



17th European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies

“Electoral law and electoral administration in Europe – Recurrent challenges and best practices” – Opening remarks of Deputy Minister of Interior Theodoros Livanios

Good day everyone!

I wish to thank you heartily for the invitation to join this Conference specifically.

I am really happy to be (digitally) here, with you, today. Not only because it is an honor to participate in this event, being held in the framework of the Greek Presidency of the Committee of Ministers, but also - to be honest - because of the very subject of the Conference: “Elections”!

I have to admit, I am very fond of the electoral process itself, all the challenges it holds and the procedural guarantees that allow us to successfully deliver the most important manifestation of democracy. The core of democracy, as it was invented here in Greece.

I am a huge fan, to put it bluntly. And I am sure I can almost “see” my good fellow workers from the Election Unit of our Ministry nodding their head right now.

Judging by the impressive participation, more than 120 participants, not only from Europe but also from other continents, including rapporteurs from America, I am glad to say that there are plenty of us!

So, this is the occasion to give you your right title, so often forgotten: “psephologists” – even though we will not focus these two days on voting methods, from small stones to internet.

This conference will address recurrent problems which appear all along the electoral process – from the registration of voters to the announcement of results – and which, albeit under evolving forms, have arisen through democratic history since ancient

times. As humankind has not changed in nature, so has its propensity to fraud and negligence not disappeared.

But we are now in a time of crisis and cannot avoid talking about the way elections are held (or not held) during the pandemics. Now that I mentioned pandemics, I cannot pass by the fact that Greek names describe big achievements, like democracy, but also the dark side of life, unfortunately = crisis, pandemics...

Nevertheless, crisis has another meaning as well: judgment! It's, therefore, time to exercise our judgment – certainly a pleasure for the lawyers present here!

And I cannot think of a better way to exercise it than deepening into elections.

There are international standards, but no international solution applicable everywhere. That is why it is so important to hear about national experiences and draw lessons on, for example, holding or not elections, when to hold them or how to hold them, including the possibilities for remote voting.

Remote voting, as a matter of fact, has been the touchstone of the parliamentary dialogue in Greece, less than a year ago, when, at long last, forty-five years after the adoption of our current Constitution (1975), we managed to adopt a law regulating the vote of expat citizens, with an extraordinary majority of 288 out of 300 votes, which is quite unique for the Greek parliamentary history. Despite that, remote voting remains a pending issue...

So, I am really looking forward to hear more about how to better address such challenges, either solved long time ago by others or newly arisen due to the pandemics.

Because keeping Democracy and its institutions safe, under extreme circumstances, is the key issue. Taking collective decisions, without the traditional tools.

Encouraging participation in commons without letting distance be an obstacle.

Removing the suspicion that remote participation and the new Media available restrict democratic functioning. Proving that they can be used to even make it more representative.

Wishing you every success, I would like to finish by saying that the aim in politics should always be strengthening of Democracy.

This can only be accomplished if we constantly seek for ways of bigger, stronger participation, in order to bring closer each and every citizen, however far one is.

To not let anyone behind. Thank you.