Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

**Resolution 1264 (2001)**[1]

# Code of good practice in electoral matters

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Free and fair elections at regular intervals by secret ballot are a fundamental requirement for a political system to be recognised as a democracy.

2. The conditions in which elections are conducted depend to a large extent on the political and cultural traditions and positive law of each country. However, there are universal standards which set absolute minimum requirements or prohibit certain forms of conduct in order for elections to be considered free and democratic.

3. At the moment, despite the work which international organisations such as the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) and the Council of Europe have been doing for some years, there is no single text setting out the basic rules for the conduct of elections.

4. The Assembly strongly believes that, because of its special role as the guardian of democracy in Europe and its expertise in electoral matters, the Council of Europe could and should play a pioneering role in codifying election rules and standards. This would prevent the application of different standards and make a positive contribution towards the assessment of situations in member states regarding the monitoring of their commitments.

5. The existence of the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) as an active part of the Council of Europe could reinforce the role of the Council in electoral matters. The organisation of co-operation and co-ordination between the Venice Commission and the Parliamentary Assembly should be enhanced so as to make fuller use of the Assembly's experience in this area, as well as the expertise of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) as regards local and regional elections.

6. The Assembly therefore calls on the Venice Commission:

   6.1. to set up a working group, comprising representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly, the CLRAE and possibly other organisations with experience in the matter, with the aim of discussing electoral issues on a regular basis;

   6.2. to devise a code of good practice in electoral matters which might draw, inter alia, on the guidelines set out in the appendix to the explanatory memorandum of the report on which this resolution is based (Doc. 9267), on the understanding that this code should include rules on the run-up to the election, the elections themselves and on the period immediately following the vote;

   6.3. as far as its resources allow, to compile a list of the underlying principles of European electoral systems by co-ordinating, standardising and developing current and planned surveys and activities. In the medium term, the data collected on European elections should be entered into a database, and analysed and disseminated by a specialised unit.

1. (see Doc. 9267, report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Clerfayt). Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 8 November 2001