

## Ukraine: European Parliament criticises local elections and calls for democratic standards

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Criticising the local elections in Ukraine of 31 October and demanding press freedoms to be respected, the European Parliament today supported the EPP Group's position in a cross-party Resolution negotiated by Michael Gahler MEP after tough debates prior to the vote.

"Today's vote is a clear signal by the European Parliament that it does not tolerate restrictions of democratic standards and freedom of expression. The European Parliament has shown the yellow card to the government in Kiev", Michael Gahler said.

MEPs particularly "deplored" a last-minute change to the electoral law prior to the 31 October elections, as well as the fact that opposition parties were not allowed to field candidates in key constituencies. They called for a "clear separation of powers and effective checks and balances between state institutions".

In addition, the European Parliament said it was "concerned" about the latest attempts to circumscribe press freedoms, and called for an investigation into the disappearance of journalist Vasyl Klementyev. It also asked for an investigation into the role of the Ukrainian security service SBU.

"Ukraine is a European country which has to keep its European perspective. But Europe will not tolerate European norms being undermined", Gahler said.