



Improving the accountability of Parliamentarians in election observation

7 March 2017, 13.00 - 16.00
Room ASP 5G1, European Parliament, Brussels

Rationale

In recent years, we are observing the increasing phenomenon of “biased observation” – more politically-motivated than evidence-based assessment of elections that mainly intends to mislead public opinion on the regularity of a process or towards one or another result. Striking examples were the “referendum” on Crimea in March 2014, the “primaries” in Eastern Ukraine in October 2014, or the Presidential and Parliamentary elections in Azerbaijan in 2013 and 2015.

The right of any single Member of a parliament to carry out his political activity throughout his mandate is obviously not put into question. However, by participating on *an individual basis* in election observation activities which are not conducted in line with the basic internationally agreed principles and methodology like the ones agreed by international organizations having endorsed the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation, Parliamentarians could damage - intentionally or not - the reputation of the entire institution that they represent. The integrity of the parliamentary body can be questioned not only in the host country, but also in the region, within the EU or abroad (public opinions, authorities, civil society, other election observation partners). In cases when such individual/unauthorised “observations” nevertheless do take place, those parliamentarians that “observed” on their own must ensure that their *personal* opinion is not confused or intentionally presented by the media as the official position of the institution.

The event aims at discussing how politics and civil society can take action against the misuse of the instrument of international election observation.

- How can one assess what is “biased observation” and what is a methodologically professional and well-grounded election observation? Does the integration of official short-term parliamentary delegations into long-term missions reduce the risk of misleading/biased statements by parliamentarians?
- How can the instrument of political short-term election observation be adapted to the new geopolitical situation and be safeguarded from political hijacking?
- Which pre-emptive measures can be taken by national Parliaments or international Parliamentary bodies to prevent politically motivated observation?
- Should “sanctions” measures be taken against parliamentarians who have participated in biased observation and have spoken on behalf of the institution, without being authorised to do so? Are such measures realistic and efficient?
- Is there any positive experience in fighting politically-biased observation internationally?

Participants: representatives from endorsing organisations of the “Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and Code of Conduct for International Election Observers”, Members of the European Parliament, national parliamentarians from EU member states, civil society organisations

Language regime: EN

Draft programme

12:00 - 13:00	Finger lunch and drinks (in the meeting room)
13:00 - 13:20	<p><i>Opening remarks/setting the scene:</i> Politically-biased observation - a challenge for electoral integrity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, EP Vice-President on Human Rights and Democracy, Member of the EP Democracy Support and Election Coordination Group (DEG)• Stefanie Schiffer, Chair of board EPDE
13:20 - 14:10	<p><i>Topic 1:</i> How can one assess what is “biased observation”? Does the integration of short-term parliamentary delegations into long-term missions reduce the risk of biased assessments by parliamentarians?</p> <p>Chair: Michael Link, Director of ODIHR</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ignacio Sanchez Amor (MP, Spain), Chair of the General Committee on Democracy, Human Rights and Humanitarian Questions• Emanuele Giaufret, Head of Democracy and Election Observation, European External Action Service
14:10 - 15:00	<p><i>Topic 2:</i> Possible preventive measures against biased observation and their effectiveness</p> <p>Chair: Ana Gomes, Member of DEG</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pat Merloe, Senior Associate & Director of Electoral Programs at National Democratic Institute (NDI) (tbc)• Sergei Tkachenko, Chair of Board EPDE and staff member of the Venice Commission (Kiev Office)
15:00 - 15:50	<p><i>Topic 3:</i> Measures to be taken against unauthorised parliamentarians-observers</p> <p>Chair: Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, EP Vice-President on Human Rights and Democracy, Member of DEG</p> <p>Speakers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• PACE (tbc)• Andrew Bradley, Director of International IDEA
15:50 - 16:00	<p><i>Conclusions:</i> Alexander Graf Lambsdorff, EP Vice-President on Human Rights and Democracy, Member of DEG</p>