EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW

(VENICE COMMISSION)

in co-operation with

THE PERMANENT ELECTORAL AUTHORITY OF ROMANIA

13TH EUROPEAN CONFERENCE

OF ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES

**"NEW TECHNOLOGIES IN ELECTIONS:
PUBLIC TRUST AND CHALLENGES
FOR ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES"**

Thursday and Friday, 14-15 April 2016

**Bucharest
Parliament House, No 2-4, Izvor Street, 5th district**

SYNOPSIS

The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe organised in co-operation with the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania the thirteenth European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies in Bucharest, Romania, on 14-15 April 2016.

The topic of the Conference was "**New technologies in elections: public trust and challenges for electoral management bodies**". The participants debated more specifically on three main issues:

- Legal framework of new technologies in elections: implementing international principles;
- New technologies applied to the pre-electoral period; and
- New technologies on E-Day and during counting phases.

Ms **Ana Maria Pătru**, President of the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania, Ms **Elena-Simina Tănăsescu**, Counsellor of the President of Romania, **Mr Ioan Dragoş Tudorache**, Head of the Prime Minister's Chancellery on behalf of the Prime Minister, opened the Conference, followed by Mr **Thomas Markert**, Director, Secretary of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe.

160 participants attended the Conference. The participants came from national electoral management bodies and other bodies involved in the electoral field from 23 European countries and 9 other countries. In total, 32 countries participated in the Conference.

The European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Election Observation and Democratic Support (EODS) of the European Union also participated in the Conference. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES), the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the International Organisation of La Francophonie (OIF), the Association of European Election Officials (ACEEEO), the Network of Francophone Electoral Skills (RECEF) and several other institutions active in the electoral field also took part in the Conference.

Representatives of the Venice Commission, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities also contributed to the Conference.

The **conclusions** of the Conference are appended to this synopsis.

The Conference

1. *Took note* of the conclusions of the first Electoral Expert Debates "Electoral Law and New Technologies: Legal Challenges" held in Bucharest on 12-13 April 2016 and *encouraged* further editions of the Electoral Expert Debates;

2. *Took note* of the Research Project "Improving electoral management: the organisational determinants of electoral integrity" presented by the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom; *endorsed* the project to undertake a survey of electoral management bodies' personnel in Europe; *encouraged* electoral management bodies to nominate a survey facilitator and to complete the survey; *agreed* to follow up the survey at a next European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies;

3. *Recalled* the conclusions adopted by the ninth European Conference of Electoral Management Bodies devoted to "Innovative solutions for elections", held in Tallinn on 4-5 June 2012;

4. *Commended* the review and the forthcoming publication of a report on 25 years of international election observation;

5. *Recalled* the relevance of existing international standards for democratic elections and their applicability to new technologies in elections;

6. *Underlined* in particular the importance of Recommendation Rec(2004)11 of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to member states on legal, operational and technical standards for e-voting;

7. *Commended* the on-going update of this Recommendation;

8. *Recalled* the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1653(2009) on electronic democracy;

9. *Acknowledged* the potential of new technologies for improving public trust in and efficiency of electoral processes, *inter alia* to enhance turnout, including of vulnerable groups;

10. *Noted* that this potential can only be realised if adequate conditions are in place in terms of legal framework as well as of capacities of electoral management bodies, and if introduced and implemented with full transparency and as part of a gradual and comprehensive approach;

11. *Noted* the wide range of existing voting methods and *recognised* the right of countries to choose traditional means of voting or e-voting technologies, starting where appropriate with pilot projects;

12. *Underlined* the necessity of ensuring the integrity of the whole electoral process when new technologies are used;

13. *Stressed* that the use of new technologies should not undermine the secrecy of the vote;

14. *Underlined* the importance of balancing transparency of electoral processes and protection of personal data therein;

15. *Recommended* in this respect to ensure the compatibility of e-enabled elections with the Council of Europe's Convention No.108 for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data;

16. *Stressed* the importance of the possibility for voters to review the use of their personal data for electoral purposes, especially regarding voters' lists;

17. *Took note* of the importance of the proper use of new technologies in maintaining the accuracy of voters' lists and registers;

18. *Pointed out* that the electoral management bodies' choice of new technologies should be guided by the needs of the electoral process and not by the interest of technology providers;

19. *Pointed out* the importance for electoral management bodies to gain proper expertise in directing and supervising the use of new technologies during electoral processes, including through building up capacity and appropriate training programmes;

20. *Recommended* raising awareness of voters regarding the use of new technologies in elections, including through civic education and public outreach programmes;

21. *Pointed to* the issue of verifiability of the vote if electronic voting is used and the importance of providing effective means of verification whilst conducting e-enabled elections;

22. *Noted* that electronic voting poses a challenge to traditional methods of election observation and *underlined* the need to ensure the effectiveness of domestic and international election observation where electronic voting is used;

23. *Recognised* the importance of identifying and promoting new initiatives facilitating voter registration, voting procedures and an increased voting turnout for voting abroad where applicable;

24. *Underlined* the importance of secure procedures when using new technologies in elections;

25. *Recognised* the inherent cost for ensuring security in elections when using new technologies and the necessity to proceed to risk assessment before introducing such technologies;

26. *Encouraged* exchange of information on good practice concerning the use of new technologies.

The date and venue of the fourteenth European Conference of Election Management Bodies will be confirmed at a later stage.