



Developing accurate voters' list in transitional democracies

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Meeting of the Advisory Board

Yerevan, Armenia
13.30, 4th September 2009

Memo

Participants

Mr. Richard Soudriette, Chairman (Centre for Democracy and Diplomacy)
Mr. Bill Sweeney, Member (IFES)
Mr. Pierre Garrone (Venice Commission)
Mr. Sead Alihodzic (International IDEA)
Mr. Zsolt Becsey (European Commission)
Mr. Steffan Darnolf (IFES Moldova)
Ms. Eszter Bodnár, Expert
Mr. Attila Kaszás, (ACEEEO)

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the meeting Attila Kaszás introduced to the members the scope of the meeting and the suggested agenda, which was accepted by the members.

2. Presentation of the members

The members presented themselves and their professional connections to the issue of voter registration. Ms. Nicole Schmidt from OSCE ODIHR could not attend the meeting because of another obligation, but she expressed also her readiness to contribute to the work of the Advisory Board.

3. Interim report

Mr. Attila Kaszás presented the interim report, and the achievements of the project in the first third of it. The members have received the comprehensive study and the questionnaires of the general survey and of the case studies. The upcoming activities of the project were discussed also. The members were interested in the planned Partners' Meeting, its participants, scope, schedule, expected outcome.

4. Comprehensive study

Ms. Eszter Bodnár presented the research methodology and the consulted sources of the comprehensive study.

Mr. Sead Alihodzic complimented the paper as being clear and precise. He asked about the references and the bibliography and suggested to include a global glossary of terms. he also suggested to consult the IDEA Handbook on the design of electoral systems, to include the study into the ACE network's Electoral Encyclopaedia, and to frame it into regional context.

Mr. Richard Soudriette also suggested to put it on the ACE website, when completed.

5. General survey: Survey questionnaire

The members of the Advisory Board consulted and analysed the general survey questionnaire prepared by the members of the Experts' Team. They considered the structure and content of the questionnaire as suitable for the purposes of the study.

6. Country case studies: Case study questionnaire

The questionnaire compiled to help the partner countries to prepare their case studies was also discussed among the members of the Advisory Board. They welcomed the fact that two new countries, Macedonia and Latvia joined the group of the case study countries, which gives a broader basis for the comparison between further and lesser developed voter registration systems.

7. Content of the manual: Ideas, suggestions

Mr. Pierre Garrone suggested to consult the OSCE ODIHR Handbook on Monitoring Voter registration to achieve synergies.

Mr. Zsolt Becsey suggested to include into the manual the factors which influence Voter Registration:

- the general status of public administration

- logistics, transportation
- cultural traditions
- costs

Mr. Richard Soudriette proposed to give the EMBs the practical and useful tools to develop their voter registration systems. “There is no such a thing as electoral Nirvana” he said, aiming that complex and mature voter registration systems in established democracies can also be further developed.

Mr. Sead Alihodzic mentioned the experiences of the international community to develop a voter registration system in Bosnia and Herzegovina between 1996 and 2002 as very useful to consider.

Mr. Pierre Garrone suggested to clearly distinguish between the different numbers when speaking of voter registration:

1. the population
2. the number of registered voters
3. number of citizens
4. number of voters
5. number of possible voters

He mentioned that in some countries the civil and the populations registries are different.

Mr, Bill Sweeney proposed to elaborate an acceptable set of definitions about

- civil registry
- population registry
- voter registry.

He mentioned that the inaccuracy of population registries in Latin-America is 10%, while in urban areas 20%.

Mr. Sead Alihodzic suggested to consult the glossary on the ACE website which is a useful tool.

Mr. Richard Soudriette proposed to use the IPD-model in the spirit of offering the users an analysis, not a model.

Mr. Zsolt Becsey suggested to study in the voter registration systems the eligibility criteria and the process of it. Data protection issues arise about the publication of voter registries, and one should decide whether this practice is standard or not.

At the closure of the meeting the members decided to stay in contact via electronic communication managed by the ACEEEO Secretariat, and to meet again formally in September 2010, in Tbilisi, during the Voter Registration Conference.

Yerevan, September, 2009