



Resolution 1407 (2004)¹

New concepts to evaluate the state of democratic development

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe acknowledges that democracy is nowadays confronted with a dangerous crisis which can be seen in the low turn-out at elections, lack of interest and low participation of citizens in public life, decreasing respect for and confidence in political parties and politicians and the tendency to elect managers instead of leaders, technocrats instead of policymakers and entertainment stars instead of statesmen.
2. The entire democratic deficit and these negative developments make the classic concepts of democratic rights and freedoms insufficient and demonstrate the necessity for introducing new concepts. The globalisation process amplifies the shortcomings of democratic systems and makes them fragile in the face of transnational phenomena.
3. While the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights are considered universal, their models are only indicative. The same values disseminated in different cultural, social, historical and geographical environments might result in a wide variety of public behavior. On the other hand, the same or comparable democratic targets could be reached by following different political avenues and starting from different social and cultural backgrounds.
4. The commitment to democratic standards is one of the fundamental requirements for every member state of the Council of Europe. Accession to the Council of Europe is preceded by a close scrutiny of the state of democracy and of all national legislation as well as the functioning of democratic institutions and the judicial system.
5. Democratic reform and development can only be sustainable when it is based on full integration of democratic norms and practices into the administrative, political and judicial systems, including normative standards and their implementation in everyday practice at operational level.
6. The Assembly is aware that the level of democratic development is not sufficient in member states, as has been indicated by the Council of Europe's monitoring procedures. It is thus necessary to combine these procedures with active assistance to, and co-operation with, all member states. The logic of monitoring should be replaced, or at least coupled with, the logic of partnership.
7. The Assembly will continue to co-operate actively with the Committee of Ministers and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in order to achieve greater synergies for the Council of Europe by exploiting the specific resources and experiences of each of these bodies with regard to the evaluation of democratic development.
8. One of the main themes of the Conference of Speakers and Presidents of European Parliaments (Strasbourg, 18 and 19 May 2004) was "How democratic is our democracy". The appeal, contained in the conclusions of the conference, to national parliaments to exchange information in this field deserves the full support of the Assembly.

1. Assembly debate on 8 October 2004 (32nd Sitting) (see [Doc. 10279](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Severin). Text adopted by the Assembly on 8 October 2004 (32nd Sitting).



9. Democratic development in Europe must be determined by various factors which may be of different weight depending on the historic, geographic, demographic, cultural, social and economic circumstances of a country. In this context, the Assembly believes that the following list – to be added to the traditional democratic standards of the Council of Europe, such as the various individual freedoms, free and fair elections, the separation of powers, the checks and balances of the state's institutions, etc. – should constitute the parameters for the evaluation of the democratic development in a given country:

- 9.1. the transparency of governmental action and administration;
- 9.2. the accountability of decision-making bodies towards the public;
- 9.3. the openness of political decision-making processes to the public;
- 9.4. the possibilities and the degree of motivation for citizens to effectively participate in the decision-making process;
- 9.5. the possibility for foreign nationals who reside in a state to gradually acquire all the rights of citizenship, including that of participating in regional and local political decision-making processes;
- 9.6. the level of political action by the public outside parliament and its impact on the functioning of parliament as the forum for democratic debate and decision making;
- 9.7. the development of civil society and the extent to which its structures and entities are neither controlled by the state nor act as disguised opposition parties lacking democratic legitimacy;
- 9.8. the secular character of the state, meaning that the state should remain at an equal distance from all religions and confessions, including agnostics; this does not prevent certain elements of the spiritual and material culture of the traditional religions of the state's population from being considered an important part of national culture;
- 9.9. the development of political pluralism and the way in which parties are financed and function;
- 9.10. the development of civic multiculturalism associating the equality of citizens and their equal loyalty to their common state (the civic nation) with the respect for diversity and intercultural coexistence (multiculturalism as a multidimensional, complex social fabric);
- 9.11. the capacity to aggregate national democracy with local, regional, non-national, transnational and global democracy;
- 9.12. the general level of economic development of a society;
- 9.13. the development of the middle class compared to the degree of economic polarisation of a society;
- 9.14. the conditions of minorities, including those measures with regard to positive discrimination which allow them to feel that they have opportunities which are equal to those of the majority and which grant them full opportunities to be integrated in the given society without losing their identity;
- 9.15. gender equality in the participation in democratic decision-making processes;
- 9.16. subsidiarity through vertical decentralisation in governmental and administrative action and regional and local self-government while preserving the cohesion of the state, together with horizontal decentralisation in sharing the burden of the social order between the state institutions and society's structures;
- 9.17. the independence of the media from governmental structures, from economic monopolies, from oligarchic control or from any other non-transparent groups of interest;
- 9.18. the measures for the protection of democracy against non-democratic initiatives;
- 9.19. the level of anti-corruption measures and their effectiveness;
- 9.20. the effectiveness of the policies against organised crime;
- 9.21. the status of prisoners and the quality of conditions in prisons;
- 9.22. the effectiveness of the anti-discrimination rules and regulations, including the rejection of any political, social and economic discrimination on an ethnic basis leading to political separatism and cultural segregation;
- 9.23. the effectiveness of civil control over public institutions (especially the military and the security services), as well as the transparency and the accountability of the bureaucracy.

10. The Assembly acknowledges that all the above criteria shall be applied and checked in all member states, be they old, new or restored democracies, as the democratic deficit threatens all of them equally.
11. In order to avoid democratic formalism and to develop a vibrant and real democracy able to have an effective popular appeal, it is crucial to avoid double standards in assessing democratic progress, and at the same time to adapt methods for the evaluation of the possible democratic deficit in such a way as to reflect properly the variety of the cultural, historical and social environment within which democracy should grow.
12. Democracy is never perfect but always evolving towards perfection; democracy is not a mere set of laws and institutions, but a way of thinking and living, and therefore it should grow naturally, without it being possible to export it or to transfer it mechanically from one place into another; democracy is not immutable but in constant evolution.
13. The Assembly calls on the national parliaments of member states and civil society to support the stimulation of participatory democracy in Europe through the following action:
 - 13.1. major political projects should be discussed and defined in order to provide the public with political ideas and ideals for public debate;
 - 13.2. politics should be resocialised by addressing the major dividing lines and rifts in Europe, for instance in the social, cultural, economic or environmental sectors;
 - 13.3. expertise and knowledge should become part of politics and political decision-making, in particular with regard to the social sciences;
 - 13.4. the social fabric and cohesion of our societies should be strengthened by developing a community spirit;
 - 13.5. a culture of conflict settlement should be supported, ensuring the solution of differences of opinions and conflicts of interests through appropriate democratic means and processes;
 - 13.6. political parties and organisations should seek to recruit members who reflect the differences in society and have the capacity to define political ideas and communicate them to the general public;
 - 13.7. political parties should become more transparent and open to civil society and the different sectors of society;
 - 13.8. democratic decision making should be decentralised and decisions should be taken as closely as possible to the people concerned, which is of particular importance within the enlarged and reinforced European Union;
 - 13.9. the public should be provided with more possibilities of expressing differences, either for themselves as a form of individual freedom, or with regard to local, regional and national decisions through consultative and participatory processes.
14. In this context, the Green Paper on “The future of democracy in Europe – trends, analysis and reforms”, commissioned by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in the framework of the integrated project “Making democratic institutions work” provides a basis for reflection for national parliaments and governments of member states.
15. The Assembly is determined to introduce a process of periodical reports on the state of democratic development, which allows each member and Observer state to present updated information on democratic reforms and other measures undertaken.
16. The Assembly is also determined to embark on a dynamic dialogue and co-operation with the other international organisations concerned, as well as with the parliaments of non-member states, in order to promote its standards and democratic values beyond its frontiers while recognising everybody’s right to have different opinions in accordance with different situations and traditions.