

Press Release

Parliamentary Assembly – Communication Unit

Ref: 276a09

Tel. +33 (0)3 88 41 31 93

Fax +33 (0)3 90 21 41 34

Internet: <http://assembly.coe.int>

e-mail: pace.com@coe.int



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PACE monitoring of Russia: 'measurable progress' but less than expected in key areas, say co-rapporteurs

Strasbourg, 31.03.2009 – Russia has made “measurable progress” in several areas in fulfilling its obligations to the Council of Europe, but this is “less important than we had hoped for and expected after a nearly five-year period”, especially on some key commitments, according to a new assessment by the monitoring co-rapporteurs of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE).

In an information note made public during a two-day meeting of the Assembly's Monitoring Committee in Valencia (30-31 March), Luc van den Brande (Belgium EPP/CD) and Theodoros Pangalos (Greece, SOC) said the current state of the monitoring procedure was “both complex and ambiguous”, a situation compounded by the consequences of the August 2008 war between Russia and Georgia.

In their 16-page report, they noted the “clear political will” of the authorities to co-operate with the Assembly and engage in open dialogue. Although there had been “measurable progress” on electoral laws, media pluralism, relations with civil society and the functioning of the judiciary and prosecutors' office, further reforms in all these areas were required. They welcomed in particular a pledge to seek the opinion of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission, its group of independent legal experts, on current electoral legislation, and said they expected this request soon.

However, the co-rapporteurs said it was “not acceptable” that Russia is the only Council of Europe member state that has not ratified Protocol No. 6 abolishing the death penalty in law, in clear contradiction with Council of Europe principles. They again urged Russia to ratify Protocol No. 14, streamlining the work of the Strasbourg Court, and to stop being “the odd ones out”.

On external relations, they said Russia and its neighbours should respect each others' interest for peace and security, but warned against the use of the “near abroad” concept. They expressed concern that energy had been used as a political tool in the recent gas dispute between Russia and Ukraine, but also welcomed Russia's efforts to help settle the Transnistrian conflict.

In conclusion, the co-rapporteurs stressed that the commitments made by Russia when it joined the Council of Europe, and its obligations as a member state, were “non-negotiable and have to be fulfilled in their entirety”.

Eleven of the Council of Europe's 47 member states are currently subject to PACE's monitoring procedure,¹ which involves regular dialogue with a country's authorities and periodic assessments by the Assembly.

[Full text of the information note](#) (PDF)

¹. Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Monaco, Montenegro, Russia, Serbia, Ukraine.