

After the elections

Election observation delegations provide an entry point for **the European Parliament to launch further activities focusing on democracy** in the country. These are implemented throughout the electoral cycle, using Parliament's **Comprehensive Democracy Support approach**.

The European Parliament's political weight and long experience of developing legislation means that it is well placed to **promote and support the implementation of recommendations**. In doing this, Parliament works in close cooperation with other EU institutions and international organisations.

Following up on recommendations involves **'parliamentary electoral dialogues'**. These targeted, election-related discussions focus on the recommendations of a previous election observation mission. The MEP who served as the mission's Chief Observer and a few other MEPs represent Parliament in the dialogue, while local parliamentarians, political leaders and prominent stakeholders speak for the country that held the elections.

The European Parliament provides additional post-election activities to support democracy, particularly through **'peer to peer' cooperation with partner parliaments**. This may involve MEPs and local MPs, or EU and local civil servants. MEPs who participate in election observation delegations have become successful partners in this work. Over the years, the peer-to-peer approach has proved to be extremely effective.

Added value

The presence of a European Parliament election observation delegation:

- **Boosts the political standing and visibility** of the long-term observation missions.
- **Enhances the legitimacy and political weight of the observation mission**. Because MEPs all have first-hand experience of running for office and being elected, they are in a unique position to assess the elections.
- **Facilitates and enhances contacts** with local parliamentarians and representatives of civil society. This, in turn, improves the exchange of information.
- Allows the **EU to speak with one voice** and provides an effective way for MEPs to observe and comment on an election.
- Provides **cross-party political support for the mission's conclusions**, which helps the EU develop follow-up activities.

For more information, visit:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/election-observation>

**Democracy and Elections
Actions Unit:**

deac-secretariat@ep.europa.eu



ELECTION OBSERVATION BY THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

The European Parliament observes
elections around the world.

Since 1984,
dedicated European Parliament
election observation delegations
have travelled to more than
75 countries
and observed over
200 elections.



Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) regularly observe elections outside the European Union. The European Parliament sends as many as **12 delegations a year**.

These delegations join longer-term missions that are already under way – either long-term European Union Election Observer Missions (EU EOMs) or International Election Observation Missions (IEOMs) organised by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE ODIHR).

Election observation is a fundamental part of the European Parliament's approach to parliamentary diplomacy.

Principles

All European Parliament election observation delegations operate under the supervision of its **Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG)**.

The DEG is composed of 15 MEPs, including the leading players in foreign affairs and democracy support.

In addition to organising the election observation activities, the DEG advises the Vice President of the Commission / High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy about EU election observation priorities.

When the DEG sends a delegation to observe an election, the delegation works within a framework: the **Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation**, which the European Parliament endorsed in 2007.

Which elections?

The European Parliament observes elections **only when invited** to do so by national authorities.

As a rule, the European Parliament observes national elections – for example, presidential or parliamentary elections. In exceptional cases, delegations also observe referendums or local elections.

In all cases, the elections must comply with internationally agreed **minimum democratic standards**. These include:

- universal suffrage,
- freedom to stand for election,
- freedom of expression,
- freedom of assembly and movement,
- reasonable access to the media for all political parties.

By joining a long-term election observation mission, Parliament ensures that its own election observers have access to data and information to help them formulate their conclusions and recommendations.

During the elections

Delegations include members of different political groups. **Seven MEPs** usually participate. They are appointed by the political groups, following a decision by the European Parliament's highest decision-making body, the Conference of Presidents.

The Members spend an **average of four or five days in the country**, where they follow a comprehensive programme that includes:

- meeting local authorities, political parties, candidates, election officials, NGOs, media, other international and national observers,
- observing on election day, and
- participating in a final press conference.

On election day, MEPs **observe the opening and closing of the polls, voting, and the count** in polling stations and other locations. Unless there are security concerns, MEPs are spread across different parts of the country.

The **Head of the European Parliament's delegation speaks at a press conference that takes place one or two days after the vote**. A preliminary statement and the mission's conclusions are presented at this conference.

All Members abide by the provisions of the '**Code of Conduct for Participants in European Parliament Election Observation Missions**'.

This code requires that the observers have no conflicts of interest, that they do not interfere during the proceedings, and that they do not comment on candidates, political issues or the organisation of the elections until after the press conference.

