

# Press Release

## Parliamentary Assembly – Communication Unit

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### 47 member States

Albania  
Andorra  
Armenia  
Austria  
Azerbaijan  
Belgium  
Bosnia and Herzegovina  
Bulgaria  
Croatia  
Cyprus  
Czech Republic  
Denmark  
Estonia  
Finland  
France  
Georgia  
Germany  
Greece  
Hungary  
Iceland  
Ireland  
Italy  
Latvia  
Liechtenstein  
Lithuania  
Luxembourg  
Malta  
Moldova  
Monaco  
Montenegro  
Netherlands  
Norway  
Poland  
Portugal  
Romania  
Russia  
San Marino  
Serbia  
Slovakia  
Slovenia  
Spain  
Sweden  
Switzerland  
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”  
Turkey  
Ukraine  
United Kingdom

### The Assembly marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its first meeting with a commemorative webpage

## **PACE has clocked up 60 years now, but its work is far from over**

Strasbourg, 07.08.2009 – On the eve of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first meeting of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), that took place on 10<sup>th</sup> August 1949, its President, Lluís Maria de Puig, gives a very positive account of its achievements, but recalls that the work of the Council of Europe and its Assembly as the “conscience of Europe” is far from over:

“I am among those who consider the Organisation’s record after sixty years as very positive. At a time of budgetary austerity we can say that the Council of Europe represents ‘good value for money’ for its Member States. It has successfully conducted a highly ambitious political project, bringing together under the same roof, around the same values, all the countries of a continent with a wide range of histories, cultures, languages and traditions.

The Council of Europe has taken the defence and promotion of human rights, the rule of law and democracy as the moral bedrock of its political project. Respect for these values is not just an internal matter for individual Member States. It is the business of each and every one of us, and as parliamentarians we have the right and the duty to act to ensure that all government activities are in keeping with our values and principles. The ‘monitoring system’ developed by the Assembly helps remind States of the commitments and obligations which they took on when they joined the Organisation.

In every family, and this also goes for our European family, criticism seems to be all right for one’s neighbours but not for oneself. And yet criticism is part of democracy; it helps us pinpoint our weaknesses and remedy them. It is a case not of trying to replace the democratically elected governments but of ensuring that they respect our values by means of dialogue and co-operation.

We must shield democracy from the danger of the latent – and often actual – temptation of trying to deal with our societal problems by sacrificing certain of our values and restricting the exercise of our rights and freedoms.

The work of the Council of Europe and its Assembly as the ‘conscience of Europe’ is far from over”.

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*The Assembly marks the 60th anniversary of its first meeting with a commemorative webpage on its site <http://assembly.coe.int>. It contains a comprehensive selection of documents, extracts from the first audio recordings and a selection of images*

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

President: Lluís Maria de Puig (Spain, SOC) – Secretary General of the Assembly: Mateo Sorinas.

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