate on user protection and security in cyberspace as well as the right to internet access, the protection of minors against excesses of sects, and ending child poverty in Europe.

Part two

A Selection of Documents

The MPs tabled several documents of interest for WUCWO :

*1-Doc.13467 The protection of minors against excesses of sects
Author M Rudy Salles France Socialist Party <http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-DocDetails-EN.asp?fileid=20544&wrqid=0&wrqref=&ref=1&lang=EN>*

*2- Doc13458 Ending child poverty in Europe
Rapporteur Ms Sevinj Fataliyeva Azerbaïdjan
European Democrat Group <http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/X2H-Xref-ViewPDF.asp?FileID=20565&lang=en>*

*3-Doc 13446 Prostitution, trafficking and modern slavery in Europe
Rapporteur Mr José Mendes Bota Portugal EPP/CD
<http://www.assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-en.asp?fileid=20559&lang=en>*

*4-Doc 13462 Refugees and the right to work Rapporteur : Mr Christopher Chope United Kingdom
EDG <http://assembly.coe.int/nw/xml/XRef/Xref-XML2HTML-EN.asp?fileid=20569&lang=en>*

Side-Events:

“A threat to the human rights of minority religious groups”

Side-event sponsored by Valeriu Ghiletschi (Republic of Moldova, EPP/CD) with the participation of: Aaron Rhodes, human rights activist, university lecturer and essayist, former Executive Director of the International Helsinki Federation for Human Rights (IHF)

MEP Ghiletschi stressed the danger of this report as there is no definition of the word sect, this report could be used against children and parents belonging to minority religious groups.

Exchange of views on “Sexual violence against refugee children”

In the framework of the 17th meeting of the PACE Network of Contact Parliamentarians to stop sexual violence against children with the participation of:

Gert Westerveen, UNHCR representative to the European institutions in Strasbourg

Sara Abbas, Head of Office for the International Organization for Migration (IOM), France

This was part of the campaign “one in five” to stop sexual violence against children by a network of parliamentarians across Europe

Hearing on “Abortion legislation: developments in Spain and the rest of Europe”

Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination, with the participation of: Vicky Claeys, Regional Director of the International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network (IPPFEN) Régis Brillat, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe European Committee of Social Rights

The Council of Europe considers that abortion is a human right and that it should be allowed to women on demand

Part Three

COING (Conference of international NGO) Activities

This session was not officially a COING meeting although several working groups took place

A Working Group on "Combating Hate Speech" was set up to offer a contribution from representatives of civil society to the development of a General Policy Recommendation on Combating Hate Speech to be put to the governments of the Council of Europe, to develop the concept of a White Paper on Combating Hate Speech, to serve as a guide to thinking and action for the use of INGOs, media and political parties.

This White Paper should be presented at a Forum of Civil Society, in 2016, in collaboration with the Council of Europe, ECRI, media and social networks and political parties.

65 representatives of INGOs have signed up. WUCWO Representative is not a member of this group but will watch the development of the work. Hate Speech doesn't have an agreed definition and is ambiguous. This new wording is actually another threat to freedom of expression, conscience and religion.

Anne Girault, WUCWO Representative to the Council of Europe