



SEMINAR ON ACCESS TO HISTORIC DOCUMENTS

organised by

PACE Interparliamentary Cooperation and Project Support Division, in cooperation with the Parliament of Albania and consultation with the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Date and time: 31 March 2023 from 9h.00-16h.30

Venue: Parliament of Albania, Bulevardi "Dëshmorët e Kombit", Tirana, Albania

Background

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) has continuously underlined the importance of transparency of public authorities in a pluralistic, democratic society, as well as the right of public access to official documents and the need to reach a balance between national security and access to such information. On 5 May 2022 the PACE Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights tabled a [motion](#) for a resolution on "The right to freedom of information: ensuring access to historical documents". The motion was referred to the As/Jur Committee and work is underway to prepare a report on this subject.

Furthermore, the Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents ([CETS No. 205](#)), asserts that the "*exercise of a right to access to official documents provides a source of information for the public, helps the public to form an opinion on the state of society and on public authorities, and fosters the integrity, efficiency, effectiveness and accountability of public authorities, so helping affirm their legitimacy*".

In view of the PACE work to prepare the report and on-going work in the Parliament of Albania towards declassifying communist-era security files, at the request of the parliament of Albania, the PACE Interparliamentary Cooperation and Project Support Division, in close cooperation and consultation with the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Parliament of Albania, is organizing the seminar on "Access to historical documents" which will take place on 31 March, in Tirana, Albania.

The aim of the seminar is to bring together parliamentarians and experts from the Council of Europe member States, especially countries having lived with an authoritarian rule in the past, and to serve as a platform for the exchange of experience and good practice in disclosing such information. Furthermore, the seminar will provide an opportunity to discuss measures taken in putting in place clear guidelines and adequate safeguards at different levels of the information disclosure procedure, in order to avert abuses. Targeted audiences include parliamentarians as well as representative of relevant institutions and stakeholders, including civil society representatives.



Draft Programme

Thursday 30 March 2023: Arrival of participants

Friday, 31 March 2023:

8h30 – 9h00 Registration of participants

9h00 – 9h45 Opening session

Moderator: Ms Blerina Gjylameti, Member of Albanian Parliament, Chairperson of Albanian delegation to the PACE

- **Lindita Nikolla**, Speaker of Albanian Parliament
- **Mr. Taulant Balla**, Chair of the Socialist Parliamentary Group
- **Mr. Enkelejd Alibeaj**, Chair of the DP Parliamentary Group
- **Louise Barton**, Director of Human Dignity and Sustainable Development, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- **Boriss Cilevič**, Former Chairperson of the PACE Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights
- **Gentiana Sula**, Head of Albanian Authority for Access to Information on ex-Sigurimi Files

9h45-10h45 Working Session: Providing access to historic documents: challenges and lessons learnt

Moderator: Ermonela Felaj, Deputy Chairwoman of Albanian Parliament

- **Mr Zbigniew Girzyński**, Member of the Polish Parliament, historian and Professor at the Nicolaus Copernicus University in Toruń (NCU)
- **Dr. jur. Andrejs Judins**, Member of Parliament of the Latvian Republic, Chairman of the Legal Affairs Committee
- **Ms Jorida Tabaku**, member of Albanian Parliament, Chair of the European Integration Committee, substitute member of the Albanian Delegation to PACE

10h45 - 11h15 Discussion

11h15 – 11h30 Coffee Break

11h30 – 12h30 Working Session Continued

Moderator: Etilda Gjonaj, Member of Albanian Parliament, Vice-Chair of European Integration Commission

- **Mr. Niels Schwiderski**, Head the Office of the Commissioner for the Victims of the SED Dictatorship at the German Bundestag
- **Mr Eldar Zeynalov**, Human Rights Activist, Azerbaijan
- **Ms. Erinda Bllaca**, Human Rights Activist, Albania

12h30 – 13h00 Discussion



13h00 – 14h30 Lunch offered by Albanian Parliament

14h30 – 15h15 Working Session Continued

Moderator: **Klotilda Bushka**, Chair of the Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights of the Assembly of Albania

- **Ms Elvana Thaçi**, Secretary to the Council of Europe Access Info, Council of Europe Convention on Access to Official Documents (Tromsø Convention)
- **Mr Fynn Heckert**, Project Officer, Council of Europe Observatory on History Teaching in Europe

15h15-16h15 Discussion

16h15 – 16h30 Wrap-up and Conclusions by Klotilda Bushka, Chair of the Committee on Legal Affairs, Public Administration and Human Rights of the Assembly of Albania, member of the Albanian delegation to the PACE

17h00-18h00 Possible visit to the museum “House of Leaves” (winner of PACE Museum Prize 2020) or the Archives of the Albanian Authority for Access to Information on ex-Sigurimi Files

Free evening

Saturday, 1 April 2023: Departure of participants