

## ***Strengthening election dispute resolution in Tunisia and other countries in the region***

**Tunis, 13 December 2019 - Some 100 participants, including representatives of the European Union, the Council of Europe, including the Venice Commission, and the authorities and institutions of Tunisia and other countries in the region, participated in the International Symposium on "Administrative Justice and Electoral Disputes".**

This symposium was organised by the Administrative Court of Tunisia, the Venice Commission and the German Foundation "IRZ" on 12 and 13 December 2019 in Tunis, with the support of the European Union and the Council of Europe within the framework of the joint European Union/Council of Europe programme "Improving the functioning, performance and access to justice in Tunisia" (AP-JUST) and the Arab Union of Administrative Judiciary. Speakers from several European (Germany, France and Italy) and Arab (Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Tunisia) countries were able to share their experience in the field of electoral litigation and engage in discussions on ways to improve the work of the competent courts in Tunisia and other countries in the region.

On this occasion, renowned practitioners, academics and other experts also addressed issues related to the election campaign and the media, particularly in France and Tunisia, the role of civil society, political parties and foreign observers in monitoring the election campaign, the proclamation of the preliminary results and the prerogatives of the Independent High Authority for Elections in Tunisia (ISIE).

The President of the Venice Commission, Mr Gianni Buquicchio, underlined the excellent cooperation in this field with the Administrative Tribunal of Tunisia, ISIE and other authorities and institutions with similar mandates in the region. He also drew the participants' attention to international standards relating to electoral disputes, in particular those developed by the Venice Commission.

The conclusions of this symposium highlight the progress made by Tunisia in its quest to guarantee sincerity in elections since the 2011 revolution. The increasing and positive role of the Administrative Tribunal in the handling of electoral disputes is also welcomed.

The conclusions contain a catalogue of recommendations aimed at further promoting transparency and supporting democratic transformation in Tunisia. These recommendations are addressed to the legislator, the executive and judicial authorities, including the High Council of the Judiciary, the High Authority for Audiovisual Communication (HAICA), ISIE, political parties and election candidates.

Among other things, it is recommended to clarify the rules of competence and procedure in electoral disputes, to simplify and unify procedures and to make the formal requirements more flexible. Coordination between HAICA, ISIE and the Administrative Court should also be improved. Finally, the conclusions draw attention to relevant international standards, in particular the Venice Commission's Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters.

The AP-JUST programme, whose main objective is to make the Tunisian judicial system more efficient and accessible to litigants, is part of the third phase of the European Union's Programme to Support the Reform of Justice in Tunisia (PARJ 3). This is a joint programme between the European Union and the Council of Europe, implemented by the Council of Europe from 1 January 2019 to 31 December 2021. It has a budget of €5,000,000, 90% of which is financed by the European Union and 10% by the Council of Europe.

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More information on the Council of Europe's work in Tunisia is available at: [www.coe.int/tunis](http://www.coe.int/tunis)