

Elections Division

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Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections

Terms of reference¹

The Parliamentary Assembly has been committed to election observation since 1991, providing essential recommendations that have helped shape the electoral legislation of member States and informed the endeavours of both the Monitoring and the Political Affairs Committees.

Confronting emerging challenges that threaten electoral integrity and undermine public trust in democratic processes, the Assembly has decided to take a more proactive stance in advocating for activities aimed at enhancing the legal frameworks and improved electoral practices in member States. In 2022, its Elections Division co-initiated the Council of Europe's Electoral Cycle, in 2023 it organised the Bern Conference on "Elections in times of crisis", which drew on the synergies of various stakeholders, including members of International Election Observation Missions (IEOM), electoral management bodies, civil society organisations, and academic institutions.

In response to the "Reykjavik Principles for Democracy" adopted at the Council of Europe Summit of Heads of State and Government (16-17 May 2023) and the subsequent Riga Declaration which committed the Assembly to "strengthening its initiatives to uphold the integrity of elections", the Assembly has realigned its activities, including by incorporating intergovernmental election cooperation in its structures as of January 2024 to enhance support for member States throughout the electoral process. It is now also managing the [Council of Europe Electoral Cycle](#) and focusing more on the preparation and follow-up to the Assembly's thematic reports on topics such as foreign interference, crisis situations, migrant portrayal in campaigns, reconstruction of Ukraine, etc.

In this context, the creation of a Parliamentary Network of election observers in 2024, renamed Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections in 2025, will facilitate cross-cutting dialogue on electoral issues and will formally represent the Assembly in external forums, without altering the operational mechanisms of existing election observation missions (EOMs) or new cooperation activities. The terms of reference for the Alliance are delineated below.

¹ Approved by the Bureau and ratified by the Assembly on 28 June 2024, revised by the Bureau and ratified by the Assembly on 7 April 2025

Aim of the Alliance

1. In accordance with [Resolution 2538 \(2024\)](#) "Promoting the revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums", the Parliamentary Assembly decides to create the Parliamentary Alliance for Free and Fair Elections to enable a more effective exchange among PACE observers, reinforce electoral activities and enhance the visibility of the Assembly's electoral endeavours in light of post-Reykjavik Summit and the addition of a co-operation component.
2. In particular, as platform of exchange, the Alliance should:
 - 2.1. foster exchange of information on electoral activities and election observation missions (EOMs) between PACE observers;
 - 2.2. promote the Council of Europe [reference standards](#) in electoral matters, in particular:
 - Venice Commission's Code of good conduct in electoral matters, Revised Code of Good Practice on Referendums and its legal opinions on (draft) legislation on elections, referendums and political parties,
 - The Committee of Ministers' Recommendations in electoral matters,
 - The European Court of Human rights' case-law on the right to free and fair elections as set out in [Protocol 1, Article 3](#),
 - PACE Resolutions related to electoral matters,
 - 2.3. organise dedicated seminars;
 - 2.4. ensure the representation of the Assembly in external activities in the field of elections;
 - 2.5. promote visibility of the Assembly's activities in the field of elections, including its contribution to the Council of Europe Electoral Cycle.
3. The Bureau of the Assembly remains responsible for the appointment of PACE ad hoc committees to observe elections and referenda in line with the Assembly's Rules of Procedure (Appendix XIII).

Composition of the Alliance

4. The Alliance shall be composed of members approved by the Bureau of the Assembly, as follows:
 - 4.1. in respect of the member States of the Council of Europe: members of the Parliamentary Assembly on the basis of candidatures presented by the political groups and taking into account active participation in PACE election observation missions, gender balance and regional balance. The Bureau of the Assembly shall approve additional members to the Alliance from among the representatives and substitutes of the Assembly who do not belong to any political group upon proposal of the Bureau of the Network;
 - 4.2. in respect of the parliaments with Observer, Partner for Democracy or Special Guest status with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: one member of parliament for each unicameral parliament, and one member of each Chamber for bicameral parliaments, appointed by the parliamentary delegation;
 - 4.3. a representative appointed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;
 - 4.4. a representative appointed by the Venice Commission.
5. The President of the Assembly, the Chairpersons of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, of the Monitoring Committee and of the Committee of Legal Affairs and Human Rights, the chairpersons of political groups, the General Rapporteur on Democracy, as well as the representatives of the Assembly in the Council for Democratic Elections of the Venice Commission (members and substitutes), shall be ex officio members of the Alliance.

Working methods of the Alliance

6. In terms of application of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, the Alliance shall follow the rules applicable to sub-committees of the Assembly (article 49 of the Rules), except as otherwise provided.

7. The working languages of the Alliance shall be English and French.
8. The Bureau of the Alliance shall be composed of one member designated by each political group and approved by the Bureau of the Assembly. The Chairperson of the Alliance shall be designated among the members of the Bureau of the Alliance on the basis of an agreement reached among the political groups ensuring the rotation amongst political groups. The chairperson and the vice-chairpersons of the Alliance shall remain in office until the opening of the next ordinary session of the Assembly. They may serve for one further term, consecutive or not. A chairperson or vice-chairperson of the Alliance designated in the course of a session for an incomplete term may be designated for maximum two further terms.
9. The costs of participation of members of the Alliance in its meetings and events shall be borne by the respective national parliaments.
10. The Alliance shall develop co-operation with all Council of Europe parties active in electoral matters within the framework of the Council of Europe Electoral Cycle, in particular the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDDEM) and the Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM).
11. The Alliance shall actively co-operate with national parliaments and parliamentarians in and beyond Europe, as well as parliamentary networks and regional and international parliamentary assemblies, including but not limited to the Assembly's partners in the framework of the International Election Observation Missions, in particular the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ ODIHR), OSCE PA, EP and NATO PA.
12. The Alliance shall also co-operate with other international organisations, election management bodies, NGOs as well as representatives of the media and the academia dealing with electoral matters.
13. The Alliance shall periodically, and at least once a year, report to the Bureau of the Assembly of its activities, which shall approve its proposals.