



NEWSLETTER

October 2024 part session | Unified European Left | PACE

♦ **Co-chair Andrej Hunko (Germany)** **spoke** on behalf of the group in the **progress report**

Upcoming activities

January

The next meetings of the UEL group will be held during the **January part session** from 27 - 31 January 2025

Election observation missions

Presidential election in the Republic of Moldova on 20 October 2024

UEL representatives: Laura Castel (Spain)

Parliamentary elections in Georgia on 26 October 2024

UEL representatives: Andrej Hunko (Germany) and Nina Kasimati (Greece)

Substitutes: George Loucaides (Cyprus) and Sevilay Çelenk Özen (Türkiye)

Assembly of Kosovo* elections on 9 February 2025

UEL representative: Nina Kasimati (Greece)
Substitute: George Loucaides (Cyprus)

HIGHLIGHTS

News:

14 December: UEL co-chair Hunko requests the PACE President to seek the Venice Commission's opinion on the Romanian Constitutional Court's annulment of the presidential election

5 November: UEL co-chairs deplore the use of the trustee mechanism by Türkiye

3 October: UEL welcomes released political prisoners Vladimir Kara-Murza and Julian Assange in the Council of Europe

Statements from delivered speeches by group spokespersons in debates

Andrej Hunko (Germany): "(...) I would like to warmly congratulate you, Mister Vladimir KARA-MURZA, on being here, on having been released from unlawful imprisonment a few weeks ago. (...) I would like to remind you that you spoke of the great dream of a great Europe, a pan-Europe. Mikhail GORBACHEV was here in June 1989; he formulated the idea of a common European home. Regardless of how we get there, I believe we must not lose sight of this perspective." ([full text](#))

George Loucaides (Cyprus): "As the only international financial institution with an exclusively social mandate, the CEB has a major role to play in social development. As such, the Bank is an instrument of European solidarity for the most vulnerable segments of the population. Let us not forget that one in five Europeans remains at risk of poverty or social exclusion, therefore the Bank's role remains crucial and should be further strengthened. We welcome the Bank's alignment with the strategic vision of the Council of Europe, as expressed during the Reykjavík Summit last year. It is equally imperative to continue mainstreaming the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into the CEB's work. Environmental issues and climate action in particular should remain at the forefront of the Bank's priorities, especially in view of the adoption of the right to a healthy and sustainable environment and the elaboration of a new Convention on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law." ([full text](#))

George Loucaides (Cyprus): "States, including Council of Europe member states that we represent, are becoming much more adept at using propaganda techniques against their own population to undermine free and fair elections, state accountability or public scrutiny. This is, of course, done mainly to avoid confronting state-sanctioned criminal behaviours and to use social, racial and economic divisions in order to gain political mileage. It is crucial, of course, that member states do not respond to these different types of propaganda with censorship or the application of restrictive measures which would amount to undermining the very freedoms we seek to protect. Public trust in electoral politics is at an unprecedented low because of the use of both propaganda and censorship techniques: the two sides of the same coin. (...) Terms like "fake news", dear colleagues, "misinformation" and "disinformation" are increasingly rightly perceived by the public as labels to silence political dissent and to close avenues for public debate that we all

Progress report

Andrej Hunko (Germany): "We always call this debate a "progress report" on Mondays. Unfortunately, it is not the case at the moment that we can talk about progress in terms of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. (...) One point that has already been mentioned, thanks to our Danish colleague, 76 Members of Parliament have been placed on a sanctions list in Azerbaijan because of their voting behaviour. There have been personae non gratae before, but I think this is the first time in history that voting behavior is the basis for who is to be sanctioned and who is not. I think that is unacceptable. It will also be important now - we also discussed this in Lisbon in the Social Affairs Committee - because the COP in Azerbaijan is coming up, and I do not think that we should now take this list into account, so to speak, and then send those colleagues who have not been sanctioned. I believe that was also the opinion of the Social Affairs Committee.

We have two elections ahead of us, both of which are highly geopolitical. That is in Moldova, including the referendum, and in Georgia. I was also part of the pre-election observation mission in Georgia. I look at this election with great concern because it is an extremely polarised situation, both sides basically say in response to my questions that they would not recognise an election of the other side if it came to that. This is, of course, a very difficult situation and requires us to maintain the highest degree of neutrality and impartiality. We are not there to support or not support one side in this conflict. (...)

agree are essential for the functioning of a healthy democracy. This does not concern only authoritarian states or states at war, but applies to all states, including the so-called "mature democracies". [\(full text\)](#)

Andrej Hunko (Germany): "At the beginning of your speech, you emphasised the importance of the Court of Justice. As you know, we have the problem that judgments, Osman KAVALA's and Selahattin DEMIRTAŞ's, are not being implemented in Türkiye. We now also have the problem of a lack of coherence when it comes to Azerbaijan. Coherence between Parliament and the Committee of Ministers." [\(full text\)](#)

Paul Gavan (Ireland): "The first thing I want to say is that people fleeing conflict are dying, especially in the Mediterranean, en route to Europe due to a lack of safe pathways. The fact that reports like these need to be written is proof positive of our collective failure to protect desperate and vulnerable human beings trying to make their way to Europe. This failure is compounded by the fact that many of these desperate people are fleeing wars and the aftermath of wars created by western countries. (...) 2023 was the deadliest year on record for migrants, and the International Organization for Migration has estimated that more than 1 000 human beings have died or been reported missing in the central Mediterranean Sea since the start of 2024. (...) On a recent fact-finding trip to Lampedusa for the Committee on Migration, Refugees and Displaced Persons, I heard first-hand testimony from children. Boys who've suffered horrendous torture and abuse at the hands of the Libyan authorities, the weaponisation of migration, the cruel plans for an EU migration pact that will only lead to detention centres across our borders. We must and can do much better" [\(full text\)](#)

Paul Gavan (Ireland): "On behalf of the United European Left, I wish to state our huge concern at the continuing path of the authoritarian Azerbaijan regime towards ever greater levels of oppression towards its own citizens, as well as its appalling treatment of the former citizens of Nagorno-Karabakh and its bellicose and threatening behaviour towards its neighbouring country Armenia. (...) I believe it is time to initiate a complementary joint procedure between the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly in relation to the many serious violations by Azerbaijan of its statutory obligations to this organisation." [\(full text\)](#)

George Loucaides (Cyprus): "As the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, we rightly condemned Hamas's brutal attack that led to the murder of innocent civilians on 7 October and demanded the immediate release of hostages. It is disheartening that, on the contrary, we have not to date demonstrated resolve and sensitivity towards the genocide in Gaza unfolding daily before our eyes. In fact, the only resolution of this Assembly demanding an immediate ceasefire was adopted on the condition that Hamas be completely dismantled, thereby in effect calling for Israel to continue the war indefinitely. (...) By the same token, during this session, most of the political groups and the Bureau did not want to hold a debate under urgent procedure on the humanitarian situation in Gaza, nor adopt a new resolution, the content of which could potentially be unsettling. (...) The way this Assembly has dealt with Gaza constitutes, unfortunately, a dark page in the history, in its history, impacting the credibility of this Organisation designed to protect and safeguard human rights. (...) " [\(full text\)](#)



Emmanuel Fernandes (France): "On 16.09.2022, the death of Jina Mahsa Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish Iranian woman, at the hands of the morality police for wearing a headscarf improperly, triggered an unprecedented wave of

Reports under preparation by UEL Members

(as/pol): Shaping the Parliamentary Assembly's relations with the United Nations Human Rights Council, George Loucaides (Cyprus)

(as/ega): Violent pornography, Laura Castel (Spain)

(as/mon): The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by Sweden, Anne Stambach-Terrenoir (France)

(as/mon): The honouring of membership obligations to the Council of Europe by Greece, Laura Castel (Spain)

Questions by UEL Members

Laura Castel (Spain) asked a question to **Mr Gabrielius LANDSBERGIS, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania and President of the Committee of Ministers**, about the designation by the Ministry of Interior of Lithuania of thousands of Belarusian and Russian citizens as a threat to national security based on their views on the Russian aggression.

Answer

Berdan Öztürk (Türkiye) asked a question to **Mr Timcho MUCUNSKI, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of the Republic of North Macedonia** about the role of North Macedonia in maintaining stability in the region.

Answer



protests in Iran. This heinous femicide is the symbol of a powerful revolutionary movement to which the regime has responded and continues to respond with unprecedented brutality and violence, which my group strongly denounces. The slogan "Woman, Life, Freedom" contains within itself the ardent aspiration, particularly of young people, for profound transformations in Iranian society to achieve the ideal of a social democracy respectful of equal rights for women, sexual and gender minorities, ethnic and religious minorities. (...) ([full text](#))

Andrej Hunko (Germany): "I have often said in this Assembly that the case of Mr Julian ASSANGE is the most important case of a political prisoner today. Why is that so? Because the implications of the Julian Assange case are so far reaching. If it is possible for a powerful state to arrest journalists worldwide on the basis of its own law if they make its war crimes public, then we have a problem – a fundamental problem for the future too. And if, at the same time, the laws of this state, i.e. the protection of freedom of expression, no longer apply to European, Australian or other journalists, for example. This has an incredibly far-reaching effect on the future of journalism, on the future of freedom of expression. That is also the reason why we have not only called for the immediate release of Julian ASSANGE three times in this Assembly since January 2020, but also why there has been a worldwide movement for his release that I cannot compare with any other case in recent years or decades. (...) ([full text](#))"



Andrej Hunko (Germany): "Let me remind you that immunity was fought for by parliaments in the 19th century, so to speak, because the monarchist executive, which was often still in place at the time, often abused the system and arrested MPs before votes or made it impossible for a parliament to function if MPs could not speak freely. This requires a certain degree of protection, and that is parliamentary immunity. It is not absolute. And that's a good thing, because of course you can't hide behind this immunity when it comes to other things. (...) ([full text](#))"

Anne Stambach-Terrenoir (France): "Peace is a founding principle of the Council of Europe. (...) The conflict in Ukraine has shattered thousands of lives, torn families apart and caused many people to disappear. Not only have many soldiers, both Ukrainian and Russian, lost their lives, but thousands have also been captured and held in detention. Behind these soldiers are families living in complete anguish. Civilians, too, are under direct attack: men, women, children, and the elderly are killed, forcibly displaced, imprisoned or disappeared. (...) In this logic of perpetual search for peace and respect for international law, my group stands firmly by all the direct and indirect victims of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, reaffirms that their dignity as human beings must be respected, and calls for the release and return of all prisoners. ([full text](#))"

Paul Gavan (Ireland): "(...) It's important to note that Bosnia and Herzegovina has benefited from the co-operation programs of the Council of Europe since 2003. Successive action plans have been implemented covering the periods 2015-17, 2018-21, and an action plan for the period 2022-25 has been adopted. (...) Despite this, a number of important concerns are outlined in the [report](#). Of particular concern is the fact that the 2022 elections were held under a framework which is in violation of the ECHR. The Committee of Ministers has adopted

Exchange of views with invited guests

The group held a round table on « implications of the Assange case: Human rights, whistleblowing, rule of law and journalism »

With the following speakers:

Craig Murray, former British diplomat and ambassador to Uzbekistan;

Stella Assange, lawyer;

Dominique Pradalié, President of the International Federation of journalists;

Stefania Maurizi, investigative journalist;

Deepa Driver, UEL legal observer in the case of Julian Assange



The group also held an exchange of views with Ms Victoria Sanduța, president of the "Voice of Justice" Judges Association



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five interim resolutions in regard to this issue, calling for the immediate relaunching of electoral reform work, while pursuing all consultations necessary aimed at eliminating discrimination based on ethnic affiliation. (...) "[full text](#)"

Andreas Sjalg Unneland (Norway): "(...) The Holodomor was not merely about starvation. It was about control and subjugation, about breaking the backbone of Ukrainian nationhood. Ninety years later Ukraine faces again an attack on their nation. The illegal Russian invasion shows no respect for human lives. And we stand in solidarity with the Ukrainian people. As we commemorate the atrocity Holodomor, we must recognise that the use of hunger as a weapon is not a relic of the past; it is a reality that continues to plague our world today. (...) In Gaza, we see how control over food and essential resources has been weaponised. For years, the blockade of Gaza, which restricts the flow of goods including food and medical supplies, has created a humanitarian crisis where millions are trapped in a cycle of poverty, malnutrition, and despair. It is a situation that can only be described as collective punishment, aimed at breaking an entire population. (...) "[full text](#)"

Laura Castel (Spain): "(...) While some regions have made significant progress in recognising gender identity, others remain highly restrictive regarding sexual orientation. This highlights the ongoing struggle to challenge traditional societal norms and promote inclusivity. While progress has been made, there is still much work to be done to ensure the safety and equality of LBQ women in Europe and worldwide. It is essential to continue advocating for comprehensive legal protection, promoting education and awareness, and challenging discriminatory attitudes. (...) "[full text](#)"

Laura Castel (Spain): "(...) However, this [report](#) leaves out the elephant in the room that is the role of multinational corporations in the capture of our nutrition policy space and the human rights agenda to make them serve their interests. (...) The current food supply management and production practices are insufficient to support the projected global population of 9.9 billion by the year 2050. Moreover, experts predict that at current rates of erosion, due to the negative impacts of agrifood technologies, we will run out of farmable soil within the next 60 years. The excessive use of chemicals in agriculture is degrading our topsoil and making our food less healthy. (...) We, as legislators, need to put human rights central and resist the influence of unaccountable multinational corporations in policy making in relation to food. (...) "[full text](#)"

Anne Stambach-Terreoir (France): "(...) Extended reality and immersive technologies present major risks for the respect of human rights, such as the spread of disinformation, increased surveillance of the population by states, and a problematic concentration of power and control in the hands of economically super-powerful technology giants. Virtual reality helmets and augmented reality goggles, for example, combined with other connected objects, continue the march towards ever more invasive data collection, carried out in addition by companies that tend to prioritise profit over the protection of citizens, paving the way for unprecedented intrusions into our lives, our homes and even our thoughts, as your [report](#) shows that collected body data can enable biometric psychography that draws conclusions about our deepest desires and inclinations, which can be used for targeted advertising as well as mass surveillance. (...) On Tuesday, before our Assembly, Julian ASSANGE spoke of the way in which governments, in contexts of war - we were talking about this - misuse mass surveillance data to organise targeted mass assassinations using artificial intelligence. And we can see the terrible reality of this today in Ukraine, Gaza and Lebanon. We therefore urge this Assembly to defend the rule of law, international law and human rights, also and above all in the metaverse. The resolution must emphasise that virtual spaces are not, and never will be, lawless spaces. It is therefore urgent to place human rights standards at the center of extended reality developments, with appropriate regulation and enforcement." ([full text](#))