



Renforcer la réforme démocratique dans les pays du voisinage méridional

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Mis en œuvre
par le Conseil de l'Europe



Lisbon Forum 2014

Electoral processes and democratic consolidation in the countries of the southern Mediterranean

*Inclusive electoral processes organised with integrity
as a step towards successful democratic governance*

**15-16 September 2014
Ismaili Centre, Lisbon**

Context

The integrity of the electoral process is one of the conditions for the ultimate expression of successful democratic consolidation, which lays the necessary foundations for good governance.

Since the uprisings in the countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean in 2011, various elections have taken place in the region with varying degrees of success and consequences for the ensuing political balance.

It is therefore important and essential, when establishing democratic governance, to give particular attention to the entire electoral process. This entails examining electoral processes and ensuring that they eradicate any barriers to participation and promote the inclusion of all members of society in political affairs, particularly women, while also taking into account the characteristics of the region and of the country concerned.

It also implies that each of the key players in governance should contribute to the success and stability of the electoral process and that such steps are in line with the recommendations of the 2013 Lisbon Forum addressed to the actors of the quadrilogue after discussing the role that they must play in establishing democratic processes.

Similarly, as witnessed at the 2013 Lisbon Forum, whose aim was to show that democratic ownership is as important for citizens as for those governing them, the aim of this year's Forum will be to show that, in the case of elections, democratic awareness applies not only to the candidates and all the other key players in the electoral process but also to voters (associations, political parties, media, etc....).

At the 2014 Forum the goal will be to draft recommendations directed to all the key players of governance after a series of debates, interventions and exchanges with the public, elected representatives and citizens on main issues, successful experiences in the south Mediterranean region or in other parts of the world.

The examination, and debate on how to involve all key actors of governance in the electoral process is, consistent with the mandate of the North-South Centre and with the aim of the Lisbon Forum, which is to offer a platform for political discussion, exchanges and the implementation of various activities involving the quadrilogue.

We also recognise the importance of elections for ensuring equal political participation of all citizens, in particular women, and their representation in decision-making bodies. Despite the substantial amount of progress that still needs to be made, recent studies show that the steps taken to ensure significant participation by women in electoral processes have positive consequences towards democratic governance in general, particularly in issues concerning women more directly. Time will be set aside at the Forum to study the advantages and disadvantages of existing mechanisms to ensure the representation of women, including those in countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean, and to make recommendations in this respect. The North-South Centre will be responsible for monitoring the implementation of these recommendations.

In the four workshops which will take place on the second day, particular importance will be given to the discussion of electoral process.

The focus of the first two workshops will be on the problems arising from the financing of political parties, funding of electoral campaigns, the need to enact laws and transparent rules to control the occasional adverse consequences of illegal interference in and manipulation of the process through funding. The topic of ethics will also be addressed and the need to draw up rules to be respected by institutions, candidates, their parties and citizens themselves.

A third workshop will be dedicated to the observation of elections by civil society in the country concerned, which is an important channel for active citizenship and for stimulating awareness of the importance of the electoral process. The observation of elections by national civil society is beyond doubt an important factor of democratic consolidation. Finally, the fourth workshop will address the involvement of civil society in the entire process through political parties, organised NGOs and international co-operation aiming to identify and discuss the conditions and means which enable civil society to exercise its rights and fulfil its duties in an informed and responsible manner.

In addressing all these aspects of the electoral process, the 2014 Lisbon Forum is fully in line with the objectives of the *“Strengthening democratic reform in the southern Neighbourhood”* Programme, which funds this Forum.

The 2014 Forum will be organised with contributions from a wide range of partners – from within the Council of Europe and beyond - who have developed substantial knowledge and know-how in this field. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Venice Commission, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, the Conference of INGOs, or partners such as IDEA and ALF, will all contribute to the success of the event.

The involvement of representatives from other continents (for example Central Asia, neighbouring countries of the Council of Europe, and other African and Latin American countries), will provide the opportunity to discuss experiences that are relevant to countries on the southern shores of the Mediterranean.