

Enhancing the selection process of European Court  
of Human Rights judges through multi-institutional dialogue

**SEMINAR MARKING THE 15 YEARS OF THE ADVISORY PANEL'S WORK**

27 November 2025, Strasbourg

OPENING SESSION

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**Chair of the Advisory Panel**

Good morning, dear colleagues and friends,

1. As Chairperson of the Panel, it is my pleasure to welcome all of you here in Strasbourg, to celebrate the occasion that gathers us all here today. The Advisory Panel of Experts on the Election of Judges to the European Court of Human Rights turns 15 years.

2. 15 years ago, the Panel was established to ensure that candidates nominated for the bench of the European Court of Human Rights possess the highest standards of competence, independence, and integrity. Our task has always been both simple in theory and profound in impact: to advise member States and the Parliamentary Assembly on the suitability of candidates, in line with Article 21 of the Convention.

3. In its early years, the Panel focused on setting rigorous procedures, defining criteria, and building mutual trust between the Council of Europe, member States, and the Assembly. The Panel has reviewed hundreds of CVs, scrutinised qualifications, and, where needed, raised concerns – sometimes requesting governments to reconsider their nominations. Over time, our methodologies have refined, incorporating feedback and best practice, always in service of the fundamental values of the Council of Europe.

4. We have consistently promoted transparency, fairness, and diversity in judicial appointments. We have encouraged gender balance among candidates and advocated for equal access. Raised issues of conflict of interest or inadequate expertise where appropriate. The Panel's independent scrutiny has contributed to strengthening the legitimacy and authority of the Court itself, ensuring public trust in the process and outcome.

5. The Panel has encountered challenges: balancing the diversity of legal traditions across member States; and addressing cases where candidates fell short of the requisite experience or independence – always with tact, discretion, and respect.

6. Allow me to share with you a few representative statistics of what the work of the Panel has entailed over the last 15 years. Since its creation, the Panel has held a total of 38 meetings, meeting on average almost 2.5 times per year. Following such meetings, the Panel has issued a total of 110 opinions, examining a total of 304 candidates.

7. Among these 304 candidates, gender balance was almost achieved. A total of 164 were male candidates, representing a 54% of the total amount, while 140 were female candidates, accounting for 46% of the total amount. These percentages do however change when it comes to which candidates end up being elected as judge, with 67.2% being male candidates and only 32.8% being female. The Council of Europe remains committed to gender parity, and this should be progressively reflected also in the judges' election.

8. Out of the 304 examined candidates, the Panel has accepted a total 230 of them and rejected only 74. This means that the percentage of accepted candidates represents a 75.7% of the total, with only 24.3% of candidates being rejected. You can see a more detailed overview in slide, as well as in the flyers distributed at the entrance.

9. Lastly, but not least important, the professional background of candidates. Throughout the 15 years of the Panel's work, we have observed that most candidates (40% of the total) are indeed judges in their respective home states. A total of 30% of candidates have an academic background, while lawyers represent only the 14%. The same percentage (14%) includes candidates with a different background, or a combined one. This includes ombudspersons, diplomats, legal advisors of governmental entities or non-governmental organisations and, generally, legal professionals in the public (including political) or private domains. A remaining 1.3% are prosecutors. The Panel makes sure that candidates nominated by governments count indeed with a sufficiently established career background, as well as with knowledge of the law and one or both of the working languages of the Court.

10. The result of our work is tangible: the Court has benefited from the service of outstanding judges, equipped with expertise and integrity to tackle Europe's most pressing human rights issues. As the European landscape evolves, so will the demands on the Court and, as reflected in the three sections of this seminar, on us. Our priorities must therefore remain: continuing to uphold the quality of the members of the Court, as well as the transparency and independence of the selection process.

11. I wish to express heartfelt thanks to my fellow Panel members, past and present, for their dedication and expertise. I also acknowledge the cooperation of member States and the Parliamentary Assembly, who have engaged constructively with our recommendations.

12. We should remember that our shared commitment – to justice and the rule of law – remains our steady guide. The Panel's work, though behind the scenes, has a profound effect **on the Convention system of protection of Human rights**, by helping to ensure a Court that is fair, independent, and capable of defending human rights across Europe. Let us continue this vital work together in the years ahead and let us turn this day into an opportunity to discuss past, present, and future challenges, with a view of enhancing the selection process and improving the Panel's important and necessary work.

Thank you.