

COVID-19: overview of the OSCE participating States' responses

Parliamentary Functioning

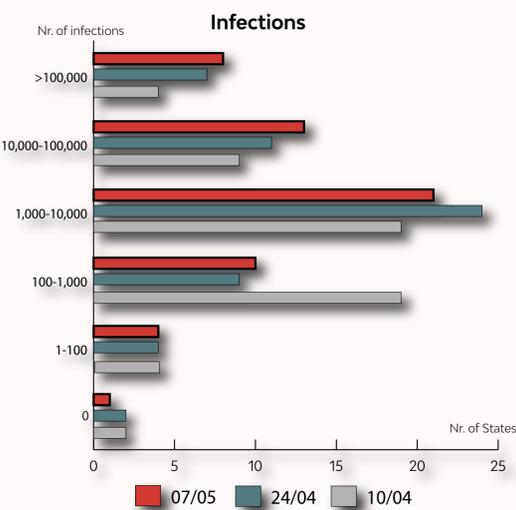
As the inter-parliamentary forum of the largest regional security organization in the world, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe serves 323 members from 57 participating States in their multilateral efforts to promote lasting security for over a billion citizens across three continents.

The present overview is the result of an OSCE PA initiative to map the OSCE participating States' responses to the COVID-19 pandemic.

GLOBAL TRENDS

Overall, **the number of infections and deaths in the region during the last 4 weeks* has grown from approx. 1.2 to 3 million (+137%)** and from approx. 83,000 to 230,000 (+175%), respectively, thus showing a comparable trend. Notably, **in both cases the recorded increase of infections and deaths was more significant during the first two weeks (+76% and 103%) than in the last two (+34% and 36%), thus confirming a slower pattern in the pandemic growth.**

Finally, **States' testing capacity has continued to expand significantly** over the last month, currently conducting on average 28,600 tests per million inhabitants, with an increase of 52% in the last fortnight.



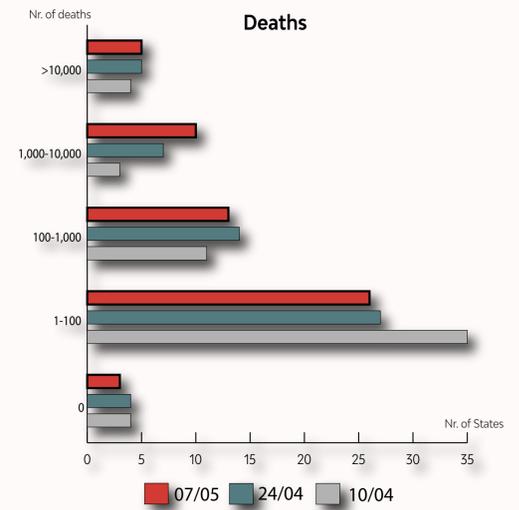
The number of States having reported more than 1,000 infections has increased by 17.5% (10) since 10 April 2020, now accounting for 42 (73%) out of 57 States. 21 of these (37%) have also surpassed the 10,000 infections threshold.

There are now 8 States (France, Germany, Italy, the Russian Federation, Spain, Turkey, UK and USA) having reported more than 100,000 cases each, accounting for approx. 2,607,000 infections combined, or 86% of the overall number of infections in the OSCE area (and 68% of global infections).

In the last 4 weeks, the total number of infections in these 8 States has grown by 142% (from approx. 1 million to 2.6 million cases). Only one State has reported no infections thus far (i.e. Turkmenistan)

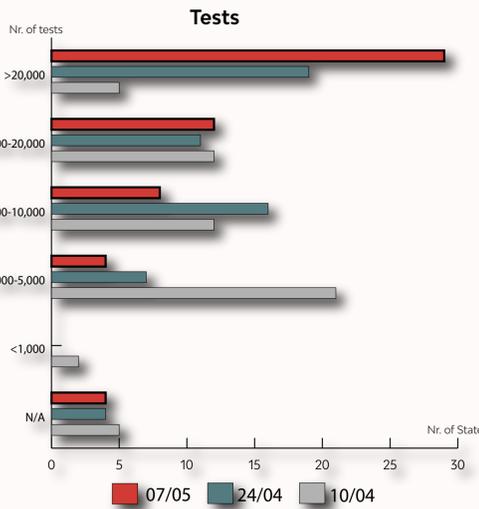
Currently 15 States (26%) have reported more than 1,000 COVID-19-related deaths, accounting for the vast majority (97%) of victims in the OSCE region.

8 of these States have surpassed the 1,000 threshold during the last month while only 5 States reported more than 10,000 victims (USA, Spain, Italy, France and UK). The number of victims in these 5 States increased by approx. 97% in the first fortnight (+68,000) and by 34.5% (+48,000) in the second. Combined, these 5 States account for 186,000 victims, representing approx. 81% of the overall victims in the OSCE region (and 70% of global deaths). 3 States (5%) have reported no deaths so far (i.e. the Holy See, Mongolia and Turkmenistan).



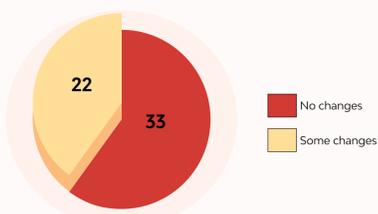
Testing rates among States have continued to increase significantly. Currently, 41 States (72%) have conducted more than 10,000 tests per million inhabitants, which shows an increase of 42% (+24 States) compared to the beginning of April.

Notably, there are now 29 States which have conducted more than 20,000 tests per million inhabitants, compared to only 5 at the beginning of April. The average testing rate for this group of States is now approx. 44,000 tests per million inhabitants, with Cyprus, Iceland, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta and San Marino, conducting more than 50,000 tests per million each.



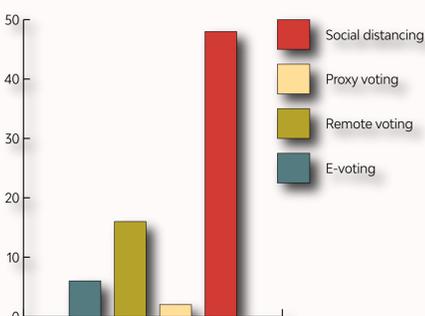
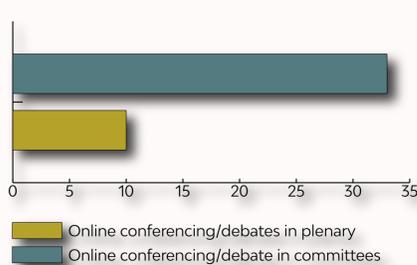
*Regularly collecting data over the last 4 weeks (10 April to 7 May) has allowed an indicative comparison of the evolution of the pandemic between the first fortnight (10 April to 24 April) and the second one (24 April to 7 May).

IN FOCUS: PARLIAMENTARY FUNCTIONING DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC



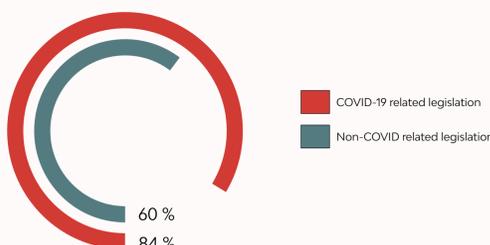
Parliaments have implemented a range of scenarios to adapt their work to COVID-19 avoidance. Indeed, more than a third of OSCE countries' parliaments are known to have adjusted their rules to accommodate functioning during the pandemic. Still others are applying already-existing mechanisms in a more extensive manner

Almost all parliaments have put in place some special mechanisms to enable parliament to continue functioning. Whereas almost one in five countries' parliaments enable plenary discussions through teleconferencing mechanisms, more than half (33) have implemented this for committee work.



Some 85% have made physical adjustments that enable parliaments to continue voting by MPs. Parliaments in 16 countries are known to have procedures enabling voting to take place remotely, such as through announcing their vote through teleconferencing mechanisms. In 6 OSCE countries Members of Parliament can cast their vote directly in electronic applications. Several countries enable party representatives to cast votes on behalf of their party colleagues in order to minimize gatherings.

Parliaments have risen to the challenge posed by COVID-19. 47 out of 56 countries' parliaments have adopted legislation directly related to COVID-19. Parliaments in 34 OSCE countries are also known to have adopted legislation not directly related to COVID-19, indicating that ongoing legislative work is continuing even under current circumstances.



EXAMPLES OF PARLIAMENTARY FUNCTIONING

Below are a few illustrative examples of options that individual parliaments in the OSCE region have applied or adopted.

E-voting



- **The Belgian House of Representatives** has developed an e-voting system for its plenary and committee meetings, enabling MPs to vote whether they are physically present or attending remotely. This system is applied on a temporary basis depending on an ad hoc decision by the Conference of Presidents.



- **The Polish Sejm** enables its Members to vote electronically through the use of parliamentary tablets. The Members log into the tablets using their unique user IDs and passwords. To gain access to the voting system, an additional authentication procedure is used where an activation code is sent via SMS text message.

Remote voting



- In **Slovenia's National Council** social distancing measures are put in place, but remote voting is also enabled through teleconferencing technology, with each Member able to cast their vote orally in a roll call.



- To ensure safe spacing during plenary votes in the **Croatian parliament**, only some Members are physically present in the main chamber, with other Members taking seats in two separate rooms. As a result, some votes are cast electronically and the rest are counted manually.

Social distancing



- For voting in the plenary of the **Danish Folketing**, only 7-10 members are admitted into the plenary hall at a time to ensure sufficient distancing, with other Members waiting in line at the entrance. Once Members have voted, they leave through a separate exit.



- In order to respect social distancing requirements, in **Hungary**, the 199 members of the National Assembly have transferred their sessions to the Upper House Chamber, which has a seating capacity of 453, where they sit in a 'chessboard' arrangement that ensures that one seat is empty around each Member in all directions, and follow strict protective health measures during their work.



- Every person entering parliamentary buildings in **Italy** has their temperature measured, with special arrangements in place if the temperature is measured over 37.5 degrees Celsius. Inside the premises of the Chamber of Deputies wearing a mask is compulsory. Larger meeting rooms are in use to enable social distancing, and sittings are scheduled to enable necessary sanitation measures between meetings.

Other approaches have included agreements among political parties to maintain only a minimal number of parliamentarians in attendance at one time. A range of physical spacing mechanisms have also been adopted in parliamentary meeting rooms, such as placing plastic shields between seats of parliamentarians as a protective measure.