



Parliamentary Conference **Elections in times of crisis**
Conférence parlementaire **Les élections en temps de crise**
Parlamentarische Konferenz **Wahlen in Krisenzeiten**
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SESSION 1: Pandemic and the Polls – the impact of Covid-19 on elections

The spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020-2021 turned our world upside down, and not surprisingly, elections have been an immediate and inevitable casualty of the pandemic. With countries grappling with unprecedented challenges to safeguard the health and safety of voters and the legitimacy of their elections, decision-makers faced serious dilemmas to determine how to manage the pandemic's immediate impact on, and consequences for, the timing and sequencing of elections.

In a very short time, the Covid-19 crisis transformed fundamental electoral norms, practices and approaches governing electoral management over the last decades. It rapidly highlighted serious gaps in legal and constitutional frameworks and challenged numerous countries to rethink how to deliver safe, technically sound and credible elections requiring extraordinary swiftness and flexibility of action.

Notwithstanding the huge challenges, the global health crisis also presented opportunities for growth, positive change and innovation which require an urgent review, adjustment and meaningful application of new policies, systems and approaches to electoral management.

This first session is therefore a timely occasion to draw some conclusions on the lessons learned, and to analyse which of the electoral management advancements sparked by the Covid-19 pandemic have survived to date and are likely to endure and shape the future of elections. It will look more specifically at the special voting arrangements (SVA) implemented during Covid-19 and question whether these arrangements are still relevant when looking beyond the pandemic.

This session will also discuss how the pandemic limited international election observers' ability to conduct comprehensive or systemic observation, but also the innovations (remote monitoring, online monitoring) introduced to compensate the limited presence on the ground, and the possibility of developing a joint framework on how EOMs approach emergency situations.

A panel of renowned election experts and politicians will address the various shortcomings and offer invaluable perspectives in preparing future elections, with the insight of the lessons we learned through Covid-19.