

Activity Report

for the year 2021

50th European Presidents Conference
Vienna, June 9-11, 2022



ASSOCIATION EUROPÉENNE DES AVOCATS
EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF LAWYERS

EU law and networking for your daily work!

Dear Colleagues,
Dear Friends,

I have the pleasure to present to you the Report on the activities and governance of the European Association of Lawyers (AEA-EAL) in 2021.

It has to be mentioned that due to ongoing war on Ukraine, we undertook urgent measures this year. A dedicated group on Facebook to collect initiatives and offers of aid for Ukrainian refugees was created. Our members engaged individually in various actions towards our Ukrainian colleagues and friends; we also organized a webinar on humanitarian law and anti-war conventions with participation of Ukrainian lawyers.

Last year was the second one affected by the Covid-19 pandemic requiring us flexibility and rapid adaptations to serial lockdowns. But we were also preparing tools to adapt to the post-pandemic landscape.

For our Association it was a very special year marking 35th Anniversary of the AEA-EAL. We were not able to meet together to celebrate its birthday, therefore we organized on-line events in 2021 and met in Brussels to see each other in person in May 2022.

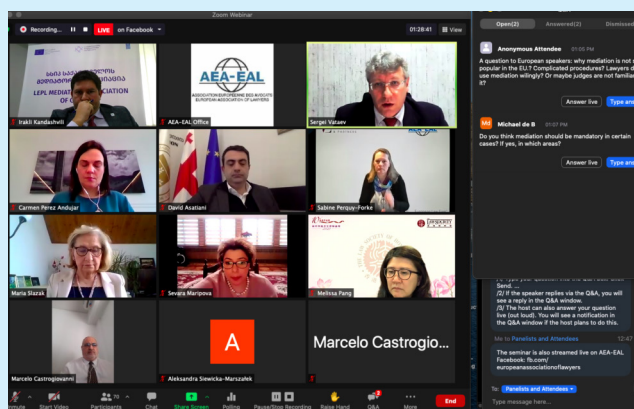
We are delighted with the opportunity to see our distinguished Colleagues, participants of the European Presidents Conference with the organizer and its *spiritus movens* Dr Rupert Wolff.

Maria Ślęzak
President



Activities (I)

- Our first event in 2021 was the webinar on “**Mediation: an effective tool for commercial and family disputes; Singapore Convention**” that took place on **January 28** that year. This successful event gathered speakers and participants from more than 15 countries. Lots of questions were raised during the event, and very positive feedback was sent after the webinar showing us how much mediation is needed in times of limited access to justice. Raising



cross-border dispute resolution cases makes Singapore Convention on Mediation a very important tool for global trade and commercial relations, it allows the parties to enforce easier terms of the settlement agreements reached in mediation between parties of various jurisdictions. We invite you to read the report from the event.

- The **Opening of the Legal Year** organized each January is a very long tradition of the **Hong Kong Law Society**. In the past, it always was a huge ceremony gathering judicial and governmental officials, representatives of the legal profession as well as distinguished guests from abroad. Due to strengthening relations between the AEA-EAL and the Hong Kong lawyers, our President is invited each year as a speaker. This year, due to the well-known circumstances of the coronavirus pandemic, the celebration had a hybrid form. On **January 11**, 2021, the main

ceremony took place with the participation of a newly appointed **Chief Justice Andrew Cheung**. On **January 12** the Presidents’ Roundtable took place with the participation of leaders of the international organization of lawyers, bar associations, and law societies. **AEA-EAL President** touched on the issue of domestic violence, which raised dramatically in every country during the lockdown and imposed restrictions. She illustrated how lawyers, law firms, and bars responded to the issue, and which introduced practices and procedures should be maintained and developed in the future as domestic violence is still a growing issue. Further work of lawyers in this field is also our input into building a sustainable society in which everybody has a right to feel safe. The intervention of our President was very well received; in their opinion, the problem is not visible enough to authorities and victims stay often alone, without any help. On **January 13** a Leadership Insights Session took place devoted to opportunities for Hong



Kong in Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and Hong Kong’s role in the Greater Bay Area. Three days of celebrations and events highlighted still the relatively strong position of judges and lawyers in Hong Kong, however, the shadow of long-lasting protests in the city and the new “security law” (giving the Beijing much stronger tools to control life in the Hong Kong

Activities (II)

Special Autonomic Region) was felt during the ceremony.

- One of the biggest legal events took place on 12.02.2021 - **European Presidents Conference**. For almost 50 years leaders of European Bars, Law Societies, and international organizations of lawyers have



been gathering in the beautiful city of Vienna to discuss crucial issues for justice and the legal profession. It is the biggest European meeting of leaders of the profession organized traditionally by the Federal Austrian Bar. The AEA-EAL President participates regularly in the Conference; in 2018 she was one of the main speakers delivering a presentation on “Self-regulation or heteronomy - lawyers’ independence in danger?”. Last year’s conference was devoted to “Rule of law and democracy – closing the gap between policy and practice” with keynote speaker **Shirin Ebadi – Nobel Peace Prize laureate (2003)**. More information about the conference can be found on www.e-p-k.at.

- On **24 March** the AEA-EAL co-organized an online **workshop organized on practical aspects of providing legal assistance in Europe**, together with the Polish National Bar of Attorneys-at-law and Regional Bar in Rzeszow. AEA-EAL speakers - **Anna Mizerka** from France and **Viktor Bobrin** from Belarus delivered information on the topic in their respective countries.

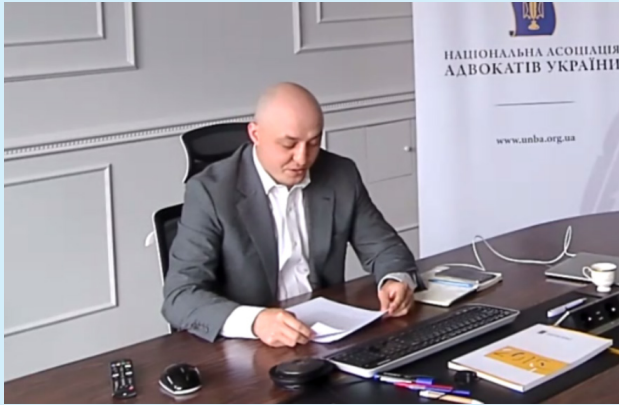
- On **April 22 – 23** the AEA-EAL President delivered a speech during the Round Table of the Chamber of Advocates of the Republic of Uzbekistan “**Prospects for the Development of the Legal Profession in the Context of Reforms of the Judicial and Legal System**”.



Our representative focused on the issue of the relevance of international cooperation for the development of the legal profession. It should be underlined that the AEA-EAL statutory task and goal is to promote international cooperation among lawyers. The Round Table took part within the framework of the **II International Legal Forum “Tashkent Law Spring”**, which was organized online by the Ministry of Justice of the **Republic of Uzbekistan**.

- An **online event on current issues of independence of lawyers** took place on **May 12, 2021**. It was a common **initiative of the European Association of Lawyers (AEA-EAL)**, the Polish National Bar of Attorneys-at-law, and the Warsaw Bar of Attorneys-at-law. During the opening speech **Włodzimierz Chróścik**, President of the Polish National Bar of Attorneys-at-law noted that independence is a core value common for all lawyers, regardless of their jurisdiction and legal culture and free lawyers are indispensable for a democratic society. Speakers participating in the conference were **Monika Całkiewicz**, Dean of the Warsaw Bar of Attorneys-at-law, **Ara Zohrabyan**, Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association, **Professor**

Activities (III)



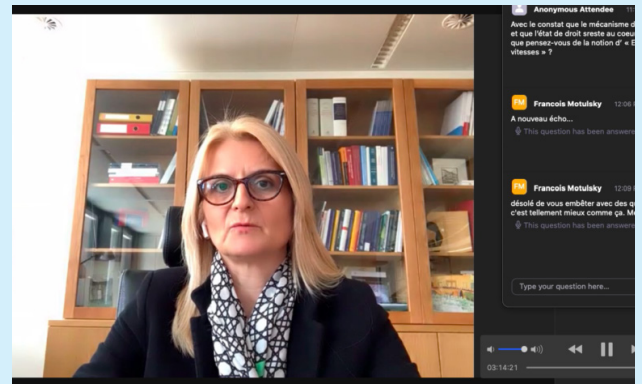
Dr. Vitalii Vlasiuk, Head of the International Law Committee of the Ukrainian National Bar Association and advisor to the Prime Minister of Ukraine

Liudmila Uliashyna, Head of the Committee Program “Law, Political Science, and Economics”, Centre for Constitutionalism and Human Rights of the European Humanity University, **David Asatiani**, President of the Georgian Bar Association and AEA-EAL Vice-President, **Ange-la Popil**, a member of the Board of the Moldova Bar Association, **Elena Avakyan**, Council Member of the Russian Federal Bar Association, **Dr. Vitalii Vlasiuk**, Head of the International Law Committee of the Ukrainian National Bar Association and advisor to the Prime Minister of Ukraine, **Dr. Mateusz Woliński** from the Warsaw Bar, **Maria Ślęzak**, AEA-EAL President, and **Michał Korwek**, Vice-President of the Polish National Bar of Attorneys-at-law.

- On **June 4**, 2021, a very interesting and live debate took place in Brussels, where



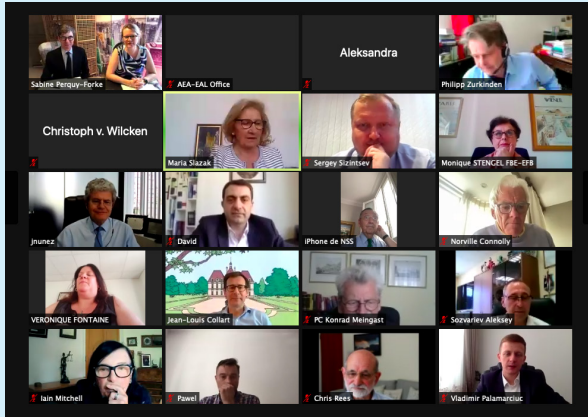
lawyers, judges, and other stakeholders met to **discuss the erosion of rule of law principle in the European Union**. The discussion followed a Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, The European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of Regions - 2020 Rule of Law Report. As the main organizer of the colloquium was the **Brussels Bar Association (French-speaking)**, one of the presentations focused on Belgium noticing relatively good situation in the country. Also, a perspective from the whole EU was discussed with strong voices that safeguards set in Article 7 of the Treaty on the European Union failed. Mainly, because the role of the Commission as “Guardian of the Treaties” is limited in the rule of law. Therefore, it is necessary to emphasize specific tasks of the Court of Justice of the European Union.



This role of the Court was presented by the Polish **judge Nina Półtorak**. Nevertheless, even the best efforts of EU courts would not be effective if the Member States do not enforce their judgments. **The AEA-EAL was a partner of the Colloquium**.

- Last year’s **AEA-EAL General Assembly** was held on **June 14**. AEA-EAL President delivered a report covering the year 2020. She also mentioned important developments that occurred in the first part of the current year.

Activities (IV)



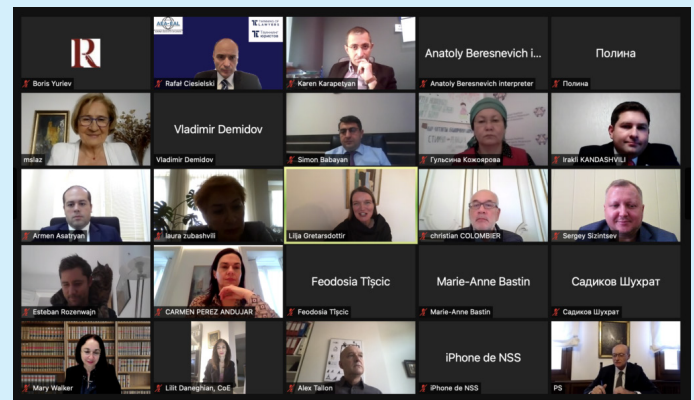
AEA-EAL Treasurer **Sabine Perquy – Forko** presented yearly accounts that were accepted unanimously by participants. Existing members of the Board of Directors were re-elected for another 3-years term of office. Also, three new Directors were elected: **Nielson Sanchez Stewart** (Spain), **Olivier d’Ursel** (Belgium), and **Vladimir Palamarciuc** (Moldova). The General Assembly decided to lower membership fees for full individual members from outside the EU/EEC.

- On **27 August 2021**, the AEA-EAL was the partner of the **VI International Forum “Mediation and Law”** in Odesa. This event was jointly organized by the Council of Europe Project “Support for judicial institutions and processes to strengthen access to justice in Ukraine”, the Ukrainian Academy of Mediation, and EU Project Pravo-Justice. A number of experts from the Council of Europe participated: **Rimantas Simaitis** (Lithuania), the head of the mediation group at the CEPEJ and the conciliator at the International Centre for Resolution of Investment Disputes, **Ramón Tena Pera**, mediator and trainer in the conflict transforma-

tion (Andorra); **Maria da Conceição Oliveira**, lawyer, mediation expert (Portugal) and **Helena Soletto Muñoz**, professor at the University of Madrid (Spain). **Irakli Kandashvili**, the Chairman of the Mediation Committee of AEA-EAL and Mediators Association of Georgia, provided the participants of the Forum with an opportunity to take part in a mediation workshop on the topic: “ **Mediator’s questioning technics as a major tool for a successful lawyer**“. Ms. **Maria Ślazak**, AEA-EAL President delivered an oral presentation in the opening discussion panel “**Mediation: Fashion Trend or Urgent Necessity?**”

Twinning of Lawyers ТВИННИНГ ЮРИСТОВ

- On **October 16, 2021**, a successful **Third Twinning of Lawyers** took place. It was an exceptional event with top speakers and participants from so many countries - an achievement to remember. But above



all, we are delighted to gather lawyers from the Caucasus and other Eastern Partnership countries as well as from other regions such as Central Asia, Pacific, or Central and Western Europe. Again, the mediation and ADR topics attracted a wide audience and caused live discussions, questions, and many issues raised to be developed during future events. The first part of the Twinning was a seminar on “**Dispute resolution me-**



Activities (V)

chanism: reducing the burden in courts and improving access to justice". During this part speakers and participants discussed in three sessions issues connected with introduction, development, and further enhancement of Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) tools for the benefit of citizens and justice. Apart from experts and practitioners, we hosted distinguished guests: Four speakers delivered speeches: **Anna Wyrzykowska** (Poland – AIJA President), **Panagiotis Perakis** (Greece – CCBE Vice-President), **Shyam Divan** (India – vice President of LawAsia) and **Mary Walker OAM** (Australia – Co-Chair of the IBA Mediation Committee). We marked also our 35th Anniversary with the **Roundtable of Past Presidents** of our Association chaired by Juan Nunez. This event was organized together with the Council of Europe and the Chamber of Advocates of the Republic of Armenia. Conference materials and other information are available on twinningoflawyers.eu.

- The **VI Kazakhstan Forum of Lawyers**



was held on **November 19**, 2021. The event was devoted to the topic "**Strategy for the development of the legal profession**". Within the framework of the Forum, AEA-EAL President delivered a **presentation on modern threats to institutional and professional independence**. Other speakers raised such topics as the quality assurance of legal assistance

in new conditions and effective solutions in the field of legal assistance, the transformation of legal assistance in the context of digitalization, and other challenges of the next decade. The AEA-EAL speakers: **Alex Tallon** and **Julen Fernandez Conte** delivered presentations on current issues within the legaltech. Organizers of the conference were the Republican Collegium of Advocates, the OSCE Program Office in Nur-Sultan, and the Legal Policy Research Center. Access to the recording from the Forum is available here: <https://youtu.be/3vzgiezYqR4>

- On **November 24**, 2021, the AEA-EAL was invited for launching the annual international forum "**Mediation for Lawyers**". The Forum was conducted and moderated by the chair of the AEA-EAL Mediation Committee – **Irakli Kandashvili**, the Chairman of the Association of Mediators of Georgia. During the forum, the President of the Supreme Court of Georgia **Nino Kadagidze**, the First Deputy Minister of Justice of Georgia **Tamar Tkeshelashvili**, the Director of the USAID Mission **Peter A. Wiebler**, The AEA-EAL President **Maria Ślązak**, and the President of the Georgian Bar Association **David Asatiani** addressed the audience.



Iain Mitchell QC, AEA-EAL expert and speaker during the Forum