

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:

- The **MEDem Service Gateway Hub** is going to be a one-stop-shop, where users (a) can query for concepts and datasets using the MEDem search engine, and (b) can – if desired – have the queried data curated through an automated process of data harmonization or linking for more comprehensive analyses.
- The **MEDem Measurement Map** will compile and document the measurement of concepts and items/scales used in different data collections in the field of research on democratic processes, politics, and elections. The Map is meant to serve as a living encyclopedia that assists researchers when working out the empirical details of their research questions, helping them to pick valid and reliable measurement instruments.
- The **MEDem Standards Catalog** will lay out best practice guidelines for data collectors to facilitate retrievability, harmonization, and interoperability of their data and to ensure that their data will follow certain quality standards.
- MEDem will offer **training and capacity building** for students at various stages of their academic career, from providing teaching materials for high school students, supporting their democratic formation, to providing massive open online courses (MOOCs), online tutorials, and summer schools for graduate students on research and methods-related topics, laying the groundwork for academic excellence.
- MEDem will devise tools to **improve the communication among researchers**, where researchers can benefit from the experience of others to make fragmented knowledge accessible to everybody.

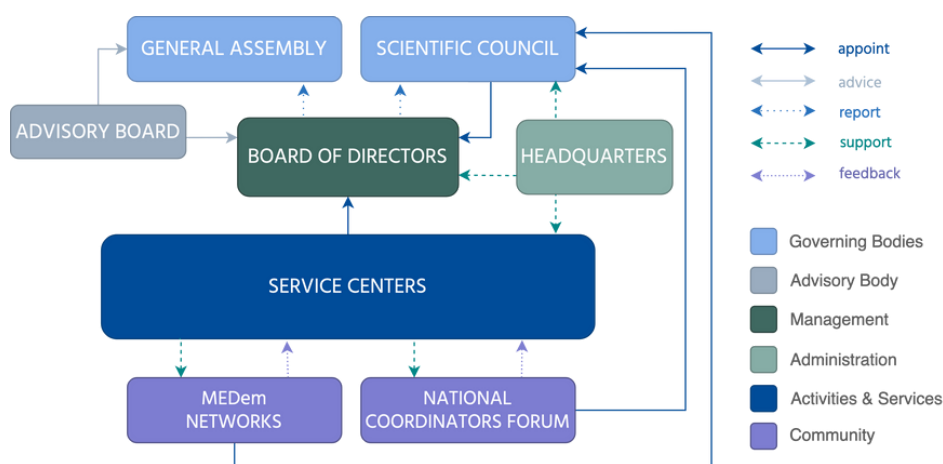
- MEDem will offer **advice and expertise to its members and associated partners** on various topics like legal and ethical issues, or individual methodological and technical questions – helping members to make informed decisions when designing new data collections.
- MEDem will assist in reaching out to the **non-academic community**, like policymakers, journalists, or interested citizens. The interactive web application will allow users without prior statistical knowledge to effortlessly inspect and visualize data about the functioning of democracies.
- MEDem will also offer **training for (data) journalists** on how to effectively utilize quantitative democracy data, which will equip journalists with the necessary skills to access and interpret such data.

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 service centers, 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 *Service Centers* (SCs) 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. Governments and/or academic institutions from Croatia, Italy, Germany, Lithuania, Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland have expressed a desire to offer support in the future.

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