



# Despina CHATZIVASSILIOU-TSOVILIS

Head of Secretariat – Political Affairs and Democracy Committee  
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

*Dr Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis has a total of 27 years of professional experience in the Council of Europe. She has worked for 21 years with and for parliamentarians from all over Europe in the Parliamentary Assembly. During the last 12 years, she has led the Secretariats of the Monitoring and then Political Affairs and Democracy committees. She provided advice to four successive Secretaries General of the Assembly, numerous committee Chairpersons and Presidents of the Assembly.*

*She has also acquired solid experience in intergovernmental co-operation having worked for the Committee of Ministers monitoring procedure at the Directorate of Strategic Planning (DSP). Along with strong team management skills, she developed her experience in human resources management as Human Resources Correspondent for the whole DSP.*

*She is a Doctor in law, holding a PhD on the European Convention of Human Rights from the European University Institute (EUI, Florence, Italy). She started her career at the European Commission of Human Rights. She is of Greek nationality.*

## CURRICULUM VITAE

Born in Athens, Greece,  
on 28 February 1967  
Married, two children

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## LANGUAGES

**ENGLISH:** fluent  
**FRENCH:** fluent  
**ITALIAN:** fluent  
**GREEK:** mother tongue

## CAREER IN THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

### **PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**

#### *Political Affairs and Democracy Committee*

- Head of the Secretariat (2010-present)
- Secretary of the Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau of the Assembly on the Role and Mission of the Assembly (first half of 2018)
- Co-Secretary (1994-1995)

#### *Monitoring Committee*

- Secretary and, as of January 2008, Acting Head of the Secretariat (2006-2009)
- Co-secretary (1997-2000)

#### *Legal Affairs Committee*

- Co-Secretary (1996- 1997)

### **INTERGOVERNMENTAL SECTOR**

#### *Monitoring Department Directorate of Strategic Planning*

- Deputy and, as of April 2005, Acting Head, responsible for the monitoring procedure of the Committee of Ministers (2000-2006)
- Human Resources Correspondent for the Directorate

### **EUROPEAN COMMISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS**

- Lawyer (Sept. 1993- Febr. 1994)

## MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

### *Political and legal experience*

*Contributing to the Organisation's enlargement and monitoring function*

- contributed to the definition of **accession criteria** for new member States;
- played an active role in the accession of six member States, having assisted the "eminent lawyers" (former judges of the European Court of Human Rights) and/or the rapporteurs of the Political and Legal committees to prepare respectively pre-accession legal reports or accession opinions. In this, she put to the disposal of the Parliamentary Assembly her legal experience and knowledge of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) as well as her strong negotiation skills and political flair;
- contributed to the development of **the Assembly's monitoring mechanism to accompany reforms** in new member States and verify the implementation of accession commitments which led to the creation of the Monitoring Committee in 1997; she assisted rapporteurs in charge of monitoring with respect to 14 member States and participated in numerous **election observation** missions;
- as Deputy and Acting Head of the Monitoring Department at the Directorate of Strategic Planning, she contributed to developing **country specific monitoring within the Committee of Ministers**, linked to intergovernmental co-operation programmes and activities.

*Handling politically sensitive and complex files*

- provided appropriate advice and support to parliamentarians handling with skill, impartiality and discretion politically sensitive and complex files and issues such as **crises and conflict situations** in and between member States, including frozen conflicts;
- assisted parliamentarians to **identify priorities** for the Assembly, enhance its **role and mission** as the Council of Europe's political engine, streamline its action, improve synergies with the Committee of Ministers and thus strengthen its relevance for the benefit of citizens and member States;
- contributed recently (April 2019-January 2020) to the definition of a **complementary joint procedure** by the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, in case of violations by member States of their statutory obligations.

## PREVIOUS WORK EXPERIENCE

- European University Institute (EUI), Florence, Italy: Research Assistant for Professor Antonio Cassese, former President of the CPT and of the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia (1992-1993)
- Law firm A.Chiotellis-I.Yannidis, Athens, Greece: trainee lawyer (1988-1989); as of 1994, member of the Athens Bar Association.
- Criminal Law Review, *Poenika Chronika*, Athens, Greece: member of the editorial board (1986-1993)
- *Apollonion* Musical School: professor of classical guitar (1984-1988)

## EDUCATION

### DOCTOR JURIS

- EUI, Florence, Italy - PhD thesis on "*Pre-trial Deprivation of Liberty under the European Convention on Human Rights: a critical analysis of the Strasbourg case-law*", under the supervision of Professor Antonio Cassese and Professor Stefan Trechsel, graduated with Honors (*summa cum laude*) in 1994 following four years of research fellowship

### LAW DEGREE

- Law School, University of Athens, graduated with Honors (top of the year) in 1988

### SECONDARY EDUCATION

- Scuola Italiana d'Atene and Anavrita

## MAIN PUBLICATIONS

- Together with Heinrich Klebes *Problèmes d'ordre constitutionnel dans le processus d'adhésion d'États de l'Europe centrale et orientale au Conseil de l'Europe*, *Revue universelle des droits de l'homme* 1996, Vol. 8 N° 8-9, pp. 269-286.
- *L'adhésion de la Russie au Conseil de l'Europe*, « Le Conseil de l'Europe acteur de la recomposition de l'Europe », *Cahiers de l'Espace Europe* 1997, N° 10, pp. 27-60.
- *Effectiveness of judicial remedies: an analysis of the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights under Articles 5 and 6*, ERA-Forum 4/2004, Academy of European Law (ERA), Trier.

## *Preparing responses to democratic challenges in Europe*

- contributed to setting up the **World Forum of Democracy**, having assisted the rapporteur and in close co-operation with the intergovernmental sector in promoting the role of the Council of Europe as a **global reference on Democracy** and coordinating the Assembly participation in the first editions;
- assisted parliamentarians to identify **good practice on electoral matters**, based also on the findings of the Assembly's election observation missions, and make proposals which fed into the work of the Venice Commission and follow-up conferences i.a. on the abuse of administrative resources; the **updating of the Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice on Referendums** is another example of follow-up;
- contributed to the Assembly's endorsement of the initiative by youth activists to make 22 July the **European Day for Victims of Hate Crime** through her work on counteracting neo-Nazism.

## *External relations*

- assisted rapporteurs in promoting **stronger Council of Europe – European Union partnership** in the aftermath of the Lisbon treaty, including EU accession to the ECHR;
- provided assistance to the **Assembly – European Parliament Joint Informal Body** which in 2011 agreed on arrangements regarding the European Parliament's participation in the election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights following EU accession to the ECHR;
- put in place streamlined **co-operation between the Assembly and the OECD**, ensuring the Assembly's participation in the OECD Global Parliamentary Network as an institutional partner, thus strengthening synergies and enhancing the parliamentary dimension of the co-operation;
- contributed to the **implementation of the Assembly's neighbourhood policy** by assisting parliamentarians to promote Partnership for Democracy status or *ad hoc* cooperation with parliaments from neighbouring regions, accession to Council of Europe conventions, co-operation with the Venice Commission and the North-South Centre and thus adherence beyond its borders to standards and values upheld by the Council of Europe, including in the area of gender equality;
- **co-organised several regional conferences**, meetings and visits, most recently in Dubrovnik, bringing together parliamentarians and experts from the Middle East, the Southern coast of the Mediterranean and the Council of Europe.

## *Institutional experience and working together*

- put to the benefit of the Assembly her **broad knowledge of the Organisation** and in particular: initiated and promoted the co-operation between the Assembly and the **Venice Commission**; developed synergies with the **Commissioner for Human Rights** and other monitoring bodies, and drew examples from the **Court's case-law** to substantiate the political positions of rapporteurs;
- initiated the practice of complementing Assembly monitoring reports with recommendations to the **Committee of Ministers** proposing concrete assistance and co-operation activities for the countries concerned thus **linking Assembly and intergovernmental action**;
- provided advice and guidance to the President of the Assembly as secretary to the **Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau on the Role and Mission of the Assembly** which, in the first half of 2018, brought together Chairpersons of all national delegations, political groups and committees and helped him reach consensus on a report summarising proposals for future Assembly action;
- forged **close working relationships of trust with MPs**, including Assembly Presidents and committees' Chairpersons, from different political cultures and traditions, thanks to her interpersonal skills and human approach;
- demonstrated her strong **resilience** capacity and **managerial skills in leading and motivating teams**, both in the Assembly and in the intergovernmental sector, even in situations of acute pressure;
- developed **human resources management experience** through special training and as Human Resources Correspondent for the whole Directorate of Strategic Planning.