



Strasbourg, St Petersburg, 16 May 2017

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**EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW**  
**(VENICE COMMISSION)**

in co-operation with

**THE CENTRAL ELECTION COMMISSION OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION**

and

**THE INTERPARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY**  
**OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES**

**14<sup>TH</sup> EUROPEAN CONFERENCE**  
**OF ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES**  
**“OPERATIONAL ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES**  
**FOR DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS”**

**Monday and Tuesday, 15-16 May 2017**

**St Petersburg**  
**Tavricheskiy Palace, Shpalernaya 47**

**SYNOPSIS**



The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe organised in co-operation with the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation and the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States the fourteenth European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies in Saint Petersburg, Russian Federation, on 15 and 16 May 2017.

The topic of the Conference was “**Operational Electoral Management Bodies for Democratic Elections**”. The participants debated more specifically three main issues:

- Functional Electoral Management Bodies;
- Professional Electoral Management Bodies; and
- Towards genuine democratic elections.

**Mr Alexey Sergeev**, Secretary General of the Interparliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States, **Mr Gianni Buquicchio**, President of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe and **Mr Nikolay Levichev**, Member of the Central Election Commission of the Russian Federation, on behalf of **Ms Ella A. Pamfilova**, Chairperson of the Central Election Commission, Russian Federation, opened the Conference.

Around 130 participants attended the Conference, representing national electoral management bodies and other bodies involved in the electoral field; from 23 European countries and 5 other countries. In total, 28 countries were represented in the Conference.

The European Parliament and the Election Observation and Democratic Support (EODS) of the European Union also participated in the Conference. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the United Nations (UN), the Organization of American States (OAS), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), the Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO) and several other institutions active in the electoral field also took part in the Conference.

Various representatives of the Council of Europe also contributed to the Conference.

The **conclusions** of the Conference are appended to this synopsis.

### The Participants

1. *Recalled* the existing international electoral principles, standards and norms that are contained within different international documents: the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, in particular Article 25, the European Convention on Human Rights, in particular Article 3, Protocol 1, the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), in particular Article 29, the Convention on Standards for Democratic Elections and Electoral Rights in CIS member states, the Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters and the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document;
2. *Underlined* the need to further develop international electoral principles, standards and norms as well as practice;
3. *Took note* of the conclusions of the survey conducted by researchers from the University of East Anglia since the presentation of the Project "Improving electoral management: the organisational determinants of electoral integrity" to participants of the 13<sup>th</sup> EMB Conference last year; *underlined* the importance of on-going research on EMBs; *encouraged* EMBs to participate in future waves of this cycle;
4. *Pointed out* that functionality of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) is a key element to ensure democratic elections and build trust in electoral processes;
5. *Underlined* the importance of adequate human and financial resources for EMBs to be able to fulfil their tasks throughout comprehensive electoral cycles in a transparent, independent and timely manner;
6. *Recalled* that ensuring efficient EMBs implies strong internal structures and an efficient functioning of such structures, therefore perpetuating their institutional memory;
7. *Pointed out* that regardless of their composition, EMBs have to be impartial in order to ensure democratic elections and *underlined* that impartiality depends in particular on political will;
8. *Recalled* the importance of political balance and the impartial functioning of politically-appointed EMBs;
9. *Underlined* the necessity of transparent EMBs by ensuring effective internal and external communication, vis-à-vis the public, domestic and international institutions, including civil society, implying *inter alia* meaningful information on electoral procedures to all electoral stakeholders;
10. *Underscored* the positive role of the internet in facilitating the work of EMBs, as well as of social and mass media in promoting more transparent and visible EMBs, while calling for the responsible use of these instruments;
11. *Recognised* the usefulness of international co-operation based on respecting national sovereignty and other principles of international law;
12. *Commended* the co-operation between EMBs and other public authorities, as well as other bodies, such as statistical offices and audit offices that assist EMBs' operations;

13. *Recognised* the regulatory role of EMBs and their responsibility in implementing electoral legislation; *pointed out* their possible input during the preparation of electoral reforms;
14. *Pointed out* that professionalism of EMBs requires strategic and operational planning to work effectively during the whole electoral cycle;
15. *Underlined* the importance of experience, professionalism and training of EMBs' members and staff;
16. *Pointed out* the value of training for other categories of electoral stakeholders and, where applicable, electoral judges, proxies and election observers as well as civic education;
17. *Encouraged* EMBs to promote recruitment by merit through a rigorous process, job security, career opportunities, employee involvement in decision making, a supportive supervision of staff and a consideration of employee job satisfaction and stress levels;
18. *Pointed out* the importance of gender balance within EMBs and *underlined* that efforts should be made to increase electoral participation of underrepresented and potentially disadvantaged groups, such as women, voters residing in remote areas and people with disabilities;
19. *Encouraged* the timely publication in an accessible manner of decisions adopted by election commissions and of aggregated and disaggregated election results;
20. *Recommended* meaningful access for observers, political party proxies and media representatives to the work of EMBs throughout all stages of electoral processes;
21. *Recommended* that international election observers provide detailed and substantiated assessments and recommendations;
22. *Took note* of methods and safeguards developed by EMBs in order to avoid multiple voting and to achieve accurate voter registers.

Norway has offered to host the fifteenth European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies in 2018. The exact dates will be confirmed at a later stage.