



Report on 3rd Annual Meeting of Election Management Bodies

Tbilisi, Georgia

20-22 February 2013

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The Georgian Central Election Commission (CEC), chaired by Mr Zurab Kharatishvili hosted the two-day conference in Tbilisi, where guests and representatives from election management bodies of Eastern Europe, the Caucasus region, and Central Asia gathered amongst representatives of leading international and local non-governmental organisations as well as representatives from Israel, Nepal and Indonesia. The CEC worked in close cooperation with the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies (ICPS) in the organisation of the conference.

Over the course of the proceedings of the conference, papers were presented pertaining to the main topic of the year: 'Conflict Management in the Electoral Process'. One of the innovations of this year's conference was also to introduce themes pertaining to the place of citizens in the electoral process, including conflict-related issues as well as questions of electoral psychology and ergonomomy.

Electoral Commissioners of the various countries from Central and Eastern Europe that were represented at the meeting provided expert insight into their individual electoral practices and processes as well as offering advice on how to manage conflict and minimise problems that can be experienced by electoral management bodies. These presentations highlighted methods of best practice, provided a forum for the discussion of shared problems and facilitated the transfer of knowledge across borders and contexts.

Whilst the majority of participants of the conference were involved in the management of elections, often making the crucial decisions of how to organise the electoral process and managing the teams that make 'elections happen', some leading experts in electoral psychology and electoral ergonomomy from the International Centre of Electoral Psychology (ICEP) offered some thought-provoking presentations that highlighted their findings from recent research on elections in several major democracies, that places voters at the heart of elections. Their spotlights on electoral ergonomomy focused on how different formats of elections and apparently small differences in electoral rules and processes can have major implications on how citizens perceive the electoral process and can even significantly affect electoral behaviour.

Their electoral psychology research delves into the minds of voters in order to try and understand what they think about at the crucial moment when they are asked to cast their vote, be it on a paper ballot, a voting machine, on-line, and whether it is on election day, in

advance, from abroad or from home. Their research on electoral psychology also provided unprecedented insights into the emotions felt by citizens in relation to elections and how they affect their voting processes, trust, motivations, behaviour, and perceptions of representation and the democratic process. These attempts to provide a better understanding of the preferences, perceptions and electoral choices of voters aim to help decision-makers in their quest to make elections as inclusive, efficient, transparent, and trusted as possible and to minimise the risk of conflict or post-election contestation.

More scientific experts participated in the conference and added interesting historical perspectives on violence in elections and the advantages and risks related to the use of e-voting on the likely occurrence of post-electoral violence.

Alongside members of Electoral Commissions, international and local IGOs and NGOs, and experts in the fields of electoral psychology and ergonomics, the conference included presentations by the representatives of some of the largest companies supplying electoral technology and biometric identification devices.

They explained how the latest advances in technology can support the electoral management process. Companies in attendance of the conference included Smartmatic, Cross Match Technologies, Dominion Voting Systems, Scytl and Gilat Satellite Networks. As electoral management bodies are continually seeking to make the electoral process more efficient, safer, and more user-friendly, the addition of electoral technology systems to help in the management of elections is one of the natural avenues that are considered by election organisers.