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Bureau of the Assembly

Parliamentary and electoral co-operation activities

Overview of PACE cooperation work and work plan 2025

1. Parliamentary and electoral cooperation: strengthening democratic governance

1. The work and activities of the **Parliamentary and Electoral Cooperation Division** (PECD) in the Parliamentary Assembly Secretariat aim to enhance the resilience of democratic systems by promoting robust parliamentary practices and fair electoral processes. Working in close collaboration with PACE Committees and with other parts of the Council of Europe, the Division aligns its work and activities with the Council of Europe's strategic objectives, and in particular, with the priorities set out in the Reykjavik Declaration.

2. The [Reykjavik Summit](), held in May 2023, called inter alia for measures to combat democratic backsliding, and stronger mechanisms to ensure democratic participation, uphold free and fair elections, and enhance the resilience of democratic institutions.

3. The Assembly's parliamentary and electoral co-operation activities aim to support parliaments and relevant electoral bodies and institutions in the member States, partners for democracy, and observers in addressing modern challenges and to foster good governance. The activities build on both the democratic standards, relevant instruments and bodies of the Council of Europe, and on the Assembly's own network and expertise in parliamentary matters.

4. The Reykjavik Declaration highlighted the urgency of collective action to strengthen democratic institutions in the face of global challenges, including rising populism, digital threats, and the erosion of trust in governance. By fostering inter-parliamentary dialogue, supporting the implementation of Council of Europe and PACE standards, the execution of European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) judgments, and enhancing the transparency and inclusivity of electoral processes, the Assembly's cooperation activities provide a concrete and targeted follow up to the principles set forth in the Reykjavik Principles of Democracy.

5. The approach not only addresses immediate needs but also contributes to the long-term resilience of democratic systems. Its dual focus on parliamentary and electoral cooperation reflects a commitment to building robust governance structures that adapt to emerging trends, such as the digitalisation of democratic processes, the fight against disinformation, and the inclusion of underrepresented voices in decision-making.

6. The Parliamentary and Electoral Cooperation Division works to foster collaboration and knowledge exchange between parliamentarians and other stakeholders and to lever expertise, partnerships, and innovative approaches to promote and uphold the values and expertise of the Council of Europe, and the work of the Parliamentary Assembly as one of its statutory bodies.

2. Shared goals and strategic priorities

7. Both parliamentary and electoral cooperation initiatives share the overarching goals of:

- **Democratic resilience**: Ensuring adherence to democratic principles through strengthened institutions and practices.

- **Good governance**: Promoting transparency, accountability, and inclusivity in decision-making processes.

- **Capacity building**: Enhancing the competencies of key actors in both legislative and electoral domains.

- **Cooperative engagement**: Facilitating dialogue and partnerships among stakeholders at national, regional, and international levels.

3. Overview of PACE co-operation work

- **Impact and implementation**: Supporting national parliaments in ratifying and implementing the Council of Europe standards, including those derived from the **Reykjavik Declaration**.

- **Knowledge sharing**: Organising seminars and workshops to equip parliamentary staff with expertise in legal instruments and legislative practices.

- **Targeted cooperation**: Engaging with members of parliament from partners for democracy, observers, and democratic forces in non-member States.

4. Electoral cooperation

- **Election standards**: Developing and disseminating best practices in election administration, campaign financing, and voter education.

- **Inclusivity in elections**: Promoting the participation of underrepresented groups such as women, minorities, and youth.

- **Digitalisation and innovation**: Assessing the feasibility of e-voting and combating disinformation in electoral contexts.

- **Training and capacity building**: Strengthening the competencies of key actors in both legislative and electoral domains.

- **Election observation**: Following up on findings from election observation missions to enhance compliance with democratic norms.

8.   It is worth noting in the context of electoral cooperation the [Council of Europe Electoral Cycle](#) framework, which provides a comprehensive and holistic approach to the work of promoting, supporting, and safeguarding democratic electoral processes. The Cycle ensures that every stage of the electoral process, from preparation to implementation and post-election follow-up, is addressed with the highest standards of professionalism, transparency, and inclusivity.

5. Achievements and noteworthy initiatives

9.   The Parliamentary Assembly's co-operation activities, supported by an allocation from the Assembly's Ordinary Budget and supplemented by voluntary contributions, aim to expand its impact, open its work to wider audiences, and strengthen democratic governance across member States and beyond. These initiatives encompass a range of thematic conferences, multilateral seminars, and other events.

5.1.   Strengthening relations and cooperation with the Ukrainian parliament

10.   Recognising the unprecedented challenges faced by the Verkhovna Rada due to the large-scale war of aggression by the Russian Federation, the Assembly has given priority to support to the Ukrainian parliament and parliamentarians. This initiative facilitates their meaningful participation in PACE's institutional activities, including part-sessions and other high-level meetings, and allows them to exchange regularly with fellow parliamentarians from Council of Europe member States and beyond, bring information on the situation in Ukraine to the regular debates on this topic, and to continue to benefit from expertise and information regarding legislative practices, procedures, and standards in fulfilling their obligations under the Statute of the Council of Europe.

11.   The project has enabled:

- **Inter-parliamentary exchange**: Ukrainian MPs have engaged with peers across Europe, fostering dialogue, collaboration, and the exchange of best practices to reinforce democratic principles.

- **Capacity building**: Access to expertise, legislative resources, and institutional support has empowered Ukrainian parliamentarians to address domestic challenges while advancing democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

- **Knowledge dissemination:** Insights from Ukrainian parliamentarians enrich discussions on broader European issues, fostering mutual learning and solidarity.

5.2.   Annual thematic parliamentary conference

12.   Organised in collaboration with relevant PACE Committees, such conferences focus on critical and multi-perspective topics covered by PACE reports, recommendations and resolutions (such as democracy, human rights, artificial intelligence, gender equality, environment, sport governance etc.). By engaging national parliaments, civil society, media and international organisations, these conferences:

- Amplify the Assembly's work and relevance and bring together different strands of its committee work around a common theme.

- Create platforms for multi-stakeholder dialogue between parliamentarians and other relevant parties.

- Promote the dissemination and implementation of Council of Europe and PACE standards.

5.3.   Side events at major institutional meetings

13.   Side events, held alongside PACE Standing Committee meetings and other important gatherings like the European Conference of Presidents of Parliaments, serve as vital forums for outreach and engagement. These events:

- Attract diverse audiences, including policymakers, academics, and media.

- Provide targeted discussions on pressing topics.

- Strengthen partnerships with national and regional actors.

5.4. Supporting national parliaments in human rights and standard implementation

14.   National parliaments play a pivotal role in:

- **Implementing Council of Europe and PACE standards**: Through dedicated workshops and seminars, PACE equips parliamentarians with tools to integrate human rights considerations into domestic legislation.

- **Advancing convention-based standards**: Parliamentarians are empowered to ratify and implement Council of Europe conventions effectively, fostering alignment with European norms.

5.5. Engagement with partners for democracy

15.   Targeted activities are organised for and with Partners for Democracy, such as Morocco and other regions, to strengthen parliamentary roles in democratic reforms, foster civil society engagement, and evaluate legislation, working together with Council of Europe bodies such as the Venice Commission.

6.   Country-specific achievements (electoral cooperation)

- **Republic of Moldova**: Advancements in electoral reforms, including the integration of digital solutions and hosting regional conferences on political financing and election transparency.

- **Georgia**: Adoption of Council of Europe recommendations in electoral legislation and training programs to combat administrative misuse, disinformation, and hate speech.

- **Bosnia and Herzegovina**: Enhanced coordination between election administrators, prosecutors, and police agencies, along with comprehensive training for electoral commissions to ensure credible and efficient elections.

7.   Expanding outreach and impact

16.   Through its thematic conferences, side events, and targeted activities, the Assembly:

- **Reaches broader audiences**, amplifying the visibility of its standards and recommendations and maximising the impact of its work.

- **Encourages participatory dialogue**, reinforcing democratic practices at all levels to meet emerging challenges effectively.

- **Provides a model for integrating parliamentary and electoral cooperation** into comprehensive frameworks for governance.

8.   Funding and partnerships

17.   The parliamentary and electoral cooperation activities are supported through a mixture of financial resources, combining the Parliamentary Assembly's Ordinary Budget (130,000 euros/year) with voluntary contributions from member States. These resources provide a solid foundation for

the work underway; however, the impact is significantly amplified through collaborative funding mechanisms with the European Union in the framework of the CoE/EU Joint Programmes and other key partners, especially in the field of electoral co-operation activities.

18.   Partnerships with national parliaments play a pivotal role, ensuring the projects are tailored to the specific needs and contexts of member States while fostering ownership and accountability.

19.   Collaboration with other Council of Europe entities and bodies is part and parcel of the Parliamentary and Electoral Cooperation programme. Such partnerships ensure alignment with the overall priorities of the Organisation, foster synergies and avoid duplication of effort.

20.   This internal collaboration within the Council of Europe will therefore be further pursued with a particular focus on strengthening partnerships within the framework of the Electoral Cycle and with the Directorate of Programme Coordination (DPC).

21.   Also important are alliances with international and regional organisations, such as the United Nations and its bodies, Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), the EU and the European Parliament, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). These partnerships bring in valuable expertise, networks, and resources. Civil society and specialised media are likewise valuable partners for co-operation activities, bringing in perspectives such as the local and grassroots level, the voice of youth and of vulnerable or overlooked groups in society.

9.   Workplan and priorities for 2025

22.   The focus for 2025 centres on enhancing the scope, impact, and inclusivity of the co-operation aspect of the Assembly's work. Efforts will be strengthened to integrate a parliamentary dimension into the Council of Europe's specific co-operation Action Plans and to bring the results of PACE's work closer to national parliaments through both bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

23.   The co-operation work in 2025 will seek to address increasingly complex and diverse challenges through:

9.1.   Parliamentary focus on key and emerging challenges

- **Artificial intelligence**: Providing guidance on the ethical and democratic implications of AI in policymaking, electoral processes, and governance and facilitating the exchange of good practice.

- **Environmental governance**: Strengthening parliamentary engagement on climate action and sustainable development goals, with an emphasis on empowering legislators to adopt and monitor environmental policies effectively. Particular focus will be on providing support through events that will discuss and exchange best practice on integrating young people and women in the decision making/taking processes on climate change.

- **Digital transformation of democracy**: Addressing the growing influence of artificial intelligence and technology in democratic processes, including the risks and opportunities presented by digitalisation. This includes promoting:

- A better understanding of the crucial role of parliaments in shaping the development, regulation, and oversight of artificial intelligence technologies.

- E-voting frameworks that ensure security and inclusivity.

- Strategies to combat disinformation and safeguard electoral integrity.

- Capacity-building programs for parliamentarians to legislate effectively in the digital domain.

- **Protection of vulnerable groups**: Championing the rights of women, children, minorities, and other marginalised communities by integrating their concerns into legislative and electoral frameworks.

- **Unified democratic initiatives**: Combining expertise from the parliamentary and electoral fields to support solid and comprehensive frameworks for governance, particularly in post-conflict or transitional settings like Ukraine.

9.2. Geographical reach

- **Strengthen democratic resilience in member States and beyond**: By engaging with parliaments in areas facing instability or democratic backsliding, the Assembly aims to bolster institutions capable of countering emerging threats.

- **Engage in dialogue with Russian and with Belarusian democratic forces**.

- **Deepen engagement with partner States**: Expanding support to parliaments in Partners for Democracy such as Morocco, Jordan, and Kyrgyzstan, fostering shared values and democratic principles through targeted cooperation projects.

- **Promote regional cooperation:** Encouraging collaboration among neighbouring states to address shared challenges, leveraging regional synergies to advance democratic standards and governance.

9.3. Sustainable impact

- **Parliamentary integration in Council of Europe Action plans**: work towards the systematic inclusion of the specific parliamentary dimension in country-specific and regional Action Plans to:

- Ensure legislative ownership of reforms.

- Foster inclusivity by aligning parliamentary activities with broader democratic objectives.

- Leverage the unique legitimacy and oversight roles of parliaments to enhance transparency and accountability.

- **Proactive engagement with national parliaments**:

- encourage bilateral programs to address country-specific needs, such as legislative reforms, oversight capacities, and political inclusivity.

- o Organise multilateral and regional forums that bring together parliaments to share best practices, discuss common challenges, and promote joint initiatives.

- o Develop tailored training and peer-to-peer exchanges for parliamentarians and staff to build institutional capacities**.**

9.4.   Expanding outreach and participation

- **Enhancing visibility**: Through thematic conferences, side events, and regional dialogues, the Assembly will open its activities to larger audiences, including civil society, academia, and media.

- **Inclusive platforms for collaboration**: By fostering partnerships with international organisations, electoral bodies, and national parliaments, the Assembly will ensure that its work remains relevant, impactful, and accessible to diverse stakeholders**.**

- **Strengthening parliamentary networks**: Continue to provide support as and when needed to the Parliamentary Networks and Alliances to address specific challenges, mobilise resources and collective action and strengthen impact.

24.   By advancing these priorities, the Parliamentary Assembly cooperation activities seek to deepen the impact of the work of the Assembly as a catalyst and multiplier for democratic resilience and innovation. Its enhanced integration into Council of Europe Action Plans and proactive engagement with national parliaments will create enduring frameworks for collaboration, reinforcing the Assembly's impact across Europe and beyond.

Appendix 1

Thematic overview of activities to be organised in 2025 by the Parliamentary and Electoral Co-operation Division,

including in cooperation with the Secretariats of PACE Committees and other CoE institutional bodies and entities

ORGANISING ENTITY	ACTIVITY	TENTATIVE DATE	TENTATIVE VENUE	SOURCE OF FUNDING
	PARLIAMENTARY COOPERATION			
PECD in cooperation with the PACE Committees	**Promoting the role of the Ukrainian Parliament in upholding and strengthening democratic institutions**			
1	*Activities to develop the exchange of information and joint actions between the Assembly structures and the Ukrainian delegation*	All year	Strasbourg/Paris /Kyiv/other MS	**OB + VC**
PECD in cooperation with other CoE bodies/entities	**Implementation of the partnership for democracy**			

Activities with the Parliament of Morocco					
1.	*Seminar on the methodology for the preparation and evaluation of legislation, in cooperation with the Venice Commission*	1st semester	Rabat	**OB+VC**
Parliamentary Conferences					
1.	*Shaping the future: Parliamentary conference on 'Global student mobility and the challenges of recognising qualifications and skills'.*	1st semester	Strasbourg	**OB+VC**
2.	*Parliamentary Conference on Artificial Intelligence*	15-16 December	London,UK (tbc)	**OB+VC**
3.	*An event on "The Impact of Social Media Abuse on Women in Politics" (parliamentary + electoral cooperation)*	1st half of the year	UK (tbc)	**OB + VC**
PACE Information Seminars for the Secretaries of national delegations					
1.	*Half day information seminar (theme to be decided)*	April or June	Strasbourg	
2.	*Half day information seminar (theme to be decided)*	December	Paris	**OB**

Thematic events at the level of PACE Standing Committee Meetings and Conferences				
1	Event on Youth and Environment, to be organised before the Conference of Presidents of Parliaments	20 March	Strasbourg	
2.	Side event to be organised in cooperation with the Maltese delegation to PACE (tbc)	23 May	Valletta, Malta	**OB**
3.	Round table to be organised in cooperation with the Moldovan delegation to PACE on: Violence against Women and the Role of Parliaments in the implementation of the Istanbul Convention (tbc)	*21 November*	*Chisinau, Moldova*	**OB**
ELECTORAL COOPERATION				
1.	High-Level Dialogue IV "GOOD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE IN UKRAINE: ACHIEVEMENTS, CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD IN POST-WAR PERIOD in collaboration with the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and Venice Commission	2nd semester	Central Election Commission/ National Assembly of Ukraine	**VC**
2.	Post-election Conference following Local Elections 2024, Bosnia and Herzegovina	1st trimester	Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina	**VC**
3.	Post-electoral review conference following October Presidential elections and EU-related republican constitutional referendum, 2024, Moldova.	1st semester	Chișinău, Moldova	**VC**
4.	Regional conference Money in Politics	2nd semester	Chișinău, Moldova	**VC**
Election related events				
1.	Expert discussion on media and elections, newest challenges and threats to be organised in cooperation with Oxford University and Kyiv-Mohyla Academy	1st semester	*TBC*	**VC**
2.	Bilateral peer-to-peer exchange between Ukrainian authorities (CEC, MFA) with the UK authorities	1st semester	*TBC*	**VC**

| 3. | *Other activities: Conferences, trainings, seminars, workshops and expert support focusing in particular on capacity building and professionalization of electoral administration, improving electoral dispute resolution and monitoring political and campaign finance, developing voter education and awareness, strengthening domestic observation, combating the misuse of administrative resources and combating hate speech and disinformation, strengthening the role of the media in elections and electoral campaigns* | All year | *Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, Moldova, Ukraine* | **OB /VC** |