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Newsletter

Issue 3/2020



OCTOBER 2020 PLENARY

Page 2

8-9 October 2020 - Due to the worsening sanitary conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ceremony devoted to the 30th anniversary of the Venice Commission has been postponed to a later date. The 124th Plenary Session therefore took place exclusively on-line.

The Commission adopted the draft opinions on current constitutional reforms in Iceland and Malta, on functioning of the judiciary in Georgia and Ukraine, on bar associations in Turkey, on freedom of assembly in Kosovo and freedom of religion in Uzbekistan.

RECENT EVENTS

Page 3

Brief description of some recent events in the following fields of action:

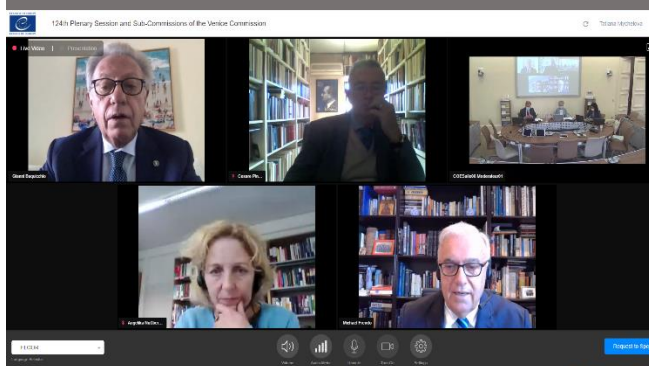
- constitutional assistance;
- elections, referendums and political parties;
- constitutional justice;
- neighbourhood policies.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Page 4

What is the Venice Commission up to these days ?

Information on the forthcoming opinions, studies and events



124th PLENARY SESSION OF THE VENICE COMMISSION - MAIN DECISIONS

Strasbourg/ Paris, 8-9 October 2020 - Due to the worsening sanitary conditions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, the ceremony devoted to the 30th anniversary of the Venice Commission has been postponed to a later date. The 124th Plenary Session therefore took place on-line, managed from the Council of Europe office in Paris.

The Commission adopted the draft opinions on:

- current constitutional reforms in [Iceland](#) and [Malta](#),
- functioning of the judiciary in [Georgia](#) and [Ukraine](#),
- bar associations in [Turkey](#),
- freedom of assembly in [Kosovo](#) and freedom of religion in [Uzbekistan](#).

In addition, the Commission adopted the draft Reports on:

- [criminal liability for peaceful calls for radical constitutional change](#),
- [measures taken in the EU member States as a result of the Covid-19 crisis](#) (interim report),
- [election dispute resolution](#).

The [revised Guidelines on Referendums](#) and the [Report on electoral law and electoral administration in Europe](#) were also on the agenda.

The Commission equally endorsed three urgent joint opinions issued between the June and October plenary sessions by the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR on:

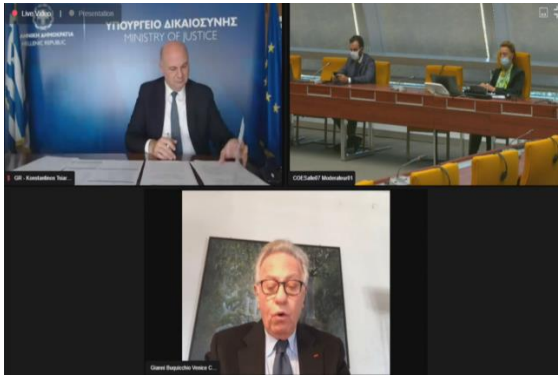
- [the draft Law no. 263 amending the Electoral Code, the Contravention Code and the Code of Audiovisual Media Services](#) of the **Republic of Moldova**;
- [the draft law on elections of members of parliament and councillors](#) of **Montenegro**;
- [the draft Law 3612 of Ukraine on democracy through all-Ukraine referendum](#).

The Commission asked its President to issue a [public statement](#) on its behalf in support of the continuity of the Institution of the Human Rights Commissioner of Poland, based on the “Venice Principles” on the Protection and Promotion of the Ombudsman institution.

[All the decisions of the October 2020 plenary](#)

RECENT EVENTS

Constitutional assistance



Council of Europe Conference of Ministers of Justice - 09/11/2020

The President of the Venice Commission participated in the online Conference of Ministers of Justice of the member States of the Council of Europe on the following topic: "Independence of Justice and the Rule of Law". The Conference was organised by the Greek Chairmanship of the Council of Europe.

[Learn more here](#)

Elections, referendums and political parties



"Electoral law and electoral administration in Europe - Recurrent challenges and best practices" - [17th European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies](#) - 12-13/11/2020

The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe held the 17th EMBs online, operating from the headquarters of the Council of Europe. Representatives of the EMBs of Venice Commission member States, i.e. Europe and the Americas among other parts of the world, participated in the event, exceptionally open to public.

Constitutional justice



Association of the Asian Constitutional Courts – Conference - 23- 25/09/2020

The Venice Commission participated in a video Conference of the Association of the Asian Constitutional Courts (AACC) "Freedom of expression: experience of the AACC members", organised by the Secretariat for Research and Development established by the AACC.

[Website of the AACC SRDC](#)

Neighbourhood policy



TOWARDS A USER-ORIENTED ADMINISTRATION - 11th UniDem Med – webinar - 13-15/10/2020

The Venice Commission organised the 11th UniDem Med Regional Seminar in co-operation with the Ministry of the Economy, Finances and Public Administration Reform of the Kingdom of Morocco. It brought together around 60 senior international experts and public officials from six Southern Mediterranean partner countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon -Morocco, Palestine* and Tunisia) with the aim to exchange best practices. [Learn more here](#)

Work in progress

The workload of the Commission has increased in the past months. More and more urgent opinions are issued in between the sessions.

- [Opinions in the pipeline](#)
- [Forthcoming events](#)



“Venice Commission - Thirty-year quest for democracy through law” – jubilee volume

At its 124th Plenary Session in October 2020 and following the adoption of its 1000th opinion, the Venice Commission presented its jubilee volume “Thirty-year quest for democracy through law”. Some sixty authors – members and former members of the Commission, as well as experts – present in depth various aspects of the work of the Commission, covering the Commission’s wide field of expertise.

[More information on the volume](#)



VENICE COMMISSION
 THIRTY-YEAR QUEST
 FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
 1990 – 2020

Recent urgent opinions

- **Republic of Moldova** – Urgent joint amicus curiae brief on [three legal questions concerning the mandate of members of constitutional bodies](#). The Urgent brief was prepared upon the request by the Constitutional Court of the Republic of Moldova of 09 October 2020 and published on 16 November 2020.
- **Bulgaria** - Urgent interim opinion on [the draft new Constitution of Bulgaria](#) prepared upon the request of the President of the National Assembly of Bulgaria of 18 September 2020 and issued on 23 November 2020. The opinion focused on the reform of the judiciary and the prosecution service where the most important amendments were proposed.
- **Kyrgyzstan** - Urgent joint amicus curiae brief on [the postponement of the parliamentary elections motivated by a constitutional reform](#). The Urgent brief was prepared upon the request by the Constitutional Chamber of the Supreme Court of Kyrgyzstan of 4 November 2020, where the Constitutional Chamber put four questions to the Venice Commission, and published on 18 November 2020.

[Contact us](#) if you have any questions!