

Press Release

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"the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
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United Kingdom

Spaniard Lluís Maria de Puig elected as new PACE President

Strasbourg, 21.01.2008 – At the opening of its winter session in Strasbourg, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) elected Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) as its new President.

"You have just elected a President who believes in Europe, and who believes in the Council of Europe," he declared in his first speech as President of the Assembly. "I am a convinced European and I regard the future of our institutions with optimism. I want to make a citizens' Europe the watchword of my term in office. I believe that the Assembly's task is to help shape a Europe which is being built for Europeans and by them."

He stressed his intention of forging closer ties with the other players on the European political scene, and particularly the European Union. "I know that institution well, and am convinced that the EU should make better use of the Council of Europe's experience, know-how and instruments."

A historian and politician, Mr de Puig has been a member of PACE since Spain joined the Council of Europe in 1983. In that time, he has served as Vice-President of PACE (1993-1996), Chair of the Spanish delegation (1993-1997 and since 2004), Chair of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education (2002-2005) and Chair of the Socialist Group since 2004.

Active in the clandestine opposition to the Franco regime, he later, as leader of the Socialist Party and, from 1979, member of parliament, helped Spain to make the transition to democracy. A member of the Cortes until 2004, he was elected Senator for Gerona in 2004.

Born in Bascara on 29 July 1945, he is married and the father of two children.

Mr de Puig succeeds René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD) as the Assembly's 24th President since it was established in 1949. He is the third Spaniard to hold the office.

There had been only one candidate. Under the Assembly's new Rules of Procedure, the President's one-year term of office may be renewed once.

The Parliamentary Assembly brings together 318 members from the national parliaments of the 47 member states.

President: René van der Linden (Netherlands, EPP/CD); Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

Political Groups: SOC (Socialist Group); EPP/CD (Group of the European People's Party); ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe); EDG (European Democratic Group); UEL (Group of the Unified European Left).