

**European Conference of Presidents of Parliament
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**Theme 3 : Mobilisation of Parliaments against hate for inclusive
and non-racist societies**

**President of the Senate of the Kingdom of the Netherlands
Ms Ankie Broekers-Knol**

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Politicians have a major responsibility. We can choose to either inspire fear or inspire understanding. We are an example to the rest of the nation and we have a responsibility to promote a free, respectful and inclusive society.

One way of doing this, is by publicly condemning the spread of hate and racism, not only **against** migrant groups but also **amongst migrant groups themselves**. Recently there have been calls for rejection and isolation within Turkish migrant groups as a result of the attempted coup, a coup which as such was of course most objectionable. In the Netherlands, people who support the Turkish government are in conflict with people who do not. This form of **imported hatred** has resulted in parents keeping their children home from school, out of either fear or hatred of "the other side".

There is no place for this in our free, democratic societies. It even provides fertile ground for xenophobia. We should not raise youth with the hate that arises from foreign conflicts. I believe it is up to politicians to condemn this in our public

statements. The things we teach our children form the foundation of our state.

However, the responsibility politicians have in condemning hate stretches further than our public performances. We should also be aware that the **language and the arguments** we use in our parliamentary debates send an important message to the population.

We as Presidents of Parliament play an important role in this. By determining what is - and what is not - allowed, we set an **example**.

Two years ago in Oslo, we spoke with one another about striking a balance between majorities and minorities. I stated that the acceptance of a legislative proposal should always be the result of a debate in which all arguments are heard and debated. I even said that without this, a free democracy is an empty shell. I still believe this to be true. But in practice, "**making sure all arguments are heard**" can lead to difficult situations.

I will tell you what I mean by that. It concerns a balance we as Presidents of Parliament must all strike.

What happens if a political party chooses to use arguments in a parliamentary debate that inspire hatred towards a certain

group in society? Do you allow the free democratic debate to **run its course**? Knowing that - although you may personally condemn these sentiments - they are very much alive in your society and should be given the chance to be spoken out loud in a political arena.

Or do you ask the speaker to **take back** his or her words? Knowing that parliament as a whole sets a certain standard and that the language of politicians influences the way people speak to each other in everyday life.

This is perhaps the most difficult dilemma we as Presidents of Parliament have to deal with. That is why it is important to share opinions on the matter in the way we do today.