



**PACE Thematic Project on  
the role of national parliaments in implementing  
Council of Europe electoral standards  
2015-2020**

## **RATIONALE**

The Council of Europe, with its various statutory bodies, plays a central role in the codification of electoral law, in electoral observation and in assisting member states to improve their electoral systems and processes.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) recalls in its *Resolution 1897 (2012) Ensuring greater democracy in elections* that “democratic elections are decisive for ensuring that the will of the people is respected in the shaping of the legislature and government at all levels and that elected bodies are effectively representative.” but also that “(...) today, when citizens seem to have less and less confidence in the institutions of representative democracy, it is all the more crucial to enhance the democratic character of elections and thus reinforce the link between the expression of the people and the actual outcome of the vote.” The Assembly has observed over 220 parliamentary and presidential elections in European countries since 1989, together with the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), which drew-up in 2002 the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters.

The Assembly in its election observation reports, as well as in its resolutions and recommendations on different aspects of electoral processes\* has frequently pointed out certain election-related violations, which still persist in a number of Council of Europe member States, in particular the misuse of administrative resources or lack of equal access to the media and of media impartiality but also the problem of effective implementation of existing laws on free and fair election.

\*see: <http://www.assembly.coe.int/LifeRay/APCE/pdf/Elections/FundamentalTexts2003-2019-EN.pdf>

## **PACE PROJECT**

The Assembly, in co-operation with its Election observation and Interparliamentary co-operation Division, Venice Commission and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, developed a parliamentary project on the role of national parliaments in implementing electoral standards as from 2015, which will be pursued in 2020.

In this period, project targeted certain countries and was financed by various regional or country-specific programs carried out by PACE as well as co-financed by the Venice Commission (see *the detailed calendar of activities below*). It is implemented by the PACE Parliamentary Project Support Division and it aims at raising awareness of Members of national parliaments of target countries of importance of their involvement in ensuring electoral systems and processes in compliance with Council of Europe standards to guarantee respect of parliamentary democracy and respect of human and civil rights in their country. The current project was developed in view to treat some of the recurrent problems during electoral process but also in order to share electoral good practices among member States on peer to peer basis.

## IMPLEMENTATION AND ACHIEVEMENTS

The Assembly has organised so far six activities between June 2015 and December 2019, with a total number of 355 participants registered: 121 parliamentarians (PACE MPs and MPs from national parliaments) and 234 other participants (experts, members of the Venice Commission and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, NGOs, Central Electoral Committees, international organisations, representatives of governments). One more activity is currently planned for September 2020 in Georgia, before its 2020 parliamentary elections.

The activities within the framework of this project focused on three major electoral aspects, necessary for a democratic election, to which the project provided answers:

- ❖ How to implement the right to free election and improve electoral standards (see the Summary report from the Conference in Paris, on 4-5 June 2015);
- ❖ How to prevent and respond to the misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes (see summary reports from the conferences held in London on 9-10 November 2017 and in Tirana on 10-11 April 2018)
- ❖ How to ensure Media freedom during democratic elections (see the summary report from the conference in Berlin on 4 July 2016)

### CALENDAR OF IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES IN 2015-2019 and participation statistics

Date and Venue / Programme	Activity and framework programme	MPs	Other participants
4-5 June 2015 PARIS	Parliamentary Conference on implementation of the right to free elections: the challenge of applying election legislation and Council of Europe standards  <i>PGG - Partnership for Good Governance, joint programme with EU 2015-2017 for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine</i>	22	50
18 May 2016 MINSK	National Round Table on electoral standards and the electoral process improvement in Belarus  <i>PGG 2015-2017</i>	9	20
4 July 2016 BERLIN	Parliamentary Conference on Media freedom as a cornerstone for democratic elections  <i>PGG 2015-2017</i>	36	30
9-10 November 2017 LONDON	Regional Parliamentary Conference on "Misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes: a major challenge for democratic elections"  <i>PGG 2015-2017</i>	20	43
10-11 April 2018 TIRANA	Joint Parliamentary Seminar with the Congress on "Misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes: a major challenge for democratic elections"  <i>Action Plan for Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina 2015-2017</i>	20	67
2-3 December 2019 TBILISI	Regional Parliamentary Conference on preventing and responding to the misuse of administrative resources during electoral processes: the role of national parliaments  <i>Action Plan for Georgia 2019-2020</i>	14	24
	Total	121	234
<b>TOTAL PARTICIPATION</b>		<b>355</b>	