

Recommendation 2179 (2020)¹

Democracies facing the Covid-19 pandemic

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly refers to its [Resolution 2337 \(2020\)](#) on democracies facing the Covid-19 pandemic in which it calls, *inter alia*, on member and observer States to respect the system of democratic checks and balances and apply a number of principles when facing a public health emergency and when deciding whether to hold or postpone elections during such an emergency.
2. In the face of the pandemic, the Assembly considers that the international context must shift from rivalry among powers to strong and effective multilateral co-operation beyond partisan divisions. It also calls on member and observer States to ensure that diagnostic tools, treatments and vaccines are available and affordable for everyone, starting with the most vulnerable groups among Europe's 830 million citizens.
3. The Assembly welcomes the fact that, in the face of the challenges raised by the pandemic, the Council of Europe bodies and institutions – in particular, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Committee of Ministers, and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) – as well as the Secretary General and the Commissioner for Human Rights have provided timely and adequate support to member States by sharing with their governments and parliaments tools, standards and guidelines aimed at ensuring compliance with the principles of democracy, human rights and the rule of law in their response to the pandemic.
4. The Assembly welcomes in particular the Secretary General's toolkit offering guidance to member States, "Respecting democracy, rule of law and human rights in the framework of the Covid-19 sanitary crisis", as well as the Declaration of the Committee of Ministers on the Covid-19 pandemic, adopted on 22 April 2020 under the Georgian presidency. It also fully supports the theme "Protection of human life and public health in the context of a pandemic – Effectively responding to a sanitary crisis in full respect for human rights and the principles of democracy and the rule of law", which is the focus of the priorities of the Greek presidency of the Committee of Ministers, and looks forward to the Athens Declaration to be adopted on 4 November 2020 at ministerial level.
5. In light of the principles applicable to situations of emergency drafted by the Venice Commission and on the basis of information, available on the website of the observatory of such situations in Venice Commission member States, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to build on national experiences and good practice in responding to the Covid-19 pandemic with a view to developing a checklist of parameters to enable the fullest democratic participation possible in situations of emergency.
6. Noting that co-operation, co-ordination and exchange of information and good practice between different tiers of government (national, regional and local) have proved crucial for the efficiency and effectiveness of the response by member States to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Assembly invites the Committee of Ministers to prepare a recommendation with guidelines on multilevel governance and response to emergencies.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee*, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 13 October 2020 (see [Doc. 15157](#), report of the Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy, rapporteur: Mr Ian Liddell-Grainger; see also [Doc. 15164](#), opinion of the Committee on the Honouring of Obligations and Commitments by Member States of the Council of Europe (Monitoring Committee), rapporteur: Ms Yuliya Lovochkina).

