Parliamentary Conference **Elections in times of crisis**
Conférence parlementaire **Les élections en temps de crise**
Parlamentarische Konferenz **Wahlen in Krisenzeiten**
Bern/Berne 9-10.05.2023

SESSION 4: Does the digital mean danger? – how electronic voting, AI and cyber are transforming elections

As the digital world infiltrates every aspect of our lives, the pillars of democracy face unprecedented challenges. Three main areas - electronic voting, artificial intelligence (AI), and cybersecurity - are playing a significant role in shaping elections in the modern world.

As these technologies continue to play a bigger role in elections, it is essential to address these concerns and ensure that technology serves to enhance, rather than undermine, the democratic process. This final session will provide an opportunity to discuss the challenges and opportunities presented by these new technologies as they reshape the electoral landscape, including the need for more regulation, stricter rules on data protection and algorithmic accountability.

PANEL 1: At the mercy of digital: protecting the vote in the digital warfare

As technology advances, the threats to the integrity and security of our democratic processes become increasingly complex. With digital tools, there are much more subtle ways to manipulate people not just with deep fakes, but to manipulate the perception of what the society thinks.

This panel will engage in a thought-provoking discussion centered on key concerns related to electronic voting systems, the dangers of AI, and the potential impact of cyberattacks on election outcomes, knowing that at the end of the day, it is all about public trust in these systems.

Among the issues to be raised:

How can we weigh the benefits of convenience and efficiency in electronic voting against the risks of hacking, malfunction, and voter disenfranchisement?

What are the powers and limitations of AI-driven data analysis in electoral processes, and what ethical concerns surround its use in elections?

How can the public and private sectors collaborate to fortify electoral systems against cyber threats and ensure the future of election integrity? What are the dangers that arrive when private vendors providing technologies capture the electoral process?

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What strategies can be employed to counter disinformation campaigns, and how can we mitigate the influence of false information in the digital sphere, particularly on social media platforms? How to arm the public with the ability to discern what is fake and what is not?

What best practices and lessons can be learned from different countries in their quest to protect the vote amidst the digital warfare, and how can these insights be applied globally?

PANEL 2: Harnessing the power of technology and innovation – rethinking electoral procedures

Notwithstanding the multiple risks, technology holds immense potential to transform and modernise the electoral process. Crises often act as catalysts for innovation as they have the ability to create a sense of urgency, highlight vulnerabilities and foster collaboration, which in turn can lead to the development and adoption of innovative solutions.

By harnessing the power of innovation, national authorities have the potential to revolutionise the way elections are run in the future, making them more transparent, efficient, secure, and inclusive and consequently more attractive to public trust.

What are the precise benefits, and how can technology be incorporated into the process without compromising electoral integrity will be in the focus of this last panel, which will challenge conventional thinking and provide insights into the future of voting in the digital age:

How has online voting revolutionised the way people participate in elections, and what challenges must be overcome to ensure its successful implementation? How can technology help voters make more informed decisions, and what role should AI-powered platforms play in providing unbiased information on candidates and policies.

The panel of distinguished experts and practitioners will examine the latest technological advancements in voting systems, such as blockchain-based voting platforms, biometric voter authentication, and AI-driven election monitoring. These emerging technologies offer new possibilities for improving the transparency, efficiency, and security of electoral procedures. How can technology help voters make more informed decisions, and what role should AI-powered platforms play in providing unbiased information on candidates and policies? What are the lessons learned from countries that have successfully implemented technology-driven election systems?

By addressing these factors, democracies can strengthen the legitimacy and resilience of their electoral systems in the face of evolving challenges.