

EUROPEAN CONFERENCE OF ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES

Pluralist elections
Secret ballot
Right to vote
Accountability
Equal suffrage
Inclusiveness
Impartiality
Effective complaints and appeals
Universal suffrage
Public trust
Right to free elections
Democratic elections
Integrity
Turnout
Neutrality
Choice
Electoral process
Balanced and neutral
media coverage
Gender parity
Professionalism
Transparency
Equality of
opportunity
Fair competition
Free suffrage

Venice Commission
of the Council of Europe





13th EMB Conference group photo, Bucharest, 14-15 April 2016

Background – The Venice Commission assisting Electoral Management Bodies towards genuine electoral processes

The electoral field is one of the key areas of expertise of the European Commission for Democracy through Law of the Council of Europe (“the Venice Commission”). In addition to opinions and studies on electoral legislation, conferences and training seminars, the Venice Commission works closely with the Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) of its 61 member States.

■ Electoral Management Bodies oversee and conduct elections and referendums, and therefore play a crucial role in the good functioning of democratic institutions. Their mandates include a variety of tasks, such as the administration of elections, managing complaints, promoting gender equality and the participation of minorities and advocating electoral reform.

What is the European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies?

European Electoral Management Bodies met for the first time in Palma de Mallorca, Spain, in 2002 and agreed to continue to meet on a regular basis. The Venice Commission co-organised and took part in the second conference, held in Strasbourg in 2005. Since then, the European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies (EMB Conference) has been co-organised annually by the Venice Commission and local EMBs in different European countries. The last EMB Conference was held in Bucharest in 2016 and was jointly organised by the Venice Commission and the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania.

■ The Conference gathers together electoral administrators and experts from the Venice Commission’s 61 member States and beyond. The EMB Conference’s primary aim is to pool and share knowledge and expertise on international standards, domestic legislation and good practice in the electoral field in general. The EMB Conference is a unique forum which provides an opportunity to examine the challenges faced when managing electoral processes, to debate on how to improve such processes and to strengthen the network between EMBs.



13th EMB Conference, Bucharest, 14-15 April 2016

Working methods

The EMB Conference usually lasts two days, and is organised annually in one of the Venice Commission's member States in co-operation with the local EMB. It is based on a participatory and interactive method that includes plenary sessions with several panellists focussing on a specific subject and working sessions held simultaneously in which participants can choose a topic of their interest, exchange views and share knowledge on a more informal basis.

■ The different sessions of the EMB Conference are generally held in English, French, Russian and the language of the host country. Simultaneous interpretation is provided for all participants. Invited participants take part in the EMB Conference free of charge.

■ A pool of experienced keynote speakers from diverse backgrounds contributes to each EMB Conference. They include chairpersons or members of EMBs, international election experts, elected officials, members of governments, representatives of international institutions and renowned scholars.

■ A synopsis summarising the discussions held in both the plenary and working sessions is published and available to the public on the Venice Commission's website at the end of each EMB Conference. These conclusions highlight potential issues and improvements of electoral processes. They are targeted at both electoral management bodies and public authorities, including law makers.

Participants

The main beneficiaries of the EMB Conference are the Electoral Management Bodies of Venice Commission member States, their members and their staff. The Conference is nevertheless intended to reach a broader audience including researchers, international and regional organisations (both governmental and non-governmental) and other relevant stakeholders in the electoral field. Major international organisations such as the European Union, the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE/ODIHR), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA) and the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) have participated in the EMB Conference on a regular basis since 2005. The 2016 edition saw the participation of more than 140 guests, including more than 90 participants from 32 countries.



12th EMB Conference group photo, Brussels, 30-31 March 2015

Topics

The EMB Conference has touched upon a wide variety of topics over the years, starting with very general issues in the earlier editions, to the future of electoral administration and electoral management in more recent ones

List of the 15 editions of the EMB Conference

- ▶ **15th edition (2018, Oslo):**
Security in elections
- ▶ **14th edition (2017, Saint Petersburg):**
Operational Electoral Management Bodies for Democratic Elections
- ▶ **13th edition (2016, Bucharest):**
New Technologies in Elections: Public Trust and Challenges for Electoral Management Bodies
- ▶ **12th edition (2015, Brussels):**
Ensuring Neutrality, Impartiality and Transparency in Elections: The Role of Electoral Management Bodies
- ▶ **11th edition (2014, Helsinki):**
Combating the Misuse of Administrative Resources during Electoral Processes
- ▶ **10th edition (2013, Chişinău):**
The Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters: Strengths and Potential Developments
- ▶ **9th edition (2012, Tallinn):**
Innovative Solutions for Elections
- ▶ **8th edition (2011, Vienna):**
Elections in a Changing World
- ▶ **7th edition (2010, London):**
Every Voter Counts
- ▶ **6th edition (2009, The Hague):**
Enhancing Participation in Elections
- ▶ **5th edition (2008, Brussels):**
Distance Voting
- ▶ **4th edition (2007, Strasbourg):**
Fighting against Electoral Fraud – Complaints and Appeals Procedures
- ▶ **3rd edition (2006, Moscow):**
Development and Codification of International Standards in the Field of Elections
- ▶ **2nd edition (2005, Strasbourg):**
Voters' Turnout – Impact of New Technologies on Participation
- ▶ **1st edition (2002, Palma de Mallorca):**
Electoral Management and Electoral Co-operation in Member States and with International Organisations



The Venice Commission

The Venice Commission is an advisory body of the Council of Europe in constitutional matters. Initially conceived as an instrument of emergency constitutional engineering against a background of transition towards democracy, the Commission has gradually evolved into an internationally recognised, independent legal think-tank. Although the Commission is mainly known for its legal opinions and transnational studies, it also helps to disseminate a common legal heritage based on the fundamental legal principles of Europe and beyond, including through conferences.

Members – 61:

Albania (1996), Algeria (2007), Andorra (2000), Armenia (2001), Austria (1990), Azerbaijan (2001), Belgium (1990), Bosnia and Herzegovina (2002), Brazil (2009), Bulgaria (1992), Chile (2005), Costa Rica (2016), Croatia (1997), Cyprus (1990), Czech Republic (1994), Denmark (1990), Estonia (1995), Finland (1990), France (1990), Georgia (1999), Germany (1990), Greece (1990), Hungary (1990), Iceland (1993), Ireland (1990), Israel (2008), Italy (1990), Kazakhstan (2011), Republic of Korea (2006), Kosovo (2014), Kyrgyzstan (2004), Latvia (1995), Liechtenstein (1991), Lithuania (1994), Luxembourg (1990), Malta (1990), Mexico (2010), Moldova (1996), Monaco (2004), Montenegro (2006), Morocco (2007), Netherlands (1992), Norway (1990), Peru (2009), Poland (1992), Portugal (1990), Romania (1994), Russian Federation (2002), San Marino (1990), Serbia (2003), Slovakia (1993), Slovenia (1994), Spain (1990), Sweden (1990), Switzerland (1990), “The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (1996), Tunisia (2010), Turkey (1990), Ukraine (1997), United Kingdom (1999), United States (2013)

Associate member:

Belarus (1994)

Observers:

Argentina (1995), Canada (1991), Holy See (1992), Japan (1993), Uruguay (1995)

Participants:

European Union, OSCE/ODIHR

Special co-operation status:

Palestinian National Authority (2008), South Africa (1993)

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.