RC.IO/3/10
30 September 2010

ENGLISH only

OSCE 2010 Review Conference

Warsaw, 30 September to 8 October 2010

Working Session 1: Democratic Institutions

Contribution of the Council of Europe

The Forum for the Future of Democracy

The objective of the Council of Europe's Forum for the Future of Democracy (FFD), established by the Third Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw 2005), is to strengthen democracy, political freedoms and citizens' participation. After its first annual sessions in Warsaw and Moscow, the third session of the Forum was held in 2007 in Stockholm/Sigtuna, Sweden, on the theme "Power and Empowerment – The interdependence of democracy and human rights". The 2008 Session of the Forum (Madrid, 15–17 October 2008) was hosted by the Government of Spain and the City of Madrid on the theme of "E-democracy: who dares?" It addressed the opportunities and challenges of the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) in democratic life and included a presentation by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights on observation of e-voting. The 2009 Forum session took place in Kyiv, Ukraine, on 21-23 October, on the theme "Electoral Systems: Strengthening democracy in the 21st century" and a representative of ODIHR made a workshop presentation on the legitimacy of elections. In 2010, the Forum is being hosted by Armenia on the theme of "Perspectives 2020: Democracy in Europe – Principles and Challenges"[1] and a representative of ODIHR will address a working session.

Good Governance in the Information Society

The Good Governance in the Information Society Project (2004 – 2010) has been focusing on how new information and communication technologies (ICT) affect the practice of democracy in Council of Europe member states. Its main aim has been to provide governments and other stakeholders with new instruments and

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[1] More information is available at www.coe.int/democracy.

practical tools in this field and to promote the application of existing instruments and of good and innovatory policy practice.

Standards in the field of e-democracy

The [Recommendation on e-democracy](#) (CM/Rec(2009)1), prepared by the Council of Europe's Ad Hoc Committee on e-democracy (CAHDE) and adopted by the Committee of Ministers in February 2009, offers all European governments and other interested stakeholders substantial guidelines and principles when dealing with e-democracy. Alongside an explanatory memorandum, the Recommendation is accompanied by a number of practical tools[2] providing practical information on using ICT for democratic processes.

In order to raise awareness about the potential of e-democracy, the Council of Europe has developed a portable exhibition on electronic democracy which has been shown since September 2009 at several events at the Council of Europe and elsewhere[3].

Regulatory action may also be taken in respect of internet governance. In this connection, in 2007 the Council of Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC) launched a joint initiative in the framework of the UN Internet Governance Forum (IGF) on "Public Participation in Internet Governance". The objective of this initiative is to propose a code of good practice on information participation and transparency in internet governance that may be considered by major internet governance entities. During the past year, the draft code has been explored with various internet governance (IG) entities such as ICANN, regional and national IG fora, and ISOC. A workshop at the fifth IGF in Vilnius/Lithuania (14-17 September 2010) will provide an opportunity to discuss the practical aspects of applying a draft code of good practice and to hear from members of the wider internet community on their experiences and suggestions.

Standards in the field of e-voting

The Council of Europe [Recommendation on e-voting](#) (CM/Rec(2004)11) has become the main international reference for ensuring democratic election standards when e-voting is used.

The second biennial meeting to review developments in the field of e-voting and the application of Rec(2004)11 (Madrid, 16 October 2008) was organised in the context of the 2008 Session of the Forum for the Future of Democracy. At that meeting, the representatives of member states present agreed that the

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[2] http://www.coe.int/t/dgap/democracy/default_en.asp

[3] The Council of Europe is keen to show this exhibition at events related to the discussion and promotion of democracy and good governance. Further information may be obtained from ruth.goodwin[at]coe.int.

Recommendation on e-voting continues to be accurate and useful. At the same time, the participants felt that in the light of experiences and developments in the field of e-voting over the last four years, it might be appropriate to develop some additional commentaries on certain parts of the Recommendation. It was therefore agreed that the Secretariat should make an inventory of the topics which member states feel require more elaboration with a view to presenting the outcomes at the next biennial meeting, which will take place in Strasbourg on 16-17 November 2010. The outcome of the inventory was that issues of certification of e-voting systems and transparency of e-enabled elections should be the priority field of the Council of Europe's future work on e-voting. Representatives of OSCE/ODIHR have been involved in the development of guidelines on certification and transparency. They have attended meetings and contributed via e-mail during the drafting phases. Especially the guidelines on transparency of e-enabled elections, which focus on different ways for governments to make e-voting as transparent as possible, was welcomed by OSCE/ODIHR and it should in the future assist the OSCE/ODIHR observers in their work of the observation of e-elections. The results of this work will be presented at the review meeting in November. At the same occasion, a new publication entitled "E-voting handbook: Key steps in the implementation of e-enabled elections" will be presented.