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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

SYNOPSIS

Electoral training workshop

Tbilisi, 22-24 September 2003

The Venice Commission organised an electoral training workshop in Georgia from 22 to 24 September, 2003.

The aim of this workshop was to train and inform those involved in the electoral process in view of the legislative elections to be held on 2 November, 2003. The workshop was held over three days. Participants were divided into two groups: the first was composed of representatives of nongovernmental organisations, candidates, parties political and media; the second included members of the Central Electoral Commission (CEC), Chairmen of District Electoral Commissions and electoral judges. The afternoon session on the third day was devoted to a simulation of the voting procedure and was filmed by the organisers for future televised transmissions. Participants were active and enthusiastic. Approximately 35 participants attended the workshop.

The topics dealt with were as follows:

- candidates, voters and election campaign (Bernard OWEN, France)
- what happens at the polls:
 - o from the voters' point of view (Didier VINOLAS, France)
 - o from the point of view of observers and the representatives of the candidates and the political parties (Gabriella BERNASCONI-WALKER, Switzerland)
- vote count, declaration and publication of results (Bernard OWEN, France)
- and electoral appeals (Christian GEISER, Switzerland).

During the workshop, the following points were underlined:

- that the credibility of the election and the vote count is dependent on the Central Electoral Commission establishing clear rules. In particular, separate bulletins and ballot boxes should be provided for the parliamentary elections and the referendum. Experts also recommended that the vote count be carried out by separate officials for the legislative poll and the referendum.
- that the Venice Commission has shown itself willing, at the request of the authorities, to provide the following short and medium term assistance to those involved in the electoral process:
 - o assistance to the CEC before elections, even considering the lateness in which the forthcoming election was determined and the significant, urgent work which must be carried out. This could be carried out by an expert during the remaining few weeks before the poll date
 - o post election assistance to the Georgian Supreme Court, in view of a possible electoral dispute (in view of a similar experience in Armenia)
 - o finally, foreseeing further targeted electoral training workshops before the next elections.
- Concerning the referendum on reducing the number of Parliamentary deputies, the Venice Commission also stated that this reform would be a step towards streamlining; however, due to the lateness in its organisation would required increased information to its citizens.

Gianni Buquicchio
Secretary of the Venice Commission