

# VOTE!

## Division of Electoral Assistance



[www.coe.int/electoral-assistance](http://www.coe.int/electoral-assistance)

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

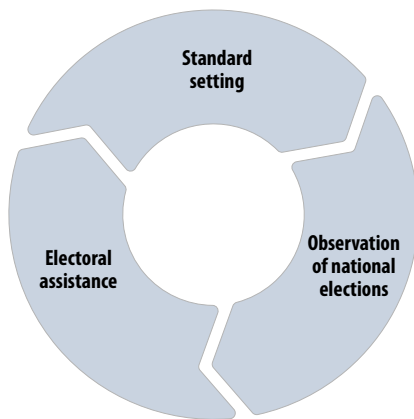


CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE



**T**he Council of Europe assists in the organisation of regular, free, fair and transparent elections in its member states and in other countries which so request.

— The electoral assistance offered by the Council of Europe is based on the principle of a virtuous circle:



— For example, the **Division of Electoral Assistance** puts in place assistance programmes, which it presents to the Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM) of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. These programmes are designed to:

- ▶ **increase** the capacities of the bodies responsible for running elections, electoral in-service training centres and also national observers, judges, the media, political parties, etc. ;
- ▶ **raise** awareness of the electoral process among those concerned, in particular women voters and candidates, young people, first-time voters, national minorities, NGOs, etc.

## INCREASING CAPACITIES

### Electoral training

Professional electoral training, and more specifically the training of members of electoral commissions, is a fundamental requirement for the successful conduct of elections. The Division of Electoral Assistance develops tailor-made assistance programmes such as:

- ▶ the drafting of study programmes for key players in the electoral process (including members of electoral administrations, the media, political parties, civil society, judges and lawyers);
- ▶ the development of training members for members of district and constituency electoral commissions;
- ▶ the training of trainers;
- ▶ the preparation of certification programmes;

- ▶ Organisation of study visits so that member states subject to Council of Europe monitoring can obtain examples of good practices. In 2016, a **study visit** was made to Spain to help it increase the research capacities of the members of the Centre for Electoral In-Service Training of the Republic of Moldova.
- ▶ Contribution to the establishment of the **Albanian School of Electoral Commissioners**, whose aim is to improve the functioning of the electoral administration through the training of electoral agents.





## National observation of elections

One of the objectives of the Division of Electoral Assistance of the Council of Europe is to professionalise the national observation of elections. This need to train national observers derives from the essential role that civil society organisations play in assessing the way in which elections are conducted in specific fields (electoral registers, electoral litigation, intimidation and human rights violations, media control, and the corrupt financing of election campaigns). Such assessments are valuable tools in promoting democratic procedures, political rights and good governance. National observers also remain in the country once the international observers have left and continue to work on improving the electoral process.

- ▶ Training of national observers on the basis of handbooks on international standards and techniques for drafting election observation reports intended for use by civil society. These **handbooks** have been updated to provide advice for organisations of national observers. **Check-lists** are also available to facilitate the observers' work. By way of preparation, the Division also holds **E-learning** sessions using the handbooks to assist observers in performing their duties.

## RAISING AWARENESS

### Young people and first-time voters

When young people leave school they know very little about how state institutions function, or about civic participation and involvement in politics, as school syllabuses do not cover these issues in enough depth.

When they reach the legal age for voting, young people have only a superficial knowledge of the importance of democratic rules and of the role and significance of elections. It is now more essential than ever to make first-time voters aware of the importance of voting.

- ▶ Raising the awareness of 35 000 Albanian pupils to the importance of voting and of the 2015 local elections. This programme was put in place in 385 schools, with the support of the Ministry of Education and Sports and of the Central Electoral Commission of Albania.
- ▶ Assistance in setting up **“Electoral Development Schools”** in Georgia. The main aim of these schools is to draw the attention of young Georgians from 17 to 25 years of age to the electoral process and electoral issues by means of discussions and training courses.





## Women voters and candidates

■ The Division of Electoral Assistance makes the necessary adjustments to electoral programmes to increase women's participation as voters and candidates by making them aware of the importance of elections. It draws up awareness-raising programmes designed to:

- ▶ address the causes of women's under-representation in politics and ensure the exchange of information on practices which work through seminars, round tables with members of parliament, political parties and independent candidates;
- ▶ provide a whole range of information and practical tools by developing toolkits including comparative studies, case studies and lists of recommendations on the basis of the Council of Europe's normative and evaluation tools;
- ▶ help political parties to draft and sign a charter of commitment to promoting women's rights;
- ▶ identify and disseminate an interesting example with the aim of increasing women's participation in elections by organising European best practices competitions.

- ▶ Assistance in **monitoring gender equality in the media** in Moldova in 2015. More women participated than at previous elections. The Division has also assisted in the training of 15 candidates standing at local elections.

## ELECTRONIC VOTING

— The Council of Europe is the only European organisation that has established intergovernmental **electronic voting** norms.

— **Recommendation Rec(2004)11** on legal, operational and technical standards for e-voting remains the only source of reference on the subject. It is used in national jurisprudence, even in non-member States, as well as by other relevant international actors.

— Since its adoption, the Recommendation has been subject to biennial review meetings. Discussions in the Committee of Ministers' Rapporteur Group on Democracy (GR-DEM) as well as a recent expert meeting on the Recommendation have also shown a growing consensus as to the need to update the present Recommendation, with a view to incorporating newer technological and societal developments over time.

— It is in this context that the Committee of Ministers decided to set up the Ad hoc Committee of Experts on legal, operational and technical standards for e-voting (**CAHVE**). The Ad hoc Committee is a forum where senior officials from member States' election management bodies meet to update Recommendation Rec(2004)11 and discuss technical and legal development in e-voting in Council of Europe member States.

**CAHVE**

*(Made up of representatives of each member state)*



**Update**

Recommendation (2004)11 of the Committee of Ministers



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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.

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