



PERMANENT DELEGATION OF NORWAY TO THE OSCE

NORWEGIAN STATEMENT AT THE PRESENTATION OF THE “REVIEW OF ELECTORAL AND LEGISLATION PRACTICE IN THE OSCE PARTICIPATING STATES”

As delivered by Mr Christoffer Wiig, Advisor - Jurist, Norwegian Ministry of
Local Government,
Vienna, 2013

Thank you, Madame Moderator, and thank you for inviting me to speak at this event.

I represent the Ministry of Local Government, which has the overall responsibility for election legislation in my country, both at local and national level.

We welcome ODIHR’s review of electoral legislation and practice, which is a useful reminder and overview of issues we need to keep in mind in order to ensure full compliance with OSCE commitments and other international standards.

Madam Moderator,

Norway is a well-established and transparent democracy. The people trust the electoral system and practice. Yet, this is not to say that there is no need for improvement; neither does it mean that we do not need input and advice from external sources.

I welcome this opportunity to explain how we in Norway review our election legislation, regulations and practice and how we cooperate with ODIHR in this work.

ODHIR carried out election observations in Norway in 2009, 2011 and 2013.

I will first focus on the 2011 elections, during which we conducted an Internet voting pilot in ten municipalities. At the invitation of the Norwegian Government, ODIHR sent an Election Expert Team to observe this pilot.

Electronic voting – at home and via the Internet – poses new challenges and requires new election observation approaches. The Election Expert Team was therefore invited to observe the use of new voting technologies from an early stage and through the

different phases of the election process. ODIHR's objective was both to assess how the Internet voting pilot was conducted, and to provide recommendations for possible improvements.

The ODIHR team conducted six visits during the various stages of the Internet voting, including the setup and configuration, the start and closing of the voting, the counting of electronic votes, and data destruction. The report from the Expert Team was presented in March 2012.

The report emphasized that high standards in ensuring the security of the internet voting system were employed, including carefully designed hardware and software components and robust encryption schemes to protect the secrecy of the vote. Nevertheless, several recommendations were put forward in order to improve the Internet voting framework and procedures.

Building on our experiences from 2011, including ODIHR recommendations, we conducted a new pilot on Internet voting during last September's parliamentary elections, this time in 12 municipalities. Also this Internet voting pilot was observed by ODIHR experts. We look forward to receiving their assessment and recommendations.

Madame Moderator,

It is important to us that Norwegian election regulations and practice are in accordance with OSCE commitments and other international obligations. Input from ODIHR has helped us identify shortcomings and design the necessary amendments.

One example of follow-up of ODIHR recommendations is the establishment of a National Internet Voting Committee.

Madam Moderator, let me now briefly elaborate on how we internally evaluate our elections.

After each election, the Ministry undertakes a *comprehensive evaluation* of how the election process was executed in the individual municipalities and counties. This evaluation forms the basis for assessing possible amendments to law, regulations and routines.

On the basis of our own assessments and of recommendations from ODIHR experts, the Ministry of Local Government works out proposals for specific changes to laws and regulations.

These proposals are summed up in a consultation paper, which is the basis for a broad consultation process with local authorities, public sector and civil society; more than 600 bodies in total. Interested individuals may also submit their comments. All views and suggestions are published on the Ministry's website.

As a result of the consultations new legislation proposals will be submitted to parliament. The process from assessment and analysis to new legislation takes around one to one and a half years, and is repeated after every election.

Madame Moderator,

In concluding I would like to echo speakers before me who have said that no OSCE participating States has a perfect election system. Neither do we. We therefore greatly appreciate the assistance from ODIHR in filling possible gaps between practice and commitments.

Thank you.