

Bridging differences, building trust

# The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Bringing together 323 parliamentarians from across the 57-nation OSCE region, including Europe, Asia and North America, the OSCE PA provides a forum for parliamentary dialogue, leads election observation missions, and strengthens international co-operation to uphold commitments on political, security, economic, environmental and human rights issues.

## The parliamentary dimension of the OSCE

The primary task of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly is to facilitate inter-parliamentary dialogue, an important aspect of the overall effort to meet the challenges of democracy throughout the 57 participating States of North America and Eurasia.

Recognized as a regional arrangement under the United Nations Charter, the OSCE is a primary instrument for early warning, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation in its area. The Parliamentary Assembly, established by the 1990 Charter of Paris to promote greater involvement in the OSCE by national parliaments, is the oldest continuing OSCE Institution.

## Voting for action

Representing their national parliaments, Members of the Parliamentary Assembly meet several times a year to debate a wide variety of issues relevant to the ultimate goal of all OSCE efforts: human security for

all in the OSCE region. As elected representatives of the citizens of the OSCE participating States, they play an important role in maintaining security and stability in the region.

The parliamentarians debate, vote and pass declarations and resolutions addressing issues concerning the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, economic and environmental co-operation and political-military policies.



## Enhancing OSCE visibility

Whether observing an election abroad or debating OSCE policy in their own parliaments, sharing expertise with their foreign ministry or visiting a foreign government, parliamentarians raise the visibility and credibility of the OSCE. These elected officials enhance the profile of the OSCE, particularly in election observation.

## Promoting diplomacy

Their elected status gives parliamentarians the independence and advantages that can at times open doors to dialogue in a way not available to appointed governmental representatives. When regional tensions flare, multilateral meetings of parliamentarians can foster communication and promote peaceful solutions.



## Forum for dialogue

The Assembly regularly organizes topical seminars and conferences to spur inter-parliamentary dialogue, review OSCE commitments and exchange views with top international experts. These events place special attention on issues such as minorities, migration, organized crime, and freedom of religion, as well as regional topics, including security in the Caucasus, Trans-Asian parliamentary dialogue, democratic development in the Mediterranean, environmental security in the Arctic and economic progress in South East Europe.

## Election observation leadership

More than 5,000 parliamentarians from the OSCE PA have observed some 170 elections since 1993, helping to establish the OSCE as the gold standard in the field of election observation. When the OSCE PA observes an election, the OSCE Chair-in-Office appoints a senior Member of the Assembly as the Special Co-ordinator to lead the OSCE short-term observers and present the statement of the observation mission on behalf of the whole Organization.

## Co-operation with other Institutions



The Assembly has regular formal and informal interaction with the other OSCE Institutions. It is represented at every level of official OSCE meetings and maintains a close working relationship with the OSCE Chair-

in-Office, the Secretary General, other OSCE Structures and Institutions in Vienna, Warsaw, and the Hague, as well as with the OSCE presences in the field.

The OSCE PA has also developed extensive co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, the Inter-Parliamentary Union, the European Parliament, the

Inter-parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, and PABSEC, all of which have observer status in the OSCE PA.



## OSCE PA structures

Each July, the OSCE PA convenes its Annual Session, where Members follow a democratic process to elect Assembly officers and adopt declarations and resolutions that inform the work of the OSCE and national parliaments. Past declarations included recommendations that led to the creation of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media and the Economic and Environmental Co-ordinator positions.

Every February, Members gather for the Winter Meeting in Vienna, which gives the Assembly the opportunity to interact directly with the OSCE's governmental side, and every autumn, an OSCE participating State hosts the PA's Autumn Meeting.

## The Standing Committee

The Standing Committee, comprised of heads of national delegations and Bureau Members, approves the budget, elects the Secretary General, and guides the work of the Assembly.

## The General Committees

The work of the Assembly is divided into three General Committees, which generally correspond to the three main sections of the Helsinki Final Act:



- I. Committee on Political Affairs and Security
- II. Committee on Economic Affairs, Science, Technology and Environment
- III. Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions

Committee members elect a chair, vice-chair and rapporteur to one-year terms. Resolutions are passed by majority vote during meetings at the Annual Session.

## The Bureau

The president, nine vice-presidents, treasurer, and the officers of the three general committees make up the Bureau. The president emeritus (immediately preceding past president) is also an ex officio non-voting Bureau member. The Bureau takes decision by a two-thirds majority vote and is responsible for ensuring that the decisions of the Standing Committee are carried out.



## Special Representatives

Appointed by the President, special representatives serve as focal points on topical and regional issues, co-ordinating the Assembly's efforts and activities to strengthen the PA's response to specific challenges. Issues and regions covered by special representatives include, inter alia, human trafficking, South East Europe, and gender issues.

## Ad Hoc Committees

Established by the Standing Committee, ad hoc committees and working groups have increased parliamentary attention on issues ranging from addressing migration to countering terrorism to promoting transparency and reform in the OSCE.

## The International Secretariat

Under the direction of the Secretary General, the International Secretariat supports the President and Assembly leadership and organizes all meetings, election observation missions and diplomatic visits.

The International Secretariat consists of 20 permanent staff members, two JPOs and a rotating team of eight research fellows based at the headquarters office in Copenhagen provided by the Danish Parliament and a liaison office in Vienna. The headquarters and the liaison office function as international diplomatic missions. Representatives of the liaison office participate in meetings of the OSCE executive structures, including the regular meetings of the Permanent Council.

The Secretariat serves as a communications link between national delegations and OSCE Institutions and as an information hub for Assembly Members as well as the general public.

## Research Assistantship

A team of international fellows brings added research and linguistic capability to the International Secretariat. The Research Assistantship Programme is open to post-graduate students of the political sciences and law. Some 250 Research Assistants from 29 countries have served in the programme, with many moving on to positions in their own governments and parliaments as well as with the OSCE and other international organizations.

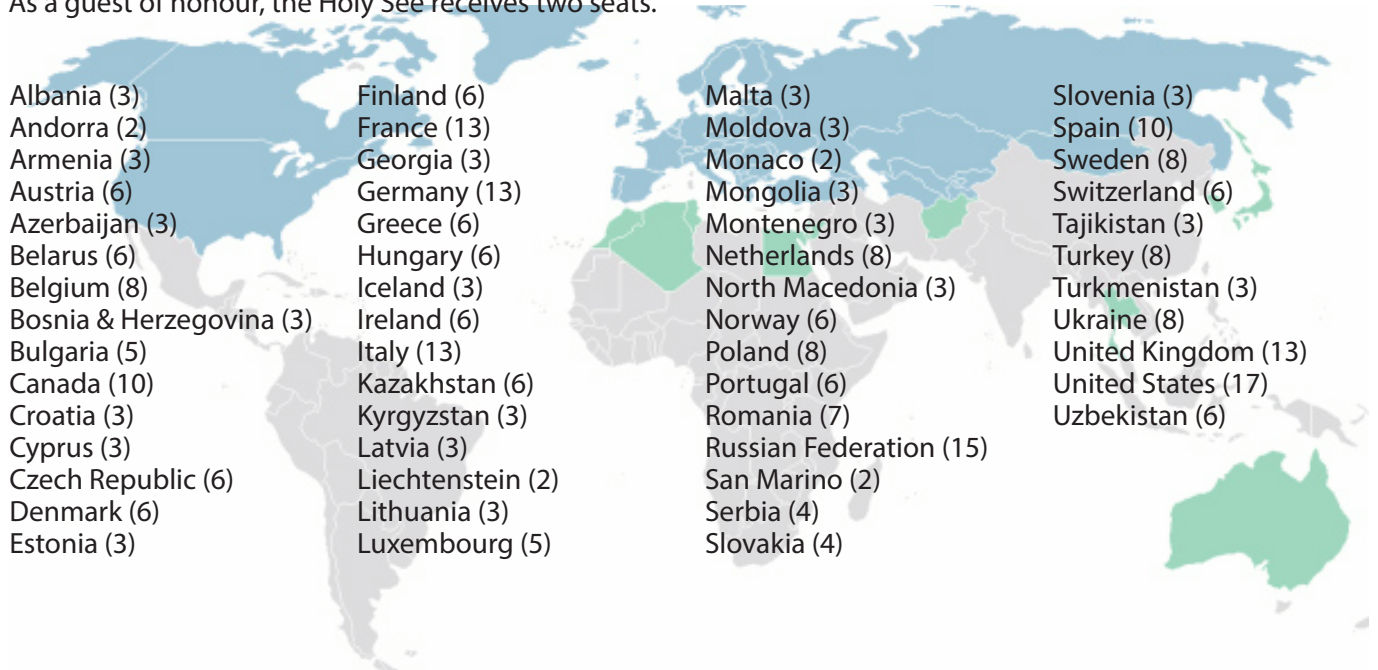
## JPO Programme

The OSCE PA Junior Professional Officers Programme is addressed to young professionals with some relevant work experience and with a background in political science, law, international relations. OSCE PA JPOs can be assigned to work either in Copenhagen or in Vienna. The programme is intended to boost their professional skills in areas connected to the work of the Parliamentary Assembly.



## Membership of the Assembly and distribution of seats/votes

As a guest of honour, the Holy See receives two seats.



## Partners for Co-operation

Afghanistan	Jordan
Australia	Morocco
Algeria	Republic of Korea
Egypt	Thailand
Israel	Tunisia
Japan	

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