

CONCEPT NOTE

Seminar on Methodological and Organisational Challenges to European Union Election Observation

26-28 April 2017, Brussels Rue de la Loi 82

I. Introduction

The implementation of the Election Observation and Democracy Support (EODS) enters a new phase. Before consolidating a workplan for the project's activities, a meeting of election experts and practitioners will be held to discuss methodological and operational challenges to the European Union (EU) election observation. The seminar will help to better address these matters in the EODS training and methodological strategy and mainstream them in the broader frame of EU election observation missions (EOMs).

II. Background

Given the evolving nature of electoral practices around the globe, the European Union election observation is facing new challenges, both methodologically and operationally. Following are the key issues which emerged over the last years in the context of EOMs:

1. How to observe the **use of new voting technologies** (NVT) in elections,
2. How to observe **voter registration** and assess accuracy of voter registers/lists;
3. How to monitor and report on **campaign finance** and the **role of money** in politics;
4. What is the observation methodology and the criteria for evaluating **the role of social media** and instances of manipulation of information on the web (so called *fake news*), and
5. How to ensure an **effective follow-up** to EOMs recommendations.

Along these five themes, another key dimension concerns the actual implementation of EU EOMs and the extent to which their work in the field can be actively supported by the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Foreign Policy Instruments (FPI), EODS and the Service Provider. In this perspective, three dimensions will be discussed:

1. How to improve pre-deployment briefing and post-election debriefing of EOM Core Team (CT);
2. How to provide better assistance and support to the ongoing EOMs, and
3. How to enhance operational assistance by Service Providers.

III. Seminar objectives, expected outputs and methodology

The seminar targets four main objectives, namely:

1. identifying the **current approaches** to the observation of the five issues identified above;
2. discussing the **capacity these approaches have to respond** to the actual needs on the ground;
3. analysing the **extent to which actual EOMs can realistically and credibly assess** these areas of observation; and
4. **advancing practical and methodological approaches** to election observation procedures and operations.

Some 20 experts involved in election observation with EU and other international organisations will be invited to discuss these issues and to bring up concrete-lessons learned from the field. During the three-day event, participants will brainstorm on the specific themes identified while sharing their experience, insights, perspectives and knowledge.

A moderator for each thematic area will briefly (15 min) present the current methodological approaches and the existing challenges to participants. Plenary and group discussions will then discuss these issues and suggest how to address them in theory and, even more importantly, in practice. A rapporteur for each session will summarise the main conclusions and recommendations.

The expected output of the seminar is a working paper gathering all the recommendations and suggestions advanced during the event that will be then possibly used in the frame of EODS activities and shared within the election practitioners' community.

IV. Agenda

26 APRIL 2017		PROPOSED THEMES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS
09:30 - 10:10	<p>Welcome and opening remarks European External Action Service (EEAS) Democracy and Election Observation Division European Commission Service for Foreign Policy Instruments, Election Observation Unit. European Parliament – Democracy and Election Action Unit EODS Project Director</p>	
10:10 - 10:25	<p>Presentation of the participants</p>	
10:25 - 10:40	<p>Presentation of the seminar EODS Training Coordinator</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Illustration of general and specific objectives of the seminar ✓ Introduction to the working approach: structure of the sessions ✓ Definition of the expected outcomes and outputs
10:40 - 11:00	<p><i>Coffee break</i></p>	
11:00 - 12:30	<p>How to observe the new technologies used in voting and tabulation Presentation of the current approach and challenges (15 mins) Moderator: Alexander Shlyk – Head of Election Department, OSCE/ODIHR Rapporteur: Holly Ruthrauff – Electoral expert</p> <p>Group and plenary discussion</p> <p>Presentation of conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Themes for group discussion</p> <p>Group 1: What are the main issues related to the use of new technologies for voting in the frame of EU EOMs? What can be realistically observed and assessed?</p> <p>Group 2: What are the main issues related to the use of new technologies for tabulation, transmission and centralisation in the frame of EU EOMs? What can be realistically observed and assessed?</p> <p>Group 3: What can be the role of the other Core Team analysts and observers (LTO, STO) in contributing to the analysis of the use of NVT in a given electoral process?</p> <p>Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Elaboration of a set of practical recommendations for the observation and the assessment of NVT in relation to voting and tabulation
12:30 - 13:30	<p><i>Lunch break</i></p>	

<p>13:30 - 15:00</p>	<p>How to assess the accuracy of voter registration Presentation of the current approach and challenges (15 mins) Moderator: Domenico Tuccinardi – Electoral expert Rapporteur: Cyril Kulenovic – Electoral expert</p> <p>Group and plenary discussion</p> <p>Presentation of conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Themes for group discussion Group 1: Which are the criteria to assess the reliability and inclusivity of the voter registration process? What are the methodology, the tools and the mandate of an Experts’ Missions? Group 2: Which are the criteria to assess the accuracy of the voter register in the frame of EU EOMs methodology, tools and mandate? Group 3: Should Experts’ Missions become a standard practice? If so, in which cases? What is the added value of Experts’ Missions in the frame of EU EOMs?</p> <p>Output ✓ Elaboration of a set of practical recommendations for the observation and the assessment of voter registration</p>
<p>15:00 – 15:15</p>	<p><i>Coffee break</i></p>	
<p>15:15 – 17:00</p>	<p>How to monitor and report on campaign finance and the role of money in politics Presentation of the current approach and challenges (15 mins) Moderator: Jurij Toplak – Campaign finance expert</p> <p>Presentation of Gerardo de Icaza - Director of the Department of Electoral Cooperation and Observation of the Organisation of American States: OAS methodological frame to observe campaign finance in the frame of EOMs</p> <p>Group and plenary discussion</p> <p>Presentation of conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Themes for group discussion Group 1: What is the state of actual implementation of EU EOM Guidelines on Political and Campaign finance within EOMs deployed? How can be consistently mainstreamed in the observation methodology? Group 2: What is the actual role of the campaign/political analyst in the assessment of political and campaign finance? Group 3: What is the actual the role of observers (long and short term) in the observation of campaign finance?</p> <p>Output ✓ Elaboration of a set of practical recommendations for the observation and the assessment of campaign finance</p>

27 APRIL 2017		PROPOSED THEMES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS
9:30 - 11:00	<p>Criteria for evaluating the role of social media and instances of manipulation of information on the web (so called <i>fake news</i>) Presentation of the current approach and challenges (15 mins) Moderator: Rasto Kuzel – Media expert Rapporteur: Alice Colombi – Media expert</p> <p>Group and plenary discussion</p> <p>Presentation of conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Themes for group discussion Group 1: What is the state of the actual implementation of EU EOM Guidelines on Online Content?</p> <p>Group 2: What are the issues that should be reported in the preliminary statement and the final report, what conclusion can be drawn and what recommendations can be elaborated?</p> <p>Group 3: What are the main challenges posed by fake news in terms of observation and their potential implications?</p> <p>Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Elaboration of a set of practical recommendations for the consolidation of the methodology for observing online content and fake news
11:00 – 11:15	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11:15 – 13:00	<p>How to ensure an effective follow-up to election observation missions (EOMs) recommendations Presentation of the current approach and challenges (15 mins) Moderator: Paul O’Grady – Electoral expert Rapporteur: Hannah Roberts – Electoral expert</p> <p>Group and plenary discussion</p> <p>Presentation conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Themes for group discussion Group 1: What is the state of the actual implementation of EU EOM Guidelines on Drafting Recommendations, in particular in relation to their structuring and organisation?</p> <p>Group 2: What is the role of EOMs and Exploratory Missions (ExMs) countries where observation has taken place in the past: How a mission should assess and eventually endorse/reject previous recommendations?</p> <p>Group 3: What are the areas that should be improved for the return visits: methodological and operational issues?</p> <p>Output</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Elaboration of a set of practical recommendations for the enhancement of EU EOMs recommendations follow- up
13:30 - 14:30	<i>Lunch break</i>	

<p>14:30 - 16:00</p>	<p>How to improve pre-deployment briefing and post-election debriefing of EOM Core Team Presentation of the current system: objectives, practices and limits (20 mins) Moderators: Riccardo Chelleri – EEAS; Mualla Cirakli - FPI Rapporteur: Armin Rabitsch – Electoral expert</p> <p>Group and plenary discussion</p> <p>Presentation of conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Themes for group discussion Group 1: Which are the areas of improvement for the pre-deployment briefing: contents and operations? Group 2: What are the areas of improvement for the post-deployment de-briefing: in terms of contents and operations? Group 3: What is the current role of the Exploratory Mission in informing size, structure and priorities of EOMs? Is there a need for more detailed Guidelines in terms of methodology?</p> <p>Output ✓ Elaboration of a set of practical recommendations for the improvement of briefing/de-briefing sessions</p>
<p>16:00 – 16:15</p>	<p><i>Coffee break</i></p>	
<p>16:15 – 17:00</p>	<p>Side event Crowdsourced election observation Speaker: Xabier Meilan Pita – Electoral expert</p> <p>Presentation and joint discussion</p>	<p>Principles, approaches and added value of crowdsourcing: how could EU EOMs adapt the available tools and why?</p>

	28 APRIL 2017	PROPOSED THEMES AND EXPECTED OUTPUTS
09:30 – 11:00	<p>How to provide better assistance and support to the ongoing EOMs Presentation of the present approach, its benefits and its gaps (15 mins) Moderator: Xabier Meillan Pita - Electoral expert Rapporteur: Inta Lase – Media expert</p> <p>Group and plenary discussion</p> <p>Presentation of conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Themes for group discussion Group 1: Which are the problems for which support may be fostered or introduced for EU EOMs (evaluation, reporting, etc.)? Group 2: Which are the tools and mechanisms that should be put in place to provide assistance and support to EU EOMs in the field? Group 3: How can EEAS/FPI/EODS provide enhanced assistance to EU EOMs in the field?</p> <p>Output ✓ Elaboration of a set of practical recommendations for improving assistance to EU EOMs in the field</p>
11:00 - 11:15	<i>Coffee break</i>	
11:15 – 12:45	<p>How to enhance operational assistance by Service Providers An overview of the current practices: effectiveness and possible developments (15 mins) Moderator: Elena Todova – EU EOM Project Manager Rapporteur: Tania Marques – Electoral expert</p> <p>Group and plenary discussion</p> <p>Presentation of conclusions and recommendations</p>	<p>Themes for group discussion Group 1: Which are issues for which support may be fostered or introduced? Group 2: What are the good practices and standard procedures for operations and relations between SP and EOMs? Group 3: How improving the usefulness (follow-up, lesson-learnt, etc.) of EU EOMs end-of-mission internal reports?</p> <p>Outputs ✓ Elaboration of a set of practical recommendations for improving assistance to EU EOMs in the field</p>
12:45 - 13:00	<p>Wrap-up of the main conclusions and recommendations – EODS Project Director Closing remarks and end of the seminar</p>	