



Questionnaire on the modalities of voting in national parliaments

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Instructions

Purpose. This questionnaire documents, for each parliamentary chamber, the constitutional provisions, the Rules of Procedure (RoP) and the actual institutional practices governing roll-call, secret, proxy and remote/postal voting.

Answers. Please reply in qualitative terms and add quantitative data wherever available, such as official statistics or minutes, with references to the relevant legal texts.

Section 1. Ordinary voting and general framework

1.1. What is the ordinary or default method of voting in your chamber when no special modality is requested, for example a show of hands, standing or division, or non-nominative electronic voting? Please specify separately for the plenary and, if it differs, for committees.

Plenary: The ordinary method of voting is nominative electronic voting. If the electronic voting system cannot be used, voting takes place by a show of hands. In cases provided by law, secret voting is conducted by electronic voting or ballot papers.

Committees: Committee decisions are normally adopted by consensus. Where a vote is requested, voting takes place openly by a show of hands. Votes are cast personally by committee members.

1.2. Are roll-call voting, secret voting, proxy voting and remote/postal voting each explicitly regulated in your legal framework, that is in the Constitution, legislation or Rules of Procedure? A brief yes or no for each modality is enough here, since details follow in the dedicated sections.

Voting modality	Explicitly regulated
Roll-call (recorded/nominative) voting	Yes
Secret voting	Yes
Proxy voting	No
Remote/postal voting	Conditionally (remote only)

Section 2. Roll-call (recorded, nominative) voting

2.1. Is roll-call voting the standard operating procedure for final passage votes on legislation in your chamber? If not, in addition to or instead of which method is it used?

The Riigikogu does not have a separate roll-call voting procedure. Ordinary plenary voting is conducted electronically and each Member's vote is individually recorded. Therefore, recorded (nominative) voting is the standard method for final passage votes on legislation and for most other votes.

2.2. Which legal texts regulate roll-call voting, whether constitutional provisions, legislation or Rules of Procedure?

The constitutional basis is Article 72(2) of the [Constitution](#), which provides that voting in the Riigikogu is public. Public voting is linked to the accountability of Members of Parliament to the electorate and enables citizens to know how their elected representatives vote. This principle is implemented in such a way that all public votes in the Riigikogu are recorded and attributable to individual Members. The only exception is secret voting in cases provided by the Constitution or legislation.

2.3. Since 2000, have the rules on roll-call voting changed, and in which direction? Please note any relevant court decisions or case law, and any current debates on possible changes.

No relevant changes have been identified since 2000.

2.4. Are there different types of roll-call, such as an oral roll-call, nominative electronic voting or other nominative methods? On what basis do they differ, for instance the degree of publicity or the legal requirements?

The Riigikogu does not distinguish between different forms of roll-call voting. The ordinary method is nominative electronic voting. If the electronic voting system cannot be used, voting is conducted by a show of hands. Secret voting by ballot paper is used only where expressly required by law.

2.5. What is the precise method used? For example an oral roll-call, an electronic voting machine with nominative attribution, a show of hands with an electronic check, or a division.

The Riigikogu uses a nominative electronic voting system. Members vote personally, and each vote is individually recorded and published. If the electronic voting system cannot be used, voting takes place by a show of hands; those votes are also recorded individually and made publicly available.

2.6. Does roll-call voting apply to plenary sittings only, or also to legislative committees?

Recorded (nominative) voting applies both in plenary sittings and in committees.

2.7. Who can request a roll-call, and who can obtain one? Is it compulsory on some occasions, for example confidence votes or the final passage of legislation?

N/A. See the previous answers.

2.8. Are there differences in the voting rules between final passage votes, votes on amendments, votes on individual articles, budgets and confidence or no-confidence motions?

The voting procedure is generally the same. Differences relate mainly to the majority required for adoption of a decision rather than to the method of voting. Certain elections are conducted by secret ballot, and some matters are subject to special majority requirements under the Constitution or legislation.

2.9. Is there a mechanism for Members to formally explain their vote, whether before or after the vote itself, for example a written or oral declaration of vote included in the minutes? Is this available for all votes, or only for certain categories? When?

No. The Riigikogu Rules of Procedure do not provide for a separate mechanism allowing Members to attach a formal declaration of vote to the minutes. Members may explain their position during the debate before the vote.

2.10. Whether and how are roll-call results published, for example in the minutes, the official journal, the parliamentary website or by real-time online publication? Are the votes cast by individual MPs publicly accessible?

Voting results are published through the Riigikogu's electronic information system and on the parliamentary website. The results of plenary votes, including the vote cast by each individual Member, are publicly accessible. As ordinary plenary voting is conducted through an electronic voting system, the results are available in electronic form immediately after the vote. Information on committee voting results is included in the committee minutes, which are published on the Riigikogu website.

2.11. May the declarations of vote attached to the minutes be changed afterwards, at the request of a Member of Parliament?

N/A

2.12. Does your chamber use an electronic voting system? If so, since when has it been in use?

Yes, the system has been in use since Estonia regained its independence in 1991.

2.13. Is there any relevant convention or practice, not written into the rules, that governs roll-call voting?

No. There is no separate unwritten convention governing roll-call voting. The recording and publication of individual votes are part of the ordinary operation of the Riigikogu's voting system and do not constitute a separate convention or practice.

2.14. Please provide an estimate of the number of roll-call votes per year or per term from 2006 to 2026, drawing on official statistics where available.

N/A.

Section 3. Secret voting

3.1. Is secret voting permitted or, in some cases, mandatory? For which types of decision, for example elections of or votes on persons, conscience issues such as bioethics, abortion or euthanasia, or which kind of motions? Is a secret ballot on a legislative bill possible?

Plenary: Voting at a sitting of the Riigikogu is public.

Voting is secret only in the following cases:

- 1) election of the President of the Republic;
- 2) election of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Riigikogu;
- 3) appointment of the Chief Justice and members of the Supreme Court;
- 4) appointment to the office of the Auditor General;
- 5) appointment of the Chancellor of Justice and the Deputy Chancellor of Justice-adviser to office;
- 6) appointing the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of Eesti Pank (Central Bank) and appointing a member of the Supervisory Board of Eesti Pank.

Committees: In the committees of the Riigikogu, secret voting is used only for the election of the chairperson and deputy chairperson of a committee.

3.2. Which legal texts regulate secret voting?

The Constitution establishes the principle that voting in the Riigikogu is public and provides that secret voting may take place only in cases prescribed by the Constitution or the Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act, and only for elections or appointments of officials (§ 72). The Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act specifies the offices for which secret ballots are held and regulates the procedure for conducting secret votes (§ 79).

Ballot papers are used for the election of the President of the Republic and of the President and Vice-Presidents of the Riigikogu. In other cases, secret voting is normally conducted electronically. Ballot papers would be used only exceptionally, where two conditions are

met simultaneously: the electronic voting system cannot be used, and the vote is required to be secret.

3.3. Since 2000, have the rules on secret voting changed, and in which direction? Please note any relevant court decisions or case law.

No changes.

3.4. Who may invoke secret voting, and under what procedural conditions?

N/A. Secret voting cannot be requested by Members, parliamentary groups or other parliamentary bodies. It is used only in cases expressly provided for by the Constitution or legislation and is therefore mandatory whenever such a case arises.

3.5. When both secret and roll-call voting are requested for the same vote, which takes priority?

N/A

3.6. Is there any relevant convention or practice governing this matter?

No. Secret voting is used only in cases expressly provided for by the Constitution or legislation, and there is no separate convention or practice that changes this rule.

3.7. Where secret voting is used, how is anonymity guaranteed in technical terms, for example through a paper ballot, an isolated booth or non-nominative electronic voting? If it is electronic, how is it ensured that a Member cannot prove to anyone else how they voted?

When secret voting is conducted electronically, the result is recorded and published only in non-nominative form, so it does not identify how individual Members voted. The secrecy of the vote is therefore protected at the level of recording and publication. No separate technical mechanism is used to prevent a Member from voluntarily revealing how they voted, and no additional measures are used to conceal which button or icon a Member selects on the screen during the act of voting.

When secret voting is conducted by ballot paper, anonymity is ensured through a secret ballot procedure. Ballot papers are completed individually in voting booths so that a Member's choice cannot be observed by others.

3.8. Are statistics or qualitative examples available on the use of secret voting in the current legislature or, for permanent chambers, over the last five years? Are records kept of the number or the subject-matter of secret votes?

Not relevant. Secret voting is used only in a limited number of elections and appointments prescribed by the Constitution and legislation. It is therefore exceptional rather than a regularly used voting method.

Section 4. Proxy voting, delegation and absence arrangements

4.1. Does the Constitution or the Rules of Procedure require the vote to be cast in person? How is this principle interpreted in relation to proxy and remote voting?

Yes. The principle of personal voting is explicitly laid down in the Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act, which provides that Members of the Riigikogu vote in person (§ 80).

Accordingly, proxy voting is not permitted. The requirement of personal voting does not preclude remote voting where this is expressly provided by law. In the case of a remote sitting, Members continue to vote personally; only the mode of participation differs.

4.2. Do the Constitution, legislation or Rules of Procedure permit the formal delegation of a vote, known as proxy voting, to another Member?

No.

4.3. Since 2000, have the rules on proxy voting changed, and in which direction? Please note any relevant court decisions or case law.

No.

4.4. If it is permitted, under what conditions is delegation granted, for example illness, maternity or parental absence, official missions, force majeure or any justified absence? Must the delegation be instructed?

N/A

4.5. What are the limits, for instance the maximum number of delegations per proxy holder or their duration? Is the proxy general, so that the holder votes at discretion, or directed, so that the holder is bound by instructions?

N/A

4.6. How does the delegation work in practice, including the formalities, registration and publication?

N/A

4.7. Do these rules apply to plenary voting only, or also to committees?

N/A

4.8. Do any of the following exist as alternatives or complements to formal proxy voting, and how do they operate: pairing, clearing, coordinated abstention, or the temporary substitution of Members?

N/A

4.9. How often are proxy voting and its alternatives used in practice?

N/A

4.10. Is there any relevant convention or practice governing this matter?

N/A

4.11. Are there current reform proposals or debates on proxy voting, particularly in relation to parental leave, maternity and gender equality?

No.

Section 5. Remote and postal voting

5.1. Is remote voting, that is casting a vote from outside the chamber, permitted? If so, is it available to all Members and for all votes, or only in specific circumstances such as illness, maternity or parental absence, or official missions?

Remote voting is permitted only in the context of a remote sitting of the Riigikogu. Under the Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act, a remote sitting may be convened only for compelling reasons (§ 89¹). Where a remote sitting has been convened, all Members may participate and vote remotely. Remote voting is therefore not available on an individual basis due to illness, maternity or parental leave, official travel or other personal circumstances. Postal voting is not permitted.

5.2. Which legal texts regulate remote voting, and since when has it been available? Was it introduced or maintained after the COVID-19 pandemic, and is it now a permanent scheme or a temporary or emergency measure?

Remote voting is regulated by the Riigikogu Rules of Procedure and Internal Rules Act. It was introduced during the COVID-19 pandemic and has been retained in legislation. Under the current legal framework, remote voting is possible only during a remote sitting of the Riigikogu. A remote sitting may be held only in the presence of compelling reasons as provided by law.

5.3. How does remote voting work in practice, including the platform used and the way in which the voting Member is identified? The technical aspects of identification and security are covered in the section on security, reliability and publicity.

Remote voting uses the same electronic voting system as voting during an in-person sitting. To cast a vote electronically, a Member must be logged into the system under their own account and authenticated using electronic identification. Members vote personally through the system used by the Riigikogu.

5.4. Does remote voting apply to plenary voting only, or also to committees?

Remote voting may apply both to plenary sittings and to committees. In both cases, it is linked to remote participation and is available only when a remote sitting is held in accordance with the conditions laid down by law. It is not available as an individual accommodation for particular Members.

5.5. How often is remote voting used in practice?

Remote voting is not a separate voting method. It is possible only when a remote sitting of the Riigikogu has been convened. Remote sittings were last held in 2021; since then, no such sittings have taken place, and remote voting has therefore not been used.

5.6. Are there current reform proposals or debates on remote voting?

No.

5.7. Is postal voting permitted for Members of your chamber? If so, for which votes and under what conditions?

No.

5.8. Which legal texts regulate postal voting, and since when has it been available?

N/A. Postal voting is not permitted for Members of the Riigikogu.

5.9. How does postal voting work in practice, including the formalities, the way the vote is authenticated and, where required, how its secrecy is preserved?

N/A

5.10. How often is postal voting used in practice?

N/A

Section 6. Security, reliability and publicity of the vote

The following questions concern aspects that cut across all voting modalities. Please answer with reference to electronic and remote voting where relevant, and write “not applicable” where a modality is not used. This section may be answered with the help of the parliamentary services responsible for the voting system.

6.1. How is the personal casting of the vote ensured, that is, what mechanism identifies the voting Member, and who manages the voting system?

Identification might be by physical presence and a call of names, a personal card or badge, seat or station-based electronic voting, biometric identification, or, for remote voting, a login, two-factor authentication or video.

The voting system is managed by the IT Department and operated by the Sitting Department of the Chancellery of the Riigikogu. Personal casting of the vote is ensured

through smart card login and visual verification of the vote on the screen by the voter after casting it.

Smart card identification is used in the voting units in the plenary hall.

For remote participation, the national ID card or Smart-ID/Mobile-ID is used for identification, together with local system credentials. More information on Estonian electronic identity can be found here: [Estonian electronic identity](#).

6.2. Is the electronic voting system managed by the chamber's own staff or outsourced? What further measures ensure its reliability and security, for example protection against multiple or substitute voting, and have there been any notable incidents?

The software development of the electronic voting system is outsourced, while the on-site system is managed and operated by parliamentary administration.

6.3. Is there an audit trail or log of electronic votes, and can the proclaimed result be independently recounted or verified afterwards? Are the recorded voting data kept and open to inspection, and for how long? Is there a manual fallback procedure if the electronic system fails during a vote and what are the consequences for the validity of the deliberation? Has a result ever been contested because of a malfunction, and how was it resolved? Please note any relevant case law.

If technical problems arise, the vote can be repeated. Voting data are retained indefinitely. During voting, there are currently no blockchain-based or digital-signature security measures providing an additional layer of security for the plenary vote itself. This is mainly because the result is immediately confirmed on screen by the voter and is documented in secondary systems through video recordings and live broadcasts.

6.4. How are the results made public in technical terms?

For example, display screens in the chamber, live web-streaming, downloadable open data or application programming interfaces, and how reliable and secure is that dissemination system?

Voting results are made public through:

- live broadcasts;
- screen in the plenary hall;
- a real-time REST API as open data.

6.5. Does the chamber itself publish elaborated or aggregated information on voting?

For example, are the voting and attendance records of individual Members, with the reason for any absence such as a mission, illness or an unjustified absence, published by the chamber? Does the chamber provide descriptive data on group cohesion? Or is such elaboration left entirely to third parties?

The voting and attendance records of individual Members are published automatically in real time. Reasons for absence from plenary sittings, such as official missions, illness, or other absences, are published separately. The reasons are usually collected by the staff of the respective political parties.

6.6. Open data resources: are the underlying raw data released in a reusable format that allows independent re-analysis?

To your knowledge, is there a non-official civic platform, such as a parliamentary-monitoring website, that reworks Members' votes and activity, and does it draw on official open data?

Riigikogu provides real-time REST API services for all open data. Various NGOs make use of these services, not only for monitoring purposes but also for active participation in lawmaking through citizen initiatives (for example, [Rahvaalgatus](#)). The website of the Riigikogu itself is also based on this open data, which is therefore maintained, continuously updated and supported.

Section 7. Further information

7.1. Is there any additional information you would like to share? In particular, are you aware of significant legal or political-science publications on parliamentary voting modalities in your country? Please provide links where available.

The following publications may be of interest in relation to parliamentary voting modalities and voting procedures in Estonia:

Private Members' Bills and the Personal Vote: neither selling nor Shaving / Mihkel Solvak.- The Journal of Legislative Studies, ISSN 1357-2334. (2013) vol. 19, no. 1, March, pp. 42-59. https://artiklid.elnet.ee/record=b2608005*est

(in Estonian) Riigikogu istungite ja hääletamise avalikkuse ning Riigikogu otsustusvõime ja häälteenamuse nõuded / Kalle Liebert. - Riigikogu toimetised. 6. Tallinn, 2002. Lk. 59-68. <https://rito.riigikogu.ee/eelmised-numbrid/nr-6/riigikogu-istungite-ja-haaletamise-avalikkuse-ning-riigikogu-otsustusvoime-ja-haalteenamuse-nouded/>

(in Estonian) § 72. [Riigikogu istungite ja hääletamise avalikkus] / Tiina Kuusmann Eesti Vabariigi põhiseaduse kommentaarid [Võrguteavik]. Tallinn : Eesti Teaduste Akadeemia Riigiõiguse Sihtkapital, 2023. <https://pohiseadus.riigioigus.ee/v1/eesti-vabariigi-pohiseadus/iv-riigikogu-ss-59-76/ss-72-riigikogu-istungite-ja-haaletamise>



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