

Council of Europe

January 2014

Part one

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

The first 2014 session of the Council of Europe took place from 27 to 31 January in Strasbourg, France.

The President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) reported the activities of the office and the standing committee for the past year. The Assembly elected a woman as the new Chair: Ms. Anne Brasseur, from Luxembourg.

A new Danish judge has been elected to the European Court of Human Rights.

The Secretary of the Council of Europe, Thorbjorn Jagland Norwegian made a presentation.

President of the European Parliament, the German Socialist Martin Schulz, gave a speech and the Parliamentary Assembly also received a visit from Werner Faymann, Federal Chancellor of Austria.

The parliamentary debate focused on the following points:

- Syrian refugees: how to organize and support international aid?*
- The functioning of democracy in Ukraine*
- The fight against racism and intolerance in Europe and in the police,*
- The partnership with the Palestinian National Council,*
- Internet and politics: the impact of new information technologies and communication on democracy,*
- Migrants: making sure that they are an asset for the European host societies,*
- Intensify efforts to fight against global inequality: the European contribution to the process of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs),*
- Climate change: a framework for a global agreement in 2015,*
- Diversification of energy as a fundamental contribution to sustainable development,*
- The obligation of international organizations to be accountable for their actions in case of violations of human rights.*

The Secretary General quoted the Pope during his speech: "Here, I associate myself with the Pope who has warned against a trend where the winner takes it all and that those at the bottom of the society are lagging more and more behind. I would like to add: we have a structural problem in our political system, namely that we very seldom find those at the bottom represented in the political parties and in the state bodies and parliaments. So the mega trends in today's market economy, which the Pope speaks about, are being reinforced by the political institutions. Rather than helping to reduce inequalities."

Part 2

A Selection of Documents

The MPs tabled several documents of interest to us:

*1-Doc. 13416 31 January 2014 The issue of late term abortions
Written question No. 655 to the Committee of Ministers by Mr Ángel PINTADO, Spain, Group of the European People's Party*

*2- Doc 13364 11 December 2013 Freedom of religion and practices of religion
Resolution proposal tabled by Mr Sandro GOZI Italy*

*3- Doc. 13397 27 January 2014 A State's right to protect its religious and cultural heritage
Written question No. 650 to the Committee of Ministers by Mr Martin HENRIKSEN, Denmark*

*4- Doc. 13401 28 January 2014 Combating sexual violence against children: towards a successful conclusion of the ONE in FIVE campaign
Motion for a resolution tabled by the Committee on Social Affairs, Health and Sustainable Development*

*5- Doc. 13412 30 January 2014 Compatibility of the European Convention on Human Rights and the Cairo Declaration
Written question No. 651 to the Committee of Ministers by Mr Pieter OMTZIGT, Netherlands*

*6- Doc. 13349 31 October 2013 Violence against women in Europe
Report1 Committee on Equality and Non-Discrimination Rapporteur: Mr José MENDES BOTA, Portugal*

*7- Doc. 13414 30 January 2014 Legalization of euthanasia for children in Belgium
Written declaration No. 567*

*8- Doc. 13400 28 January 2014 The employment rights of female workers from Eastern Europe
Motion for a resolution tabled by Mr Viorel Riceard BADEA, Romania*

Part Three

COING (Conference of international NGO) Activities - WUCWO Activities

At the initiative of the Conference of INGOs, a group of NGOs active in Ukraine participated in the meetings. The COING adopted a resolution calling for a halt to violence and respect for democracy in Ukraine, elected a new board member, Ms. Anna Rurka, Polish, President of EUROCEF "European Action Committee for Children specialized in Children and Family in their life community" and passed three resolutions on human rights, religions and hate speech.

The WUCWO representative participated in meetings of the Commission "Fight against poverty", at the CINGO meeting which gathers international Christian-based NGO, the working group "Living together" of the "Committee on Education and culture " of the Plenary Assembly of NGOs and attended the "Commission on Equality and Non-Discrimination" of the PACE entitled "Combat violence against women and discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation and gender identity " in the presence of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe.

The representative met with several members of parliament and thanked them for their work for the common good and human rights: Messrs. Pieter Omtzig (Netherlands), Valeriu Ghilechi (Moldova), Ferenc Kalmar (Hungary), David Davies (UK), Luca Volontè (Italy) as well as representatives of Care for Europe (David Fieldsen) and CORE (Josephine Quintavalle) who came to present a draft declaration against euthanasia of sick children in Belgium and the possibility of approving genetically modified children in the UK.

Report by Anne Girault, WUCWO representative