



Parliamentary Conference **Elections in times of crisis**  
Conférence parlementaire **Les élections en temps de crise**  
Parlamentarische Konferenz **Wahlen in Krisenzeiten**  
Bern/Berne 9-10.05.2023



5 May 2023

**Parliamentary Conference**

**Elections in times of crisis:  
challenges and opportunities**

*organised by the*

**Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE)**

*in co-operation with the*

**Swiss Parliament**

*in the framework of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession of Switzerland  
to the Council of Europe*

**9 – 10 May 2023**

**Assembly Hall of the National Council, Swiss Parliament, Bern**

**PROGRAMME**

[Parliamentary conference – Elections in times of crisis \(Bern, 9-10 May 2023\) \(coe.int\)](https://www.coe.int/t/e/parliamentary_conference_elections_in_times_of_crisis_bern_9-10_may_2023.aspx)

## Monday 8 May 2023

17:00 – 18:30 *Cultural event for early arrivals: guided city tour on foot – prior registration required*

## Tuesday 9 May 2023

9:00 – 9:30 Registration of participants

9:30 – 10:00 **Welcoming address**

Chaired by: **Mr Damien Cottier**, Chair of the Swiss delegation to PACE, Chairperson of the PACE Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

- **Mr Martin Candinas**, President of the Swiss National Council
- **Mr Tiny Kox**, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
- **Ms Claire Bazy Malaurie**, President of the Venice Commission
- **Mr Leendert Verbeek**, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

10:00 – 11:30 **SESSION 1: *Pandemic and the polls – the impact of Covid-19 on elections***

Moderator of the Conference: **Mr David Eades**, Chief Presenter, BBC

- *The overall short-and long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on electoral management policies and practice*
- *Legal challenges and preparedness for emergency situations – limits and vulnerabilities*
- *Special voting arrangements during the pandemic: advantages, risks and sustainability*
- *International election observation during the pandemic: what have we learned?*

Chaired by: **Mr Damien Cottier**, Chair of the PACE ad hoc committee, Chair of the Swiss delegation to PACE

Panellists:

- **Dr Massimo Tommasoli**, Director of Global Programmes and Permanent Observer for International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA) to the United Nations, Stockholm
- **Mr Eirik Holmøyvik**, Member of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, Professor of Law, University of Bergen, Norway
- **Mr Alexandr Berlinschii**, Secretary, Central Electoral Commission of the Republic of Moldova
- **Mr Matteo Mecacci**, Director, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), Warsaw
- **Mr Roberto Montella**, Secretary General of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, Copenhagen

Parliamentary contributions:

- **Ms Edite Estrela**, Portugal, SOC
- **Ms Valentina Grippo**, Italy, ALDE
- **Mr Alexander Pocij**, Poland, EPP
- **Ms Cécile Hemmen**, Luxembourg, SOC

*Exchange of views*

11:30 – 11:50 *Coffee break*

11:50 – 13:00 **SESSION 2: Universal suffrage amid universal suffering – how natural disasters distort elections**

- *Natural disasters short before elections: from legal considerations to logistics*
- *Proactive and reactive strategies in protecting elections from natural disasters: risks management vs crisis management*
- *Impact of natural hazards on the campaign, accuracy of election results and the validity of the electoral process*
- *Rebuilding public trust in the integrity of elections following natural disasters*
- *Role of international community support to election authorities in areas affected by natural disasters*

Chaired by: **Ms Despina Chatzivassiliou-Tsovilis**, Secretary General of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Panellists:

- **Mr Erik Asplund**, Programme Officer, Electoral Processes Programme, Focal point on natural hazards and elections, International IDEA, Stockholm
- **Dr Bernd Vöhringer**, Vice-President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe and President of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress, Lord Mayor of Sindelfingen, Baden-Württemberg
- **Dr Emre Toros**, Professor of Political Science at the Faculty of Communication, Hacettepe University, Ankara / Fulbright scholar at Harvard University, Cambridge, MA (2022-2023)

Parliamentary contributions:

- **Mr Nacho Sánchez Amor**, MEP, Spain, S&D
- **Mr Ahmed Yıldız**, Türkiye, NR
- **Ms Edite Estrela**, Portugal, SOC
- **Mr Haluk Koç**, Türkiye, SOC

*Exchange of views*

13:00 – 13:15 *Family photo*

13:15 – 14:30 *Lunch break*

14:30 – 16:00 **SESSION 3: How to be fair in warfare? – the impact of armed conflict on elections**

***Panel 1: Upholding the integrity of elections in times of major security crisis (armed conflicts, major terrorist acts, internal political instability)***

- *States' duties and possible derogations*
- *Minimum conditions for elections to be held and conducted in accordance with international standards in situations of armed conflicts and terrorist acts*
- *Alternative voting methods for elections in conflict areas*
- *Effects of external crisis and war on national and local elections*
- *Interference of hybrid wars in alternative spaces (cyberattacks, propaganda, political subversion, ...)*

Chaired by: **Mr Pierre-Alain Fridez**, Vice-Chairperson of the PACE Sub-Committee on Conflicts concerning Council of Europe Member States, Monitoring rapporteur on the Republic of Moldova, member of the Swiss delegation to PACE

Panellists:

- **Mr Simon Geissbühler**, Ambassador, Head of the Peace and Human Rights Division at the Swiss Foreign Ministry
- **Mr Stewart Dickson**, Thematic Spokesperson of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on the Observation of local and regional elections, Rapporteur on “Local and regional elections in major crisis situations”, Vice-President of the Council for Democratic Elections and member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly, United Kingdom
- **Dr Irena Hadžiabdić**, Expert of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, Member (and former Chairperson) of the Central Election Commission of Bosnia and Herzegovina
- **Mr Vassilis Ntousas**, Head of European Operations, Alliance for Securing Democracy, German Marshall Fund, Brussels

Parliamentary contributions:

- **Mr Antón Gómez-Reino**, Spain, UEL
- **Mr Oleksii Goncharenko**, Ukraine, EC/DA
- **Ms Maria Valentina Martínez Ferrero**, Spain, EPP/CD

*Exchange of views*

16:00-16:20 *Coffee break*

16:20-17:45

**Panel 2: Suffrage after the cannons fall silent – preparing Ukraine for its post-war elections**

- *Timeframes and minimum conditions for calling national and (early) local elections after martial law is lifted (in terms of security, political environment, logistics, finances,)*
- *Guaranteeing the vote of displaced persons within and beyond Ukraine*
- *Registration regulations for displaced voters: how to tackle risks of election frauds?*
- *Implementing alternative voting methods in situations of damaged physical and electoral infrastructure; introducing necessary safeguards*
- *Social media affecting the level playing field among candidates*
- *Material and technical support for the organisation and conduct of post-war elections in Ukraine*

Chaired by: **Mr Nacho Sánchez Amor**, Special coordinator on election observation for the European Parliament, Member of the European Parliament (Social and democrats), Spain/Brussels

Panellists:

- **Dr Volodymyr Venher**, Associate Professor, Department of Jurisprudence and Public Law, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Executive Director at the Kyiv-Mohyla Rule of Law Research Centre, Kyiv, visiting fellow at the Brasenose College and the Institute of European and comparative Law, University of Oxford (2022-2023), United Kingdom
- **Ms Olga Aivazovska**, Chairperson of the Global Network of Domestic Election Monitors (GNDEM), Chairperson of the Civil Network OPORA, international expert in electoral matters, Warsaw
- **Mr Oleh Didenko**, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission of Ukraine
- **Ms Meaghan Fitzgerald**, Director of Elections, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), Warsaw

Parliamentary contributions:

- **Ms Alina Zahoruiko**, Verkhovna Rada Sub-committee on elections, Ukraine
- **Ms Lesya Zaburanna**, Ukraine, ALDE
- **Mr Oleksii Goncharenko**, Ukraine, EC/DA
- **Mr Alfred Heer**, Netherlands, ALDE
- **Mr Andrii Lopushanskyi**, Ukraine, ALDE

*Exchange of views*

19:00

**Reception to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the accession of Switzerland to the Council of Europe, with the participation of Mr Alain Berset, President of the Swiss Confederation, and Mr Bjørn Berge, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe**

**Wednesday, 10 May 2023**

09:00 – 09:10 Keynote address by **Mr Bjørn Berge**, Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe, on “Elections in times of crisis: the role of the 4<sup>th</sup> Summit of the Council of Europe”

09:15-10:30 **SESSION 4: Does digital mean danger? – how electronic voting, AI and cyber are transforming elections**

Chaired by: **Ms Þórhildur Sunna Ævarsdóttir**, Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on Artificial Intelligence and Human Rights of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Iceland politician of the Pirate party, human rights lawyer and journalist, Reykjavik

**Panel 1: At the mercy of Digital: protecting the vote in the digital warfare**

- *Mitigating the evolving security threats of digital technologies on electoral processes (Artificial Intelligence, cyber-attacks, foreign interference, energy crisis, ecological catastrophes) – latest challenges*
- *Addressing cybercrime and cybersecurity: crisis management in emergency situations*
- *False narratives: protecting the vote in the war of mis- and disinformation*

**Panellists :**

- **Mr Thomas Schneider**, Head of International Affairs in the Federal Office of Communication, Switzerland; President of the Committee on Artificial Intelligence of the Council of Europe
- **Mr David Eray**, Head of the Swiss delegation to the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Minister of the Environment for the Canton of Jura, Thematic Spokesperson of the Congress on Digitalisation and Artificial Intelligence
- **Dr Iuliia Spycher**, Researcher on Digitalisation of Public Administration, University of Bern

**Parliamentary contributions:**

- **Mr Constantinos Efstathiou**, Cyprus, SOC
- **Mr Oleksii Goncharenko**, Ukraine EC/DA

*Exchange of views*

10:30 – 10:50 *Coffee break*

10:50 – 12:30 **Panel 2: Harnessing the Power of Technology and Innovation – rethinking electoral procedures**

- *The benefits of the digital*
- *Re-evaluating long-established electoral procedures and practices: sustaining advances and innovations in the next electoral cycles*
- *Strengthening public trust in the management of future electoral processes: challenges and opportunities*

Panellists:

- **Ms Therese Pearce Laanela**, Head of Electoral Processes, International IDEA, Stockholm
- **Mr Oliver Kask**, Judge, President of the National Election Commission of Estonia, Substitute member of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe, elections expert
- **Mr Giorgi Kalandarishvili**, Chairman of the Central Election Commission of Georgia
- **Ms Barbara Perriard**, Head of Political Rights Division, Federal Chancellery, Switzerland

Parliamentary contributions:

- **Ms Viktoriya Podgorna**, Verkhovna Rada Chairperson of the Sub-Committee on e-democracy, Ukraine
- **Mr Antón Gómez-Reino**, Spain, UEL
- **Ms Cécile Hemmen**, Luxembourg, SOC

*Exchange of views*

12:30 – 13:00 **Closing session**

Chaired by: **Mr Damien Cottier**, Chair of the Swiss delegation to PACE, Chairperson of the PACE Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

- Closing remarks by **Mr Rastó Kužel**, Executive Director, MEMO 98, Slovakia, General Rapporteur of the Conference
- Adoption of the Final Declaration
- Closing remarks by **Ms Livia Leu**, State Secretary of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland

13:00 – 14:00 *Lunch (stand-up buffet)*

14:30 – 16:00 *Social event: visit to the Museum of Communication (winner of the 2019 Council of Europe Museum Prize) – prior registration required*

Format of the conference: *The conference will be held in four sessions, divided into six moderated panel discussions with introductory remarks by members of the panel, followed by an exchange of views and experiences by members of parliament and election management bodies and concluded by a general debate.*