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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

2nd MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL FOR DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS
(Venice, 3 July 2002)

MEETING REPORT

1. Observers

Mr Buquicchio informed the Council that ACEEEO (Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials) had requested observer status. This Association has in particular drawn up, on the initiative of the Russian Central Electoral Commission, a draft convention on electoral standards, rights and freedoms. This text will be discussed at a Conference which will take place in Moscow on 25-27 September 2002. Following this, an initiative could be developed within the Council of Europe.

Mr Masters underlined the quality of co-operation with ACEEEO in Kosovo.

The Council for Democratic Elections decided to admit ACEEEO as an observer.

2. Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters

The Council examined the preliminary draft guidelines in electoral matters drawn up by the Venice Commission Secretariat (CDL-EL (2002) 2 rev.), as revised by the Secretariat on the basis of comments by members of the Council at its first meeting, as well as those made on the revised text presented by the Secretariat.

The members of the Council for Democratic Elections made some further proposals for amendment which were mainly accepted. Some points will appear in the explanatory report (for example points I.1.a.bb.iii and I.1.a.cc.iii).

The question of equality of sexes (point I.2.e) was one of the most controversial. Mr Martini cannot agree with the solution finally retained.

The Council adopted the guidelines in electoral matters as revised during the present meeting (CDL-EL (2002) 2 rev 2).

3. Draft Workshop on Civic Rights of Individuals with Disabilities

The members of the Council were invited to take part in the Global Workshop on developing standards of electoral access for voters with disabilities, which will be organised by Swedish International Development Cooperation Assistance (SIDA), IFES and International IDEA on 14-17 September 2002.

4. Proposals for future activities

It was proposed that the guidelines in electoral matters should be the contribution of the Venice Commission and the Council for Democratic Elections at the ODIHR Human Dimension Seminar and in particular for the discussion on electoral standards which will take place on 18 September.

Mr Clerfayt indicated that, at the next meeting, the explanatory report on the guidelines, which will be revised on the basis of the document CDL-EL (2002) 1, should be adopted.

The follow-up to this text should then be discussed, however the perspective of a Council of Europe Convention should be mentioned.

In addition, the Council is interested in the work on electronic voting (see item 5).

5. Other questions and communications

Mr Remmert informed the Council for Democratic Elections about the Integrated Project “Making democratic institutions work”. As indicated in document IP1 (2002) 7, its overall aim is to consolidate common European standards that will assist member states and civil society in setting-up policy frameworks and practical instruments to strengthen institutions so that they encourage the most active participation possible of all Europe's citizens. This overall aim breaks down into the three following specific objectives/themes : accountability and responsiveness of democratic institutions; participation of civil society in decision-making; fair and inclusive electoral procedures.

The Integrated Project is also interested in new topics such as electronic voting. A seminar has been organised on this subject on 1-2 July in Strasbourg, at which the Council for Democratic Elections will be represented by its Chairman. A further meeting will take place during the year, with government representatives. In addition Mr Garrone participated in a Colloquy on the same theme in Florence on 10-11 May.

It is envisaged to set up a network of national correspondents on the issue of electronic voting, which could provide information for the establishment of a database on electoral matters.

A general guide, publications and information on a website are envisaged for the end of the Integrated Project period (2003-2004).

In general the Integrated Project aims to facilitate the distribution and implementation of standards such as those adopted by the Council for Democratic Elections.

Mr Clerfayt confirmed that the Council for Democratic Elections is very pleased to participate in the work of the Integrated Project.

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Venice Commission

Mr Georg Nolte, Professor of Public Law, University of Goettingen

Secretariat

M. Gianni Buquicchio

M. Pierre Garrone

Parliamentary Assembly

Mr Georges Clerfayt

Mr Erik Jurgens

Mr György Frunda

Secretariat

Ms Catherine Entzminger

CLRAE

Mr Gianfranco Martini

Mr Owen Masters

Integrated Project “Making Democratic Institutions work”

Mr Michael Remmert

OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Mr Giovanni Kessler, Member of OSCE PA