



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

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EUROPEAN COMMISSION FOR DEMOCRACY THROUGH LAW
(VENICE COMMISSION)

in co-operation with
THE INFORMATION CENTRE OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE IN MOSCOW

UNIDEM SEMINAR

**« DIRECT DEMOCRACY: REFERENDUM AS A TOOL
OF CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE »**

Moscow State Institute of International Relations – MGIMO

Moscow, 3 – 4 October 2003

SYNOPSIS

The Venice Commission in co-operation with the Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations (MGIMO) and the Information Centre of the Council of Europe in Moscow organised a seminar on “Direct democracy: referendum as a tool of citizen’s participation in public life” in Moscow on 3 – 4 October 2003. The three working sessions were held in the premises of the Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations.

In recent years referendum became a more important tool of direct democracy in different European countries. Russian Federation is no exception and the number of referendums on the regional and local levels has increased.

The main aim of this activity was to explore different experiences in organising referendums in Russia and such countries as France, Switzerland and in countries candidates to the European Union membership. After a number of reports (9) the participants held a fruitful discussion on the subject of different techniques of organising this type of vote and some new trends both in Russia and in other European countries in organising referendums on national, regional and local levels.

Approximately 40 participants including representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Central Electoral Commission of the Russian Federation, the Constitutional court, professors from MGIMO and other universities attended the seminar. Professor Anatoli Torkunov, Rector of the Moscow State Institute (University) of International Relations opened the seminar. The first working session was chaired by Mr Marat Baglay, Judge and former President of the Constitutional court of the Russian Federation, Member of the Venice Commission.

The Venice Commission invited the following speakers: Messrs. Andreas Auer (Professor, Director of C2D, University of Geneva, Switzerland), Sergio Bartole (Professor, University of Trieste, Italy), Jacques Robert (Professor, Former member of the Constitutional council, France) and Alexander Trechsel (Lecturer, University of Geneva, Switzerland). Mr Luan Omari, Vice-President of the Venice Commission also took part in the discussions. The Russian rapporteurs were: Mrs. Nina Kulyasova (Member of the Central Electoral Commission), Messrs Vladymir Lysenko (Member of the Central Electoral Commission), Victor Rudenko (Professor, Director of the Institute of Philosophy and Law of the Ural Academy of Sciences), William Smirnov (Professor, Russian Academy of Law and State) and Mrs Inna Rakitskaya (Lecturer, MGIMO).

The texts of the reports of this seminar will be published in due course.

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