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Plenary session

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MINUTES

of the meeting of 17 March 2015, 3 p.m. – 7.15 p.m.,
and 18 March 2015, 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Yerevan, Armenia

The Fourth Ordinary Session of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly was opened on Tuesday 17 May 2015 at 3 p.m. by the President of the National Assembly of the Republic of Armenia, Galust SAHAKYAN.

Mr SAHAKYAN noted that Euronest had been promoting the necessary conditions for close multilateral cooperation between the European Union (EU) and its Eastern Partners. He believed it was important to preserve the spirit of cooperation and to focus on the expansion of people-to-people contact, strengthening democracy and the rule of law, the protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, shaping a tolerant society, and harmonious co-existence. He urged maximum use to be made of the Assembly.

The floor was given to the President of the Republic of Armenia, Serzh SARGSYAN.

The President welcomed all guests to Armenia and expressed his desire that the session of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly would engage in constructive discussions and would accomplish fruitful work. He believed that discussions and resolutions would contribute to deeper cooperation between the EU and partner nations in a number of areas, including infrastructure and transport cooperation, energy efficiency, and renewable sources of energy, and would promote dialogue in the cultural sphere.

Mr SARGSYAN welcomed cooperation in creating and promoting a system of pan-European values, and in engaging both parliament and civil society. He emphasised that Armenia was a country of free speech and free media, with freedom of assembly and a developed civil society. He noted that in order to further improve democratic processes in Armenia, the government had initiated constitutional reforms aimed at improving constitutional mechanisms for implementing the rule of law and safeguarding fundamental human rights and freedoms. Armenia was committed to developing cooperation with the EU, focusing on continuous improvement of democratic institutions and the judicial system, good governance,

the fight against corruption, the consolidation of civil society, further improvement of the business environment necessary for the expansion of trade and investment, the continued implementation of mobility programmes, and the expansion of sectorial cooperation. Armenia was taking steps to secure people-to-people contact and the free movement of people, and supported the dialogue on a visa-free regime with the EU. The President argued that it had been possible to combine Armenia's membership in the Eurasian Economic Union and participation in the EU comprehensive agenda.

Mr SARGSYAN stressed that this year, the Armenian nation and the whole world were jointly commemorating the victims of the Armenian Genocide of 1915 that happened in the Ottoman Empire. He highly valued the role of the European Parliament in the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. The European Parliament had been the first pan-European institution to adopt a resolution condemning the crime against Armenians and to call upon the Turkish government to recognise it. The President recalled that the Armenian Genocide was not only a national tragedy, but was also a crime against civilisation and humanity on a global scale, which demonstrated a failure to learn from history, the dangers of denying a genocide, and the long-term negative consequences of allowing this type of crime to go unpunished and unrecognised. Mr SARGSYAN appreciated the 2013 Annual Report on Human Rights and Democracy in the World adopted by the European Parliament on March 12, which included a separate paragraph addressing the Armenian Genocide centenary, and called upon all Member States to acknowledge it. He encouraged the EU institutions to further contribute to its recognition.

With regard to the resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh problem, the President mentioned that they were not going to transform this platform into a tool of propaganda or to sow interethnic hostility (as had been the case with Azerbaijan). Armenia would try to make the most of the opportunities provided by the Assembly for the benefit of peaceful coexistence and cooperation between their nations. The best proof of this was the active participation of Armenian delegations in events that had taken place in Azerbaijan, including the 2012 Ordinary Session in Baku.

Mr SARGSYAN regretted that the Azerbaijani side had avoided meeting them and had neglected the steps taken towards a constructive dialogue. He stressed that it was quite disturbing that their neighbour had demonstrated an unconstructive and "maximalist" stance in the very process of peacefully resolving the Karabakh conflict by backtracking on already-agreed points and by consistently trying to change the format of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairmanship or to launch negotiations on the treaty without agreement on basic principles. It should be obvious that the keys to the settlement of this conflict were not in Paris, Moscow or Washington, but in Baku, Stepanakert and Yerevan. Meanwhile, Azerbaijan continued to make far-fetched excuses in order to avoid a settlement based on the principles proposed by the co-chairs. The President noted that such tactics deserved an unequivocal assessment from the international community, and the European institutions in particular. He emphasised that regardless of Azerbaijan's unrealistic claims and periodic provocations at the line of contact, there was no alternative to a peaceful resolution of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. It had been the international community's position that people's rights to free expression of their will and self-determination was the only way to a comprehensive settlement of the conflict. Therefore this conflict could be comprehensively settled by means of the people of Nagorno-Karabakh freely exercising their rights. The OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs' proposal was founded on this approach.

The opening ceremony was continued by Ryszard CZARNECKI, Vice-President of the European Parliament, on behalf of the President of the European Parliament, Martin SCHULZ.

In his statement, Mr CZARNECKI stressed that the Ukrainian crisis had led to major political changes in the country: the annexation of Crimea by Russia and the armed conflict in eastern Ukraine had had strong repercussions in the neighbourhood region and had influenced the revision of the European Neighbourhood Policy. He recalled that parliamentary elections had been held in Ukraine and Moldova in 2014. He regretted that the 2012 parliamentary elections in Belarus had failed to meet international standards and expressed his hope that the Assembly would include Belarusian members in the near future (once the conditions were met). He also recalled that the new Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine had approved the new government's programme on 11 December 2014, which was a major achievement. The reforms should be implemented in accordance with the roadmap set by the Association Agreement/DCFTA.

According to Mr CZARNECKI, the key foreign and domestic policy priorities were: the reform of budget and tax codes; the reform of public services, including the police and judiciary; and opening up the Ukrainian economy, including the land market. He emphasised that successful reforms and sustainable prosperity were only possible if peace prevailed. The recently signed Minsk package of measures gave a glimpse of hope for a resolution of the conflict, although the situation was far from being back to normal. The current implementation of the ceasefire, the first exchange of prisoners, and declarations on the withdrawal of heavy weapons from the front line had provided real reasons to believe in the peaceful settlement of the conflict. He noted that if the truce was not fully respected, the EU was determined to increase pressure on Russia by imposing economic sanctions. Mr CZARNECKI claimed that Moldova's implementation of reforms and commitments was regaining momentum after its parliamentary elections and during the formation of the new government. He recalled that Moldova had completed its Visa Liberalisation Action Plan the previous year and had been granted a visa-free regime with the EU; more than 300 000 Moldovans had already benefitted from this new regime.

Mr CZARNECKI also referred to the justice sector where a number of important steps were being taken to reform it: the drafting and adoption of bills, the appointment and selection of judges, and the training of prosecutors, judges and other people involved in the legal system. Regarding basic human rights, he hoped that the Moldovan parliament would soon adopt the bill to institute a gender representation quota in the political sphere, as well as to ensure women's active participation in decision-making. He noted that Georgia had implemented most of the key recommendations set out in last year's European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) progress report. Presidential elections had been organised in line with international standards. Georgia had continued to reform its justice system and to make progress in sectorial reforms and regulatory approximation to the Union *acquis*. It was actively participating in discussions in Geneva concerning the breakaway territories and had taken measures to improve the living conditions of internally displaced persons (IDPs), with the support of the EU; it had also renewed its commitment to a genuine engagement with the breakaway regions.

Mr CZARNECKI recalled that Armenia had decided not to sign an association agreement with the EU in 2013. Armenia's decision was respected, and another institutional framework

for a dialogue within the Eastern Partnership (EaP) would have to be defined. In fact, Armenia continued to be committed to the path of reforms and had addressed some of the key recommendations included in the previous year's ENP progress report. He welcomed the adoption of the law on equal rights and opportunities for men and women, although it lacked a mechanism for complaints. He pointed out the limited developments in terms of reforms in the public administration and judiciary.

Mr CZARNECKI regretted that members of Azerbaijan's Milli Mejlis were not present and expressed hopes that the country would take its full place in the Eastern Partnership and in the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. A draft text on a new legally binding agreement based on common European values was being negotiated. Belarus was the only Eastern Partnership country that was not participating in the parliamentary dimension; however, it had been actively participating in the multilateral track of the Eastern Partnership. The EU was actively discussing modernisation issues and reforms with Belarusian civil society: negotiations on a visa liberalisation and readmission agreement were progressing well, and there was reason to hope that a visa facilitation agreement would be initialled by the 2015 EaP summit in Riga. He appreciated that Belarus had demonstrated efforts to offer a platform to peacefully resolve the Ukrainian crisis. He recalled that Belarus was going to hold a presidential election and hoped that it would be fair, with opposition representatives having a chance to participate. The EU's critical engagement policy remained valid and it was conditional on the release and rehabilitation of political prisoners, free and fair elections (in accordance with OSCE standards), the well-functioning rule of law and the respect of human rights. Mr CZARNECKI hoped that Belarus would join the Assembly one day.

The floor was given to Traian HRISTEA, head of the EU delegation to Armenia

Mr HRISTEA noted that stronger bilateral and multilateral cooperation with partners had been developed and emphasised that civil society engagement was essential. The role of parliaments could not be underestimated: governments should stay accountable and should adopt the legislation needed to underpin reforms. Euronest was well placed to promote and consolidate the role of the Civil Society Forum and the Conference of Regional and Local Authorities of the Eastern Partnership. He recalled that the development of the Eastern Partnership had remained a foreign policy priority for the EU. The commitment and determination to advance the partnership, and the reform process in particular, were of indisputable importance.

The floor was given to Heidi HAUTALA, Co-President of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly.

Ms HAUTALA started by saying that she was honoured to participate in the Fourth Ordinary Session in Armenia and thanked the President of the National Assembly, Mr SAHAKYAN, and the head of the Armenian delegation, Artak ZAKARYAN, for their sincere openness and hospitality. She regretted that their Azerbaijani colleagues had chosen not to take part in such an important session. She argued that they should make use of the possibility of energising the Eastern Partnership and of finding common issues of interest, e.g. energy security and the opportunities that the EU Energy Union also provided for the EaP countries. The partner countries should also turn towards a greener economy. She believed that Euronest would help

to solve frozen conflicts in the region. In order to enhance the accountability and implementation of reforms, civil society should be included in the process. Ms HAUTALA called for the immediate release of the imprisoned Azeri members of the EaP Civil Society Platform, Anar Mammadli, Intigam Aliyev and Rasul Jafarov, since it was not acceptable to hinder the promotion of democratic values. She highlighted the possibility of supporting countries in their chosen path by helping with the implementation of reforms.

The opening ceremony was continued by Borys TARASYUK, Co-President of the Euronest PA

Mr TARASYUK expressed his sincere sympathy to all Armenian people in connection with the victims of the Armenian Genocide. He informed those present that meetings of four standing committees, the bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly, and the meeting of the working group on Belarus had been held. He stressed that the meetings of four media committees had been constructive and hoped that all draft resolutions would be adopted.

Rihards KOLS from Latvia took the floor.

Mr KOLS stressed that cooperation should be based on democratic values, the rule of law and the respect of human rights. In his opinion, the association agreements were the most far-reaching agreements ever offered by the EU to any third country. Along with an important political component, they contained very valuable sections on trade, standards, and market and economic integration. He hoped that the EaP's architecture would be flexible in order to provide long-term incentives, since the EaP's core task was to build zones of peace and prosperity in the neighbourhood and to build relationships based on trust and security, not only between the EaP members and the EU, but in Central Asia, too. He believed that the main focus should be on increasing differentiation. Liberalisation was one of the most powerful tools for facilitating reforms and partnership. Progress in the area of mobility should be reached during the Riga summit, and multilateral cooperation should be deepened by opening up new fields such as the digital economy, the environment and civil society.

The floor was given to Emin YERITSYAN, Co-Chair of the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership (CORLEAP)

Mr YERITSYAN emphasised the very close work with all members and partners that was involved in changing the Eastern Partnership from an inter-governmental policy into a policy that involved all stakeholders. The partners were following the events in Ukraine closely and supported developments with a strong focus on decentralisation and constitutional reform. He mentioned that CORLEAP had aimed to promote the principles of local democracy, engaging more local and regional authorities and their associations in EaP policy.

The floor was given to Mikayel HOVHANNISYAN, EaP CSF Armenia Country Facilitator, speaking on behalf of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF)

Mr HOVHANNISYAN introduced some of the key priorities and expectations of the Civil Society Forum within the framework of the EaP. He noted that there was a need for the EaP countries to have clearer perspectives with regards to their further integration with the EU. Civil societies needed clearer visions of where the EaP was leading their countries (Mr HOVHANNISYAN expected the EU to help in shaping that vision). He said that civil society was ready to multiply its efforts to support more effective implementation of the Eastern Partnership, and that the CSF therefore needed more specific mechanisms and mandates for involvement. He emphasised that civil society's expertise and flexibility and mechanisms of participation and monitoring could and should be used to promote more effective democratisation of the Eastern Partnership Countries. The CSF expected the EU to be more active in addressing the issues of free and fair elections, the protection of human rights and freedoms, the consistent and effective implementation of institutional reforms and the promotion of the rule of law, which could be promoted by formulating more specific and detailed deliverables to be provided by the governments of the EaP countries. Building confidence inside the Eastern Partnership and in Europe more widely was another priority. He mentioned the example of Armenian civil society's active involvement in normalising Armenia-Azerbaijan and Armenia-Turkey relations.

Mr SAHAKYAN then invited all participants to take part in a "family photo" and a tree planting ceremony. The session was suspended and resumed at 4.45 p.m.

After a moment of silence in memory of an Armenian colleague, Vahan HOVHANNISYAN, the session continued:

1. Adoption of draft agenda (AP 101.203)

Following a proposal, the draft agenda was adopted.

2. Approval of minutes of the Third Ordinary Session, held on 28-29 May 2013 in Brussels

The draft minutes of the third session of the Euronest PA were approved.

3. Presentation of Agnieszka KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ (European Parliament) replacing Michał BONI (European Parliament) and Victor DOLIDZE (Georgia), co-rapporteurs of the Euronest PA Committee on Political Affairs, Human Rights and Democracy, of a draft resolution on "Engaging in a stronger partnership between the EU and Eastern European partner countries through the European Neighbourhood Instrument for 2014-2020"

Mr TARASYUK, Co-President of the Euronest PA asked to proceed with the reports of the four main committees of the Assembly, starting with the Political Affairs Committee. He announced that no amendments had been received. He invited the co-rapporteurs to briefly present the report of the Political Affairs Committee. The floor was given to Ms KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ.

Ms KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ recalled that the report on stronger engagement in the partnership between the EU and Eastern European partner countries through the European Neighbourhood Instrument for 2014-2020 consisted of two parts. The first part described the achievements of the Eastern Partnership in terms of new perspectives for the 2014-2020

period. The other part focused on the objectives to be achieved with the implementation of the new Eastern Neighbourhood instrument. These objectives included specific and measurable results that would bring tangible outcomes to nations and societies that had been connected with a specific working format within European partnership, with particular attention paid to democracy, the rule of law and human rights.

Ms KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ said that the new situation in the countries affected by Russia's aggression in eastern Ukraine and the illegal annexation of Crimea had led the European Parliament to condemn that act and to call upon the Russian Federation to refrain from further endangering the situation and to continue energy supplies. She emphasised that the Riga summit should strengthen the Eastern Partnership and create stronger political and economic links between the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the EU Member States. Thus new instruments should bring tangible outcomes to the affected people and should be implemented in line with the principle of accountability. There should be special programmes for those countries that had made progress in deepening democracy. She noted that the resolution highlighted the role of civil society in all processes within the EaP. The inclusion of civil society in decision-making processes was at the heart of democracy and the basis for the legitimisation of authority.

The floor was given to the Co-Chair of the Political Committee, Mr DOLIDZE.

Mr DOLIDZE noted that they had tried to incorporate all the strategically important issues into the document. He welcomed the association agreements and free trade area agreements with partnership countries. The Committee condemned Russia's direct and indirect military aggression against Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea, as well as the signature of an agreement between the Russian Federation and Abkhazia and the intention to sign an agreement with South Ossetia. Mr DOLIDZE also stressed that on 18 March, Russia was to sign an agreement with the Tskhinvali region and its *de facto* authorities. He underlined that the EU had a responsibility to defend the ambitious European perspective of partner countries. He called for the arrangement of short-term visas without delay. Before concluding, he asked members to support the report.

The debate on the report of the Political Committee was opened.

Jaromír ŠTĚTINA called for the participants to adopt a resolution condemning the Armenian Genocide of 1915. He gave examples of the killing of peoples from all over the world at different times. He claimed that in order to stop further genocide and ethnic cleansing, members should use the right words. Oleksandr KODOLA from Ukraine said they could agree on all the aspects in the Political Committee a day before. The Ukrainian delegation supported the report and hoped that it would help to settle existing conflicts. He asked others to also support the report.

Knut FLECKENSTEIN from the European Parliament delegation said that social democrats had abstained the day before, but he also noted that that could change. Then he referred to the request regarding cuts to the budget of the European Neighbourhood Policy and expressed his hope that this mistake would be rectified. The third point he addressed was involvement in

civil society processes. He called for people to be more enthusiastic about this. Finally he noted the possibility of mobilising approaches within Euronest.

Karol KARSKI from the European Parliament delegation noted that the situation on the eastern border was much more complicated than it had been ten years ago when the project was started. Five partnership countries had suffered from as-yet unsettled conflicts or from an open war (in the case of Ukraine). He stressed that the Russian Federation was involved in most of them and that Russian ambitions were the reason for the problems with partners. He believed that the EU should press Russia to withdraw its army from Ukraine, including the territory of Crimea, and to stop supporting the authorities in Ossetia and Abkhazia, which were an integral part of Georgia. He recalled that the Eastern Partnership countries counted on the EU, so Member States should not desert them.

Urmas PAET argued that European soft power had been confronted with Russian weapons. He believed that all EU Member States should ratify the association agreements with Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia. He also hoped that concrete measures concerning visa freedom and political consensus would be undertaken.

Mr DOLIDZE, the head of the Georgian delegation, recalled discussing a special document on the genocide in Armenia and gauging members' positions on this issue. In his opinion, the budget issue was one of the most important questions. He called for assistance for partner countries in strengthening their administrative capacities in order to take full advantage of the possibilities provided to them. He appreciated the words welcoming the involvement of civil society. He agreed with Mr KARSKI's comment regarding Russian aggression. He assured support from the Eastern Partners.

Referring to Belarus, Bogdan ZDROJEWSKI from the European Parliament delegation stressed that the EU should strive for visa-free movement or visa facilitation. He proposed a particular solution: specific visa arrangements for people active in the cultural sphere.

Ms KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ from the European Parliament delegation appreciated the role of civil society in Euronest's work and called for the involvement of civil society in their work. She also supported the issue of visa facilitation and cross-border movement.

4. Presentation by Alberto CIRIO (European Parliament) and Mher SHAHGELDYAN (Armenia), co-rapporteurs of the Euronest PA Committee on Economic Integration, Legal Approximation and Convergence with EU Policies, of a draft resolution on "Infrastructural cooperation between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries: road, rail and air transport joint projects"

Mr TARASYUK announced that the meeting would proceed with the report of the Economic Committee. He informed that there was only one amendment. The floor was given to the co-chairs of the Economic Committee.

Mr SHAHGELDYAN, a co-rapporteur of the Economic Committee's report, emphasised that the communication infrastructure was crucial for ensuring the development of the region and of mutual contacts and links, as well as for economic development. He reflected on some points from the report; in particular, he believed that the liberalisation of communication minimised barriers and obstacles. With regard to the security of citizens, he regretted that many people had died in the Eastern Partnership countries as a result of accidents and

believed that the EU should do its best to improve transport infrastructure, to harmonise legal frameworks with European requirements, and to minimise the number of victims on roads. The next important issue was so called "open-air" principles. He underlined that they should be fixed for all countries. He also appreciated the importance of reforms and noted that all these points in the report should not just remain on paper.

Mr CIRIO, a co-rapporteur of the Economic Committee report, underlined the need for integration between two geographic regions. He highlighted the problem of transfer: the transfer not only of goods, but also of people. He added that there was also the potential to develop tourism and noted the need for better road safety and more developed air transport.

The chairman announced that the debate on the report was open.

Ivan ŠTEFANEK from the European Parliament delegation highlighted that in five out of six Eastern Partnership countries, the EU was the most important trading partner. In comparison with other countries, particularly with Russia, the EU represented 28% of Armenia's foreign trade (with only 24% for Russia). He noted that the Eurasian Economic Union had previously been discussed in detail. Trade had fallen by 5% in 2013, and by 12% in 2014 in the Eurasian Economic Union. He suspected that was partly affected by the decrease in oil prices as well as by the reversal of custom duties. He believed that future cooperation between the EU and the Eurasian Economic Union very much depended on Russian aggression and the situation in Ukraine.

Hrant BAGRATYAN, a member of the Armenian delegation, addressed two main issues. First of all, he argued that it was not the time for Europe to mix economic and political issues, because very often political debates led to very aggressive economic blockades and sanctions. The second issue was connected to the involvement of small countries such as Armenia in the global economy. Some countries experienced problems with maintaining statistical data due to their involvement in the market of another country.

Clare MOODY underlined the importance of road safety and argued that serious action was needed in this area. She emphasised the need to support colleagues from the EaP countries.

Artsvik MINASYAN from the Armenian delegation spoke about item 12 in the report. In his opinion, the EU should make effective efforts in order to open up closed borders in the region. He recalled that for the last 25 years, Turkey and Azerbaijan had effectively implemented a closed-border policy against Armenia. This had led to the situation where Armenia did not have any sea ports or exits to the sea. The only border connecting Armenia to Europe was through Georgia. He believed that it was important for the EU to put pressure on Turkey to unconditionally open up the border. He also noted that the rate of Armenian foreign trade with the EU was actually over 35% (not 28% as had been stated). He concluded that the opening of borders would create more opportunities for Armenia.

Ivan KRULKO from the Ukrainian delegation said that the delegation supported the report and emphasised that the EU had been the main economic partner for all EaP countries. It was necessary to continue the European integration of the partnership countries. He asked attention to be paid to the next report of the committee, and in particular to the question of legal approximation of legislative systems of Eastern Partnership countries with the EU system.

5. Presentation by Mr FLECKENSTEIN (European Parliament), rapporteur of the Euronest PA Committee on Energy Security, of a draft resolution on "Challenges, potential and new engagement in cooperating on energy efficiency and renewable sources within the Eastern Partnership"

Mr TARASYUK opened the debate on the report of the Energy Security Committee. Seven amendments had been tabled. The floor was given to the rapporteur, Mr FLECKENSTEIN.

Mr FLECKENSTEIN underlined the great political priority that the European Parliament accorded to this topic. Progress should be made in developing renewable energy and energy efficiency since the current infrastructure was very old and lacked connections. Regarding renewable energy, there was still much to be done to assist consumers. The co-rapporteur called for the necessary storage capacity and flexible back-up capacity to be created so that holes in supply could be compensated. He highlighted the great potential of all partnership countries in terms of energy savings in the areas of industry and agriculture as well as housing and other sectors. He added that some proposals had been made with regard to how to ensure the necessary conditions for the sustainable energy sector, positive developments in renewable energy, and energy efficiency. Finally, he noted that the report in its draft form had been unanimously adopted with one abstention.

Mr TARASYUK opened the debate on the Energy Security Committee's draft resolution.

Eduard KUKAN from the European Parliament delegation noted that economic growth and development were closely related to energy supply. He claimed that the EU needed substantial and more secure energy supplies. The recent situation in Ukraine had demonstrated how energy could become an instrument of political pressure. Due to its high dependency on Russian supplies, the EU had started to think about energy security and energy partnership. More investments were needed to develop infrastructure, modernise the energy grid, and construct new interconnections and cross-border infrastructure. Political priority should also be given to the development of new forms of energy and energy efficiency.

Mr ZAKARYAN, the head of the Armenian delegation, said that Armenia had the potential to develop solar energy. Renewable energy should be seriously considered as an alternative source. The development of energy supply required significant investment, and Mr ZAKARYAN therefore would like to talk about different investment opportunities and available instruments, funds and foundations that might help to turn initiatives into projects. He said that the Armenian business environment was quite attractive and that there were private investors that were interested in the energy sphere. However, tariffs were not competitive enough.

Sajjad KARIM from the European Parliament delegation noted that the current situation in Ukraine, Russian aggression, and the pressure on Eastern European countries was the reason why the EU had to rethink its own energy policy by strengthening energy policy among the Member States and creating the ambitious project of Energy Union. The EU was moving towards the diversification of energy sources by creating new links and lessening the dependence on Russia as a supplier of oil and gas. He emphasised that the partners in the southern Caucasus had an important role to play in that process, both as suppliers and as transit countries. The EU had been using opportunities to enhance regional cooperation on energy issues. He added that the Anatolian natural gas pipeline, which was supposed to link the existing south Caucasus pipeline in Georgia and the Armenian-Georgian pipeline, might

become a basic framework and a potential for future developments.

Peter ERIKSSON from the European Parliament delegation believed that the decision on the Armenian Genocide should be adopted in the European Parliament in 2015 due to the 100-year anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

6. Presentation by Tatjana ŽDANOKA (European Parliament), rapporteur of the Euronest PA Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society, of a draft resolution on "Culture and intercultural dialogue in the context of the Eastern Partnership"

Mr TARASYUK welcomed the presentation and draft resolution of the Committee on Social Affairs, Education, Culture and Civil Society. The floor was given to Ms ŽDANOKA.

Ms ŽDANOKA mentioned 17 amendments to the report: some had been approved, some had not, but in the end, the report had been unanimously adopted. She recalled that Europe's main asset was its culture of charity. It could and should contribute to the development of social inclusion, innovation, democracy, human rights, education, conflict prevention and reconciliation, as well as mutual understanding and respect. Cultural diversity was one of the fundamental principles of the EU. She noted that all European languages were equal in value. This contributed to the enrichment of humanity and linguistic diversity in the EU. The EaP countries embraced not only their official languages but also co-official languages, regional languages and languages that were not officially recognised. Three hundred different national minorities and linguistic communities lived on the European continent. The EU had signed and ratified the European Convention for the Protection of National Minorities as well as the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. Ms ŽDANOKA asked countries experiencing conflict not to destroy monuments. Moreover, she underlined specific proposals regarding visa facilitation, in particular the case of cultural visas for European national artists and professionals from the cultural field. She called for the creation of a timetable for introducing a cultural visa programme in line with the existing scientific visa programme, which had been launched in 2005. She concluded that there were also recommendations providing for the implementation of "Erasmus +" and other programmes that already existed.

The chairman declared the debate on the Social Committee's draft resolution opened.

Mr ZDROJEWSKI from the European Parliament highlighted three key issues. First of all, visas for the Eastern Partnership countries. The second point was a suggestion for the European Parliament to organise a hearing on the cultural objects that were being destroyed during the current conflicts. The third point concerned paying special attention to the youngest citizens.

Tevan POGHOSYAN, a member of the Armenian delegation, mentioned the importance of the visa liberalisation programme. He recalled the secretary-general's statement from January 2012 arguing that everyone should be protected within the framework of the European Convention on Human Rights and other international instruments. He added that the EU should cooperate with civil society in territories such as Nagorno-Karabakh.

Karine ATCHEMYAN from the Armenian delegation highlighted that the delegation was particularly interested in the section on cultural dialogue. The Republic of Armenia had always been open to a cultural dialogue with all countries, even with its neighbours Turkey

and Azerbaijan, which refused to reciprocate in all formats and platforms. She mentioned that Nagorno-Karabakh was the territory with the highest concentration of Christian monuments in the world. Denying the fact that those monuments were Armenian was a mistake and should be condemned. She called on everyone to condemn cultural vandalism and added that it should not only be condemned but also punished. This would not only support Armenia but also all those who are against cultural vandalism.

Vitalii KURYLO from the Ukrainian delegation confirmed that the delegation supported the report, and in particular such issues as visa arrangements, a higher level of university education, the recognition of university diplomas in other countries, including the EU, and finally the gender policy.

7. Presentation by Mr TARASYUK, member of the Ukrainian delegation and Co-President of the Euronest PA, on behalf of the Bureau of the Euronest PA, on the draft urgent motion for resolution on the Russian military aggression against Ukraine and the urgent need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict

Ms HAUTALA, Co-President of the Euronest PA, announced that they had still two urgent resolutions. She gave the floor to the member of the Ukrainian delegation and Co-President of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly, Mr TARASYUK, to present the Ukrainian resolution.

Mr TARASYUK from the Ukrainian delegation outlined the effects of the current war with Russia: many Ukrainians killed, more than 1.5 million civilians displaced, several hundreds of people fleeing as refugees to other countries, and the destruction of infrastructure essential to the economy. He also recalled the illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea by Russia, and he regretted the violations of the Minsk agreement by Russia and Russian-backed groups. Emphasising the resolution's goal to speak the truth and to encourage Russia's withdrawal from Ukraine, he urged his colleagues to support it.

David DARCHIASHVILI from the Georgian delegation also asked the Assembly to support the resolution, presenting it as an opportunity for the Euronest PA to stand united. Although the Assembly sometimes struggled to find consensus due to clear differences in foreign policy orientations, the aggression in Ukraine represented perhaps the main security problem in Europe at the moment and action had to be taken. Left alone, the security architecture of Ukraine and the contents of the Helsinki Accords might be absolutely undermined, though international efforts might still support the country. He expressed his hope that this could be avoided.

Sandra KALNIETE from the European Parliament said that solidarity with Ukraine in its defiance against aggression was the most important issue for the existence of the Eastern Partnership. She remarked how the resistance to the aggression had facilitated democratic government and modernising reforms, consolidated Ukrainian political minority groups, and created a truly political nation. She stressed that Euronest would send a strong signal by uniting in support of the basic principles of the peaceful order in Europe. Mr KRULKO from Ukraine recalled the violations of the Minsk agreement by the Russian Federation and by terrorists. He highlighted President Putin's speech, where he had said that Russia was prepared to use nuclear weapons in connection with the situation in Crimea. Mr KRULKO believed that giving smart weapons to Ukraine would be the best way to stop Russia's aggression and restore peace in Ukraine.

Andrej PLENKOVIĆ from the European Parliament emphasised that Ukraine should receive clear political support and assistance in respect of its territorial integrity. He noted the strong condemnation of the illegal annexation of Crimea in the resolution but said that all should help Ukraine restore ownership of Donbas as well. He added that the resolution would guide political, legal and economic reforms in Ukraine, contributing to its decentralisation and its unitary status. The loss of unity in Ukraine would be the biggest victim of Putin's policy of instability and annexation.

Mr DOLIDZE, head of the Georgian delegation, said that the Ukrainian problem represented a problem for European security at large. He mentioned that aggression had started well over a year ago. He noted that the Georgian delegation fully supported the document and called on the other delegations to do so as well.

Mr FLECKENSTEIN from the European Parliament emphasised that the annexation of Crimea and the ongoing war in Ukraine was against international law. He said that the Minsk agreement was not just a question of a ceasefire, but also of the withdrawal of heavy weapons and Russian and other foreign soldiers from Ukrainian territory. He noted that for whatever side they might be fighting, these soldiers had no business in the country. He appreciated the fact that the humanitarian situation had been mentioned by the EU but underlined that very little progress had been made despite several proposals. He also stressed the immediate help required by the refugees' humanitarian situation. If the military solution was ruled out, sanctions should be heightened. He concluded by saying that it had to be in Russia's own interest to do something.

Mr ZAKARYAN, head of the Armenian delegation, recalled that the Russian Federation was a strategic partner for Armenia and that 2.5 Armenians currently lived in Russia. Ukraine was also a friendly and partner country for Armenia, where there were 500 000 Armenians. He expressed concerns about the events unfolding in Ukraine given this sensitive issue. Open dialogue was needed for a solution through negotiations, based on the UN charters of international law and, in the case of Ukraine, the Minsk agreements.

Ms MOODY from the European Parliament underlined two points that had already been made by her colleagues: practical support, and support for Ukrainian reforms.

Kazimierz UJAZDOWSKI from the European Parliament fully supported the resolution and mentioned that parliaments had more scope than governments to speak out about controversial methods. He noted that it was their obligation to do so, because they were discussing the substance and the core of European solidarity. He stressed that they were dealing with the importance of Russia in Europe, and they should be aware of that in light of the recent anniversary of the Yalta conference. He noted that the operation in Ukraine was aimed against European solidarity and he called for protest.

Mr CZARNECKI from the European Parliament said that he would support the resolution because they were not just speaking about Ukraine, but also about the interests of his and other European countries. He reminded the Assembly that when Russia attacked Georgia in 2008, at the demonstration in Tbilisi, the President of Poland, Lech Kaczyński, had said that the situation in Georgia could be repeated in Ukraine and bordering states, including Poland. He regretted to note that Mr Kaczyński was right. He underlined that the war in Ukraine was also going on in terms of language. He recalled that it was not a conflict, it was a war, and it involved Russia fighting against Ukraine.

Dumitru DIACOV from Moldova expressed solidarity with Ukraine. He hoped to see international solidarity that would lead to the resolution not only of the Ukrainian conflict but also of all other conflicts in the territory of the former Soviet Union. As he did not want to cause trouble for himself back home and because his delegation would not approve the resolution, he would abstain from the vote.

Norica NICOLAI from the European Parliament said that the resolution was about the understanding of solidarity, of respect for human beings, and of respect for dialogue. She called on her colleagues to be realistic and mentioned that she considered the Minsk agreement unsuccessful since it did not mention Crimea. She hoped that this would not lead to a temptation for more aggression. Peace and dialogue represented the best methods for resolving these conflicts. She also spoke of the necessity of re-establishing the Ukrainian authorities' control of their borders and of building trust, as reconciliation between the Ukrainian and Russian populations who lived in the Donbas area was needed. She said that this was not only a Ukrainian problem, but also an issue concerning the European Union's population, especially those living on its borders.

Georgi PIRINSKI from the European Parliament said that at that moment, the President of Belarus was seen as promoting a peaceful solution. He believed that there was only one peaceful solution to the conflict, and it should include the withdrawal of heavy weapons and the cessation of provocative acts. He underlined that only through negotiation would each European country have a true guarantee of security. He emphasised that people should be able to freely and calmly express their preferences, how they wanted to be governed, and what system they preferred. Therefore, he would not support the resolution.

8. Presentation by Mr ZAKARYAN, head of the Armenian delegation, on behalf of the Bureau of the Euronest PA, on the draft urgent motion for a resolution on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide

Ms HAUTALA gave the floor to Mr ZAKARYAN to present the next resolution.

Mr ZAKARYAN, head of the Armenian delegation, described the main goal of the resolution as being to condemn and prevent crimes against European values, human rights and crimes against humanity. He stressed that Turkey, as a successor of Ottoman Turkey, should draw a line under the first genocide of the 20th century by renouncing unsuccessful attempts to edit its own history. The Armenian Genocide centenary was not an end point; it was a renewed start of a struggle for the recognition and condemnation of old genocides and the prevention of new ones. He underlined that the Armenian Genocide, the Holocaust, the genocides of Assyrians, Greeks and other populations of Asia Minor, as well as the genocides in Rwanda, Cambodia, and Darfur, should be condemned by civilised humanity. He emphasised that the adoption of the proposed resolution would be their contribution to the recognition and condemnation of crimes of genocide. He mentioned that history had proved that solidarity was the guarantee for the victory and restoration of justice.

Ms KALNIETE from the European Parliament announced that the European Parliament would wholeheartedly support this resolution on the Armenian Genocide, as during the intervening 100 years, genocide had taken place again and again, in Cambodia, Rwanda, Srebrenica, Ukraine (Holodomor) and elsewhere.

Ihor ALEKSIEIEV said that although Ukraine and Armenia had been developing friendly

relations, the delegations' opinions on two issues were different. He regretted that the Armenian delegation was not fully voting on the declaration of Russian aggression in Ukraine and that Armenia did not support the recognition of the genocide in 1932, during which 7 million Ukrainians died.

Mr FLECKENSTEIN from the European Parliament regretted that there were no Turkish guests present. As a German, he stressed that it was not possible to have a good future without trying to confront the past. By denying history, genocide would happen again, so he suggested that his Turkish friends follow them and offered friendly support.

Mr UJAZDOWSKI said that they should adopt the resolution, as they had to respect the victims and condemn genocide. The same standard needed to be applied, as in the case of Russian and German crimes in Poland, and only if they were unanimous would such texts be adopted without cultural deals and transactions. He then called on the resolution to be approved unanimously.

Ms ŽDANOKA fully supported the resolution. She underlined that what had happened to the Armenians one hundred years ago was clearly genocide, as determined by a convention of the United Nations.

9. Adoption of the draft resolutions contained in the Committees' reports and of the draft urgent motions for resolution submitted by the Bureau ex Art. 9(2)(b) and ex Art. 9(3) of the Rules of Procedure, upon which debate is concluded

The co-chairman reminded the Assembly that they had to vote on six drafts. He recalled that the applicable rule for voting was Article 16(5), which stipulated that the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly should take its decisions with a simple majority of the members who took part in the vote. He announced that the EPP had withdrawn six out of seven amendments on the energy security report, with the exception of amendment No 4. He asked everybody to be ready to vote.

The report of the Political Committee was adopted with votes in favour, with no abstentions or votes against. The report of the Economic Committee was adopted with 47 votes in favour and 1 abstention. One amendment was adopted by 33 votes to 1 with 8 abstentions. The report of the Energy Committee was adopted by 45 votes to 1 with 3 abstentions. Amendment No 4 was adopted by 32 votes to 12 with 2 abstentions. Lastly, the report of the Social Committee was adopted by 47 votes in favour and 1 abstention.

10. Exchange of views on the European Neighbourhood Policy review (Eastern dimension) and the forthcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga

Ms HAUTALA announced that, after the adoption of the reports, an urgent draft resolution was to be adopted on Russian military aggression against Ukraine and the urgent need for a peaceful resolution of the conflict. It was put to the vote and adopted by 38 votes in favour to 9 against, with 2 abstentions.

The last resolution without amendments was the joint motion for a resolution on the centenary of the Armenian Genocide. She again asked everyone to support the resolution and opened the vote. The resolution was adopted by 33 votes in favour to 4 against, with no abstentions.

The session was adjourned at 6.30 p.m.; the working programme continued the following day.

On Wednesday, 18 March 2015, the session resumed at 9 a.m.

Ms HAUTALA gave the floor to the European commissioner, Johannes HAHN.

Johannes HAHN, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, emphasised the purpose of the ENP: to create new partnerships based on shared values, stability and prosperity. He stressed the challenges of a number of EaP countries, from the situation in Georgia to Ukraine.

The ongoing situation in the south and in Syria had halted the Middle East process, but the ENP could still support the development of the area. He mentioned that the consultation paper would form the basis for feedback from all stakeholders over the next 3-4 months.

In the various meetings between his office and foreign partners during the year, several points would be emphasised.

- Differences between partners had to be managed. Some partners, including Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, wanted closer integration with the EU. He recalled that Ukraine had taken some important steps towards reforms, and that more was needed in terms of the rule of law, corruption, public administration, economic development, energy, and constitutional reforms.
- Georgia and Moldova should focus on implementing their association agreements in the spirit of inclusiveness and consultation with relevant stakeholders. Moldova in particular needed reforms in the areas of justice and corruption, finance, the media, and public administration.
- He hoped to strengthen cooperation with Armenia and Azerbaijan. He was prepared to further support Armenia in the area of good governance, human rights, corruption, and reforming the implementation of the mobility partnership, visa facilitation and readmission agreements in force in the eastern European Union. They would continue to support civil society in Armenia. Regarding bilateral relations with Azerbaijan, he mentioned that interests and values should go hand in hand, and that he saw advantages in renewing their bilateral relations on the basis of a new comprehensive and legally binding agreement addressing trade, human rights and energy cooperation. Regarding Belarus, he appreciated its balanced stance on Ukraine and said that the European Union was ready to build on those positive steps. He hoped that Belarus could join Euronest one day.

He emphasised ENP countries' ownership in all these discussions by means of partnerships, where policies were not seen as impositions by the EU. Solid foundations could be built in this regard in essential areas such as economic development, energy, connectivity, migration, mobility, security and the fundamentals of government. In the case of Ukraine, the EU had mobilised a broad range of instruments to respond to the country's needs. For example, the EU had implemented 355 million state building contracts to support the Ukrainian government in preparing reforms. Overall, the Commission had scaled up its contribution to Ukraine to EUR 32.5 million from the EU general budget. It was also prepared to increase technical support for political processes linked with the Minsk agreement.

Mr KUKAN, rapporteur of the European Parliament on reviewing the Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, said that his report focused on the conflict in Ukraine. He recalled that the ENP had brought a qualitatively better institutional framework for EU relations with its neighbours, including economic cooperation and more robust financial support for democratisation, political stability, and prosperity. On the other hand, the ENP had been expected to deliver much more. He stressed that from the perspective of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, the EU had underestimated the political dimensions of the ENP. The crisis had showed that the policy had reached its limits in terms of technocratic governance. He said that the EU needed more differentiation, a clearer focus, and more cooperation with the partners. The countries that were seeking closer relations with the EU should be given stronger advantages by the EU, including a possible upgrade of the Eastern Partnership through expansion of the single market and the area for fundamental freedoms. The EU should invite non-association partner countries like Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus to engage more in sectorial cooperation following the model of the ENP.

Alexander MILINKEVICH, head of the "For Freedom" Movement in Belarus, a human rights and education association, said that they would like a fully-fledged Belarus delegation. They were fully committed to seeing an independent and democratic Belarus, but that independence was in danger. He said that Belarusians wanted to come back into Europe. His group was in favour of dialogue with the EU that could bring more democracy and freedom to their country. However, Europe should be sensitive and patient as the country managed its transition. The Belarusian people understood that the following year's parliamentary elections and that year's presidential elections would not be easy, and it was therefore important to avoid any provocations with its neighbours. He said that Belarusian society and opposition parties, represented there by seven organisations, were prepared to speak with a united voice, and he hoped that civil society would have a voice as well.

Mr ZAKARYAN, head of the Armenian delegation, believed that the partnership had reached a new stage, considering their not particularly rich but fairly intensive experience of the last five years. He said that each of the six countries would be able to streamline and clarify their plans, objectives and interests. He said that they would continue on the course of associations and sectorial or political cooperation. As far as values were concerned, Armenia and the EU were in almost complete agreement. He mentioned that they looked to Europe when developing democratic institutions. He stressed that Armenia, to the extent of its capacity and resources, would try to be a bridge between the newly-created Eurasian Economic Union and the EU market.

Mr PAET from the European Parliament delegation said that Ukraine was at war because of its desire to be closer to Europe. Similar factors were in play in partner countries like Georgia and Moldova. Because all Eastern Partnership countries were still highly dependent on energy and infrastructure from Russia, the EU needed to look at the bigger picture to increase the level of free decision-making in all partner countries.

Mr POGHOSYAN from the Armenian delegation said that the neighbourhood policy was founded on security issues based on European policies. He mentioned that in 2006 the policy had broadened and embraced eastern and southern policies, but security and defence were missing. He stressed that it was possible for Armenia to scant to pressures but the Armenian party in their interactions, their partner countries as well, kept raising their concerns. They

were very much in favour in both their policy. He emphasized that it was not only Armenia's fault and it was not really fair to put it all in Armenia.

Ms NICOLAI from the European Parliament delegation emphasised that each country had a different approach, which had to be respected with regard to neighbourhood policy. She said that when they had started the neighbourhood policy, the world was simple, predictable and stable. She recalled that the crisis had started in 2008 and continued today. In 2011 they had undertaken the first revision but they did not learn very much of the EU approach of naira country because the area was not stable, prosperous or secure. After the Ukrainian crises they had started the second revision. She said that EU might think patronizing and bridging, that nations stayed between 2 blocks Russia and EU. Each country had a different approach, history and culture. She believed that they could be successful with respect to these types of approach.

Mr TARASYUK, head of the Ukrainian delegation, said that the EU and the Commission were demonstrating weakness with regard to the free trade area between the EU and Ukraine and he referred to the decision to postpone implementation of the free trade area between them. The other example was the Armenian case, which was also a case of weakness of the European Parliament's policy.

Tamás MESZERICS from the European Parliament delegation emphasised that the EU should keep focusing on regional cooperation wherever possible in the areas of infrastructure, environmental protection, and climate. He also said that while countries with association agreements might need tailored approaches, some of their abilities to use EU instruments depended on their administrative capacities, which was not just a question of political will, but also of expertise. He therefore advised rethinking whether technical assistance programmes could be extended to association countries.

Naira ZOHRABYAN from the Armenian delegation agreed that the southern gas corridor would bring stability and prosperity to Azerbaijan and that democracy and human rights continued to be an issue for the EU. She regretted that the Commissioner had not mentioned anything about the situation within Azerbaijan, in particular the hundreds and thousands of activists and journalists currently incarcerated, and the refusal of the Azerbaijani authorities to uphold European values despite the EU's calls and invitations. She asked if they were concerned about these issues and the apparent aspirations of the Azerbaijani president to become a dictator.

Ms HAUTALA, Co-President of the Euronest PA, recalled that Russian involvement was apparent in some of the decisions made in Eastern Partnership countries. She added that these choices had been extremely different and in most cases had had dramatic results. In terms of trade, she said that countries could go about their business as usual, but that there was a pressing need to revise and reenergise the Eastern Partnership by enhancing the DCFTAs and potential cooperation with CIS free trade areas so that Eastern Partnership countries could be more involved. She also mentioned that the EU should not give up its sanctions against Russia regarding its aggression in Ukraine.

Mr MINASYAN from the Armenian delegation said that flexibility had a major role in the context of their cooperation. Armenian membership should not be seen as an opposing force. Furthermore, they had to recognise that a number of reforms in Armenia had direct involvement. He stressed examples of reforms in the areas of the constitution, human rights,

the rule of law, justice, and in central and local government. Noting his belief that economic sanctions never had good results, he emphasised that Armenia could become a good model of democracy, influencing other Eurasian member countries as well.

Ms ŽDANOKA from the European Parliament delegation said that the Commissioner had not gone far enough in saying that they needed differentiation in their work with EaP countries. She said that either Eastern Partnership countries needed to choose the EU through association agreements or choose the Eurasian Union. It was a mistake to say that Belarus had no alternative to the EU when being a member of Eurasian Union was also an option. She emphasised three ways to move forward: maintaining the status quo, allowing countries to remain in both unions, or encouraging a broader partnership between the EU and the Eurasian Union. Her party supported the third option.

Mr DOLIDZE, head of the Georgian delegation, had questions regarding the expectations of the visa-free regime after the Riga summit, EU perspectives on differentiation, and the preparation of European Energy Community membership for EaP countries.

Ms KALNIETE expressed her satisfaction that Belarus had been included in the neighbourhood strategy, and that dialogues existed to enlarge civil society, professional associations and youth organisations. However, the EU had to stick to its principles as well, namely ensuring the freedom and full electoral participation of political prisoners and encouraging free and fair elections. She was happy to welcome the leaders of the Belarusian opposition because they stood strong for democracy and human rights. However, this meant possible persecution by the president. Therefore, the Belarusian opposition should unite behind a single opposition candidate and present a programme to stop the decline of the economy.

Mr DARCHIASHVILI, member of the Georgian delegation, recalled that the review process was one of the fundamental processes of EU foreign policy. He said that the area of fundamental freedoms could bridge European perspectives and the neighbourhood policy. In order to succeed, help was needed in three areas: support for the implementation of visa facilitation/liberalisation; help in reducing Russian assertiveness; and finally, educating governments on the meaning of political persecution, which had been seen not only in Belarus but also Georgia.

Mr ZDROJEWSKI from the European Parliament delegation spoke about full individualisation, more flexibility, realistic perspectives, not wasting time, problems of communication, specific provision for young people, and specific expectations.

Mr SHAHGELDYAN from the Armenian delegation spoke of the real possibility of ensuring more flexibility and pragmatism in the implementation of future programmes. Regarding Azerbaijan, he said that if the approaches were general in principal, in fundamental view, that in that country truly they had to invest some principal approaches because the issue of political prisoners was quiet aggravated in that country. He also mentioned that they should focus on cooperation and reforms. In Armenia, cooperation with Europe and in the framework of EaP meant that reforms in the political system were important. That was a competitive advantage for Armenia. Electoral and justice reforms were also considered to be priorities.

Mr PIRINSKI from the European Parliament delegation said that all the concerns voiced at the meeting could only be solved by rethinking the security architecture in Europe. He

stressed that that was the central challenge for European foreign policy.

Valentinas MAZURONIS from the European Parliament delegation emphasised that the Eastern Partnership was still very young but that in its five years of existence, it had achieved much, despite Russia's imperialistic ambitions and strong political, economic and military pressure on EaP members. He said that a clear path to EU membership was a strong incentive for reforms and political transition in candidate countries. If any partner country had ambitions to join the EU and satisfied the Copenhagen criteria, that should be debated at the highest levels.

Ryszard CZARNECKI, Vice-President of the European Parliament, thanked the Commissioner for a new policy towards Belarus. He mentioned that they might not push Belarus towards Russia and that Mr Milinkevich would agree with him when he said that offering closer cooperation with regard to Lukashenko and Minsk would improve the work being done in Belarus. Referring to Armenia, he understood the difference in geopolitical situations between it and Belarus, though he highlighted a focus on a long-term perspective. He recalled suggesting very specific agreements to Armenia without any political measures attached. He emphasised that a specific economic agreement needed to be suggested in order to align Armenia with the EU. The EU was not in a position to provide a clear path to membership, but establishing a visa-free regime would send a positive signal to political elites.

Mr HAHN, European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, said that although some saw the announcement about Ukraine and Armenia as a sign of weakness in the EU, he thought the negotiations had shown strength. He stressed that compared to Russia, the EU was flexible, which was not a weakness. He recalled Armenia's refusal to sign the document at the last moment; the EU was forced to accept its decision, but was prepared to find opportunities to collaborate and to encourage Armenia to change. This was also his message to Russia. Looking into the structure of the Russian economy, it would be a good place to invest if the political structure in the country was reliable and politicians, starting with the president, had no problem to have very strong handshake quality. He believed in peaceful cooperation, but there were limits related to international obligations. The territorial sovereignty of the country was a red line, and if that was not respected then they had to react.

He noted that Russian activities over the past two years had been inspired either by a desire to restore the former empire or due to serious concerns about its security. Whatever the motivation, the perceived lack of rational motivation for Russia's actions had made it difficult to find common ground. However, politicians should dedicate themselves to a peaceful solution that respected international obligations.

Regarding the Riga summit, Mr HAHN emphasised the steps taken to improve relations with EU neighbours. Specifically, they had developed programmes, concepts, and structures such as association agreements and DCFTAs, which they had already started to implement. Capacity- and knowledge-building within administrations would be key if partner countries were willing.

In the area of energy security, they had taken steps to identify other sources of gas to reduce dependency on Russia. He said that they had a strong position in terms of goods and services, of which they exported more than EUR 300 billion, but they were running a deficit because of

their dependency on imports of oil, gas etc. He noted that the oil price had fallen and that imports amounted to about EUR 400 billion a year. That meant more than EUR 1 billion a day spent on importing oil and gas, which was the real dependency.

In Ukraine, energy waste was ten times the European average, and improvements in this area would greatly reduce the need to import gas. He asked a situation to be imagined in which Ukraine would not be forced to import gas. This was only one example, and if Europe was able to serve one percent of energy barrier they would need to import 2.7 percent less gas, which was in their joint interests.

Concerning the situation in Azerbaijan, Mr HAHN emphasised the opportunity available to individuals of all ages in Europe for self-development and stressed the need for peace and prosperity.

Lastly, he mentioned that they were open for discussions with Russia. He asked his Russian colleagues to be more reliable and to demonstrate mutual trust and confidence. He also referred to visas, by saying that they had a strong interest in supporting their partners and friends in the Eastern Neighbourhood.

11. Debate on justice: overview of the expenditure of EU financial assistance for the sector, advancement of reforms and impact of EU programmes (keynote speech by Andrea FONTANA, Head of Unit, DG NEAR C.1., European Commission)

Mr FONTANA said that justice was a political and economic value for the EU. He recalled that they had invested EUR 200 million at different stages of implementation in several programmes in Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, Ukraine and Moldova by targeting the entire cycle of justice, including effectiveness and efficiency, independent integrity, transparency, and penitentiary reform. He added that budget support was key in each of these steps. Member State expertise was also used by twinning EU administrations with those in partner countries in order to implement a comprehensive institution-building programme.

Civil society had also been consulted to support the oversight and monitoring of the justice system. In particular, they had partnered with the Council of Europe to launch a cooperation framework that used its expertise regarding standards and monitoring. This partnership identified justice as a priority for Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia in the 2014-2017 period. In Moldova, they would focus on the implementation of justice-related decisions through policy reform and border management, while in Ukraine, programmes still needed to be adopted. They had made progress in terms of efficiency standards, access, and the independence of the judiciary, but governments needed to fully embrace the reforms and show adequate political will.

Kosma ZŁOTOWSKI from the European Parliament said a focus on people was just as important as laws and regulations. Those who had cooperated with the previous regime should not have a place in the new system, nor be admitted into universities.

Mr POGHOSYAN from the Armenian delegation regretted that there was no independent judicial system in former Soviet Union countries. They should pay greater attention to education because the foundations of the legal framework were laid by specialists who were shaped by the system, independently from whether having the sociology of the judges or not. He stressed the problems of corruption in the Armenian education system, which related to

the corruption of law enforcement. However, those currently in charge of the judiciary were not able to express the political will to bring about change. He hoped that in the future this would be made a priority, suggesting more support for the research centre and reforms to the education system to create more independent judges.

Ms HAUTALA, Co-President of the Euronest PA, mentioned a growing interest in cooperating with the Council of Europe and its team of specialists and committees. However, she said that countries sometimes prevented teams from visiting penitentiary institutions, for example in Azerbaijan. They were currently seeking access to justice and the rule of law in the frozen conflict area.

Mr SHAHGELDYAN from the Armenian delegation emphasised the need to establish an independent judiciary that included independence from executives and full compliance with the rules. This was important, especially in Armenia.

Ms ZOHRABYAN from the Armenian delegation said that an independent judiciary was important for Armenia, noting the connection between severe social problems and judicial corruption. Therefore, she said that the document had to take this into account.

Mr MINASYAN from the Armenian delegation said that Nagorno-Karabakh had already joined a number of European conventions. He brought their attention to countries with transitional economies in terms of restrictions of human rights. He referred also to sanctions through the judiciary system. He mentioned that the situation was yet not the one that applied sanctions contributed to return the sanctioned persons into the society.

Mr DARCHIASHVILI from the Georgian delegation mentioned the importance of establishing European standards of judiciary management and legal frameworks to ensure independence from illegal outside pressure, such as relatives and radical groups. Currently, some of these pressures went unpunished, which should not be overlooked.

Mr DOLIDZE, head of the Georgian delegation, announced that an OSCE travel mission was on the ground in Georgia. He said that there were good reports but emphasised the need for action.

The floor was given to Mr FONTANA to answer the questions.

Mr FONTANA, Head of Unit, DG NEAR C.1. (European Commission), said that they had seen success in changing and implementing the law. A policy dialogue with countries had allowed them to identify results that governments needed to produce. Referring to the education of the judiciary, he confirmed that they had found a number of programmes where improvements could be made. He also emphasised their work with civil society to build their capacity to monitor the reforms and engage in dialogue with the government. In the case of Georgia, the special representative had worked with the government to draft an action plan in the area of human rights, and they would help the government to implement it.

12. Exchange of views and adoption of the proposals for amendment to the Rules of Procedure of the Euronest PA and the standing committees

Ms HAUTALA summarised the four elements of the proposal: rounding up numbers when calculating the columns of members present all the number of votes to attend majorities, the procedure for split vote applied in Plenary as well as in the Committees, substitute members

in the working group, for the standing Committees specifications on the two third majorities.

The first amendment concerned decision-making in the bureau. The second amendment concerned the introduction of the split vote. The third concerned the possibility of sending substitute members of the working groups. She added that there were proposals applying to the standing committees as well. The first concerned the way to calculate two-thirds majorities during votes in committees. The second concerned the split vote in the committees.

13. Presentation of a report and exchange of views on the activities of the WG on Belarus

They voted for the draft decision and then proceeded to point 13 on the agenda. Ms HAUTALA invited the Co-Chairs to take the floor.

Ms KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ from the European Parliament delegation expressed her satisfaction that the issue of Belarus had been raised and hoped to broaden the dialogue to include local and central authorities. She spoke of the need to organise a seminar not only in Brussels but also in other EU countries. During their next session, she would like to focus on analyses of the electoral system. In the working group for Belarus, they would like to intensify the dialogue between EaP countries that had similar geopolitical experiences. Their two priorities were visa liberalisation and the Bologna process.

Mr PIRINSKI from the European Parliament delegation said that they needed to promote internal dialogue in Belarus between the opposing parties and the authorities. However, he said that actions needed to be based on agreements already made.

Mr ZAKARYAN, head of the Armenian delegation, emphasised that if there was democracy and a democratic parliament in Azerbaijan, then Belarus was the motherland of democracy. He was confident that Euronest would benefit from the participation of the Belarusian parliamentary group.

Mr ZDROJEWSKI suggested that the working group should decide to travel to Minsk and to establish direct contact with Belarusian authorities.

Ms KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ from the European Parliament delegation said that officially, it was not possible to visit Minsk as the Belarusian Parliament did not recognise their working group and vice versa.

14. Adoption of work plan for the second half of 2015 and the first half of 2016

Mr TARASYUK presented the recommendations of the Bureau. The 2016 session would take place next year in Brussels, with the 2017 session taking place in Kyiv. The draft calendar of activities was approved. The Eastern Partner component decided that the next co-president would be Mr DOLIDZE, although the Ukrainian delegation had also nominated him as the co-chair of the Political Committee. Ms HAUTALA announced that the next day there would be a meeting with civil society and called for active participation. She thanked the European Parliament and Armenian delegation for its valuable participation and organisation.

The session closed at 5 p.m.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

MEMBERS OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

		Name	Country	Group
1	Ms	HAUTALA Heidi <i>Head of delegation, Co-President of the Euronest PA</i>	Finland	Greens
2	Mr	CZARNECKI Ryszard <i>Vice-President of the European Parliament</i>	Poland	ECR
3	Mr	CIRIO Alberto	Italy	EPP
4	Mr	ERIKSSON Peter	Sweden	Greens
5	Mr	FLECKENSTEIN Knut Wilhelm	Germany	S&D
6	Ms	GRAPINI Maria	Romania	S&D
7	Ms	KALNIETE Sandra	Latvia	EPP
8	Mr	KARIM Sajjad	United Kingdom	ECR
9	Mr	KARSKI Karol	Poland	ECR
10	Mr	KOVÁCS Béla	Hungary	NI
11	Ms	KOZŁOWSKA-RAJEWICZ Agnieszka	Poland	EPP
12	Mr	KUKAN Eduard <i>Committee on Foreign Affairs, Rapporteur</i>	Slovakia	EPP
13	Mr	MAZURONIS Valentinas	Lithuania	EFDD
14	Mr	MESZERICS Tamás	Hungary	Greens
15	Ms	MOODY Clare	United Kingdom	S&D
16	Ms	NICOLAI Norica	Romania	ALDE
17	Mr	PAET Urmas	Estonia	ALDE
18	Mr	PIRINSKI Georgi	Bulgaria	S&D
19	Mr	PLENKOVIĆ Andrej	Croatia	EPP
20	Mr	ŠTEFANEC Ivan	Slovakia	EPP
21	Mr	ŠTĚTINA Jaromír	Czech Republic	EPP
22	Ms	UJAZDOWSKI Kazimierz Michał	Poland	ECR
23	Ms	ŽDANOKA Tatjana	Latvia	Greens
24	Mr	ZDROJEWSKI Bogdan Andrzej	Poland	EPP

25	Mr	ZLOTOWSKI Kosma	Poland	ECR
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ABBREVIATIONS USED FOR POLITICAL GROUPS

<i>EPP</i>	<i>Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats)</i>
<i>S&D</i>	<i>Group of the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats</i>
<i>ECR</i>	<i>European Conservatives and Reformists Group</i>
<i>ALDE</i>	<i>Group of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe</i>
<i>GUE/NGL</i>	<i>Confederal Group of the European United Left - Nordic Green Left</i>
<i>Greens/EFA</i>	<i>Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance</i>
<i>EFDD</i>	<i>Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy Group</i>
<i>NI</i>	<i>Non-attached members</i>

**MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
OF THE REPUBLIC OF ARMENIA**

		Name	Political Party
1	Mr	ZAKARYAN Artak <i>Head of delegation, Vice-President of the Euronest PA</i>	"Republican" (RPA)
2	Ms	ATSHEMYAN Karine	"Republican" (RPA)
3	Mr	BAGRATYAN Hrant	"Armenian National Congress"
4	Mr	CHSHMARITIAN Karen	"Republican" (RPA)
5	Mr	ENFIAJYAN Vahe	"Prosperous Armenia"
6	Mr	MARUKYAN Edmon	NI
7	Ms	POSTANJYAN Zaruhi	"Heritage"
8	Mr	SAHAKYAN Hovhannes	"Republican" (RPA)
9	Mr	SHAHGELDYAN Mher	"Rule of Law"
10	Ms	ZOHRABYAN Naira	"Prosperous Armenia"
11	Mr	BADEYAN Manvel	"Republican" (RPA)
12	Mr	KOKOBELYAN Khachatur	NI
13	Mr	MELKUMYAN Mikayel	"Prosperous Armenia"
14	Ms	MURADYAN Ruzanna	"Republican" (RPA)
15	Mr	POGHOSYAN Tevan	"Heritage"
16	Ms	YESAYAN Margarit	"Republican" (RPA)

17	Mr	ZOURABIAN Levon	"Armenian National Congress"
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MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA

		Name	Political Party
1	Mr	DOLIDZE Victor <i>Head of delegation, Vice-President of the Euronest PA</i>	"Free Democrats"
2	Mr	AGULASHVILI Gigla	"Georgian Dream - Republicans"
3	Ms	BESELIA Eka	"Georgian Dream"
4	Mr	BUKIA Giga	"Georgian Dream - Conservatives"
5	Mr	DARCHIASHVILI David	"United National Movement"
6	Mr	JORJOLIANI Gia	"Georgian Dream"
7	Ms	MIROTADZE Ani	"Georgian Dream - National Forum"
8	Ms	TAKTAKISHVILI Chiora	"United National Movement"
9	Mr	ZHVANIA Giorgi	"Georgian Dream"

MEMBERS OF THE PARLIAMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

		Name	Political Party
1	Mr	DIACOV Dumitru	Democratic Party (PDM)

MEMBERS OF THE VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE

		Name	Political Party
1	Mr	TARASYUK Borys <i>Head of delegation, Co-President of the Euronest PA</i>	All-Ukrainian Union "Batkivshchyna"
2	Mr	ALEKSIEIEV Serhii	"Petro Poroshenko Bloc"
3	Mr	BARVINENKO Vitaliy	Group "Renaissance"
4	MR	CHEKITA Hennadii	"Petro Poroshenko Bloc"
5	Mr	KODOLA Oleksandr	"People's Front"
6	Mr	KORCHYK Vitalii	"People's Front"
7	Mr	KRULKO Ivan	All-Ukrainian Union "Batkivshchyna"
8	Mr	KURYLO Vitalii	"Petro Poroshenko Bloc"
9	Ms	VESELOVA Natalia	"Samopomich" Union

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

1	Mr	HAHN Johannes	Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
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SECRETARIAT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DG EXTERNAL POLICIES

1	Mr	STOKELJ	Ciril	Director, Directorate B - Regions
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4	Mr	KAMARIS	Philippe	Administrator, Eastern Partnership and Russia
5	Ms	RAMET	Valerie	Administrator, Eastern Partnership and Russia
6	Mr	MINAIRE	Karl	Administrator, Committee on Foreign Affairs
7	Ms	UDINA	Marta	Administrator, Committee on Foreign Affairs
8	Mr	DE MICCO	Pasquale	Administrator, Policy department
9	Ms	MRAZIKOVA	Tatiana	Administrator, Committee on International Trade
10	Ms	CARPELAN	Caroline	Senior Assistant, Eastern Partnership and Russia
11	Ms	FOGARASI	Maria- Szidonia	Assistant, Eastern Partnership and Russia
12	Ms	TURANOVA	Beata	Assistant, Eastern Partnership and Russia
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16	Ms	CHAO	Viviane	Assistant, Eastern

				Partnership and Russia
17	Ms	MOROIANU	Simona	Assistant, Finances Unit, Events Organisation
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**SECRETARIAT OF THE PARLIAMENT
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1	Mr	BIYAGOV	Victor	Secretariat of the Delegation, Department of Foreign Relations
2	Ms	SHIMSIHRYAN	Karine	Department of Foreign Relations
3	Ms	MKRTCHYAN	Narine	Committee on Foreign Relations
4	Ms	GYOZALYAN	Lilit	Committee on Foreign Relations
5	Mr	KARAPETYAN	Hovhannes	Protocol Department
6	Ms	MESROPYAN	Hermine	Committee on European Integration
7	Mr	TER-BAGHDASARYAN	Vaghinak	Protocol Department

SECRETARIAT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF GEORGIA

1	Mr	SKHIERELI	Mikheil	Head of the Staff Office, Committee on European Integration
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**SECRETARIAT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF
THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

1	Mr	BURDELNII	Eugeniu	Secretary of Delegation, Head of Inter-Parliamentary Relations Unit
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**SECRETARIAT OF THE DELEGATION OF
THE VERKHOVNA RADA OF UKRAINE**

1	Mr	BAGRINETS	Andrii	Secretariat of the Ukrainian Delegation, Inter-Parliamentary Liason Office
2	Mr	FERENS	Bogdan	Secretariat of the Ukrainian Delegation, Inter-Parliamentary Liason Office
3	Ms	PAVLENKO	Yulia	Secretariat of the Ukrainian Delegation, Inter-Parliamentary Liason Office

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2	Ms	DIAZ CONDE	Olivia	Usher
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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DG INTERPRETATION AND CONFERENCES

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1	Mr	HOBBS	James
2	Ms	LIPPA	Catherine
3	Mr	MCILROY	David Andrew
4	Mr	WOODMAN	Nicholas
RU booth:			
1	Ms	MALYCHINA <i>(team leader)</i>	Natalija
2	Mr	BOURTSEV	Andrei
3	Mr	BURDENKOV	Vladimir
4	Mr	FOKIN	Alexei
5	Ms	IGNATOVA	Evgenia
6	Mr	KASJANOV	Alexander
7	Mr	KORZH	Konstantin
8	Mr	LENYASHIN	Nicholas
9	Mr	SHKALIKOV	Grigory
10	Ms	SHUTOVA	Ekaterina
11	Ms	WHEATCROFT	Anna
12	Mr	YAKOVLEV	Sergei
PL booth:			
1	Ms	DURLAK- MOSKAL	Agnieszka
2	Ms	GONTAR	Beata
3	Ms	POREBSKA	Agnieszka
4	Mr	SKRZYPCZAK	Wojciech
5	Mr	WNUK	Przemyslaw
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3	Mr	GOLANSKI	Robert	EPP
4	Mr	HANNIBAL	Marek	EPP
5	Mr	TROMBETTA	Rino	EPP
6	Mr	GRECO	Vincenzo	S&D
7	Mr	KUHNE	Ralf	S&D
8	Mr	SEMRAU	Jakub	S&D
9	Mr	DANECKI	Wojciech	ECR
10	Mr	HAZLEWOOD	Richard	ECR
11	Mr	SMITH	Cameron	ECR
12	Ms	BALOGH	Orsolya	ALDE
13	Mr	BERGAMASCHI	Paolo	GREENS/EFA
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2	Mr	MARTINS	Adriano	Deputy Head of Division Eastern Partnership
3	Mr	RAB	Razvan Stefan	European External Action Service
4	Ms	LAPINA	Ieva	European External Action Service

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

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2	Mr	FONTANA	Andrea Matteo	Head of Unit, DG NEAR, Neighbourhood East
3	Ms	HUBER	Annemarie	Adviser, Cabinet of Commissioner Hahn
4	Ms	JAHNS	Hanna	Adviser, Cabinet of Commissioner Hahn
5	Mr	STROHAL	Severin	DG NEAR, Unit C, Neighbourhood East

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

1	Mr	YERITSYAN	Emin	Co-Chairman of the Conference of the Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership
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OBSERVERS FROM PARLIAMENTS OF THE EU TROIKA

PARLIAMENT OF LATVIA

1	Mr	KOLS	Rihards	Vice-Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee
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SECRETARIAT OF THE PARLIAMENT OF LATVIA

1	Mr	JEFIMOVŠ	Arthurs	Foreign Affairs Committee
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CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM OBSERVERS

		Last Name	First Name	Country	Organisation
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2	Mr	BOBINSKI	Krzysztof	Poland	Co-chair of EaP CSF Steering Committee and Coordinator of Working Group 1 Council
3	Mr	HOVHANNISYAN	Mikayel	Armenia	Coordinator of the Armenian National Platform
4	Mr	KUPRII	Volodymyr	Ukraine	Coordinator of Working Group 1 Council
5	Ms	KUPRASHVILI	Natia	Georgia	Georgian Association of Regional Broadcasters

6	Mr	KUZNETSOV	Petr	Belarus	Gomel Democratic Forum
7	Mr	MANOLE	Ion	Moldova	Association PromoLex
8	Ms	PUTKARADZE	Irina	Georgia	Public Advocacy
9	Ms	SUSHKO	Iryna	Ukraine	Civic initiative Europe without Barriers
10	Ms	ZALYAN	Ofelya	Armenia	Vanadzor Office of Helsinki Civil Assembly

BELARUSIAN OPPOSITION LEADERS

1	Mr	KALYAKIN	Sergey	Belarusian Left Party "Fair World"
2	Mr	LIABEDZKA	Anatol	United Civic Party (UCP)
3	Mr	MILINKEVICH	Alexander	"For Freedom" Movement
4	Mr	NYAKLYAEU	Uladzimir	Tell the Truth
5	Mr	RYMASHEUSKY	Vital	Belarusian Christian Democracy
6	Mr	KASTUSIOU	Ryhor	Belarusian People's Front (BNF)
7	Ms	VESHTARD	Iryna	Social Democratic Party (Hramada)