



Resolution 2405 (2021)¹

Provisional version

Revision of the Code of conduct for members of the Parliamentary Assembly: introducing the explicit prohibition of sexism, sexual harassment and sexual violence and misconduct

Parliamentary Assembly

1. The Parliamentary Assembly recalls its [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#) “Promoting parliaments free of sexism and sexual harassment”, which states that gender-based violence affects women in all aspects of life, the world of politics being no exception. Furthermore, in its [Resolution 2394 \(2021\)](#) “Gender representation in the Parliamentary Assembly”, the Assembly underlines that progress towards gender equality in parliamentary structures will be hampered if due attention is not paid to the need to eliminate sexism and sexual harassment within these structures. The Assembly also recalls that the Council of Europe’s Gender Equality Strategy 2018-2023 sets out the priorities through six strategic objectives and states that the overall goal of the Organisation in this area is to achieve the effective realisation of gender equality.
2. The Assembly further underlines that in its [Resolution 2290 \(2019\)](#) “Towards an ambitious Council of Europe agenda for gender equality”, it called on the Council of Europe member and observer States to sign, ratify and effectively implement the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (CETS No. 210, “Istanbul Convention”), to pay due attention to and implement recommendations put forward in evaluation reports concerning their countries and to ensure the involvement of their parliaments in this process.
3. Public awareness of sexism and violence against women in politics is crucial and the Assembly recalls that it launched its #NotInMyParliament initiative to counter sexism, harassment and violence against women in parliaments.
4. The Assembly further confirms its commitment to promoting anti-discrimination policy by establishing *sui generis* structures such as the Parliamentary Network Women Free from Violence, which is committed to raising awareness of the issue of gender-based violence. The network was instrumental to the entry into force of the Istanbul Convention and played a major role in promoting its ratification by national parliaments. The Assembly’s General Rapporteur on violence against women also contributes to raising awareness of the problem of violence against women, following relevant developments in Council of Europe member States and promoting the Istanbul Convention.
5. The Assembly welcomes the publication in 2019 by the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), on the occasion of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, of a comprehensive set of guidelines to combat sexual harassment and violence against women in parliaments. The Assembly further notes several essential principles proposed in the IPU guidelines on which any anti-harassment mechanism should be based: confidentiality; responsiveness to the complainants; fairness to all parties; thorough, impartial and comprehensive investigation; and timely adjudication. The Assembly mechanism and procedure should also be guided by these fundamental principles.

1. *Text adopted by the Standing Committee, acting on behalf of the Assembly, on 25 November 2021 (see [Doc. 15402](#), report of the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs, rapporteur: Ms Thorhildur Sunna Evarsdóttir).*



6. The Assembly recalls that sexism, harassment and violence in parliaments infringes the human dignity of women and constitutes an obstacle to women's effective participation in political or public life. It stresses that political representation is one of the main priorities of the gender equality agenda. It further notes that any form of sexism, harassment and violence in parliaments damages the reputation and image of parliamentarians and of parliaments as institutions. The Assembly recalls in this respect its [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#) and the calls upon parliaments of member and observer States, as well as partners for democracy, to, in particular, draft or revise the codes of conduct for their members with a view to setting out the explicit prohibition of sexist speech, sexist acts and sexual harassment and introducing sanctions for breaches of this obligation, as well as to introduce complaint mechanisms to prevent and sanction harassment and sexual violence and misconduct.

7. For its part, the Assembly notes that its current Code of conduct for members of the Parliamentary Assembly, by virtue of its general principles protecting human dignity, covers inappropriate conduct, which today would be classified as sexism, harassment, sexual violence and misconduct. However, current realities require that these types of misconduct be addressed explicitly in codes of conduct and the Assembly should be at the forefront in this area, and serve as a model and as a reference for national parliaments.

8. By adopting [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#), the Assembly demonstrated its clear intention to set standards to prevent and combat any form of sexism, harassment, sexual violence and misconduct, not only for member States, but also for its own work and functioning. Therefore, in line with [Resolution 2274 \(2019\)](#), the Assembly decides to:

8.1. amend paragraph 5.1 of the Code of conduct for members of the Parliamentary Assembly as follows:

"5. While performing their mandate as members of the Parliamentary Assembly, members shall:

*5.1. carry out their duties responsibly, with **due respect to human dignity and with integrity and honesty**";*

8.2. add the following new paragraph after paragraph 7:

"Members shall refrain from any form of sexism, harassment and sexual violence and misconduct.";

8.3. add the following new paragraph after paragraph 18:

"For all the cases concerning any form of sexism, harassment and sexual violence and misconduct that involve members of the Parliamentary Assembly, a recommendation or decision taken under the Council of Europe procedures in the framework of its anti-harassment policy shall be forwarded to the Committee on Rules of Procedure, Immunities and Institutional Affairs for final determination of the case.".

9. Furthermore, the Assembly notes that the vast majority of its members are unaware of the existing Council of Europe anti-harassment framework and mechanisms and considers it necessary to ensure that members are aware of these and abide by them.

10. Finally, the Assembly recalls the importance of ensuring effective implementation of the legal provisions in this area and stands ready to develop, if appropriate, guidelines on its own anti-harassment procedure and mechanism.