



Resolution 1231 (2000)¹

Impact of electoral systems on the political process

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The electoral system is one of the most fundamental elements of representative democracy. A crucial moment in representative democracies is how elected officials are elected.
2. Within the member states of the Council of Europe several electoral systems are in use. These different systems can be categorised into three main types: plural-majority systems, semi-proportional systems and proportional systems. Thirty member countries apply various proportional electoral systems.
3. The impact of electoral systems on the political process and on citizens' commitment to the political process is an important topic to be taken into consideration.
4. A large turnout at elections is an important element of democracy.
5. The proportion of women parliamentarians is increasing in western democracies. According to several studies the list-proportional representation system provides the best opportunity for women to take their place in parliament.
6. The electoral system can also have an effect on the way ethnic, linguistic and religious minorities are represented. It is important to guarantee that minorities are not discriminated.
7. The Assembly considers that citizens' participation – notably that of the young – in the political process is a topic of fundamental importance and should be debated recurrently by the Assembly in order to stimulate a broader European debate.
8. The Assembly proposes to set up statistics and to keep them updated, possibly within the framework of the International Institute of Democracy, in order to be able to compare turnout at elections in the member states and factors characterising the elected members, such as women's representation, length of parliamentary service, age and profession, thus evaluating the development of democracy.
9. The Assembly suggests that the parliaments of member countries pay attention to issues regarding the effects of the electoral systems on the political process.
10. The Assembly, as well as national parliaments, should promote research on how to stimulate citizens' participation in the political process.

1. See [Doc. 8871](#), report of the Committee on Parliamentary and Public Relations, rapporteur: Mr Lekberg. Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 9 November 2000.

