

**Check against delivery**

Secretary General, President, ladies and gentlemen.

Welcome to Oslo. We are proud to host the 15<sup>th</sup> European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies here in Norway.

This conference is a unique arena. Here, electoral authorities and other relevant stakeholders can come together and discuss current issues in the field of electoral management.

The topic of this conference is "Security in elections". As the Minister responsible for the conduct of elections in Norway, I believe that it is important to take a broad approach to this.

Recent changes to the international political landscape have led to increased attention on the risks of cyber-attacks, foreign influences and misinformation during electoral processes. These developments may affect our electoral institutions, and can influence the public trust in our elections.

Election systems are mainly based on *trust and openness*. We want the voters to trust that the votes they cast are secret, that their ballots are counted correctly and that the published results are correct. To maintain this trust, we need transparency in the electoral process.

We are experiencing fast technological development in almost every field in our society. This also affects the electoral field.

We benefit from the efficiency electronic systems provide. But at the same time: This means that we use technology that the average voter may not fully understand.

And we must assure our voters that the elections are *correctly* conducted.

This leads to a conflict between wanting elections to be transparent and open, while the nature of electronic systems is that they have to be closed to be secure.

And, if we respond to security threats by being less transparent, the attackers have already reached a goal of doubts about the trustworthiness of elections.

It is our responsibility, as election authorities, to inform about the consequences and risks. The more attentive we are, the more resilient we are.

In Norway, we had our parliamentary elections last September. Ten days before Election day, The Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation issued new regulations instructing all municipalities to manually count the votes in the first count.

Normally, the municipalities have the opportunity to scan the ballot papers in all counts.

There were no indications that anyone had attempted to affect the conduct of the election in any way. There was, however, increasing activity and attention around some of the technical solutions in place. This increased attention was in itself considered a source of risk, particularly so close to Election day.

The minister at that time commented that: "Our election administration system is well tested and secure. We wish, however, to avoid any speculation or uncertainty pertaining to the election results. Security and trust are vital for the conduct of elections."

This action calmed the debate on security. That enabled the media to shift their attention back towards the on-going political debates and election campaigns. The decision led to increased workload in the municipalities, but the results were not delayed.

On election day, we did not see any attempts to tamper with our election.

The combination of technology and traditional methods is one way of maintaining trust in that the election results are correct.

Our experience from last year is that paper trails were an important element to the public trust in the Norwegian election. We have recently completed the evaluation of the election, and will in the near future consider how to prepare for the elections in 2019.

We expect attempts to disrupt elections will be a challenge to electoral management bodies in the years to come.

International cooperation is vital to maintain the trust in elections. Our ability to tackle digital threats is *dependent* on international cooperation. As election authorities, we must also encourage cooperation between EMBs and relevant security and contingency forces.

This conference is filled with interesting interventions about past and future security challenges in elections. I hope you all will leave Oslo with more knowledge on how different bodies work on security, and that you will use this information when preparing for your next election.

Good luck with important discussions at this conference, and thank you for your attention.