

What is MEDem?

Monitoring Electoral Democracy (**MEDem**) is a new, evolving European research infrastructure that will enable better, more comprehensive and highly innovative comparative research on electoral democracies. These aims will be achieved by cooperatively bringing together and linking data sources and information on the functioning of democracies, and by building standards and instruments for data collection, visualisation, analysis, and data operation. **MEDem** also strengthens existing national and comparative studies on electoral democracy by connecting them to a stable European network of research groups and scholars working collaboratively within the infrastructure. Furthermore, **MEDem** provides training and capacity building, laying the groundwork for academic excellence. In doing so, elevating the analysis of European electoral democracies to new levels of scientific distinction and public impact.

Why is MEDem necessary?

Social sciences offer an indispensable contribution to the well-functioning of liberal democracies, as they provide thorough understanding of how citizens, elites, legislatures, governments, and media interact within the democratic process. Electoral democracies – both in Europe and the rest of the world – face rising populism, misinformation and institutional distrust. Because of the complexity of today’s political challenges, they cannot be studied within the boundaries of a single nation, or from only one perspective or one point in time. Unfortunately many institutions employ differing data collection or archival methods across countries, topics, or data types, making large amounts of gathered data inaccessible or incomparable. Data from multiple democracies should be harmonised, accessible, interoperable and reusable, in order to unlock their true potential. This is the primary task of **MEDem**.

What does MEDem provide?

As a European Infrastructure **MEDem** will provide a set of services:

- **coordinate comparative and national research groups** in the field of electoral democracy. This includes ensuring an information flow and cooperation between different research groups on data, methodological, thematic, and governance issues.
- **establish standards for data collection** across nations and data types. Identifying and recommending standards on meta-data, concepts, questions, response categories, methods of data collection, coding, etc. will set the groundwork for data pre- and post-harmonisation processes.
- **organise the pre- and post-harmonisation of data** collections across Europe and its nations. Post-harmonisation will make existing datasets more accessible and linkable to other data sources. Similarly, pre-harmonisation will allow for integration of new data using only high-quality **instruments**. Eventually, this process will make post-harmonisation redundant.
- **provide a user-friendly interface to a database of tools, measures, and datasets** that does not require advanced technical knowledge, enabling a standardised search process on a wide range of topics related to electoral democracy. This will help communities, projects, institutions, and researchers, in ensuring their work is easily available and reusable.

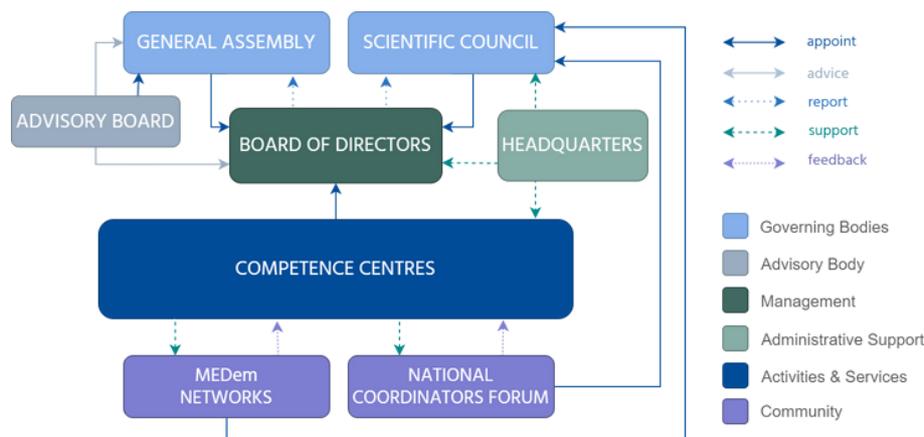
- **develop new tools for advanced data visualisation and data linkage.** Complex data need innovative approaches to data visualisation to make research findings broadly accessible. Various data sources need to be connected through the development of so-called “linkage keys” that further encourage data reusability.
- **train and interconnect the next generation of scholars and experts on European democracy.** This will stimulate the democratisation of new and cutting-edge research by serving as an innovation hub where researchers have the possibility to develop and share new instruments to produce data and tools that will be used by the community in the future.

MEDem’s Objectives and Outlooks

By connecting current (inter-)national research groups, infrastructures, and global networks, **MEDem** is conceptualised as a distributed European research infrastructure. The immediate goal of the infrastructure is to secure a position on the ESFRI roadmap because of its crucial and strategic scientific significance for European social and political research and European democracy. **MEDem** members will be European countries. Their responsibilities include funding and developing data collection efforts for **MEDem**-related research in their country, contributing to the general **MEDem** operating expenses for the headquarters and regional competence centres, as well as appointing a representative to the General Assembly. In turn, members will be at the forefront of a highly innovative and integrative social science infrastructure, creating new opportunities for research on electoral democracies, and co-deciding the direction of future work programs.

MEDem’s Prospective Governance Structure

In the prospective governance structure, the *General Assembly* serves as the governing body of **MEDem**. It consists of representatives from member countries. The *Board of Directors* together with the Director runs the infrastructure.



The *Headquarters* supports and manages daily tasks and serves as the main operational hub. The *Advisory Board* advises **MEDem** on specialised matters. The *Competence Centres* (CCs) stand in for the major service suppliers in a specific area of knowledge and/or type of data (e.g., population survey, data operations). The **MEDem Networks** are made up of leading (inter)national research groups and the *National Coordinators Forum* gives a voice to country-specific needs. Both have representation in the *Scientific Council*.

MEDem cares for its *Community* both in terms of supporting it with expertise as well as listening to it for guidance. Finally, the Austrian government already supports **MEDem's** to-be *Headquarters* at the University of Vienna politically and financially. Other governments have expressed a desire to offer support in the future.

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