



Parliamentary Assembly
Assemblée parlementaire

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4 May 2016

ELECTORAL STANDARDS AND THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IMPROVEMENT IN BELARUS

Round Table

organised by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
in cooperation with the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus

18 May 2016

DRAFT PROGRAMME

Venue

House of Representatives
National Assembly
of the Republic of Belarus
Minsk

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Background and rationale

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe observed the October 2015 presidential election in Belarus as part of an international election observation mission together with the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE PA. PACE welcomed the fact that it was invited to observe this election for the first time since 2001.

In its election observation report the PACE pointed out that “Belarus needs to reform its electoral legislation to ensure a thoroughly competitive political environment which is a key condition for the long-term democratic stability of the country” and concluded the Council of Europe and its Parliamentary Assembly, through their various co-operation programmes, should continue to strive to improve the electoral legislation and its implementation in Belarus.

The OSCE/ODIHR final report, which was published on 28 January 2016, included a number of recommendations addressed to national authorities, political parties and civil society of Belarus to support their efforts to hold elections in line with the OSCE commitments and standards for conducting democratic elections.

The PACE Rapporteur on the situation in Belarus, Mr Andrea Rigoni (Italy, ALDE), proposed to the Belarusian side to hold a roundtable on the electoral process improvement in the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus with participation of the PACE and the Venice Commission representatives. According to the PACE Rapporteur, the forthcoming parliamentary elections in Belarus in 2016 are essential for further interaction.

The round table will be organized within the 2015-2017 EU-CoE Eastern Partnership Programmatic Co-operation Framework (PCF) in co-operation with the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus and aims at public discussion of the improvement of the electoral process in the Republic of Belarus in regard to the PACE and OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.

1. Participants

Members of the House of Representatives and the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, Chairperson of the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and Holding Republican Referenda, Ms. Lidiya Ermoshina, Director of the National Center of Legislation and Legal Research of the Republic of Belarus, Mr. Vadim Ipatov, First Deputy Executive Secretary of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Union State of Russia and Belarus, Mr. Nikolai Samoseiko, representatives of state bodies, the Inter-Agency expert working group on review of the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations on the electoral process improvement in the Republic of Belarus, the CIS Executive Committee.

Representatives of media and civil society

Representatives of PACE, Venice Commission, CoE Secretariat

Representatives of the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE PA

Representatives of the Centre for European Perspective, Slovenia (TBC)

2. Languages

The documents of the conference will be available in English and Russian. Working languages will be English, Italian and Russian with simultaneous interpretation provided.

3. Venue

The House of Representatives, the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus, House of the Government (right side of the building), Minsk. Participants will need an identity document for the entrance as well as advance registration.

4. Background documents

TBC

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Registration of participants (Coffee & Tea)
(9h00 - 9h30)

Opening session
(9h30 - 10h00)

Welcome by Mr. Gennady Gritskevich, Chairman of the Standing Commission on State Building, Local Government and Regulations of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus

Mr. Andrea Rigoni, Member of the Camera dei Deputati of the Italian Parliament, Rapporteur on Belarus, PACE Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Mr Luc Devigne, Director, Deputy Managing Director Russia, Eastern Partnership, Central Asia and OSCE at the European External Action Service (EEAS), European Commission (TBC)

Mr Bogdan Zdrojewski, Member of the European Parliament, (TBC),

Session 1: EUROPEAN ELECTORAL STANDARDS
(10h00 - 12h30)

Chair: Mr Andrea Rigoni, Rapporteur on Belarus, PACE Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Speakers:

Mr Aivars Endzins, Representative of the Venice Commission:
“Venice Commission activities in the legislative field, including election legislation”

Mr Bogdan Zdrojewski, Member of the European Parliament, (TBC),
“ European Parliament election observation activities”

Coffee-break
(10.45 – 11.00)

Speakers: Mr Vladimir Misev, Election Adviser, Representative of the OSCE/ODIHR “OSCE electoral commitments.
“OSCE/ODIHR election observation activities”

Mr François Friederich, *Head of Division of Electoral Assistance, Democratic Governance Directorate* of the Council of Europe
“International standards of holding elections, Council of Europe methodology”

Mr Gorazd Justinek, Representative of the Centre for European Perspective, Slovenia
“Ensuring transparency of the electoral process. Experience of Slovenia”

Discussion

12h30 – 14.00 Lunch (Hotel Minsk)

Session 2: THE ELECTORAL PROCESS IMPROVEMENT IN BELARUS

(14h15 - 16h30)

Chair: Mr. Vadim Ipatov, Director of the National Center of Legislation and Legal Research of the Republic of Belarus

Speakers: Mr Vladimir Misev, Election Adviser Representative of the OSCE/ODIHR:
“OSCE/ODIHR proposals on improving the electoral process in the Republic of Belarus”

Mr. Evgeniy Sloboda, Representative of the CIS Executive Committee
“Conclusions of the CIS mission on the results of the presidential elections in Belarus”

Ms. Lidiya Ermoshina, Chairperson of the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus on Elections and Holding Republican Referenda
“On measures to improve the electoral legislation of the Republic of Belarus with regard to the PACE and the OSCE/ODIHR recommendations based on the results of observation of elections of the President of the Republic of Belarus”

Coffee-break
(15.15 – 15.30)

Ms Tatiana Karatkevich, Co-founder of “Tell the Truth” campaign and member of the Belarusian Social Democratic Party;
“An evaluation of the implementation of the Presidential elections in Belarus”

Mr. Vladimir Senko, Chairman of the Standing Committee of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus for Foreign Affairs and National Security
“Position of the Council of the Republic of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus on the PACE and the OSCE/ODIHR proposals on the reform of the electoral legislation of the Republic of Belarus”

Mr Andrei Bastunets, Chairperson, Belarusian Association of Journalists
“The role of the media in the electoral process in Belarus”

17.00

Final remarks:

Mr. Andrea Rigoni, Rapporteur on Belarus, PACE Committee on Political Affairs and Democracy

Mr. Gennady Gritskevich, Chairman of the Standing Commission on State Building, Local Government and Regulations of the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus