



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

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## **ALDE's engagement fostered a particularly eventful January session:**

- Effective fight against organised crime and corruption is one of the key steps towards reconciliation and building states respective of human rights in the Balkans. Reports prepared by ALDE members Dick Marty and Miljenko Doric were followed with utmost attention by media, authorities and the public. "It is not my report that constitutes a scandal. The scandal is that witnesses have been assassinated. [The Assembly's] resolution should become the first step to combat these crimes and protect our values" said Dick Marty at a press conference following the adoption by an overwhelming majority of a resolution on "Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo".
- At its hearing on the situation in Belarus, the ALDE strongly condemned the outburst of political repressions in the country. The ALDE had initiated a debate under urgent procedure on the situation in Belarus. The group's president had also signed a joint liberal statement demanding the Belarusian authorities to release political prisoners and prepare a roadmap for democratic reforms.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank those who took active part in plenary debates on behalf of the ALDE, presented reports, and attended group meetings. The Group is particularly thankful to Mrs Federica Sabbati, Secretary General of ELDR, Dr. Jürgen Wickert, Director International Political Dialogue and Dr. Ellen Madeker, Director Programmes, Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom, Brussels, who contributed to the debate on the strengthening of cooperation among liberals and democrats in Europe. Finally, the Group is grateful to our young trainees Christa Blomberg (IFLRY) and Anna Bazilo (ALDE) for their interest and active participation.

**ALDE endeavours to be the engine of the Assembly defending core European values**  
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## Improving climate for liberal ideas through enhanced cooperation



Dr Ellen Madeker, Dr Jürgen Wickert, Mrs Federica Sabbati, Mrs Anne Brasseur

**On 24 January 2011 the ALDE exchanged views with Mrs Federica Sabbati, Secretary General of the European Liberal Democrats Party (ELDR), Dr Jürgen Wickert (Director, International Political Dialogue) and Dr Ellen Madeker (Director Programme, Dialogue Programme) of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom Brussels Office. The discussion focused on the ways to strengthen liberal networking and enhance further cooperation among European liberal and democratic forces.**

Mrs Sabbati introduced ELDR's initiative of the Associate Membership for individuals. "Associate Membership for individuals will be a sign of support to the European liberal values of freedom and individual responsibility, democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and tolerance." The individual members will be able to participate in various ELDR events, therefore, to engage themselves in the role and activities of the political parties on the European level. "This initiative shows that the ELDR Party is moving from being a purely networking establishment to an organisation of individuals", said ELDR Secretary General. In 2011 the ELDR will focus their activities on budget and economy. Mrs Sabbati invited the ALDE to join and contribute to a series of seminars for MPs and MEPs aimed at elaborating a common liberal approach to cope with the economic setback.

Dr. Wickert and Dr. Madeker stressed the growing interest in strengthening the link between Brussels and Strasbourg: "The Council of Europe and the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom (FNF) have the same mission: promoting pluralist democracies, respect for human rights and the rule of law. These issues are dear to the hearts of all liberals throughout the world. We very much look forward to enhancing the cooperation between the Dialogue Programme Brussels of FNF and the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe in the Council of Europe".

Mrs Anne Brasseur, President of the ALDE welcomed the initiatives aimed at strengthening common initiatives of European liberals. As a member of the Bureau of the ELDR, she pledged to contribute to this endeavor which would certainly improve the climate for liberal values and ideas in Europe.

## ALDE holds a hearing on the post-electoral situation in Belarus



Strasbourg 24 January 2011. Mr Aleh Hulak, Mrs Tatyana Chulitskaya, Mrs Elena Milashina, Mrs Anne Brasseur

**The ALDE Group of the Parliamentary Assembly strongly condemned the violent suppression of political protest in the aftermath of the Presidential elections in Belarus and the repressions against civil society and political opponents that followed. Many of liberal partners: politicians, civic activists and journalists remain in detention and risk up to 15 years of imprisonment for organising and participating in “mass disorders”. Ahead of the PACE urgent debate on the situation in Belarus, initiated by the ALDE, the Group hold a hearing on the post-electoral situation in Belarus with the participation of direct witnesses of the events.**

The liberals discussed possible ways to help Belarusian pro-democratic forces and civil society. The Group also examined what reaction of the European community, including the Council of Europe, would be appropriate to address the recent wave of political and anti-liberal repressions.

Tatyana Chulitskaya, lecturer at the European Humanities University in exile, Aleh Hulak, Chairman of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and Elena Milashina, observer of the “Novaya Gazeta” newspaper, shared their observations of the scope of repressions and made prospects for future development of the political situation in Belarus.

“The extent of the electoral fraud in Belarus makes it absolutely impossible for anyone, including the authorities, to obtain the actual results of the presidential elections” according to Mrs Chulitskaya who coordinated a non-partisan electoral observation campaign.

“We have never before witnessed such massive repressions and such strong atmosphere of fear in Belarus”, said Aleh Hulak, who was arrested during the protest rally on 19 December and witnessed the brutality of the police and collected information on inhumane treatment of the arrested protesters. His organisation also risks severe sanctions for “discrediting the Belarusian authorities and law-enforcement organs”.

Elena Milashina underlined that Russia played a key role in these recent elections in Belarus and therefore had to take responsibility for the political consequences. The PACE could be an appropriate platform for reflecting on how Russian proximity to Belarus could contribute to the release of political prisoners and normalisation of the situation.

The ALDE expressed solidarity with the Belarusian civic activists and pro-democratic politicians and stressed that the Council of Europe could not abandon Belarus. The European Community had to clearly demand the release of all political prisoners and sanctions against those responsible for the recent outburst of violence and political repressions. It is Europe’s duty to enhance support to civil society, educational projects, independent media, and arrested people and their families. ALDE members pledged to take this message to their national parliaments.



**Ms Anne Brasseur (Luxembourg)**

- **Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee (Doc. 12477)** - 24 January 2011
- **Debate under urgent procedure: The situation in Tunisia (Doc. 12497)** - Political Affairs Committee - 27 January 2011

*“If we had not been complicit, we had certainly been more than complacent. We were complacent towards the autocratic regime of Ben Ali who had founded a “kleptocracy” based on nepotism and corruption...”*



**Mr Dick Marty (Switzerland)**

**Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo (Doc. 12462)** - Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights - 25 January 2011

*“The democratic future of Europe would be compromised if we tolerated the ambiguous links between politics and organised crime...”*



**Mr Miljenko Dorić (Croatia)**

**The obligation of member states of the Council of Europe to cooperate in the prosecution of war crimes (Doc. 12454)** - Legal Affairs and Human Rights - 26 January 2011

*“It is evident that true reconciliation [...] will not be possible if the perpetrators of war crimes are not brought to justice and impunity is not fought resolutely...”*



**Mr Bernard Marquet (Monaco)**

**Monitoring of commitments concerning social rights (Doc. 12441)** - Rapporteur of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee - 28 January 2011

*“Social rights are an indivisible part of human rights [...] In times of economic and financial crisis, social rights are in danger and must be defended even more actively...”*

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**Communication from the Committee of Ministers to the Parliamentary Assembly, presented by Mr Ahmet Davutoğlu, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Turkey, Chairperson of the Committee of Ministers**



Mrs BRASSEUR (Luxembourg) said that the Committee of Ministers had discussed strengthening processes so as to improve transparency in the judicial process. She asked whether the Committee had sufficient means and tools at its disposal to ensure that the Court's judgments were not ignored.

Mr DAVUTOĞLU – Of course, the mission of the Committee of Ministers has to be realised, but we have certain limitations, as you rightly mention, in achieving these goals. We are trying to do our best to find a way to close the gap between our mission, our expectation and our potential using the instruments and tools that we have to hand. In not only this chairmanship, but the coming ones too, we need to consider very closely how to develop our capacities, including budget capacities, tools and instruments to address the challenges and responsibilities of the Committee of Ministers.



**Question to Mr Abdullah Gül, President of Turkey**



Mrs FIALA (Switzerland)  
Mr President, thank you for being with us today. As you know, our Schengen border is facing big problems. What Italy and Spain faced some time ago, Greece is facing now. Greece has to deal with about 12 500 refugees a month, who often enter via your country, Turkey, from sub-Saharan Africa, Iran and Afghanistan. How will your country react to the problems for Greece? How many refugees is Turkey dealing with right now?



Mr GÜL agreed that the issue of refugees was a major problem but this was not a problem confined to Europe. Any fair look at the matter would acknowledge that the migration route was not just through Turkey but was wider across the Mediterranean. Turkey was however aware of the issue, as Turkey was on the migration route from the east and south. Turkey had adopted strict measures to reduce the problem and Turkish authorities worked closely with their counterparts in Greece and Bulgaria. The problem was not confined to Europe: there was also a problem in Turkey. Clearly not everyone could stay where they wished, as sometimes the numbers of migrants and refugees was enormous. Turkey had recently introduced social security reforms to give rights to people living on Turkish soil but more co-operation was needed across Europe. [Back](#)

**Question to Mr Boris Tadić,  
President of Serbia**



Mrs BECK (*Germany*)

Thanked President Tadić for his speech and the welcome signs of reconciliation for which he was responsible. She reminded him that the true justice was vital to any reconciliation process and asked him why, given his supportive words, Serbia had not yet found Radko Mlatić and Goran Hadžić and handed them over to the ICTY.



Mr TADIĆ said that the ICTY had asked that 46 Serbian citizens in total be apprehended and handed over. Of these 46, 44 had been extradited including a number of ex-Presidents of Serbia. Two remained at large. Those two were not free: they were in hiding and probably

living in far from agreeable conditions; they were certainly beyond the reach of the Serbian state. Even after the ICTY finished its work in 2013, Serbia would do all it could to bring those men to justice. The question had internal political importance as well as being a legal obligation.

Serbia accepted that such actions were a precondition for reconciliation and the only way to entrench democracy and respect for human rights throughout the region. He hoped that all countries in the Western Balkans would act similarly to allow all countries to pursue their common goal of EU membership.

There was no indication that the wanted two men were even in Serbia – he would like them to be, because then he could arrest them. The fact that they were not in Serbia made it difficult for Serbia to complete its legal and moral obligations. He reminded Mrs Beck that many fugitives were out of the reach of state authorities – Serbia was not alone in this – but he assured the Assembly that, if the men were in Serbia, they would be arrested and a solution to all other outstanding problems would soon be found.

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**Address by Mr Traian Băsescu,  
President of Romania**



Mrs GUTU (Moldova) thanked Mr Băsescu for his speech and his tireless support of Moldova in its European aspirations. As president of a country which had itself been monitored for 15 years before accession, she wondered what Mr Băsescu thought of Moldova's chances of acceding to the European Union as part of the Western Balkan package.



Mr BĂSESCU said that this was a political battle that they would fight together. Moldova would indeed become a member of the European Union when it was ready. Romania's strategic goal was to persuade colleagues in the European Union to allow Moldova's accession at the same time as the Western Balkan nations. The interest taken by the European Union in the recent Moldovan elections had demonstrated the seriousness with which Moldova was being considered by the European Union. He hoped that the newly-elected government would continue to work towards that objective.

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



Mr HANCOCK (*United Kingdom*) – I would like to express my very warm appreciation of Mateo Sorinas’s [former Secretary General of the Assembly since 1 February 2011] work. . I wish you very well for your retirement and I wish your successor well. [...] I think I speak for all members who were present at the hearing at Paris in saying that it was a great pity that the Georgians did not come. There were first-class presentations by a group of people who had invested a lot of time and energy in trying to find ways forward. But without the Georgians being present, it was impossible for anyone to gauge whether there was good will on all sides. [...] The biggest obstacle in the Caucasus is the unsettled disputes. Nagorno-Karabakh will not go away; it featured in the election campaign and it was on the minds of millions of people when they went to vote. We still have a job to do, but I believe that the future looks better now than it has for a long time. [Read more](#)

**Tuesday 25 January 2011**

**Inhuman treatment of people and illicit trafficking in human organs in Kosovo (Doc. 12462)**



Mrs BECK (*Germany*) thanked Mr Marty, who had boldly performed a difficult task. She agreed with Mr Marty’s statement that this report should not bring into question Kosovo’s independence. The question was how, in the chaos of war, a structure had been created that had encouraged organised crime and politics to become close and had led to the breathtaking situation in which Kosovo itself had been undermined from within. [...] The report before the Assembly should serve as the starting point for uncompromising co-operation between the different political actors concerned. The rights of victims and of the alleged perpetrators had to be upheld. She urged a thorough investigation to shed further light on the allegations in the report, to bring justice to the victims, and to lift any doubts and suspicions over the alleged perpetrators.

[Read more, voting results](#)

**The protection of journalists’ sources (Doc. 12443)**



Mr LAUKKANEN (*Finland*) – A journalist’s right to refuse to disclose his or her source of information is an important means of enabling the press to carry out its vital public watchdog role and to point out deficiencies and shortcomings. [...] We Liberals want to oppose any legislative action that aims to weaken the right of the journalist to protect his or her sources. It is also important to guarantee these rights in a new digital environment where new technologies are used. [...] Last year, Hungary passed a law that limits the rights of journalists not to disclose their sources. It would be necessary for Hungary to clarify in this law that journalists’ sources can only be disclosed in accordance with Article 10 of the European Convention. The journalistic guideline states that a journalist has the right not to disclose his or her source of information and that the editorial leadership must respect this

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

**Follow-up to the reform of the Council of Europe (Doc. 12458)**

Mr MARQUET (*Monaco*) reminded the Assembly that human rights were an ideal embodying Europe's hopes and dreams. Any reform of the Council of Europe had to take into account the balance of resources, the role of the Court, and move the Council of Europe closer to the citizens of Europe to make it better able to deal with their real concerns. Matters such as social welfare and education directly concerned the citizens of Europe and should not be seen as secondary rights, for a human right was a human right, indivisible from any other. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Wednesday 26 January 2011**

**Joint debate: a. The protection of witnesses as a cornerstone for justice and reconciliation in the Balkans (Doc. 12440 rev); b. The obligation of member states of the Council of Europe to co-operate in the prosecution of war crimes (Doc. 12454); c. Reconciliation and political dialogue between the countries of the former Yugoslavia (Doc. 12461)**



Mrs BECK (*Germany*) thanked the rapporteurs for their exceptional reports, which were optimistic and forward-looking. Given the emotions that the subjects aroused, such an approach was a wise one. [...] The reports emphasised the need to put continued pressure on national governments, especially once the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia finished its work. The societies concerned had to move on from a purely legal process towards social confrontation. [...] Serbia and Croatia were making great efforts towards reconciliation, while Bosnia and Herzegovina was less constructive. She therefore urged the Assembly to live up to its responsibilities by sending a clear message to Bosnia and Herzegovina that it was expected to be a viable state, capable of

building the institutions necessary to uphold the rule of law and urgently promote reconciliation. [Read more, voting results a, b, c](#)

**Joint debate: a. The implementation of judgments of the European Court of Human Rights (Doc. 12455) b. Preventing harm to refugees and migrants in extradition and expulsion cases: Rule 39 indications by the European Court of Human Rights (Doc. 12435)**



Mrs TAKTAKISHVILI (*Georgia*) highlighted the functioning of the Court of Human Rights and drew attention to the problem of the failure to implement certain of its judgments. She mentioned the particular difficulties of bringing into force Protocol 14: it had been the hard work of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights that had resulted in its implementation at all. [...] It would be impossible to guarantee human rights if the judgments of the Court were not fully implemented in all member states. She expressed her full support for the two reports. [Read more, voting results a, b](#)



Mrs LUNDGREN (*Sweden*) – Dear friends, I am very proud to speak on behalf of ALDE. Like Lord Boswell, I belong to a parliamentary Hungarian friendship group at home. As a friend, you have to be able to speak out when things happen; otherwise, you are not a good friend. So when we look at the functioning of democracy in Hungary, I hope we would say that it is in full compliance with all our Council of Europe standards, which are among the best in the world. Sadly, we are not in that position today. [Read more](#)

**Challenge on procedural grounds of the still unratified credentials of the parliamentary delegations of Montenegro, San Marino and Serbia (Doc. 12488)**



Mrs GUTU (*Moldova*) She agreed that, in principle, rules should be adhered to and was aware that the subject of equal opportunities attracted much debate. [...] The only thing that mattered was general qualities such as competence and courage, plenty of which she found in the Serbian delegation, in particular in its female substitute members. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Thursday 27 January 2011**

**Debate under urgent procedure: Violence against Christians in the Middle East (Doc. 12493)**



Mr BADRÉ (*France*) : The ALDE Group had condemned the violence against Christian minorities and he hoped that the message would be heard far and wide. Christians shared an ancient heritage with Jews and Muslims and similarly shared many values. That heritage should not be denied. The extremists had the objective of trying to break the fragile balance that existed between the peoples of the region. To counter this, people had to refocus on what united them on their shared, united values. The Middle East had to remain faithful to its ancient heritage as the cradle of religion and become a land of hope. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Debate under urgent procedure: The situation in Belarus in the aftermath of the presidential election (Doc. 12494)**



Mrs BECK (*Germany*) thanked the rapporteur on behalf of the ALDE Group. She noted that this was not the first debate that the Assembly had held on the situation in Belarus. Between 1999 and 2001, the Council of Europe had discussed the disappearance of Yuri Zakharenko, Victor Gonchar, Anatoly Krasovski and Dmitri Zavadski. Mr Pourgourides had then demonstrated that these disappearances were directly linked to the Lukashenko regime. She felt it important to remind members of the sort of regime they were attempting to work with. The opposition candidates in the previous year's election had been hounded and arrested. Now Lukashenko was attacking human rights, the free press and free thinking, with the aim of crushing all opposition. [...] She urged Russia to use its influence and contacts to start a dialogue with Lukashenko. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Debate under urgent procedure: The situation in Tunisia (Doc. 12497)**



Mrs GUȚU (*Moldova*) : The Jasmine revolution and events in other Mediterranean countries showed that the younger generations could force a country to regain the democratic path. There had been repercussions in Egypt, where violent attacks had harmed innocent victims. Such events could remove the kleptocracy from power. The report rightly sought to involve the Council of Europe in the reform process in Tunisia and she considered that it was right for it to help Tunisia build up its democratic institutions. She hoped that member states would try hard to pre-empt future violence.

The Arab people were making an important and difficult transition.  
[Read more, voting results](#)

**Friday 28 January 2011**

**Monitoring of commitments concerning social rights (Doc. 12441)**



Mrs NAGHDALYAN (*Armenia*) said that the report was a timely reminder of the need to maintain the indivisibility of human and social rights. The report was particularly relevant given the economic crisis and the ongoing process of globalisation, as there was a clear link between poor economic performance and a decline in respect for human and social rights. While she conceded that the current crisis had led to no major political upheaval in Europe, she reminded members that, in democracies, there was always a link between economic performance and political stability. The most important role of the modern state was implementing the rule of law and ensuring that social rights were respected. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Preventive health care policies in the Council of Europe member states (Doc. 12219)**



Mr MARQUET (*Monaco*) said that the ALDE Group supported the creation of a culture of preventive health care: the time was right for it. There was a growing paradox in developed societies, as some groups were living longer and healthier lives, which was of course pleasing, but at the same time other groups, particularly ethnic minorities and the underprivileged, had worsening health. A sustainable response to this problem had to be found as 600 million working days were lost each year to illness. [Read more, voting results](#)

**Promoting active ageing – capitalising on older people’s working potential (Doc. 12431)**

[Read more, voting results](#)