



# News from the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

22-26 January 2007

Address by the  
President

ALDE Bureau Elections

ALDE Guests

ALDE Rapporteurs

Group Speakers

ALDE members



*“The ALDE Group must make its guardianship of Council of Europe values more effective, through enhanced political action inside and outside the Assembly.”*

[ALDE Mission Statement](#)

Welcome to the first issue of the newsletter of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe!

The Council of Europe is the largest pan-European institution, with 46 member states. Its Parliamentary Assembly meets four times a year, discussing most important European issues relating to democracy, human rights and rule of law. Members of the Assembly are – unlike members of the European Parliament – not directly elected, but they are all members of the 46 national parliaments. This is the finest and most effective network of European MPs!

The third largest parliamentary group in the Assembly is the ALDE, following the Socialists and the EPP, and uniting currently 99 members from all over Europe. As a group, we endeavour to be the engine of the Assembly defending our core European values based on a mission statement adopted with full consensus in the group.

We launch this newsletter in order to cordially invite you to follow the debates in the Assembly and to provide us feed back on our activities.

Matyas Eörsi

## ALDE Group reconstituted its Bureau

The ALDE Group in its latest part session elected its President, Secretary General and 10 Vice-Presidents for a new three years term.

The Group re-elected as **Leader** Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary, Alliance of Free Democrats) who is also the Chairperson of the European Affairs Committee in the Hungarian National Assembly. Mr. Eörsi has been active in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe since 1994; he has been rapporteur on such important issues as Situation in Cyprus, Georgia and the Balkans. Mr. Eörsi was elected as Leader of the Group in 2002 succeeding Kristiina Ojuland, Lord Russell-Johnston, Daniel Tarschys, Bjørn Elmquist, Manfred Vohrer and Frederik Portheine.

John Dupraz (Switzerland, Radical-Liberal Party) was re-elected as **Secretary General** of the ALDE.

### ALDE Vice-Presidents:

Giorgi Bokeria (Georgia, National Movement - Democrats)

Stef Goris (Belgium, VLD)

Michael Hancock (United Kingdom, Liberal Democrat)

Serhiy Holovaty (Ukraine, „Our Ukraine”)

Sergei Ivanov (Estonia, Reform Party)

Sabine Leutheusser-Schnarrenberger (Germany, FDP)

Bernard Marquet (Monaco, Union Nationale pour l’Avenir de Monaco)

Paschal Mooney (Ireland, Fianna Fáil)

Rudy Salles (France, UDF)

Hanne Severinsen (Denmark, Liberal)

**Wolfgang Gerhardt**, President of the Friedrich-Naumann Foundation and **Jürgen Wickert**, Director of the International Political Dialogue of the FNSt, have visited the Council of Europe at the invitation of the ALDE Group on the occasion of the First ordinary session of the Parliamentary Assembly in 2007.

On Monday, January 22, Mr. Gerhardt addressed the ALDE Group. He presented briefly the strategy and achievements of the Friedrich-Naumann Foundation in the Western Balkans, in the South Caucasus and in Central and Eastern Europe. He underlined the importance of building strong communication links between the ALDE and the Foundation. In conclusion Mr. Gerhardt called on the ALDE member countries to reinforce cooperation with the Friedrich-Naumann Foundation.

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[Back](#)



**Paul Wille (Belgium):** *Peril of using energy supply as an instrument of political pressure*  
([Doc. 11132](#))



**Lord Russell-Johnston (United Kingdom):** *Current situation in Kosovo*  
([Doc. 11018](#) and [Addendum](#))



**John Dupraz (Switzerland):** *Agriculture and illegal employment in Europe*  
([Doc. 11114](#))



**Michael Hancock (United Kingdom):** *A future for HIV/AIDS children and AIDS orphans*  
([Doc. 11113](#))



**Johannes Randegger (Switzerland):** *The precautionary principle and responsible risk management*  
([Doc. 11119](#))

[Back](#)

Monday 22 January 2007

**Progress report**



Giorgi BOKERIA (*Georgia*). – I would like to take this opportunity to draw my colleagues' attention to an issue that is no longer the subject of an urgent debate: the tensions between Russia and Georgia, or more correctly the political pressure applied by the Russian Federation to Georgia. I completely agree with the President, and I applaud the work of the rapporteurs and the Council of Europe. The first small but positive steps that we have seen this week are in large part due to their attention. However, we must not forget that substantial problems remain... [Read more](#)



Michael HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – How important it was that you mentioned the link between this Assembly and civil society in Belarus, but how disappointed I was to learn that a group of students who had requested assistance from the Council of Europe to come to Strasbourg had that request turned down. The very thing that you support was thus denied to that group...[Read more](#)

***Sexual assaults linked to “date-rape drugs”***



Antigoni PAPADOPOULOS (*Cyprus*). – On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, I thank the rapporteur and the committee for raising awareness of sexual assaults linked to date-rape drugs. The increasingly frequent reports of such cases of sexual violence indicate that a new phenomenon has appeared in our modern, troublesome society, and it requires further investigation. Victims have drugs slipped into their drinks at bars, clubs and social events for the purpose of reducing their resistance to sexual advances... [Read more](#)

Tuesday 23 January 2007



***Debate on child victims: stamping out all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse***

Bernard MARQUET (*Monaco*) said that the Council of Europe had launched its campaign for the protection of children in April 2006. The Deputy Secretary General was committed to this campaign. Yesterday at the ALDE Group meeting, there had been a lively discussion of the statute of limitations. Detractors had argued that evidence became diluted with time. However, crimes against humanity were not time-limited, and therefore nor should crimes against children. The Council of Europe was a good place to push this argument... [Read more](#)

### ***Debate on the peril of using energy supply as an instrument of political pressure***



Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). A year ago, after the dispute between Ukraine and Russia about gas prices, I proposed that the Assembly hold an urgent debate, and the request was rejected. I have to admit that the Assembly was right. I do not say that I was wrong, but the Assembly was certainly right. As the rapporteur rightly said, what happened recently between Belarus and Russia showed that that was not an ad hoc situation. It is an ongoing problem, and I am seriously worried that we will face a horrible situation in future. I dare not even imagine what will happen if any of our member countries begin to feel deprived of energy and we begin to exhaust our reserves. That is one of the biggest dangers ahead of us. [Read more](#)

### ***Debate on the honouring of obligations and commitments by Armenia***



Stepan DEMIRCHYAN (*Armenia*). – It is obvious that Armenia has made progress in bringing its legislation into compliance with European standards. Nevertheless, it is also obvious that simply passing legislation and changing the constitution are not enough for the implementation of democratic reforms and democratisation of society. Constitutional provisions and laws must be brought to life and effectively applied... [Read more](#)

Wednesday 24 January 2007

### ***Debate on the current situation in Kosovo***

Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). In October's part-session, we could not discuss Kosovo, although we discussed the Balkans. A fine gentleman from the Serbian delegation made a speech in which he said, "We will never, ever give up Kosovo." After a debate, I asked him in a friendly fashion, "How can you not give up something that you do not have?" [...] The majority of the Liberal Group were in favour of the report but there were many worries. We are in favour of conditional supervised independence but we need to talk about our worries. [Read more](#)

### ***Joint debate on agriculture and migrant workers (translated)***



Rudy SALLES (*France*) congratulated the rapporteurs on their excellent work. The sectors in question relied on seasonal workers and would therefore always attract a large number of migrants. The consequences were very low pay and poor working conditions, which made their position equivalent to slavery. The Assembly had to condemn this. The Council of Ministers should take all necessary measures to reduce violations of labour law and help migrants. This was an important issue, which would only become more important in the future... [Read more](#)

Thursday 25 January 2007

***Debate under urgent procedure: Threats to the lives and freedom of expression of journalists***

Michael HANCOCK (United Kingdom). – By their very nature, journalists, especially investigative journalists, walk on the wild side of life, and do so on behalf of those of us who are not brave enough to take the steps that they take to keep us informed, to develop ideas and to challenge the societies in which they work... They take such steps just to try to make our society a little bit better, and they are undoubtedly due our support and help... [Read more](#)

***Current affairs debate: Threat to the European Court of Human Rights: urgent need for Russia to ratify Protocol No. 14***



Dick MARTY (Switzerland). – *Opening speaker* – Peace and justice could never be secured once and for all, however; they had to be fought for every day. The European Court of Human Rights was today in jeopardy. It was submerged under a huge volume of its work. Awareness of this situation had led to the drafting of Protocol No. 14, which was intended to improve matters. The Protocol had been open for signature for the last two and a half years and 46 member states of the Council of Europe had signed. All the parliaments except one had ratified the Protocol. A few weeks ago, the Duma had blocked it. This meant that all the efforts to enable the Court to operate more effectively could be reduced to nothing, so today the Parliamentary Assembly was facing a very serious situation... [Read more](#)



Serhiy HOLOVATY (Ukraine). – Russia is the only state in the Council of Europe to veto the reform of the European Court of Human Rights, and it has vetoed 45 other instruments. I am not challenging the democratic method of voting in the Duma, and I agree that the Duma's decision was democratic. However, are we, in the Assembly, in a position to tolerate the current situation?.. [Read more](#)

***Joint debate on HIV/AIDS (translated)***



Walter SCHMIED (Switzerland) said that HIV/AIDS was a pernicious virus that had a long incubation period before its symptoms manifested themselves. However, the inevitable outcome was death. New drugs could only delay this outcome. Other preventable diseases had been tackled, but the problems of HIV/AIDS had not been faced. HIV/AIDS victims were frequently stigmatised and their predicament was seen as their own fault... [Read more](#)

Friday 26 January 2007

***Towards responsible food consumption (translated)***



John DUPRAZ (*Switzerland*) – There was a very long supply chain, which separated consumers from producers. Responsible food consumption required increased trust between both parties. Consumers needed to be concerned about a number of factors such as how the food was produced, respect for the environment, corporate social responsibility and animal welfare... [Read more](#)

***The precautionary principle and responsible risk management (translated)***

Bernard MARQUET (*Monaco*) thanked Mr Randegger for his draft report, and said that, whether considering the greenhouse effect, genetically modified organisms or mad cows, the precautionary principle should be involved when taking decisions. The precautionary principle, which applied when scientific evidence was incomplete, had prevented many problems from occurring... [Read more](#)

[Back](#)

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