

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
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CLOSING REMARKS

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Excellences, distinguished colleagues, dear friends,

As we conclude this day of reflection and celebration, we stand at a meaningful crossroads. Fifteen years after the creation of the Advisory Panel, we honor not just an institution, but a vision—a vision of a Court whose judges embody integrity, independence, and excellence, and whose authority is constantly renewed through the quality of those who serve on its bench.

Today, our discussions were not merely technical. They were a reminder of why this work matters: because in its heart lies the protection of human dignity, the preservation of justice, and powerful promise that every person in Europe can seek redress when their rights are threatened.

1. Therefore, I would first like to thank our distinguished speakers for their in-depth expertise and involvement, which made this seminar possible. The significant number of participants — around one hundred — demonstrates the strong interest in the election of European Court of Human Rights judges and the role of the various actors in this regard. Your active contributions throughout the day have been essential to the success of this seminar. It is also particularly important that all the institutions involved in this process - the Committee of Ministers, the governments of the High Contracting Parties, the Panel, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Court - were able to participate in this seminar and contribute to the discussion on the role of the Panel from different perspectives.

2. As highlighted during our discussions, the Panel operates within a complex and evolving European environment and political context. Issues affecting the rule of law and judicial independence at national level can also have an impact on the selection of candidates by High Contracting Parties. These developments do not diminish the Panel's tasks; they underline their importance.

3. Despite these challenges, as well as the fact that the Panel relies almost exclusively on information provided by governments and cannot interview candidates, the Panel succeeded in providing impartial expert opinions on the suitability of candidates in relation to the standard of Article 21 of the European Convention on Human Rights, complemented where appropriate by observations on the national selection procedures.

4. The Panel has always done so in a timely manner, even under significant time constraints. This is remarkable, given that the Panel's members serve on a voluntary

basis while holding demanding judicial or legal positions. I would also like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the exceptional support of the Advisory Panel Secretariat, whose efforts have been instrumental in the success of the Panel's work and this seminar. Despite very limited human and financial resources, the Secretariat, provided by the Public International Law Division of the Directorate of Legal Advice and Public International Law (DLAPIL), has ensured the continuity and quality of the Panel's work and managed to provide support to the Panel as part of its broader responsibilities.

5. Today's exchanges have brought forward several important proposals for institutional developments. These developments reflect the steadily expanding responsibilities entrusted to the Panel and the growing expectations of our institutional partners, including the Parliamentary Assembly. In this broader context, it may be appropriate to reflect, in due course, on whether the current means available to the Panel are sufficient to support its evolving role.

6. I would like to stress that the ultimate purpose of the Panel is to contribute to ensuring that the Court's composition reflects the highest standards of competence and impartiality. This is not an abstract objective; it directly supports the Court's authority, legitimacy and weight so that its judgments are well received and accepted at a national level, including by national supreme courts. This benefits over 700 million citizens across the 46 High Contracting Parties.

8. In this essential mission, the Panel relies on the continued support of all those involved in the selection and election process: including judges, lawyers and legal professionals, as well as the broader legal community. My colleagues and I on the Panel are particularly happy to see that this support exists and is materialising in your presence today.

In conclusion, as we celebrate this anniversary, let us remember that the Advisory Panel was created in a moment of collective determination that the legitimacy of the Court must be protected, and that this protection requires vigilance, expertise, and unity of purpose.

Fifteen years later, that determination remains as vital as ever. Let us carry the inspiration of today forward. Let us continue to challenge ourselves, to learn from one another, and to ensure that the next generation of judges will be worthy of the trust placed in them. May the next fifteen years be marked by progress and by our commitment to justice.

To all speakers, participants, and organisers: We would like to thank you for your contributions, your dedication, and your belief in this shared mission. We would also like to thank the interpreters whose professionalism have enabled today's discussions to take place in both official languages.

Thank you