

Her Excellency  
**Barbara Ćwioro**

Embassy Of Poland In Prague  
Valdštejnská 8  
118 01 Prague

Your Excellency,

First, allow me to express solidarity with the Polish people in their struggle against the Covid-19 pandemic. Our thoughts are with all those who have suffered from the infection or lost their loved ones.

However, on behalf of the ALDE group in the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (ALDE- PACE), I would like to express our deep concern as to the plans to carry on with the May 2020 Presidential election by postal vote.

We are concerned that in the current situation of lockdown, it is impossible to organize a meaningful political debate necessary for guaranteeing an equal playing field for all political forces and candidates. The fact that the electoral legislation is being profoundly modified just a few weeks before the conduct of the election also clearly goes against European electoral standards, including the highly respected recommendations of the Venice Commission. We believe that in these circumstances the democratic legitimacy of the forthcoming elections will be undermined, especially considering the already mounting criticism from opposition parties, NGOs, local government officials and medical community. The ALDE-PACE joins the calls from PACE co-rapporteurs on the functioning of democratic institutions in Poland and from the Director of OSCE-ODIHR to postpone the election to the second half of this year where the conditions will hopefully improve to allow for a genuinely democratic electoral process.

The ALDE group is also deeply worried about the two citizens' bills examined by the Polish Sejm and now sent to the committees for a second reading. These bills aim to even further restrict women's access to safe and legal abortion – rendering it practically impossible – and children's right to sexuality education. We call on our colleagues in the Polish Parliament to make the right choice and reject these bills.

We all understand that these difficult times require a lot of courage from political leaders. But the ALDE- PACE strongly believes that the most courageous course of action would be to strictly respect European standards for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law.

I would be thankful if you could transmit this letter to the competent authorities of the Republic of Poland.

Respectfully yours,

František Kopřiva  
vice-chair of the European Affairs Committee,  
delegate to the Parliamentary Assembly of the  
Council of Europe