

# CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE

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## **Recommendation 124 (2003)<sup>1</sup> on the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters**

The Congress,

1. Having regard to:

*a.* Resolutions 1264 (2001), 1578 (2002) and 1320 (2003) and Recommendation 1595 (2003) of the Parliamentary Assembly concerning the adoption of electoral rules at European level;

*b.* work by international bodies on European electoral rules and practice, in particular recent documents by the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (ODIHR/OSCE) and the Association of Central and Eastern European Election Officials (ACEEEO);

2. Welcoming:

*a.* the setting up by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) of a Council for Democratic Elections, in which the Assembly and the Congress are represented;

*b.* the Venice Commission's adoption of a Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, as recommended by the Parliamentary Assembly and drawn up by the Council for Democratic Elections;

3. Having taken part in drawing up the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters through two of its members, representing the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions respectively;

4. Wishes to congratulate the Parliamentary Assembly and the Venice Commission on their outstanding work and thank them for giving the Congress a part in it;

5. Convinced of the importance, for the Council of Europe, of:

*a.* officially recognising the work which has been done within the Organisation on electoral matters, which now constitutes a substantial body of knowledge and expertise;

*b.* shouldering its institutional responsibilities by promoting that asset appropriately;

6. Noting that at present there is no binding legal instrument bringing together the basic rules of conduct for elections, or any permanent European body responsible for electoral matters;

7. Hopes that the achievements of setting up the Council for Democratic Elections and adopting the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters will be consolidated by initiatives which match the Council of Europe's ambitions;

8. Consequently invites the Venice Commission to:

*a.* put work by the Council for Democratic Elections on a permanent footing and maintain that council's tripartite composition (the Venice Commission, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress);

*b.* extend the council's responsibilities to take in:

i. setting up a European database on electoral matters;

ii. producing a computerised model questionnaire to assist observers at elections which makes appropriate reference to the principles of the above-mentioned code;

iii. drawing up draft opinions on electoral matters in consultation with the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress;

9. Calls on the Committee of Ministers to:

*a.* adopt the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters in the form of a European convention, taking into account any initiatives by other international bodies active in this field;

*b.* for that purpose, set up an intergovernmental group of experts which includes, as observers, members of the Parliamentary Assembly, the Venice Commission and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;

10. Calls on the Parliamentary Assembly to continue its efforts vis-à-vis the Committee of Ministers and the Venice Commission to make sure that the Council for Democratic Elections and the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters evolve in the direction recommended above.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 21 March 2003 (see Document CG (9) 26, draft recommendation presented by Mr L. Cuatrecasas, rapporteur).