

What is MEDem?

Monitoring Electoral Democracy (**MEDem**) is an evolving European research infrastructure that enables better, more comprehensive, and highly innovative comparative research on electoral democracies by bringing together and linking data sources and information on the functioning of democracies, as well as by developing standards and instruments for data collection, visualisation, analysis, and data operations. **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. The infrastructure was officially included in the ESFRI Roadmap 2026.

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:

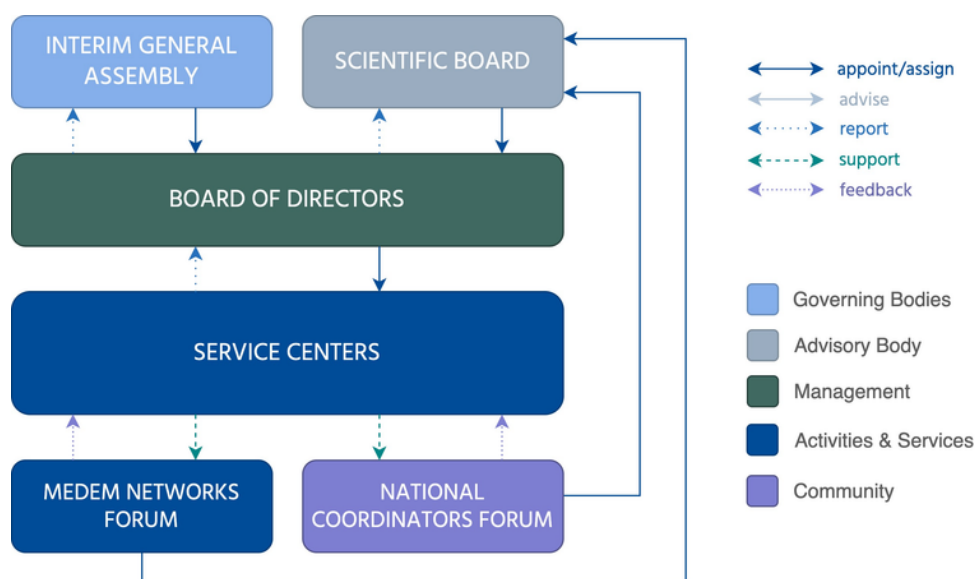
- The **MEDem Service Gateway Hub** is going to be a one-stop-shop, where users (a) can query for concepts and datasets using the MEDem search engine, and (b) can – if desired – have the queried data curated through an automated process of data harmonization or linking for more comprehensive analyses.
- 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 build on its inclusion in the ESFRI Roadmap 2026 and advance its implementation as strategically important research infrastructure for European democracy research. **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



During the Preparation Phase, **MEDem** maintains a flexible governance structure while laying its foundation. Regular **Interim General Assembly** meetings facilitate informal exchanges with ministry representatives to align with national priorities. The **Board of Directors** provides strategic oversight, coordinates key scientific and operational areas, and guides **MEDem's** development and direction. **Service Centers** offer expertise in population surveys, multimedia analysis, data linkage, and capacity building, strengthening **MEDem's** research support. The **Scientific Board** serves as an advisory body, integrating international expertise from the research communities represented in the **MEDem Data Networks Forum** and the **National Coordinators Forum**, but does not currently participate in decision-making.

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