

Council of Europe Press Division
Phone: +33 (0)3 88 41 25 60, Fax: +33 (0)3 88 41 39 11
E-mail: pressunit@coe.int, Internet: www.coe.int

E-mail

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Controversy over caricatures: debate on freedom of expression at the PACE Standing Committee (Paris, 17 March 2006)

Strasbourg, 14.03.2006 – Following the controversy over the caricatures recently published in Denmark and the violent reactions in a number of countries, the Standing Committee of the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly (PACE) is poised to hold a debate (*) on the subject at its meeting on 17 March in Paris.

In the view of PACE President René van der Linden, who will open the meeting at 9.30 am, "there cannot be a democratic society without the fundamental right to freedom of expression and information, but freedom of thought, conscience and religion constitutes one of the essential freedoms of individuals".

Also on the [agenda](#) is the adoption of a draft text on the [need for international condemnation of the Franco regime](#).

The report, prepared by Leo Brincat (Malta, SOC), strongly condemns the grave human rights violations committed in Spain by the Franco regime between 1939 and 1975. It calls for international condemnation of that regime and the declaring of 18 July 2006 as an official day of condemnation of the Franco regime.

The participants will also hold an exchange of views with Jean-Claude Juncker, Prime Minister of Luxembourg, on his draft report on relations between the Council of Europe and the European Union.

Finally, the PACE members are due to adopt texts on:

- [New trends and challenges for Euro-Mediterranean migration policies](#)
- [Mechanisms to ensure women's participation in decision-making](#)
- [Gender budgeting](#)
- [A dynamic housing policy as an element of European social cohesion](#)
- [The future and regeneration of coalfields in Europe](#)
- [Regrouping land in central and eastern Europe](#)

Venue: Assemblée Nationale (Salle Lamartine), 101, rue de l'Université, Paris (Métro station: Invalides/Assemblée Nationale)

Contact: PACE Communication unit, + 33 3 88 41 31 93, pace.com@coe.int

(*) The Standing Committee will adopt its agenda, including the holding of a current affairs debate on freedom of expression, at the beginning of the meeting. The PACE Standing Committee comprises the Bureau (the President and 20 Vice-Presidents of the Assembly, the leaders of the five political groups and the 10 Committee Chairpersons) and the leaders of the national delegations. It generally meets at least twice a year and its main task is to act on behalf of the Assembly when the latter is not in session.

