

Press Release

**The Socialist Group at the Parliamentary Assembly at the Council of Europe:
*Strong condemnation of any form of corruption and call for an independent investigation of the alleged accusations***

The recent media and NGO's reports about corruption and conflict of interests in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) leave the Socialist Group extremely concerned and worried. The allegations taken over by the media, if proved, undermine the credibility and the integrity of our Organization.

The **Assembly** cannot but take these reports seriously and cannot wait until cases are judged to react. It needs to firmly and publicly condemn any form of corruption and any undeclared conflict of interests to undertake visible and transparent efforts to investigate and resolve the current case in an independent manner, and develop new rules for the future.

In this regard, we request the Assembly to rapidly present its proposals for action or constructive next steps. With its anti-corruption body GRECO, the Council of Europe is equipped with a high level of expertise when it comes to the topic of corruption. The Bureau of PACE could give a formal mandate to GRECO to formulate proposals to PACE to improve its Rules in order to avoid such practices.

The **Socialist Group within PACE** firmly condemns all acts of corruption and/or any facilitation of the latter. We recall to each of our members their obligations in terms of principles of behavior and separation between the political interest and the private ones. And we call the other Political Groups within PACE to join us in this condemnation. We remain committed to the principles of transparency and morality of the public life.

Thus, the **Socialist Group** will take the **following initiatives**:

- ***call for an independent investigation of the alleged accusations***
- adopt a **Code of Ethics for the Group**.
- establish an **independent Committee on Ethics**, which will have the mandate to assess any reported cases of alleged corruption or infringement to the Code and propose to the Group actions or/and sanctions to be taken.
- take the initiative to **revise the possibilities of the PACE to prevent corruption**, undeclared conflict of interest and unjustified interferences, and to counter these where necessary, by specifically proposing changes to the Code of Conduct which outlines the general principles of behavior which the Assembly expects of its members.
- take the initiative to study the situation and the rights and obligations of the **lobbyists within PACE**.

However, the deep crisis and severe criticism the PACE is currently facing, particularly from the ranks of civil society, also portray an opportunity: to re-gain trust through consistent action and a clear set of rules.