



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

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*PACE Session
25-29 June 2007*

Welcome to the ALDE
Newsletter

"Why we are liberals"

ALDE Rapporteurs

Group Speakers

ALDE Bureau
and
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 third 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 Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) is the third largest parliamentary group in the PACE, uniting currently 105 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 issue this newsletter in order to cordially invite you to follow the debates in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and to provide feed back on our activities.

Lord Russell-Johnston called on the ALDE members to contribute to the new edition of the Group Policy Document “Why we are liberals”. Below is the address of Lord Russell-Johnston to the Group.

Contributions are accepted until 31 October 2007.

Dear Liberal Friend,

As you know, both the Bureau and the Group as a whole, have agreed that the Group Policy Document, “Why we are Liberals”, published in 1998, should be brought up-to-date and re-published. It is not intended to change the structure of the document, which combines current comments on the Liberal position; individual member-statements of belief; a history of the Liberal Group, with specific references to its outstanding members, since its formation; and appendices, which set the Group within the perspective of International Liberalism.

In 1998, the Group had 77 members; of these 25 made contributions and of those, in 2007, only 5 remain. Also the Group has increased in size to 105. I hope we can greatly exceed the one third involvement of 1998. For Liberals the individual contribution and how he or she sees freedom and co-operation develop are paramount.

I therefore invite you to send ALDE’s secretariat (peter.kallenberger@coe.int; maria.bigday@coe.int) a statement of 450 words explaining why you believe yourself to be a Liberal and – at the special request of our President, Matyas Eörsi – a further 50 words on the significance of the Council of Europe to our work. Photographs will be extracted from the internet.

I consider that, with your help, we can produce a document which can become a central reference work for Liberals in Europe and beyond.

*With best wishes,
Lord Russell-Johnston
Honorary President*

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Walter Schmied (Switzerland): *Euro-Mediterranean agricultural and rural policy* ([Doc. 11301](#))

Rapporteur of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs
Presented on 25 June 2007



Darja Lavtižar-Bebler (Slovenia): *Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee* ([Doc. 11313 Parts 1 and 2 + Addendum](#))

Presented on 25 June 2007



Hermine Naghdalyan (Armenia): *The feminisation of poverty* ([Doc. 11276](#))

Rapporteur of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
Presented on 26 June 2007



Carles Gasòliba I Böhm (Spain): *The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD): focus on Eastern and South-Eastern Europe* ([Doc. 11300](#))

Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Presented on 26 June 2007



Dick Marty (Switzerland): *Alleged secret detentions and unlawful inter-state transfers of detainees involving Council of Europe member states* ([Doc. 11302 rev. and Addendum](#))

Rapporteur of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights
Presented on 27 June 2007



Mr John Dupraz (Switzerland, ALDE): *Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on grounds of their religion (for opinion)* ([Doc. 11322](#))

Rapporteur of the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men
Presented on 29 June 2007

Monday 25 June 2007

Euro-Mediterranean agricultural and rural policy



John DUPRAZ (*Switzerland*). – An exodus was occurring from rural areas to urban conurbations across the Mediterranean and self-sufficiency was declining, leaving rural populations impoverished. It could only be in the common interest to support a programme of sustainable agriculture and to alleviate the imbalance between rural and urban populations in terms of access to health care and education. It was entirely legitimate for the Assembly to occupy itself with those problems. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee



Mike HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – We need to refine our Organisation, so that the Council of Europe deals with the core values that the Secretary General and others have repeatedly said we should concentrate on. We still tend to move away from them with great ease and regularity. [...] Tomorrow, we were to have a debate on issues loosely connected with religion in one form or another. Is that really a debate for the Council of Europe? [...] Most of us here believe that there is a future for this Assembly and that it has a rightful place in the future of Europe, but if we do not engage Europe's young people, that future will be on very shaky ground. [Read more](#)

Tuesday 26 June 2007

The image of women in advertising



Tina ACKETOFT (*Sweden*). – I thoroughly agree with much of what the rapporteur has said. She has accurately described the background to this matter. [...] The problem I have with the report is not with the suggestions that it makes, which are good, hands-on suggestions. The only problem is that those actions are already being taken by different organisations. We have the international advertising boards and international advertising agreements. [...] That is why I cannot put my name behind the report, unfortunately. I am sad that we have not made the time available to make amendments to it because of the shift in this week's schedule. That would have made for a better product and a better brand name for the Council of Europe in the long term. [...] [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

The feminisation of poverty

Mike HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – The report is timely and well constructed, and it makes a case that is both coherent and sensible. However, I feel that there was one question that should have been answered: why should women suffer more deprivation and poverty than men? [...]

Unless we address those problems and women face up to their responsibility, which is to use the vote and the power that they have, sadly, reports such as this will do what they have done in the past: they will be written, applauded and then forgotten.

[Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Europe's social dimension: full implementation of the revised European Social Charter and evaluation of new labour regulations and minimum wages



Bernard MARQUET (*Monaco*) Thanked the rapporteur for an excellent piece of work. European governments were facing the demanding task of balancing the challenges posed by the globalised economy and the need to reduce public budgets and deficits with the demand from citizens for a consolidation of the European social model, at a time when unemployment was on the increase and populations were ageing.

[Read more, voting results](#)

Promotion by Council of Europe member states of an international moratorium on the death penalty



Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*). – I aim to be quite brief in giving full, unequivocal support to the report on behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. [...] Credible sources suggest that between 7 500 and 8 000 people were executed in 2006. The official statistics remain a state secret, making monitoring and analysis problematic.

As the rapporteur said, the deterrent argument has long been discredited, but even if it were not, that would not be a justification for states to behave in a totally uncivilised way. Saddam Hussein was a brute – there is no argument about that – but that is not a justification for treating him in a brutish way, which is exactly what was done. We ought to put particular pressure on the United States and Japan, both former observer countries with our Organisation, and the Russian Federation, which I remind members committed itself to ratification on joining this Organisation in 1996, and it still has not done so.

[Read more, voting results](#)

European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD): focus on eastern and south-eastern Europe



Antigoni PAPADOPOULOS (*Cyprus*). – Over the years, the EBRD has been a successful financial institution and a development bank with political inspiration. [...] We welcome the EBRD's initiative to double its investments in energy efficiency and clean technologies in the period 2006-08, by investing about €1.5 billion and €100 million as supplementary support. Moreover, we endorse the following Council of Europe recommendations to the EBRD: to strengthen its field presence in countries of operation; to promote more loans and micro-credit facilities; to encourage cross-border investment in the southern Caucasus; and to co-operate more closely with the World Bank and other institutions to boost infrastructure investment. [Read more, voting results](#)

Wednesday 27 June 2007

Secret detentions and illegal transfers of detainees involving Council of Europe member states: second report



Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). –The time has come to stop crying about lack of visibility for the Council of Europe. Dick Marty is, I think, more well known than many heads of state and government. He has proved to us that if you pick up an important issue and are critical about countries, you are visible. Congratulations and well done. [...]

Let me conclude by saying that 11 September caused a panic – in Europe as well, but mostly in America. We should think about what countries do in a panic. They make mistakes. [...]

I understand the panic and I understand that there should be more intelligence and more public money spent, but that should be done hand in hand with greater transparency and more public control. We should be ready to correct the mistakes that we have made.

[Read more, voting results](#)

Combating anti-Semitism in Europe

Mike HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – We must also be careful not to make the mistake of thinking that anti-Semitism is the worst of the racial abuses that we suffer in this world. We must not divorce it from wider issues that our communities face daily. We should not attack the Jews among us, or the historical connections that many people seem to have with the Jewish faith. However, we should take account of the wider issue of the intolerance and racial abuse that are meted out time and again, day in and day out, across our continent.

[Read more, voting results](#)

Situation of longstanding refugees and displaced persons in south-east Europe

[Read more, voting results](#)

Thursday 28 June 2007

Prosecution of offences falling within the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia

Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*). – This is a highly important, hugely dense and complex report. It is very difficult, indeed impossible, to deal with it comprehensively and effectively in the time available. [...] Very sadly, there are still some in Serbia, notably in the Radical Party, who have continued to deny Srebrenica and close their eyes to the many unresolved crimes of rape and violence. The rapporteur puts it very bluntly in paragraph 28, where he says that Srebrenica has been “shown to be an incontrovertible fact” and that “the same applies to the crimes committed in Dubrovnik, Zvornik, Vukovar and Brcko.” So where are Mladić and Karadžić? They must be under protection? [...]

I conclude by quoting Tony Lloyd once more. At the very end of his report, he says: “No matter how long and painful the reconciliation process may be, many efforts are still required. Justice is an indispensable ingredient in the process of reconciliation for the victims, communities and countries concerned and it is essential fight impunity resolutely at all levels.” And so say I, and so say the Liberal Group.

[Read more, voting results](#)

Debate under urgent procedure: how to prevent cybercrime against state institutions in member and observer states



Kristiina OJULAND (*Estonia*). – I note the low attendance today. There is an urgent need to debate this important issue, and we should bear it in mind that what happened to Estonia could happen to any country at any time. [...]

As the Liberal Group points out, the ability of the existing political, diplomatic and legal framework to deal with this issue is limited. [...] A first step for us here in the Council of Europe should be a full report on cyber-attacks against independent government institutions and private entities.

[Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Honouring of obligations and commitments by Monaco



Hanne SEVERINSEN (*Denmark*). – The Liberal group is grateful to the two co-rapporteurs for their report about the little Principality that tries so hard to be a democracy and to fulfill its commitments and obligations. [...]

Next year, there will be an election, and within two years it is expected that all the commitments will be fulfilled and that a clearer line will be drawn between the Principality power and the National Council. In considering how to do this, the Liberal group discussed the idea of requesting an opinion from the Venice Commission on the constitution and the constitutional practice of the Principality of Monaco, in order to assist with future reforms.

[Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Iran's nuclear programme: the need for an international response

[Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Friday 29 June 2007

Intercultural and inter-religious dialogue

[Read more](#), voting results: [State, Religion, Secularity and Human Rights](#)
[Blasphemy, religious insults and hate speech against persons on grounds of their religion](#)

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