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Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights

Procedure for electing judges to the European Court of Human Rights

Information document prepared by the Secretariat

Introduction

1. According to [Protocol No 11](#) to the [European Convention on Human Rights](#) (hereinafter “ECHR”), in force since 1 November 1998, the European Court of Human Rights operates on a permanent basis and is made up of full-time professional judges resident in Strasbourg. The number of judges is equal to that of High Contracting Parties. Amending Protocol No.14 to the Convention, which entered into force on 1 June 2010, did not change these provisions. It did, however, institute a single term of office of nine years for judges elected to the Court and set out transitional provisions for the *ipso jure* extension of the term of office of sitting judges at the time the Protocol entered into force ([Article 21 of Protocol No.14](#)).

Criteria for office

2. Article 21, paragraph 1, of the ECHR stipulates:

“The judges shall be of high moral character and must either possess the qualifications required for appointment to high judicial office or be jurisconsults of recognised competence”.

Procedure for electing judges

3. According to Article 22 of the ECHR:

“The judges shall be elected by the Parliamentary Assembly with respect to each High Contracting Party by a majority of votes cast from a list of three candidates nominated by the High Contracting Party”.

4. Article 23, paragraphs 1 to 3, stipulates:

“1. The judges shall be elected for a period of nine years. They may not be re-elected.

2. The terms of office of judges shall expire when they reach the age of 70.

3. The judges shall hold office until replaced. They shall, however, continue to deal with such cases as they already have under consideration.”

Steps taken by the Parliamentary Assembly to improve the procedure for examining candidatures for the election of judges to the European Court of Human Rights

5. The Assembly decided to improve its own procedure for choosing between the three candidates nominated by each Contracting Party. To this end, it adopted a number of texts: [Resolution 1082 \(1996\)](#) and [Recommendation 1295 \(1996\)](#) in April 1996, [Resolution 1200 \(1999\)](#) in September 1999, and, more recently, [Resolution 1646 \(2009\)](#) in January 2009.

6. The Assembly is of the view that information provided by candidates should be presented on broadly similar lines to facilitate comparison between the candidates. For that reason a standard *curriculum vitae* is sent out (see appendix to Resolution 1646 (2009), also appended to the present document). The Assembly also invites candidates to participate in a series of personal interviews. The Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights has a special Sub-Committee to conduct such interviews.¹

7. In its [Recommendation 1429 \(1999\)](#), the Assembly made proposals for nominating candidates at national level, recently reiterated in [Resolution 1646 \(2009\)](#).² By its [Order 558 \(1999\)](#), it instructed its Sub-Committee on the election of judges “to make sure that in future elections to the Court member states apply the criteria which it has drawn up for the establishment of lists of candidates, and in particular the presence of candidates of both sexes”.

8. In January 2004, the Assembly adopted Resolution 1366 (2004) and [Recommendation 1649 \(2004\)](#). In these texts, it confirmed the necessity to keep the procedure of selection which had been set up. It also emphasised the need to receive candidates all having the required level to exercise the function of judge as well as the need for gender balance. It decided not to consider lists of candidates not fulfilling those criteria. Resolution 1366 (2004) was subsequently modified by [Resolution 1426 \(2005\)](#), [Resolution 1627 \(2008\)](#) and [Resolution 1841 \(2011\)](#) by which single-sex lists of candidates would only be considered if the sex is under-represented (under 40 % of judges) or if exceptional circumstances exist to derogate from this rule.³

Requirements for submission of lists of candidates for the office of judge

9. Paragraph 4 of Assembly Resolution 1646 (2009) specifies:

“[...] the Assembly recalls that in addition to the criteria specified in Article 21 § 1 of the Convention, as well as the gender requirement, states should, when selecting and subsequently nominating candidates to the Court, comply with the following requirements:

4.1. issue public and open calls for candidatures;

4.2. when submitting the names of candidates to the Assembly, describe the manner in which they had been selected;

4.3. transmit the names of candidates to the Assembly in alphabetical order;

¹ This used to be an *ad hoc* sub-committee until October 2007. It is now a permanent sub-committee: see footnote to Rule 48.6 in [Rules of Procedure of the Assembly](#), Strasbourg, October 2012, page 66. See also “Election of judges to the Strasbourg Court: an overview” in *European Human Rights Law Review* (2010), pp. 377-383.

² The last two sentences of paragraph 2, in [Resolution 1646 \(2009\)](#), specify “In the absence of a real choice among the candidates submitted by a State Party to the Convention, the Assembly shall reject lists submitted to it. In addition, in the absence of a fair, transparent and consistent national selection procedure, the Assembly may reject such lists”. See also, in this connection, [Guidelines of the Committee of Ministers on the selection of candidates for the post of judge at the European Court of Human Rights](#), adopted on 28 March 2012.

³ Resolution 1366 (2004), as modified by Resolutions 1426 (2005), 1627 (2008) and 1841 (2011) specifies, in its § 4, that such “exceptional circumstances” exist “where a Contracting Party has taken all the necessary and appropriate steps to ensure that the list contains candidates of both sexes meeting the requirements of Article 21 § 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights.” Such exceptional circumstances must be duly so determined by a two-thirds majority of Sub-Committee, whose position subsequently needs to be endorsed by the Assembly in the framework of a Progress Report of the Assembly’s Bureau. Text available at http://assembly.coe.int/RulesofProcedure/html/EN/Rules/Reglement_2012_EN/Candidates_for_the_European_Court_of_Human_Rights.htm.

4.4. candidates should possess an active knowledge of one and a passive knowledge of the other official language of the Council of Europe (see model curriculum vitae appended hereto⁴), and

4.5. that, if possible, no candidate should be submitted whose election might result in the necessity to appoint an ad hoc judge.”

10. This text consolidates and reinforces the recommendations made to states in 2004 when governments were asked to ensure, *inter alia* “that a call for candidatures has been issued through the specialised press” and that “every list contains candidates of both sexes”⁵ (paragraph 19 of Assembly Recommendation 1649 (2004)). Resolution 1646 (2009) is based on a report which emphasises the need for more fairness and transparency in national selection procedures, the need for candidates to possess a number of years of relevant (judicial) work experience and a knowledge of both working languages of the Council of Europe.⁶

11. The Committee of Ministers has also recently set up an advisory panel of experts on candidates for election as judges to the Court. Their function is to advise States Parties to the Convention – before the latter transmit lists of candidates to the Assembly – whether candidates for election meet the criteria stipulated in Article 21, paragraph 1, of the Convention.⁷

Results of the interviews

12. The Sub-Committee considers the candidates not only as individuals but also with an eye to a harmonious composition of the Court, taking into account, for example, their professional backgrounds and a gender balance. It formulates a recommendation to the Bureau of the Assembly, which the Bureau forwards to the Assembly members and may decide to declassify (make public).

Election by the Assembly

13. On the basis of the candidatures transmitted to it, the Assembly elects the judges to the European Court of Human Rights during its part-sessions.⁸ The candidate having obtained an absolute majority of votes cast is declared elected a member of the Court. If no candidate obtains an absolute majority, a second ballot is held, after which the candidate who has obtained a relative majority of votes cast is declared elected. Election results are publicly announced by the President of the Assembly during the part-session.⁹

⁴ The text of the model curriculum vitae is appended to the present document.

⁵ See [Resolution 1366 \(2004\)](#), as modified by Resolutions [1426 \(2005\)](#), [1627 \(2008\)](#) and [1841 \(2011\)](#), paragraphs 3 and 4 (as explained in paragraph 8, above). See, in this connection, paragraph 5.vi of this Resolution which reads “that one of the criteria used by the sub-committee should be that, in case of equal merit, preference should be given to a candidate of the sex under-represented at the Court”. See also [decision](#) adopted by the Ministers’ Deputies at their 593rd meeting on 27-28 May 1997 (item 4.1), and paragraph 49 of the Explanatory Report to Protocol No 14 to the ECHR which reads: “It was decided not to amend the first paragraph of Article 22 to prescribe that the lists of three candidates nominated by the High Contracting Parties should contain candidates of both sexes, since that might have interfered with the primary consideration to be given to the merits of potential candidates. However, Parties should do everything possible to ensure that their lists contain both male and female candidates”.

⁶ See PACE [Doc. 11767](#) of 01.12.2008, report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Rapporteur : Mr Chope, *passim*.

⁷ [Resolution CM/Res\(2010\)26](#) on the establishment of an Advisory Panel of Experts on Candidates for Election as Judge to the European Court of Human Rights. The panel is composed of seven personalities: see [Committee of Ministers decision of 8 December 2010](#). See also Assembly [Resolution 1764 \(2010\)](#), adopted on 8 October 2010, based on [Doc. 12391](#) of 7 October 2010, report of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, Rapporteur : Ms Wohlwend.

⁸ Modalities for the election procedure can be found in the Appendix to [Resolution 1432 \(2005\)](#), reproduced in Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, Strasbourg, January 2012, at page 154.

⁹ See paragraph 8 of Assembly [Resolution 1726 \(2010\)](#), adopted on 29 April 2010, which specifies when judges’ terms of office commence. The paragraph reads: “[the Assembly...] confirms its position that the nine-year term of office of a judge elected by the Assembly to the Court shall commence from the date of taking up of his/her duties, and in any event no later than three months after his/her election. However, if the election takes place more than three months before the seat of the outgoing judge becomes vacant, the term of office shall commence the day the seat becomes vacant. If the election takes place less than three months before the seat of the outgoing judge becomes vacant, the elected judge shall take up his/her duties as soon as possible after the seat becomes vacant and the term of office shall commence as from then and in any event no later than three months after his/her election.”

Timetable envisaged for elections in 2013:

Elections foreseen in June 2013

Iceland, Lithuania and Slovak Republic - the terms of office of judges elected in respect of **Iceland** (Mr David Thór Björgvinsson), **Lithuania** (Ms Danutė Jočienė) and the **Slovak Republic** (Mr Ján Šikuta) expire on 31 October 2013.

Election foreseen in October 2013

Romania - the term of office of the judge elected in respect of **Romania**, Mr Corneliu Bîrsan, expires on 16 December 2013.¹⁰

Timetable envisaged for elections in 2014:

Elections foreseen in January 2014

Serbia and Denmark - the term of office of the judge elected in respect of **Serbia** (Mr Dragoljub Popović) expires on 3 April 2014, and that of the judge in respect of **Denmark** (Mr Peer Lorenzen) expires on 20 May 2014.¹¹

Timetable envisaged for elections in 2015:

Elections foreseen in April 2015

Liechtenstein, Monaco and Cyprus - the term of office of the judge elected in respect of **Liechtenstein** (Mr Mark Villiger) expires on 31 August 2015, and that of the judge in respect of **Monaco** (Ms Isabelle Berro-Lefèvre) expires on 10 September 2015. The term of office of the judge elected in respect of **Cyprus** (Mr George Nicolaou) expires on 16 September 2015.¹²

Elections foreseen in June 2015

Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Luxembourg, Slovenia and Finland - the terms of office of judges elected in respect of **Andorra** (Mr Josep Casadevall), **Armenia** (Ms Alvina Gyulumyan), **Austria** (Ms Elisabeth Steiner), **Azerbaijan** (Mr Khanlar Hajiyev), **Latvia** (Ms Ineta Ziemele), **Luxembourg** (Mr Dean Spielman) and **Slovenia** (Mr Boštjan Zupančič) expire on 31 October 2015; that of the judge elected in respect of **Finland** (Ms Päivi Hirvelä) expires on 31 December 2015.

¹⁰ Judge to reach the age of 70 on 16.12.2013.

¹¹ Judge to reach the age of 70 on 20.05.2014.

¹² Judge to reach the age of 70 on 16.09.2015.

APPENDIX I**Model curriculum vitae for candidates seeking election to the European Court of Human Rights¹**

In order to ensure that the members of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe have comparable information at their disposal when electing judges to the European Court of Human Rights, candidates are invited to submit a short curriculum vitae on the following lines:

I. Personal details

Name, forename

Sex

Date and place of birth

Nationality/ies

II. Education and academic and other qualifications**III. Relevant professional activities**

a. Description of judicial activities

b. Description of non-judicial legal activities

c. Description of non-legal professional activities

(Please underline the post(s) held at present)

IV. Activities and experience in the field of human rights**V. Public activities**

a. Public office

b. Elected posts

c. Posts held in a political party or movement

(Please underline the post(s) held at present)

VI. Other activities

a. Field

b. Duration

c. Functions

(Please underline your current activities)

VII. Publications and other works

(You may indicate the total number of books and articles published, but mention only the most important titles (maximum 10))

VIII. Languages

(Requirement: an active knowledge of one of the official languages of the Council of Europe and a passive knowledge of the other)

Language	Reading			Writing			Speaking		
	very good	good	fair	very good	good	fair	very good	good	fair
a. First language: (Please specify)
b. Official languages:									
– English
– French
c. Other languages:									
.....
.....
.....

¹ This text is taken from the Appendix to Parliamentary Assembly [Resolution 1646 \(2009\)](#). Also available on the Parliamentary Assembly website: <http://assembly.coe.int/CommitteeDocs/2009/ModelCVEN.doc>.

IX. In the event that you do not meet the level of language proficiency required for the post of judge in an official language, please confirm your intention to follow intensive language classes of the language concerned prior to, and if need be also at the beginning of, your term of duty if elected a judge on the Court.

X. Other relevant information

XI. Please confirm that you will take up permanent residence in Strasbourg if elected a judge on the Court.

APPENDIX II

Expiry of judges' terms of office¹:

31 October 2013	Judges elected in respect of Iceland, Lithuania and Slovak Republic
16 December 2013	Judge elected in respect of Romania (age limit reached)
3 April 2014	Judge elected in respect of Serbia
20 May 2014	Judge elected in respect of Denmark (age limit reached)
31 August 2015	Judge elected in respect of Liechtenstein
10 September 2015	Judge elected in respect of Monaco
16 September 2015	Judge elected in respect of Cyprus (age limit reached)
31 October 2015	Judges elected in respect of Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Latvia, Luxembourg and Slovenia
31 December 2015	Judge elected in respect of Finland
6 September 2016	Judge elected in respect of the United Kingdom (age limit reached)
31 January 2017	Judges elected in respect of Albania, Georgia, Hungary, Spain and "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"
2 March 2017	Judge elected in respect of Ireland
30 April 2017	Judges elected in respect of Bulgaria and Turkey
26 August 2017	Judge elected in respect of Montenegro
20 September 2018	Judge elected in respect of San Marino
4 May 2019	Judge elected in respect of Italy
14 June 2019	Judge elected in respect of Ukraine
19 September 2019	Judge elected in respect of Malta
31 December 2019	Judge elected in respect of Germany
3 January 2020	Judge elected in respect of Estonia
31 March 2020	Judge elected in respect of Portugal
17 May 2020	Judge elected in respect of Greece
21 June 2020	Judge elected in respect of France (age limit reached)
31 August 2020	Judge elected in respect of Norway
3 October 2020	Judge elected in respect of Switzerland
12 September 2021	Judge elected in respect of Belgium
25 September 2021	Judge elected in respect of Sweden
31 October 2021	Judges elected in respect of Czech Republic, Netherlands and Poland
2 December 2021	Judges elected in respect of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the Republic of Moldova

¹ Judges in respect of Croatia and the Russian Federation, who were elected in October 2012, have not yet taken office. It is understood that they will do so in January 2013.

Hyperlinks to useful texts

Article 21 of Protocol No.14

<http://conventions.coe.int/treaty/en/treaties/html/194.htm>

Recommendation 1429 (1999)

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta99/EREC1429.htm>

Resolution 1432 (2005)

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta05/eRES1432.htm>

Resolution 1646 (2009)

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta09/ERES1646.htm>

Recommendation 1649 (2004)

<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=/Documents/AdoptedText/ta04/EREC1649.htm>