

Comparative Parliamentary Code of Ethics and Integrity

SEAPAC

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OSCE
Background Study

**Professional and Ethical Standards for
Parliamentarians**

Warsaw, 2012.

- OSCE Human Dimension commitments on democratic institutions state that “the participating States recognize that vigorous democracy depends on the existence as an integral part of national life of democratic values and practices as well as an extensive range of democratic institutions.”
- And building democratic institutions, it is critical to ensure that the individuals who work in public life adhere to certain professional and ethical standards.
- This applies to both mature democracies and to those where democratic institutions are still ‘under construction’.
- Across the OSCE region, there is a growing consensus that professional and ethical standards for parliamentarians are critical to strengthening good governance, public integrity and the rule of law.

Brussels Declaration, the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA)

- develop and publish rigorous standards of ethics and official conduct for parliamentarians and their staff;
- establish efficient mechanisms for public disclosure of financial information and potential conflicts of interests by parliamentarians and their staff;
- and establish an office of public standards to which complaints about violations of standards by parliamentarians and their staff.

Why reform standards?

four main reasons why OSCE participating States to consider reforming professional and ethical standards for parliamentarians. These are to:

- **Fight corruption**
- **Boost accountability and trust**
- **Professionalise politics**
- **Meet international standards**

How to reform standards

- **Codes of conduct**
- **Registers of interests and asset declarations**
- **Rules about allowances and expenses**
- **Other aspects of conduct**

Monitoring and enforcement

- Internal regulators
- External regulators

Initiating and Sustaining Reform

- Building Ownership of the system
- Working Groups fair and transparent
- Led by or include individuals who are widely regarded as ethical leaders and who inspire public confidence
- parliamentary standards through transparency and accountability initiatives, which are highly cost-effective.
- new members are briefed on the rules when they enter parliament
- educate the public and the media to encourage them to hold MPs to account

Key elements of a parliamentary standards system

Institution	Description	Objectives	Points to consider
Code of conduct	Written list of principles and/or rules to guide conduct	Provide clarity to MPs about expectations. Facilitate accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compatibility with existing laws? • Principles or rules? • Accompanying guide to the code of conduct?
Registry of Interests	Centralized list of the private interests of MPs that could influence or appear to influence their decisions	Ensure that private interests do not influence MPs' judgement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What needs to be registered? • Who will get access? • What about privacy concerns?
Declaration of Assets	Statement listing total assets of an individual MP	Deter corruption by allowing scrutiny of assets gained while in public office	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are declarations submitted (electronically, paper, etc)? • Should declarations be publicly disclosed? • Do family members need to make declarations? • Can declarations be checked against tax returns?

Expenses and allowances	Rules about what expenses are permissible and accounting	Ensure that public money is not wasted or used to supplement income	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should allowances differ for different types of MPs? • Should MPs' expenditures be centralized?
Conduct in the chamber	Rules about conduct within debates, respect for colleagues, language to be used or avoided, dress code	Ensure that parliament operates professionally and is able to perform its duties, that there is an atmosphere of respect for one's colleagues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should demeanour be regulated? • Are informal practices in the chamber inhibiting debate? • Are gender and ethnic equality upheld?
Rules about relations with lobbyists	Rules and restrictions on the kinds of relations that MPs can have with lobbyists and interest groups	Ensure that MPs do not abuse office, receiving money from lobbyists in exchange of political favours	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What kind of information should be provided in a registry of lobbyists? • What is the balance between good lobbying and improper political influence?

Comparative studies

- Codes of Conduct for Parliamentarians A Comparative Study – UNDP - King Prajadhipok's Institute , 2009
- OSCE Background Study Professional and Ethical Standards for Parliamentarians Warsaw, 2012.
<http://www.osce.org/odihr/98924?download=true>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n7tLxHXP2d8>