Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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Elections in times of crisis

Reply to Recommendation[1]: Recommendation 2301 (2026)
Committee of Ministers

1. The Committee of Ministers carefully examined Parliamentary Assembly Recommendation 2301 (2026) "Elections in times of crisis" and forwarded it to the Steering Committee on Democracy (CDDEM) and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) for information and possible comments.

2. The Committee of Ministers recalled that free, fair and resilient elections remain the cornerstone of functioning democracies and are essential to ensuring citizens' confidence in the good functioning and legitimacy of democratic institutions. Similarly to the Assembly, it regrets that elections are increasingly exposed to a combination of political, technological and security-related risks that can undermine their integrity and public trust. The Committee also reiterates its support to the ongoing process of the Council of Europe's New Democratic Pact for Europe, which sets out a forward-looking vision for stronger and more inclusive democratic systems in which elections that comply with international standards – including in times of crisis – play a key role.

3. The Committee of Ministers would first like to refer to the Reykjavík Principles for Democracy, adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Reykjavík, Iceland, 16-17 May 2023), which set out the foundations of the European democratic order, as well as to the Parameters for facilitating the implementation of these Principles (see CM(2025)194-add).

4. With regard to enhancing the coherence and visibility of the Council of Europe's work on electoral resilience (paragraph 7.1 of Recommendation 2301 (2026)), the Committee welcomes the fact that the Venice Commission contributes to this coherence and visibility through the Council for Democratic Elections, the only tripartite body of the Council of Europe, comprising members of the Venice Commission, members of the Parliamentary Assembly and of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, uniting the legal experience of the Venice Commission with the political experience of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress.[2] It also welcomes the support of the Venice Commission to the Assembly's proposal to develop a set of standards for the preparation of elections in crisis situations, which will further enhance electoral resilience of Council of Europe member States.

5. With regard to enhancing the support for member States in revising their legal and institutional frameworks (paragraph 7.2), the Committee concurs on the importance of assessing legal and institutional frameworks and sharing practices among States and other stakeholders in order to foster collective learning. Building an evidence-based understanding of gaps and vulnerabilities within democratic systems can help address threats to electoral processes in a proactive manner. The Parameters could contribute to such evidence-based reflection. The Committee also recalls that the Venice Commission stands ready to contribute

1. Adopted at the 1574th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies (30 October 2026).
2. The Council for Democratic Elections examines all opinions and documents of a general nature (codes of good practice, guidelines, etc.) in the field of elections and political parties before they are submitted for adoption to the Venice Commission.

its expertise to the review of legal and institutional frameworks, through the preparation and adoption of country-specific opinions and/or multi-country reports, as well as through the legal advice it provides to election observation missions.

6. As far as reinforcing co-operation to address disinformation, cyberattacks and foreign interference (paragraph 7.3) is concerned, the Committee refers to the ongoing mapping exercise by the Venice Commission of the domestic legislation on foreign interference in electoral processes which is expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of the issue and to enhance the identification and exchange of good practices aimed at preventing and effectively addressing foreign interference and influence. Furthermore, the Committee also draws attention to the dedicated sub-parameters of the aforementioned Parameters that address issues such as the misrepresentation and intentional spread of disinformation, including by foreign actors, electoral manipulation, as well as broader requirements relating to political advertising, AI-driven campaign tools and the media coverage of election campaigns. Moreover, the Committee draws the Assembly's attention to its recent decision instructing the Ad hoc Committee on Foreign Information Manipulation and Interference (CAHFIMI) to prepare an appropriate draft legal instrument, including a possible draft framework convention, addressing foreign information manipulation and interference (FIMI).[3]

7. The Committee of Ministers notes that misinformation and fake news often spread more actively during a state of emergency compared to ordinary situations and countries can be even more vulnerable at this time to cyberattacks and foreign interference, especially in an election period. As the Venice Commission has outlined in its interpretative declaration of the Code of good practice in electoral matters as concerns digital technologies and artificial intelligence: "States should regulate the consequences of information disorders, cyber-attacks and other digital threats to electoral integrity; candidates and parties must be granted fair and equitable access to online media, and regulations should be implemented to ensure that artificial intelligence systems by internet intermediaries do not favour certain parties or candidates over others".[4]

8. Regarding the promotion of regular exchanges between central election commissions of member States and international partners (paragraph 7.4), the Committee recalls that the Venice Commission works closely together with the Electoral Management Bodies of its 61 member States, including through the co-organisation of the European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies and its pre- and post-electoral conferences with key electoral stakeholders.

9. Finally, with regard to providing continuous support to member States affected by conflict or prolonged emergencies, in particular Ukraine (paragraph 7.5), the Committee recalls that, even in times of crisis, the Venice Commission stands ready to assist member States in holding secure, inclusive and credible elections in line with European and international standards. With specific regard to Ukraine, the Committee also recalls that, within the framework of the Action Plan for Ukraine "Resilience, Recovery and Reconstruction" 2023-2026, the Council of Europe's activities in the electoral field include establishing a more structured framework for assessing electoral readiness in post-war conditions. The action plan supports key national stakeholders including the Central Election Commission and Parliament in addressing war-related electoral challenges and enhances dialogue among key stakeholders on the constitutional, legal and operational aspects of post-war elections through the High-Level Dialogue on good democratic governance. Furthermore, it strengthens Institutional resilience against election-related cyber threats and institutionalisation of strategic electoral communication through the adoption of the Central Electoral Commission Communication, with particular attention on IDPs, out-of-country voters, women, military personnel, veterans, youth and first-time voters, people with disabilities and national minorities. Furthermore, it supported increased public engagement and awareness through the online educational platform "CEC: prosvita".

3. CM/Del/Dec(2026)1566/10.1.
4. CDL-AD(2020)014,*op. cit.*, paragraph 117.