

**Programmatic Cooperation Framework for
Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Republic of Moldova, Ukraine and Belarus**



Regional conference

**“Follow up to the recommendations of international Election Observation Missions
in the countries of the Eastern Partnership”**

CONCLUSIONS

(Draft)

Venice, 24 – 25 October 2016

The beneficiaries of the Programmatic Co-operation Framework Project on “Reforming electoral practice and developing regional co-operation in electoral matters” implemented by the Council of Europe present at the Conference on “Follow up to the recommendations of International Election Observation Missions in the countries of the Eastern Partnership” held in Venice (Italy) on 24 - 25 October 2016:

- *Reaffirmed* the importance for international organisations and civil society organisations to continue conducting observation of elections as a mean to ensure the application of the five guiding principles of the suffrage: universal, equal, free, secret and direct;
- *Praised* the co-operation in the field of elections with various Council of Europe stakeholders and other international organisations and *recalled* the importance of common work in the framework of election observation including through co-operation among different partners for election observation such as civil society organisations at national level;
- *Emphasised* the distinct role of civil society organisations in the electoral process as well as their contribution to the development of national electoral procedures and *called* for their further professionalisation through continuous improvement of their observation and reporting methodologies;
- *Invited* relevant authorities in the countries of the Eastern Partnership to engage in a pre and post-electoral dialogue with a view to implementing the election observation recommendations *inter alia* through requests of technical assistance to the Council of Europe;
- *Entrusted* the Council of Europe to look into modalities and funding for sustainable long-term electoral assistance in the countries of the Eastern Partnership aimed at co-operating with Member States to implement technical recommendations of election observation missions conducted by the OSCE/ODIHR, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities through country-specific Action Plans;
- *Noted* the added value of peer-to-peer exchanges among electoral stakeholders and civil society organisations in the Eastern Partnership including mutual observation of elections and co-operation in the areas of common interest such as financing of political parties and electoral campaigns as well as participation of underrepresented groups to the political process and *requested* the Council of Europe Secretariat to consider the possibility of establishing a plan of action in the field of post-electoral technical co-operation in the Eastern Partnership for 2017 – 2020;
- *Noted* the importance for the election observers to adhere to the principles of the United Nations Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and the Code of Conduct for International Election Observers as a fundamental common document for the conduct of election observation missions in an impartial, professional and accurate manner;
- *Agreed* to make full use of existing international and regional election standards and good practices developed by the Council of Europe including those of the Council for Democratic Elections of the Venice Commission, European Union, United Nations, OSCE/ODIHR that provide the necessary framework for ensuring free and fair elections and therefore truly democratic political regimes in the countries of the Eastern Partnership and continue the practice of regular exchanges through events such as the present conference;
- *Recommended* to extend the practice of preliminary discussion of substantive recommendations from the international observation missions with expert

non-governmental organizations of the respective country in particular with the organisations engaged in domestic election observation;

- *Asked* the Council of Europe to consider the possibility of regularly holding such meetings for joint professional and substantive discussion of problems in the implementation of the recommendations of international election observation missions;
- *Asked* the Council of Europe to publish the materials of the event and *agreed* to disseminate the conclusions among authorities and donor community in the countries of the Eastern Partnership;
- *Expressed* sincere gratitude to the Italian authorities and to the Council of Europe office in Venice in particular for their co-operation in the organisation of the event, for their contribution to its successful completion, and finally for their generous hospitality.