

## 6 JULY - EPP-ED GROUP MEETS IN BUDAPEST TO MAP OUT STRATEGY FOR 2004-2009

06-07-2004

In its first meeting after the European elections in Budapest, the EPP-ED-Group in the European Parliament has analyzed the outcome of the elections as being a success that has to be converted into political results now. After a welcome note from - amongst others - the Hungarian delegation leader, Victor ORBAN, and the Chairman of the EPP-ED-Group in the European Parliament, Hans-Gert POETTERING (CDU/D), Austrian Group treasurer Othmar KARAS stated that the EPP-ED-Group has clearly been a winner of enlargement. Taking into account that the Group turned out to be the strongest political force in the European Parliament with 270 deputies out of 735 this has been a victory however without a legislative majority, said Karas. Although the Group is the only political force that is represented in all 25 member states and has been particularly successful in a number of countries such as Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Luxembourg and Slovakia it cannot go alone but must cooperate with the other political groups in the European Parliament.

Wilfried MARTENS, Chairman of the European People's Party, shared this analysis but stated as well that the European elections had been the biggest vote ever in Europe with 150 million voters even though average participation had still declined in the EU-25. Martens furthermore demanded that the Group's main targets such as prosperity, security, stability and a Union of peoples as well as values will be pursued. He also welcomed the nomination of the next Commission president according to the outcome of the elections as a further success, while demanding at the same time that the nomination procedure must be more transparent in the future. Martens furthermore suggested the nomination of a European election's candidate by each political group in the future in order to boost participation again.

Upon invitation of the Group chairman, Valéry GISCARD d'ESTAING, chairman of the former Convention on the future of Europe, made a summary of the European Constitution calling it a decisive step to make Europe more transparent, more effective and more democratic. Giscard thanked the Group for its initiative to establish the Convention on the future of Europe. After pointing out the fact that the European Council had accepted the Convention's draft constitution text with very little changes he said that it will bring substantive progress such as the establishment of European Foreign Minister, double majority voting, clear competences and the acknowledgement of the legislative role of the European Parliament. Giscard concluded with the statement that the EU constitution should be ratified at the latest before 1 July 2006.