



# 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 January 2010*

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*“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 January 2010 issue of the *Newsletter of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)* in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe!

The Council of Europe is the largest pan-European institution, bringing together 47 states. Its Parliamentary Assembly meets four times a year, discussing the most important European issues related to democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Members of the Assembly are – unlike members of the European Parliament – not directly elected, but they are members of the 47 national parliaments. PACE is therefore the most important and effective network of European MPs! The ALDE Group currently brings together 97 MPs. As a group, we endeavour to be the engine of the Assembly defending core European values.

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 provide feedback on our activities. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Mr Simms, member of the Canadian observer delegation to PACE, for his active participation in group meetings. We are also grateful to our colleagues from liberal partner organisations who attended the ALDE meetings this time: Emil Kirjas, Secretary General, LI, and Elin Blomqvist, Intern, IFLRY.

## ALDE adopts new rules of procedure and elects its Bureau

Under the new [Rules of Procedure](#) of the Group the ALDE formed its new Bureau on Monday, 25 January 2010.

**Chairperson: Mrs Anne Brasseur, Luxembourg**



**Secretary General:  
Mrs Mailis Reps,  
Estonia**



**Treasurer: Mr Paul  
Wille, Belgium**

**Vice-Chairpersons:**



**Mr Paolo Giaretta,  
Italy**



**Mrs Kerstin Lundgren,  
Sweden**



**Mr Mike Hancock,  
United Kingdom**



**Mr Bernard Marquet,  
Monaco**



**Mr Serhiy Holovaty,  
Ukraine**



**Mrs Nursuna Memecan,  
Turkey**



**Mr Michael Aastrup  
Jensen, Denmark**



**Mrs Marina Schuster,  
Germany**



**Mr Terry Leyden,  
Ireland**



**Mr Jordi Xucla I Costa,  
Spain**



**Ex officio (Former  
Chairperson): Mr  
Matyas Eörsi,  
Hungary**



**Ex officio (Chairperson  
of Committee): Mr Dick  
Marty, Switzerland**



**Mrs Doris Fiala, Switzerland, former Secretary General of ALDE,  
takes part in the Bureau**

**President Basseur takes part in the ALDE-EP seminar on "Reinterpreting History: How the Kremlin thinks and what this means for Europe", 3 February 2010**



"The politics of banalisation of Stalinism and the creation of the indisputably positive aura of Stalin's role in the Russian history is a dangerous precedent of refusal to conduct one's memory work, or travail de mémoire. The denial of history and its lessons is not a valid basis for modernisation and democratic reforms; therefore I welcome the Liberal's efforts to raise awareness of such policies and I call attention to PACE resolution 1481 (2006) stressing once again that moral assessment and condemnation of crimes committed play a key role in the education of young generations and democracy building. Russian authorities must not overlook this principle." ([www.alde-pace.org](http://www.alde-pace.org))

**Eastern Partnership Programme to be discussed in Berlin**

On the initiative of the ALDE Group and with the support of the ELDR, Friedrich Naumann Foundation and ALDE-EP, an international and inter-institutional workshop "Eastern Partnership - The Liberal Approach: Positions and Tools" will be held in Berlin on 26-27 February 2010. The workshop aims at examining the Eastern Partnership's thematic platforms from a liberal perspective and at producing a statement outlining a common liberal position on the Eastern Partnership project.

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The Prague Summit, 7 May 2009, launched the EU Eastern Partnership programme for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. The project aims at promoting security, stability and prosperity by supporting democratic and market-oriented reforms in the region.

The beneficiaries of the Eastern Partnership are a neighbourhood for the European Union; whereas for the Council of Europe they are full-fledged members – with the exception of Belarus. The governments and the parliaments of these countries have a long record of cooperation and communication on equal terms with EU member states in the framework of the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly. Consequently, effective teamwork between the European Union and the Council of Europe will contribute to the successful implementation of the Eastern Partnership.



**Mátyás Eörsi (Hungary)**

***Observation of the presidential election in Ukraine (17 January 2010) (Doc. 12132)***

Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau  
Presented : Monday 25 January 2010



**Nursuna Memecan (Turkey)**

***Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity***

Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men (for opinion)  
(Doc. 12099)  
Presented: Wednesday 27 January 2010



**Hendrik Daems (Belgium)**

***Thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representativity of national parliaments in Council of Europe member states (Doc. 12107)***

Political Affairs Committee  
Presented: Wednesday 27 January 2010



**Jørgen Poulsen (Denmark)**

***Solving property issues of refugees and displaced persons (Doc. 12106)***

Committee on Migration, Refugees and Population  
Presented: Thursday 28 January 2010

Monday 25 January 2010

### Progress report



Mrs BRASSEUR (Luxembourg) congratulated the new President, and said that he was assured of great support. The past President also deserved congratulations for his discreet but determined style. He had taken a balanced approach and had always valued consensus. He had dealt successfully with many difficult issues. However, tasks remained for the new President to address.

As regards the Ukrainian presidential elections, the progress that had been made since the tensions of the past should be welcomed. Mrs Brasseur thanked Mr Eörsi for the balanced report. It was to be hoped that 7 February would see calm elections in Ukraine and give the country the stability that it needed. [Read more](#)

Tuesday 26 January 2010

### The situation in the Middle East



Mr HANCOCK (United Kingdom). – Nobody, under any circumstances, can condone the violence and evil of attacks on innocent people in their homes and on their streets, whether they are carried out by the Palestinian cause or Israelis. I believe that the report balances that argument. But the real issue is that something has to give. We heard from the Israeli Foreign Minister this morning that the Israelis were prepared to make further concessions. But he did not explain what those concessions would be. We heard clearly from the Palestinian side about the parameters of their demands and what they would expect. We do not need a compromise because a compromise will not be a lasting solution; there has to be a realistic approach that accepts that one side is going to have to give. [...] I ask the Israeli Foreign Minister to look seriously at lifting the blockade and allowing humanitarian aid through. I do not believe that there is a family in Israel that would want to condone that. So for goodness' sake, as a government, do something about it. [Read more, voting results](#)

### The functioning of democratic institutions in Bosnia and Herzegovina



Mr EÖRSI (Hungary). – We would like to take this opportunity to propose a completely new approach to how Europe deals with Bosnia and Herzegovina. [...] We must understand that Bosnia and Herzegovina is not one of a dozen countries where democratic values should be improved and where we should provide assistance to improve democracy: it could collapse if the new constitution is not adopted by consensus, and the country would then have a huge problem.

I think that the Dayton Agreement was excellent in stopping the bloodshed, but it came from abroad and was an enforced agreement. The interlocutors, the three entities – Bosniacs, Serbs and Croats – do not feel that it was their own product. So my proposal for Europe on this new approach is that we should stop telling them what the constitution should look like. We may think that we have the tools, that we know everything, that we are very clever and that we can tell them what is right and what is wrong, but what is really important is to help to start a new process that will be owned by the three communities and their political leaders. [Read more, voting results](#)

### Action against trafficking in human beings: promoting the Council of Europe Convention (Document 12096)

Mr HANCOCK (United Kingdom). – The real issue is not the niceness of saying that we have signed up and ratified and that we are all hunky-dory when it comes to dealing with trafficking. The evil of trafficking is all around us. [...] The real problem is that very few countries hunt down the perpetrators. What do they do? As we have heard in earlier and eloquent speeches, the people who have been punished and put at greater risk – placed in double jeopardy – are those who have been trafficked. [...] Many of you have spoken to the family members of those who have been trafficked and who died as a result. [...] What do our courts do when these people are brought before them? It is very difficult to prove some of these cases, even though to the uneducated or non-legally trained eye there seems to be an abundance of evidence. These people often walk free from courts right across Europe. [Read more, voting results](#)

### **Discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity**

Mr HANCOCK (United Kingdom). – We did not set up this Organisation 60 years ago to defend conservative faith values. We set it up to defend the rule of law and the rights of the individual and to give them some sense of purpose that, irrespective of their lifestyle, they would be given respect for making that individual choice – whether it involves how they speak, how they dress, their sexual orientation or what they believe in. This report represents a condemnation of the Organisation that we come here to represent, because there should be no need to write such a report. If we all genuinely believe in the values of the Council of Europe, we all believe that it is okay for each of us to have our own preferences about the way that we live our lives when it comes to sexual orientation. [...] We must say at some stage that the amendments before us are simply wrecking amendments. If this Organisation is about anything, amendments that go categorically against the pillars of the Assembly should not even be printed. [Read more](#). The vote on the resolution was postponed.

### **Judicial corruption**



Mr MARTY (Switzerland) said that the report went to the heart of the purpose of democratic institutions. Corruption was like a poison or a virus which insinuated its way into institutions and destroyed them. Judicial corruption was the mother of all corruption because without a fair and transparent legal system it was not possible to tackle other types of corruption. No state was completely free of corruption. [...] Corruption was a more serious threat to states than terrorism because it was more hidden. The Assembly was debating corruption among judges but there was also corruption among prosecutors and the police. Corruption was not like a normal crime, in which there would be a victim and a perpetrator: corruption involved the corrupter and the corrupted, both of whom were complicit. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

### **Freedom of religion and other human rights for non-Muslim minorities in Turkey and for the Muslim minority in Thrace (Eastern Greece)**



Mrs LUNDGREN (Sweden). – I should like to stress that we as parliamentarians should defend human rights and freedoms for individuals no matter what their ethnicity, religion, language, sexual orientation and so on. [...] Colleagues, be aware that we as parliamentarians should not interfere in religious affairs. We should have a division of power in that respect. We should open up space for differences even there. Some of the amendments ask us to name the head of a church or other organisation. That is not for us to decide; it is for us to make it possible for everyone to find their way forward. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

### **Respect for media freedom**



Mrs ANIKASHVILI (Georgia) thanked the rapporteur for the report, which she said contained important and useful information, including the number of journalists killed in Europe since 2007, 13 of which had been killed in the Russian Federation. She had her own experience of how the human rights of journalists were violated. The Government of Georgia had used the army to suppress the media on the grounds of national security. Independent media were necessary in order for a democracy to function properly. A government must not use political power to silence the media. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

### **Thresholds and other features of electoral systems which have an impact on representativity of national parliaments in Council of Europe member states and increasing women's representation in politics through the electoral system**



Mr ZERNOVSKI ("The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"). – I fully agree that the lack of equal representation of women and men in political decision-making is a threat to the legitimacy of democracy. In the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, to which I belong, there is a clear conviction that the participation of women in political life contributes greatly to the strengthening of democracy and promotes the position of women in society. Once again, the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe is giving the best example by being the only political group to be chaired by a woman. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

**What can Europe do for Haiti? Current affairs debate**

Mrs SCHUSTER (Germany): The international community had to consider two key issues with respect to Haiti. First, many children had become orphans as a result of the earthquake. There was a risk that this would result in illegal adoptions. Haitian children were susceptible to trafficking and abuse. It was therefore particularly important that their rights should be upheld.

The second issue was the need to rebuild the political institutions of Haiti. The circumstances in Haiti represented an opportunity to improve the democratic functioning of the country. [...] Members of the Parliamentary Assembly had a responsibility to call on their governments to assist Haiti in achieving a fresh start. [Read more](#)

**Detention of asylum seekers and irregular migrants in Europe**

Mrs REPS (Estonia). – On behalf of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, and as my own personal opinion, I should like very much to congratulate Mrs Mendonça on the points that would state the difference between illegal migrants and asylum seekers. Of course, we should all conclude that asylum seekers should not be detained. [...] As the report observes, we should not detain vulnerable people. We should not detain those with disabilities, and in no circumstances should we detain unaccompanied minors. We should also pay special attention to their families. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

**Solving property issues of refugees and displaced persons**

Mrs TAKTAKISHVILI (Georgia) said that the report was excellent and the recent war between Georgia and Russia had demonstrated how current were the issues that it covered. Thousands of Europeans were homeless and had lost everything. All they had left was hope. The need for restitution of property had been recognised in a number of European Court of Human Rights rulings. These rulings had to be honoured. A standing committee should be established to inquire further into these matter so that justice for the 2.5 million Europeans who have been displaced could be achieved. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

**The functioning of democratic institutions in Albania**

Mr ZERNOVSKI (“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”). – During the election period, we witnessed a deterioration in the dialogue between the main political parties. Unfortunately, as has already been pointed out, that situation continues, and is hampering the democratic functioning of the state institutions. The political dialogue needs to get back on track. It should take place first and foremost in the parliament. [...] I was pleased to note the progress that had been made on human rights and the protection of minorities which was demonstrated in the election process. [...] I welcome the decision of the European Commission of 16 November 2009 to accept the candidacy of the Republic of Albania for EU membership, and I hope that, without further delay, Albania will finally be placed on the Schengen list. [Read more](#), [voting results](#)

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