Press Release

COUNCIL   CONSEIL
OF EUROPE   DE L'EUROPE

47 members

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia and
 Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"the former Yugoslav
 Republic of
 Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

The Forum for the Future of Democracy points out the need to build citizens' trust in e-democracy

Madrid, 17.10.2008 – The 4th Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy, devoted to e-democracy and which today held its closing session in Madrid, pointed out the need to build citizens' trust in e-democracy to achieve its full potential.

In their final report, the General Rapporteurs of the Forum highlight that "e-democracy, as an additional channel for democratic practice and participation, can significantly contribute to achieve more transparency, accountability and responsiveness of democratic institutions". They also stress that it can facilitate citizens´ democratic engagement and accessibility of the democratic process.

The Rapporteurs highlight that e-democracy can help to restore the declining interest in politics and the democratic process, and they also call on all actors in the democratic process to use the opportunities offered by e-democracy.

Some 400 parliamentarians, governmental officials, local and regional representatives, NGOs, academics and experts have met in Madrid on 15-17 October under the theme "E-democracy who dares?" to discuss the potential of the new information technologies to strengthen democracy and increase participation. The meeting was organised by the Council of Europe and hosted by the Spanish Government and the City of Madrid.

In his opening remarks Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, said that "new information technologies offer tremendous opportunities, but they are not, in themselves, a miracle cure for the democratic challenges. The fact is that high tech is no antidote to low trust".

With regard to recent developments in e-voting, the Rapporteurs called on national policy-makers to devote increased attention to certification and observation of elections to guarantee security and transparency, and to build trust in the electoral process.

The final report also underlines that e-democracy involves risks – such as the digital divide and e-discrimination -, which need to be addressed by political decisions, investments and solid risk assessment and management. "People will only trust e-democracy if they are confident that the information and data they disclose in the context of e-democracy processes are not used or stored for any other purpose", it states.

The conclusions of the Forum will set the agenda for the future work of the Council of Europe in the field of e-democracy.

The 5th session of the Forum for the Future of Democracy will be held in Kyiv (Ukraine) in 2009 and will focus on electoral systems.

Press contact: Jaime Rodríguez, Council of Europe Press Division
Mob. +33 (0) 689 99 50 42, jaime.rodriguez@coe.int

For more information

To receive our press releases by e-mail, contact : Council.of.Europe.Press@coe.int

A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.