



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

N°4, 2007

***PACE Session
1-5 October 2007***

**Welcome to the ALDE
Newsletter**

**M.Kasyanov: ALDE
Guest Speaker**

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 forth 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 47 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 47 national parliaments. This is the finest and most effective network of European MPs!

The third largest parliamentary group in the Assembly is the ALDE, uniting currently 100 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 during its sessions in Strasbourg and to provide feed back on our activities. We also use this opportunity to thank all ALDE members for active participation in the work of the PACE. We are also grateful to our colleagues from liberal partner organisations, namely Federica Sabbati (ELDR), Emil Kirjas and Fang-yi Ho (LI) and Jelena Spasovic (IFLRY), who attended the ALDE meetings this time.



1 October 2007, Press-Conference: Matyas Eörsi and Mikhail Kasyanov

On the occasion of the fourth part of the 2007 PACE Session, the ALDE invited Mikhail Kasyanov, leader of the “People’s Democratic Union” and former Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, to address the Group and to conduct several meetings with high officials of the Council of Europe, September 30 – October 1, 2007.

In his address to the Group on Monday, October 1, Mikhail Kasyanov underlined that despite of serious economic progress, major democratic and constitutional principles were not respected in Russia. Having taken a tougher stance after the tragedy of Beslan, the Russian regime now seems to create serious obstacles to what may be considered as democratic elections. Answering the questions of the ALDE members, M.Kasyanov informed the Group about recent changes in the Russian electoral law making it difficult for any opposition party to be elected in the Duma. In such conditions, the main concern for the opposition forces would be finding possibilities to stand united in the coming presidential elections. In conclusion, Mikhail Kasyanov said that Russia was a European country and therefore had to be subject to the same standards as any other democracy. The ALDE and M.Kasyanov also exchanged views on Russian foreign policy and Russian energy supplies to Europe. The leader of the ALDE, Matyas Eörsi, and Mikhail Kasyanov shared their views with journalists.

During his visit to Strasbourg, Mikhail Kasyanov also conducted meetings with the ALDE Bureau, the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and the Secretary General of the PACE, the President of the PACE, the President of the Socialist Group and the President of the EPP.

Mikhail Kasyanov commented to the ALDE on the results of his visit. [Read more in English](#) or [in Russian](#).



Michael Hancock (UK): *The humanitarian crisis in Darfur* ([Doc. 11355](#))

Rapporteur of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee (for opinion)
Presented on 2 October 2007

[Voting results](#)



Antigoni Papadopoulou (Cyprus): *The OECD and the world economy 2007* ([Doc. 11357](#))

Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Presented on 3 October 2007
Resolution adopted unanimously



Eva García Pastor (Andorra): *The OECD and the world economy 2007* ([Doc. 11357](#))

Contribution from the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs
Presented on 3 October 2007
Resolution adopted unanimously



Paul Wille (Belgium): *Political dimension of the Council of Europe budget* ([Doc. 11371](#))

Rapporteur of the Committee on Economic Affairs and Development
Presented on 3 October 2007

[Voting results](#)



Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg): *The dangers of creationism in education* ([Doc. 11375](#))

Rapporteur of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education
Presented on 4 October 2007

[Voting results](#)

Monday 1 October 2007

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



Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – Mr President, Cuba is not in Europe but this organisation stands for democracy and human rights. We should not forget that, decades ago, when Fidel Castro and Che Guevara were conducting their independent war against the United States, they enjoyed tremendous support from all over Europe. We believe that the time has come for the current Cuban regime to explain to the people the reason for the number of political prisoners. The number of labour camps today far exceeds that in the last year of the Batista regime. [Read more](#)

Migration



Andrej ZERNOVSKI (*“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”*). – The role of the Council of Europe on migration is under threat of being reduced, while the work of this Assembly shows how closely migration is related to the core issues of human rights. We agree with Mr McKinley, Director General of the International Organization for Migration, when he says that there is “plenty of room for closer co-operation between the Council of Europe and IOM.” If we are honest, we have to ask ourselves, “Are we really doing things together?”, and the true answer will be, “Not much.” We can hold regular meetings, but also, let me assure you, we have to envisage concrete joint projects. [Read more](#), [voting results \(1\)](#), [\(2\)](#), [\(3\)](#)

Tuesday 2 October 2007

Humanitarian crisis in Darfur

Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – This Organisation was brought into life in the aftermath of the Second World War. The audience in the gallery who watched those early debates heard the phrase “never again”. Turning to recent history, on Rwanda, what did we do? On Bosnia, what did we do? Kosovo is another good example. [...] The problem is that the Sudanese Government does not want foreigners to go there to provide assistance. In order to implement our vision, we need to use military power. That is the dilemma. Those intellectuals, who unfortunately have more influence on public opinion than politicians, condemn situations in which Europe goes to war. We are not allowed to use military action, but we are responsible for being unable to resolve something that is incapable of resolution without military action. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Address by Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow and all Russia



Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*). – The Patriarch knows that this Assembly has built up, over many years and with considerable effort, concepts of generosity and tolerance as between people. This includes the treatment and rights of homosexuals and lesbians. The Patriarch has been accused of intolerance in this respect, particularly in preventing any assembly in Moscow, as well as in other ways. I would appreciate it if he would state his position on this matter. [Read more](#)

Address by Mr Vojislav Koštunica, Prime Minister of Serbia

Lord RUSSELL-JOHNSTON (*United Kingdom*). – May I follow up Mr Omtzigt's question, because it is very important? Many years have passed since the awful massacre at Srebrenica, yet the pain and anguish that many feel still bites. Will the Prime Minister say specifically what his estimate is of when Mladić will be apprehended, and what resources Serbia is devoting to that? [Read more](#)

Current affairs debate



Dick MARTY (*Switzerland*): One of Europe's crowning achievements was the ability to let its 800 million citizens appeal directly to the European Court of Human Rights. Problems had been experienced within the Court for a long time. Protocol 14 had been an attempt to solve some of these difficulties. However, the Russian Duma had singularly failed to ratify the protocol and, as a direct consequence, the European Court had been forced into increasing the number of its judges within a very short period of time. This was a serious situation and the existence of the Court was at stake. [Read more](#)



Sabine LEUTHEUSSER-SCHNARRENBARGER (*Germany*): Protocol 14 governing the work of judges had to be implemented. Russia was the only state that refused to ratify the protocol, leaving the Council of Europe with 22 judge positions to fill. Protocol 14 extended the term of office of judges from six years to nine years and guaranteed their independence by means of elections. It was being held up by one member state. Mr Margelov had said that he was in favour of the protocol. He needed to persuade his colleagues in the Duma. [Read more](#)

Member states' duty to co-operate with the European Court of Human Rights

Sabine LEUTHEUSSER-SCHNARRENBARGER (*Germany*) People who applied to the Court were experiencing physical threats designed to prevent them from attending. It was important to remember that the European Court of Human Rights was not just a court where national courts were judged. Some people risked life and limb in order to bring a case to Strasbourg. She was pleased that the report contained the details of these specific cases. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Honouring of obligations and commitments by Moldova



Mike HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). Rules and conventions are good only if the people of the country feel comfortable with them and can use them, will not be abused because of them and are able to have a better life because of them. There is not a shred of evidence in the report of that for the average Moldovan. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Wednesday 3 October 2007

Realising both economic growth and social protection in Europe in an era of globalisation



Antigoni PAPADOPOULOS (*Cyprus*). I congratulate the rapporteur, Tony Lloyd, on his very good report. It is true that globalisation has engulfed every country in the world, bringing a decisive break with the past along with profound changes: economic interdependence, dramatic increases in the volume and variety of transactions in goods and services, movement of people and knowledge, and accelerated diffusion of technology. [...] But while Europeans welcome a globalised future, many people worldwide criticise globalisation for its negative effects such as environmental catastrophes, social unrest, increased poverty, uncontrolled migration and social dislocation. [...] We believe that European governments must regard globalisation as an opportunity. What is needed is for all governments to co-ordinate, guide and regulate the globalisation process. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Address by Mr Abdullah Gül, President of Turkey

Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – Mr President, I join my colleagues in welcoming you back to this Assembly. I am sure that you realise that liberals respect all individuals, whatever their religion. You also know that we stand for a clear separation between religion and state, which Atatürk established in your country. When you were elected as President, there were worries in Europe that the position might change. What is your response to those worries? Perhaps you could highlight for us your vision for the separation of religion and state in Turkey. [Read more](#)

Regionalisation in Europe



John DUPRAZ (*Switzerland*): Three levels of governance operated within Switzerland, and the report gave full descriptions of many other models in existence in the European Union. Each country was sovereign and free to organise its governance system as it saw fit. However, the process of regionalisation was imperative because it empowered people in the decision-making process. Furthermore, regionalisation allowed the hopes and aspirations of ethnic groups to be met. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

The OECD and the world economy 2007 (enlarged debate)



John DUPRAZ (*Switzerland*) on behalf of his group, thanked the rapporteur and the co-rapporteurs for an excellent report. He said that the world economy had improved since the last report, but that the ALDE still had some concerns. The economy was strong in places, but overall it was patchy. China had a strong economy. However, some of the Third World countries had an almost non-existent economy. The gap between rich and poor was widening. This had a direct impact on migration. [Read more](#), resolution adopted unanimously

Political Dimension of the Council Of Europe Budget



Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – Paul Wille and his colleagues who spoke harshly about the budget were right. The problem is no longer financial constraints or savings. We are facing a struggle for life, albeit perhaps not this year or next year. If I were to put the prospect for our budget in romantic terms, I would describe it as a matter of life or death. We all agree in this Chamber that it is up to our governments to help finance us. [...] My conclusion is that we should do a better job here and then turn to our national governments for more finance. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

For a European Convention on Promoting Public Health Policy in Drug Control



Mike HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*). – This document is particularly important because of paragraph 8 and the three points there. It suggests that the whole convention should be predicated on three objectives. The first is “to promote, as a fundamental human right, the right to health in the context of problem drug use” – exactly what Paul Flynn and our Dutch colleagues said. The second is “to clarify the scope of the right to health as it applies to problem drug use” and the third is “to help identify good practices for the operation of the right to health as it applies to problem drug use, at the community, national and international levels.” [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Thursday 4 October 2007

Towards decriminalisation of defamation

Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – The title of the report contains the word defamation, but as the rapporteur rightly said, the document is about free speech. The report therefore deserves the full support of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

The concept of preventive war and its consequences for international relations

Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – Mr de Puig has presented an excellent report. The crucial question is not whether preventive war can be generally condemned, because, as he rightly said, preventive war is possible under certain conditions. Mr de Puig rightly asked what those conditions might be. I am certain that everyone in the Hemicycle agrees, without any exceptions, that war is a genuine horror. The question is whether we can fully condemn preventive wars in general terms. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Address by Mr H. R. Agung Laksono, next President of the Asian Parliamentary Assembly

Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – I want to understand how you work and what you think about some important matters. We in the Council of Europe, from Ireland to Georgia and Russia to Portugal, disagree about many things, but we agree about the basics. What is the APA's position on one of your member countries, the president of which openly speaks about wiping off the map a country that has observer status in the Council of Europe – namely, Israel? What are you going to do about that? [Read more](#)

Prostitution – which stance to take?



Nino NAKASHIDZÉ (*Georgia*). – Any attempt to abolish voluntary prostitution will only drive prostitution underground and encourage organised crime, thus making prostitutes more vulnerable. It would be better to deal with voluntary prostitution by legalising it so that it can be regulated, not with the aim of taxing it or for other structural reasons but to defend the rights of those involved in prostitution and to protect them. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

The dangers of creationism in education

Matyas EÖRSI (*Hungary*). – Evolution is a theory and creationism is a theory. I can accept what the previous speaker said – some people believe the creation story – but it is important to note that, scientifically, only evolution is proven.

However, we are talking about public schools, which are financed by public money. We do not want our children to be imbeciles. We want them to know how life comes about and to be prepared to take part in that huge competition where knowledge is vital for success. If we want them to be successful we must support Anne Brasseur and her report. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

Friday 5 October 2007

Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights – stock-taking and perspectives

[Voting results](#)

“Parliaments united in combating domestic violence against women”: mid-term assessment of the campaign

[Voting results](#)

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