



## **Weekly Media Report of developments related to the Council of Europe** 28 September - 2 October 2015

The Weekly Media Report gives an overview of recent developments in international media. Please note that the Report does not constitute a formal communication, does not represent the official position of the Delegation and does not commit the European Union in any way.

Ce rapport donne un aperçu des développements récents dans les médias internationaux. Ce rapport n'est pas une communication formelle, ne représente pas la position officielle de la Délégation et n'engage en aucun cas l'Union Européenne.

### **PACE**

#### **[Václav Havel Human Rights Prize 2015 awarded to Ludmilla Alexeeva](#)**

*28/09 – Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*

The third Václav Havel Human Rights Prize – which honours outstanding civil society action in defence of human rights – has been awarded to veteran Russian human rights defender Ludmilla Alexeeva. The €60 000 prize was presented at a special ceremony today at the Palais de l'Europe in Strasbourg, on the opening day of the autumn plenary session of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE).

#### **[PACE Bureau decides to send observation mission for Azerbaijan elections](#)**

*28/09 – APA/Azerbaijan*

The PACE Bureau held its meeting on the first day of the autumn session on Monday. The issue of sending an observation mission for the parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan was discussed at the meeting. After long discussions, the participants – 17 of them in favor of and 10 against the decision – agreed on sending a 32-person delegation led by Jordi Xucla, a Spanish parliamentarian, to Azerbaijan. Note that, some MPs within PACE are against the sending of an observation mission to Azerbaijan. The decision is expected to be approved at the plenary meeting of the PACE session.



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### [Wojciech Sawicki re-elected PACE Secretary General](#)

*29/09 – Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), meeting in plenary session in Strasbourg, today re-elected Wojciech Sawicki to the post of Secretary General of the Assembly for a five-year term starting on 1 February 2016. Mr Sawicki currently heads the secretariat of the Assembly, having been elected its Secretary General in 2010. He joined the Council of Europe in 1996 as Director (Deputy Clerk) in charge of the General Services Department of the Parliamentary Assembly. In that capacity, he was responsible for the interparliamentary co-operation programme and for co-ordination of committees' activities.

### [PACE to observe parliamentary elections in the Kyrgyz Republic](#)

*01/10 – Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*

A 16-member delegation of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), led by Meritxell Mateu Pi (Andorra, ALDE), will be in the Kyrgyz Republic from 2 to 5 October to observe the conduct of the parliamentary elections, alongside observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the European Parliament. The delegation will meet, in particular, representatives of political parties running in the elections, the Chairperson of the Central Commission for Elections and Referenda, and representatives of civil society and the media, before observing the voting on 4 October.

## **Migration**

### [German president warns of limits to number of refugees](#)

*28/09 - Reuters*

Germany's president has warned that there are limits to how many refugees his country can absorb as it prepares for as many as 800,000 arrivals this year, showing growing concern even at the highest level over how to look after so many newcomers. "We want to help. We have a big heart. However, there is a limit to what we can do," President Joachim Gauck, a former rights activist in communist East Germany, said in a speech on Sunday evening. "Our ability to take in people is limited, although we don't know yet where those limits are," he added.



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### **[PACE urges reform of 'dysfunctional' Dublin asylum system, creation of 'European refugee' status](#)**

*29/09 – Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*

The EU's Dublin system, which determines which country is responsible for treating asylum applications, is dysfunctional and ineffective and should be urgently reformed to ensure "equitable burden sharing" among member States, according to PACE. "Recent events in Germany, Austria, Hungary and elsewhere show that the Dublin system has already collapsed and must be reformed as a matter of urgency," said the Assembly, approving a resolution based on a report by Michele Nicoletti (Italy, SOC). The parliamentarians urged the creation of a "European refugee" status, enabling beneficiaries of international protection to transfer residence and other rights between EU countries.

### **[PACE urges a 'holistic and rights-based' approach to migration through transit countries](#)**

*30/09 – Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe*

EU countries should avoid "a narrow emphasis on border control and security" in dealing with the migration crisis, and instead embrace a "holistic, rights-based and effective" approach involving countries of transit and origin, PACE has urged. Approving a resolution based on a report by Tineke Strik (Netherlands, SOC), the Assembly said the EU's existing policy of "externalisation" of border control left migrants and refugees at risk of exploitation, abuse and violence.

### **[Rising racism worries Council of Europe](#)**

*01/10 – The Local (DE)*

Europe's top human rights watchdog on Thursday voiced concern at mounting racism in Germany, citing a wave of far-right, anti-Islam demonstrations at odds with the more recent image of a country ready to open its doors to hundreds of thousands of refugees. "There have been worrying developments as regards public manifestations of racism and xenophobia," the Council of Europe's committee on national minorities said in a statement. "Manifestations of anti-Semitism and anti-Muslim and anti-immigrant sentiments are... reported to be rising, as well as attacks against asylum seekers," the report said.



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## Ukraine

### [Ukraine, rebels agree to broaden weapons withdrawal](#)

*29/09 – Reuters*

Ukraine and pro-Russian separatists have agreed to extend a pull-back of weapons in east Ukraine to include tanks and smaller weapons systems, the OSCE's representative at peace talks, Martin Sajdik, said on Tuesday. The deal was agreed during further talks in Minsk, Belarus, on the ceasefire, whose implementation has faced regular setbacks due to accusations from both sides of violations. "It concerns the withdrawal of tanks, mortars and artillery of less than 100 mm calibre to a distance of 15 km (9.3 miles). The first phase will start in two days," said Sajdik, from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

## Syria

### [Syria conflict: Russia wants 'co-ordination' against IS](#)

*28/09 – BBC News*

Russian President Vladimir Putin has called for a regional "co-ordinating structure" against jihadist militant group Islamic State (IS). Mr Putin reiterated his support for Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who Western countries and the Syrian opposition have said must go. The crisis is expected to be high on the agenda at the UN in New York. Mr Putin will hold rare talks with US President Barack Obama to discuss the issue later on Monday. Relations between Russia and the West have been strained over Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula last year and support for separatist rebels.

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