

# News from Copenhagen

OSCE PA

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## Armenian election improved, but lacking competition, PA says



Head of Mission Tonino Picula speaks to the press on election day.



Bureau members and staff meet in Yerevan.

The 18 February Armenian presidential election demonstrated improvements over previous presidential elections but the limited field of candidates meant that the election was not genuinely competitive, concluded observers from the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly. Important democratic freedoms, including the right to campaign freely, were generally respected during the campaign, observers said.

“This election showed improvement, but lacked genuine competition,” said Tonino Picula, Head of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly election observation mission. “We are pleased to note progress on several aspects, but competition is critical if Armenia is going to live up to the aspirations of its people for a vibrant and engaging democracy.”

Picula has previously led election observation missions to

Georgia, Russia, Kazakhstan and Moldova.

OSCE PA Deputy Secretary General Tina Schoen and Operations Officer Iryna Sabashuk conducted a pre-electoral visit to Yerevan on 29-30 January. The OSCE PA International Secretariat established a presence in Yerevan to continue monitoring the political situation with the arrival of former OSCE PA Presidential Advisor Andreas Baker on 6 February.

Joint briefings were held with parliamentary colleagues from PACE and the European Parliament on 16-17 February. On election day, 30 parliamentary observers visited more than 100 polling stations in Yerevan, towns and villages in Sevan, Armavir, Ashtarak and Kotayk.

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has observed eight elections in Armenia since 1995.

## De Donnea visits Secretariat in preparation for Winter Meeting



Francois-Xavier de Donnea with Gustavo Pallares and Spencer Oliver

François-Xavier de Donnea, Head of the Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Reform of the OSCE, visited the OSCE PA International Secretariat on 15 February. In meetings with Secretary General Spencer Oliver, Deputy Secretary General Gustavo Pallares and Programme Officer Maria Chepurina, de Donnea discussed preparations for a meeting of the committee during the Winter Meeting in Vienna.

In particular, the committee will closely consider OSCE PA recommendations and proposals for the work of the OSCE, as well as the future of election observation. The Ad Hoc Committee on Transparency and Reform was first established in 2001 under the leadership of Steny Hoyer, and was mandated last year to examine issues related to the Helsinki +40 process.

## Strong OSCE PA involvement for freedom of the media



Linda Kristiansen and Matteo Mecacci at the OSCE internet freedom conference

Several representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly participated in the OSCE internet freedom conference in Vienna on 14-15 February.

Matteo Mecacci (Italy), Chair of the Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions, Margareta Cederfelt (Sweden), Roel Deseyn (Belgium), Linda Kristiansen (Denmark) as well as OSCE PA Special Representative Amb. Andreas Nothelle, Deputy Director of Administration Marc Carillet and other staff of the Vienna Liaison Office represented the PA at the event.

Organized by OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media Dunja Mijatović, the event gathered more than 250 key policymakers and experts from throughout the OSCE region and provided an opportunity to promote the work done by the PA in the field of internet freedom. Assembly declarations on internet freedom have focused primarily on three topics: cyber crime, racism and children sexual exploitation.