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COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON GOOD DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AT LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVEL (LR-GG)

REPORT ANALYSING THE LOW DEMOCRATIC PARTICIPATION BY CERTAIN GROUPS IN SOCIETY AND TAKING STOCK OF MEMBER STATES' POLICIES

Secretariat Memorandum
prepared by the Directorate General of
Democracy and Political Affairs
Directorate of Democratic Institutions

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Countries having replied to the questionnaire:

Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium (Brussels Capital Region, Flemish Region and Walloon Region), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (England and Wales).

Introduction

At the 16th session of their conference in Utrecht, the European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government voted the issue of *"Addressing the low level of democratic participation in public life at local and regional level"* as the second most important challenge in the area of local and regional democracy. To meet this challenge, the CDLR adopted several activities and outputs in the Programme of Activities (2010-2013) to implement the Utrecht Agenda, among which the development of a Report on low democratic participation by certain groups in society and taking stock of member States' policies.

This document contains the draft report developed by the Rapporteur Mr Edwin Lefebre (Belgium). It presents highlighted cases and initiatives from different member States to increase the electoral participation. The report is based on the data obtained from the replies to the questionnaire sent to the member States (thirty countries replied to the questionnaire)[1]. Other relevant documents and materials, as well as input from experts, were also used in preparation of this report.

The CDLR reviewed the draft Report at its meeting on 29 March 2011, made some changes to it, and entrusted the LR-GG with exploring follow-up activities.

Action required

The LR-GG invited to explore follow-up activities such as a workshop to share practices highlighted in the Report and the development of a manual of good practices.

[1] Countries having replied are: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium (Brussels Capital Region, Flemish Region and Walloon Region), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey, Switzerland and the United Kingdom (England and Wales).

Report analysing the low democratic participation by certain groups in society and taking stock of the Member States' policies

Rapporteur: Mr Edwin Lefebre (Belgium)

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INTRODUCTION

1. Background and objectives

Good local and regional governance requires democracy to function effectively at the local and regional level. The Council of Europe has recognised the crucial importance of citizen participation at local and regional level. The CoE acquis for this issue testifies to that commitment[2].

In 2005 and 2007 the European Ministers responsible for Local and Regional Government, meeting in Budapest and Valencia respectively, added to their "Agenda" a number of challenges and actions relating to democratic participation at local and regional level.

At their following Conference in Utrecht in 2009 the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority was opened for signature. At this Conference, the Ministers identified the challenge of the low level of democratic participation in public life at local and regional level as the second most important challenge for local and regional governance for the coming years. Furthermore, they took note of a report on developments on citizen participation in members' States, covering also the integration of foreigners in local life.

This report will address that challenge, as well as the following challenges identified by the Ministers in Utrecht:

- reducing the complexity and cost of the current system of local and regional government and enhancing its efficiency (challenge 3);
- enhancing the capacity for and quality of governance in local and regional communities or authorities (challenge 4);
- improving access to public services delivered at local and regional level (challenge 6).

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[2] The following instruments and reports with regard to citizen participation have been adopted by the Council of Europe:
a. Convention / Additional Protocol
- Convention CETS No. 144 of 5 February 1992 on the participation of foreigners in public life at local level;
- Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority.

b. Recommendations
- Recommendation 59(1999) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe of 17 June 1999 on "Europe 2000 youth participation: the role of young people as citizens";
- Recommendation Rec(2001)19 of the Committee of Ministers of 6 December 2001 on the participation of citizens in local public life;
- Recommendation Rec(2004)13 of the Committee of Ministers of 17 November 2004 on the participation of young people in local and regional life;
- Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)1 of the Committee of Ministers of 18 February 2009 to member states on electronic democracy (e-democracy);
- Recommendation Rec(2009)2 of the Committee of Ministers of 11 March 2009 on the evaluation, auditing and monitoring of participation and participation policies at local and regional level.

c. Reports
- Participation by citizens-consumers in the management of local public services (1994);
- Electoral systems and voting procedures at local level (1999); Participation of citizens in local public life (2002);
- Model initiatives package on public ethics at local level (2004).

The aim of the report is to provide an insight into the issue of low democratic participation of certain groups in society and Member States' policies relating to it. It includes case-studies and initiatives to increase participation used in different countries. The expected impact is that member States would have an enhanced knowledge enabling them to address more effectively the problems related to this phenomenon.

The reports may also be seen as an extension of the above-mentioned report on developments on citizen participation in members states. One of the conclusions of this report states that: "*… some groups or categories seem still to fall through the net and have low interest in – or limited access to – participatory processes. It would be important to focus on these groups in order to avoid creating or perpetuating societies or segments of society that do not feel they are stakeholders and nourish the feeling of exclusion or of a lack of legitimacy*".

2. Methodology and obstacles

A questionnaire was designed and approved by the CDLR and sent to the member States. It included combined qualitative (open-ended questions) and quantitative (multiple-choice questions). Thirty member States replied to the questionnaire[3] and the data obtained served as a basis for drafting the report.

Other relevant documents and materials, including input from experts, were also used in preparation of this report.

The main obstacle identified during the analysis of the countries' replies is the lack of data about the level of voter participation of certain groups. Data protection and privacy laws are one of the main reasons why these data are not collected or are not publically available. However , the most readily available source for finding the data are websites. Most of the related websites are government agency websites, and most of the information is only in the official language(s) of the countries concerned, rendering them less consultable for persons who do not understand these language(s). This fact seriously hinders the possibility of deducing trends or drawing conclusions about voter participation by certain groups.

[3] Countries having replied are: Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium (Brussels Capital Region, Flemish Region and Walloon Region), Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Turkey, Switzerland and United Kingdom (England and Wales).

I. VOTER PARTICIPATION

Table 1 in the appendix shows the years when the last three local elections were held in member States, the level of local authority concerned and the percentage of voter participation (=percentage of eligible voters) in each of these elections.

Five member States showed an upward trend and nine member States a downward trend with regard to voter turnout for community/municipality elections. The situation has stayed more or less the same in the eleven other member States who replied to the questionnaire. The upward trend was rather pronounced in two member States: +8% and +15%. The downward trend was rather high in six member States and ranged from -10% in three of those member States to -14% in one of them and to -20% in two of them.

With regard to the voter turnout for provincial/county elections (second tier local authorities), one member State showed an upward trend (+8%) and three member States showed a downward trend (dropping by -8% in one member State). The situation stays more or less the same in five other member States.

Five member States showed a downward trend in voter participation for provincial/county elections (second tier local authorities) and one member State showed an upward trend. The downward trend was rather high in three member States and ranged from -10% in two member States to -20% in another.

I.1. The average percentage of voter participation for elections for communities/municipalities

The average percentage of voter participation for community/municipality elections could be evaluated in twenty-six of the thirty member States (table 2 of the appendix). Data on Armenia was given in Armenian and could not be used. No data specific enough was available from Luxembourg, where voting is compulsory, or from Switzerland, where elections for municipalities took place on different dates and according to different systems. No figures were provided by Germany.The percentages of voter participation in Austria was based on the average turnout in Lower Austria, Styria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg and in the United Kingdom on the average turnout in England and Wales.

One country showed an average percentage of voter participation between 20 and 40%, fourteen countries showed an average turnout between 40 and 60%, eight countries showed an average turnout between 60 and 80% and three countries showed an average turnout that was greater than 80%. The high turnout of more than 80% occurred in Belgium (where voting is compulsory), Cyprus and Turkey (where voting is also compulsory).

I.2. The average percentage of voter participation for provincial/county elections (second tier local authorities)

The average percentage of voter participation for provincial/county elections could be evaluated in nine of the thirty member States (table 3 of the appendix). Not every member State is divided into provinces. The percentages of voter participation in Austria were based on the turnout in Burgenland, Styria and Vienna.

One country showed an average percentage of voter participation between 20 and 40%, four countries showed an average percentage of voter participation between 40 and 60%, three between 60 and 80% and one more than 80%.

I.3. The average percentage of voter participation for elections for regions

The average percentage of voter participation for elections for regions could be evaluated in eight of the thirty member States (table 4 of the appendix).

Two countries showed an average percentage of voter participation between 20 and 40%, three between 40 and 60%, two between 60 and 80% and one more than 80%.

I.4. What are "certain groups" in society?

The data mentioned in the points I.1. to I.3. concerned only the percentage of voter participation in general, without any breakdown identifying different population groups . If more specific data had been available, it might well have appeared that some groups of voters showed a higher turnout than other groups of voters. It could also have been that certain groups who were less likely to vote in some member States were more likely to vote in other member States and vice versa.

Identifying those groups in society which participate less or more can be a complex process. Groups in society are not fixed, and individuals may belong to more than one group, for instance young individuals with limited professional qualifications, or unemployed persons belonging to an ethnic group.

Nevertheless certain groups in society can be identified on the basis of the following criteria:

- ethnic origin;
- gender;
- religion;
- age;
- disability, for instance visual or mobility disability;
- literacy/illiteracy;
- social status;
- employment;
- education;
- professional qualifications.

I.5. Available data about the level of voter participation of certain groups

Data on the level of voter participation of certain groups was available in thirteen of the thirty member States (table 5 of the appendix). No data was available on certain groups in seventeen member States . Data was either not collected or publically not available as a result of data protection and privacy laws. Occasionally surveys of certain groups voting-intentions were carried out in the run up to elections.

No member State has data available on all the groups mentioned in the questionnaire.

Four of the thirty member States had data available on ethnic origin, although in the case of Belgium's Flemish Region the data was available on nationality, rather than ethnic origin. Twelve member States had data available on gender, one on religion, nine on age, one on disability, one on literacy/illiteracy, two on social status, one on employment, two on education, one on professional qualifications. Two member States had data available on other groups.

The most available data was therefore on gender or age and to a much lesser degree ethnic origin. Data on other groups was generally held by one or two member States.

The most readily available source for finding the data was a website. Most of these websites were government agency websites on elections or statistics. However, a majority of the websites were only in the country's official language(s), which meant they were less consultable for non-speakers of these language(s). Deducing trends or drawing conclusions about voter participation by certain groups was thus seriously hindered.

Collecting data on the level of voter participation of certain groups in countries where voting is compulsory can also be useful. Studies on who casts a vote and who would be likely to cast a vote if compulsory voting is abolished have been carried out in the Flemish Region of Belgium. The analysis below was carried out in this region at the level of municipalities. It showed that a municipality's characteristics were linked to its voter turnout. It further appeared that record levels of voter abstentions was prevalent in municipalities with lower socio-economic status (high unemployment, etc.), notwithstanding that voting was compulsory.

Highlighted cases

As mentioned earlier, the most available data concerned groups according to gender. In **Finland**, the statistical institute produced an interesting table showing the number of votes cast by gender in the municipal elections between 1921 and 2004[4]. Up until 1984, more men participated in the vote than women: the voter participation of men was on average 3% higher than the voter participation of women. Since 1984 the trend has reversed: on average, with the voter participation of women 3% higher than that of men. In Iceland, some interesting tables on participation in local elections by gender can be found on website[5] of the statistical institute. The tables showed that since 1994 the participation of women was 1 to 2% higher than that of men. It was of course not possible to draw conclusions from the two examples, since they only indicated that voter participation of men was not necessarily higher than that of women.

In **Hungary**, the thirteen officially recognised minorities of the country have the right to elect their own self-governments on local, territorial and national level. In order to be a member of a minority a person must declare him/herself to be a member. During minority elections citizens belonging to a minority have to register themselves on separate electoral rolls as the voters of their own minority. This roll has to be deleted after the elections to ensure protection of civil data[6].

Due to the reasons mentioned before, namely data protection and privacy laws and information only being available in countries' official language(s), no more information on voter participation was available.

I.6. Available data about the number of candidates for elections belonging to certain groups

Data on the number of candidates for election from certain groups was available in twenty-one of the thirty member States (table 6 of the appendix). Nine member States did not have such data. As for data on the level of voter participation of certain groups, data protection and privacy laws were some of the main reasons why this data was either not collected or publically available.

Member States had more data available on the number of candidates for election belonging to certain groups than on the level of voter participation of these groups. No member State had data available about all the groups mentioned in the questionnaire.

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[4] http://www.stat.fi/til/kvaa/2004/kvaa_2004_2010-07-30_tau_017_en.html.
[5] http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Elections/Local-goverment-elections.
[6] However, anonymous data are published on the official election website at http://www.valasztas.hu (in Hungarian).

Four of the thirty member States had data available on ethnic origin, although in the case of the Flemish Region of Belgium the data was not really about ethnic origin, but nationality. Nineteen member States had data available on gender, none on religion, fifteen on age, one on disability, one on (il)literacy, two on social status, six on employment, five on education, two on professional qualifications. Four member States had data available on other groups, for instance Armenia on party membership.

The most available data was thus on gender, age and to a lesser degree employment, education and ethnic race. Data on other groups was generally held by one or two member States.

On most websites with information on the number of candidates for election belonging to certain groups, it was only available in the official language(s) of the countries concerned, which seriously hindered the possibility of deducing trends or drawing conclusions about the number of candidates for election belonging to certain groups.

Highlighted cases

With regard to the gender criterion, **Finland** and **Iceland** provided some interesting information[7].

There was a total of 38 509 candidates in the municipal elections in Finland in 2008. Of these candidates, 22 935 were men and 15 574 were women. The proportion of female candidates rose slightly, by 0.5%, from the previous municipal elections and stood at 40.40%. The proportion of women candidates in different elections exceeded the current one only once, in the parliamentary elections of 1991, when female candidates made up 41.20% of all candidates.

The proportion of female candidates for local elections in 2010 in Iceland rose by 3% compared with the prevous local elections in 2006 (2006 local elections: male candidates = 56.20%, female candidates = 43.80%. 2010 local elections: male candidates = 53.20%, female candidates = 46.80%).

The Conseil national des femmes du **Luxembourg** published a list of the female candidates for the last municipal elections in 2005 in Luxemburg, but the total number of candidates was not mentioned[8].

The data on gender in **Slovenia** concerned the mayors and councillors elected as a result of the 2010 elections, and not the candidates[9]. The same applies for **Switzerland**: the data available was on male and female representatives elected in the cantonal parliaments and not on the candidates[10].

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[7] Finland: http://www.stat.fi/til/kvaa/2008/01/kvaa_2008_01_2008-09-30_tie_001_en.html.

Iceland: http://www.statice.is/Statistics/Elections.

[8] http://www.cnfl.lu/documents/Listedescandidatesauxelectionscommunales2005.pdf.

[9] http://www.stat.si/eng/novica_prikazi.aspx?id=3622.

[10] http://www.portal-stat.admin.ch/nrw/files/fr/04.xml.

The age structure of the candidates for the municipal elections in 2008 in Finland is very similar to that of the previous municipal elections in 2004. The majority of all candidates, or 72%, were aged 40 or over. The proportion of young candidates aged under 30 was 10.70%. The corresponding percentages in the previous municipal elections were 71.30 and 11%. Although the proportion of over 40-year-olds was nearly the same as in the current elections, the proportion of the oldest candidates, over 55 years of age, among them increased by 4% from the previous municipal elections. Their total number in the current elections is some 1 000 more than in 2004. The average age of candidates also rose by one year and stands at 48 years[11].

The Local Government Association (LGA) in **England** publishes every other year a census of local authority councillors. From the 2008 census, it appears that:

- Most councillors (68.40%) were male, 30.8 % were female (0.8% did not respond). The proportion of female councillors has increased from 27.80% in 1997;
- The average age of councillors has increased from 55.4 years in 1997 to 58.8 years in 2008;
- 96.60% of councillors were white and 3.40% came from an ethnic minority background[12].

II. STEPS AND MEASURES TO ADDRESS THE PARTICIPATION

II.1. Authority, body or institution which addresses the issue of voter participation

Six out of thirty member States had no authority, body or institution to address the issue of voter participation. Five member States had one level of authority, body or institution addressing this issue, eight member States had two levels, three member States had three levels and six member States had four levels (table 7 of the appendix).

It is the national level which addresses the issue of voter participation in most member States (twenty-one member States), followed by the local level (fifteen member States). This issue is addressed by the regional level in seven member States and by civic associations in eight member States. In **France,** in addition to the national government, CIDEM (association Civisme et Démocratie), a civic association, addresses the issue of voter participation.

[11] http://www.stat.fi/til/kvaa/2008/01/kvaa_2008_01_2008-09-30_tie_001_en.html.
[12] http://www.lga.gov.uk/lga/core/page.do?pageId=1095015.

Three member States mentioned another authority, body or institution, for example the Electoral Commission in the **United Kingdom**, which is an independent body set up by and answerable to the United Kingdom Parliament[13].

Of course, most political parties, candidates and NGO's in all the member States are involved in action to make voters aware of the importance of their participation in elections. The role of the press may also not be forgotten. In **Moldova**, the Centre for Independent Journalism is active in the field of addressing voter participation.

II.2. Strategy or policy to increase voter participation

Fourteen of the thirty member States had a national/regional/local/civic association/ etc., strategy or policy to increase voter participation, which is 46% of the respondents (table 8 of the appendix).

Highlighted cases

One of the reasons that member States gave for having no national strategy or policy to increase voter participation was that there were large local and regional differences in the voter participation. This was the case in **Denmark**, where today there are on-going talks regarding this subject in the local and regional councils.

In countries like **Belgium** and **Luxemburg**, where voting is compulsory for national citizens and voluntary for residents of other nationalities, awareness-raising campaigns were organized to increase or encourage a maximum of residents of other nationalities to vote. This was done in particular by associations representing the other nationalities (in general or of a particular nationality) who are active in this field.

In the Czech Republic, the mayor was responsible for delivering the ballot papers to all the voters within his district at least three days before election day. Together with the ballot papers, voters get an information leaflet which contained all necessary information on how to vote.

[13] The Electoral Commission sets standards for elections including registration of political parties, making sure people understand and follow the rules on party and election finance, publish details of where parties and candidates get money from and how they spend it, set standards for electoral registration and running and report on how well this is done, make sure people understand the importance of voting and how to vote**.** The Electoral Administration Act 2006 places a duty on Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers to encourage participation in the electoral process.

The following strategy or policy in **Finland** was pursued. Each institution decides on its best strategy. At a general level, all institutions seemed to underline the importance of local elections. Usually, a forecast of the turnout is made and compared to earlier elections. It was also usual to compare the Finnish situation to Swedish elections, where electoral turnout was reputed to be higher than in Finland. The strategy was to raise issues linked to the municipal level in order to stimulate voters' interest. The future of municipal services is usually the issue, municipal mergers can also be a big issue.

Campaigns to incite people to vote were financed in **France.** CIDEM, a civic association with representatives of NGO's like the Human Rights League on board and with partners such as the French Ministry for National Education, organised such campaigns. The Conseil Régional des jeunes d'Ile-de-France also launched a campaign urging the youth to vote.

All levels of **Hungarian** public administrative bodies were involved in the organisation of elections to ensure voters' awareness by sending electoral notices, public announcements, posters, media advertisements, etc. in an impartial, unbiased manner. Apart from this information, strong emphasis was put on young/first time voters. The National Election Office and the Foundation for Elections operate a special website for this target group[14]. Election procedures are described in an accessible manner, first time voters can participate in election related contests, quiz-games etc.

Ireland undertakes each year an annual advertising campaign at national and local level encouraging people to register to vote.

In England and Wales, the Electoral Administration Act 2006 places a duty on Electoral Registration Officers and Returning Officers to encourage participation in the electoral process**.**

II.3. Actions undertaken to increase voter participation in general

Nearly all the member States undertook actions to increase voter participation in general (table 9 of the appendix). The actions most undertaken aimed at increasing voter awareness and voter knowledge through websites (nineteen member States), newspaper advertisements (nineteen member States) and street banners (eleven member States).

Highlighted cases

TV and radio campaigns are of course also used to increase voter awareness. **Estonia**, **Poland** and **Portugal**[15] are three of the countries who use the media in order to increase voter awareness. **Finland** mentions that TV-campaigns and programms are important, especially the ones where party leaders debate on most current issues of local policy.

[14] http://www.elsovalaszto.hu/.
[15] National Election Commission in Portugal, www.cne.pt.

A third of the thirty member States extend the opening hours of polling booths in order to increase voter participation in general. Advanced voting and postal voting are used in nine of the thirty member States. An increase in the number of polling booths is used in six member States; voting by proxy and internet voting are used by five and four of the member States respectively (table 9 of the appendix). **Switzerland** was one of the pioneers of internet voting.

Another practical measure to increase voter participation is to allow citizens to vote from their place of residence (home, hospital, prison, etc.). This is the case in **Latvia**. It should be noted that allowing prisoners to vote is a contentious issue in some countries.

Several countries have drafted a practical guide for voters, one of the countries which mention this action is **Monaco**.

II.4. Certain groups which are especially targeted by the actions undertaken to increase voter participation

Seventeen of the thirty member States do not target certain groups when they undertake actions to increase voter participation.

Highlighted cases

The group which is most targeted is the group based on ethnic origin (eight member States). Five out of thirty member States target the age group and three member States target the gender group. The other groups are each targeted by only one member State. The group based on professional qualifications is not targeted by a member State. Three member States targeted "other groups": **Estonia** (EU citizens), **Iceland** (foreign nationals) and **Luxemburg** (non Luxemburg nationals) (table 10 of the appendix).

Concerning the group based on the ethnic origin, **Hungary** can be mentioned. Information on minority elections – see point I.5. - is distributed in cooperation with minority organisations. Minority ballots are bilingual: apart from the official Hungarian language, the content is also printed in the language of the given minority.

With regard to a fairer gender representation, gender quota are used in countries like **Belgium** and **Greece** in order to enhance the eligibility of women. According to the current legislation in these countries, the parties are obliged to include in their candidate lists a minimum percentage of candidates from each gender. In Belgium, the difference between the numbers of candidates of each gender on the candidate lists may not be greater than one, which ensures in practice nearly 50% of women candidates on each list. Under Greek law, the parties are obliged to include in their candidate lists a minimum of one third of candidates from each gender.

Estonia sends individual letters to first time voters with the aim of making them aware of the importance of participation in the voting process. **Switzerland** takes different initiatives like JuniorParl., Session des Jeunes, etc., to let young people know how the Swiss institutions work[16].

The Hungarian official election website[17] can be switched to accessible mode for users with sight disabilities and is also fully compatible with text-to speech software. Executive electoral regulation stipulates that local election authorities should ensure the accessibility of polling stations as much as possible.

Notifications of the right to vote and stand as a candidate for EU citizens are sent in Estonia. **Iceland** undertakes some interesting actions for foreigners residing there. One of these actions is the publication of a booklet in eleven languages (besides Icelandic) which is sent to foreign nationals who are entitled to vote in the elections. It gives an overview of the electoral procedure, with details regarding the right to vote, the electoral register, polling stations and voting on election day[18].

II.5. Unintended consequences of the actions undertaken to increase voter participation in general, for example affecting the secrecy of the election

Nearly all the member States – twenty-eight - mentioned that there were no unintended consequences of the actions undertaken to increase voter participation in general (see table 11 of the appendix). **Austria** and **Lithuania** informed that postal voting had some unintended consequences. Discussions during the drafting process of legislation are held in Austria in order to further increase security measures when using postal voting. Lithuania did not specify any unintended consequences of postal voting.

III. MONITORING PARTICIPATION

III.1. Authorities, bodies or institutions which take the lead in conducting surveys and analyzing voter participation

A survey analysing voter participation was conducted in twenty-one out of thirty respondent member States. Each member State can have more than one authority, body or institution which conducts this type of survey, which is the case in several member States. The survey is carried out by a government institution or agency in thirteen member States, by an academic institution in eleven member States, by international organisations in six member States and by NGO's in five member States. Eight member States reported that the survey was conducted by other organisations like for instance political parties and candidates. Nine member States reported that no surveys analysing voter participation took place in their country (see table 12 of the appendix).

[16] http://www.parlament.ch/f/wissen/juniorparl/Pages/default.aspx.
[17] www.valasztas.hu.
[18] http://www.kosning.is/sveitarstjornarkosningar/english.

IV. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Data on the level of voter participation of certain groups was only available in 43% of the member States having responded to the questionnaire. More member States had data on the number of candidates for elections belonging to certain groups, which are available in 70% of the respondent member States. Data protection and privacy laws were one of the main reasons why this data was not always collected or not always publicly available.

The Report showed that nearly all the participant member States undertook action to increase voter participation in general, but more than half of these did not target certain groups. Nearly half of the participant member States had a national/regional/local/civic association/ etc., strategy or policy to increase voter participation.

The limited availability of data and the fact that most of the information was only available in the official language(s) of the member States concerned, meant neither the impact of the actions, strategies and policies could be measured, nor any conclusions could be drawn.

In a number of member States, the actions, strategies and policies pursued have not always produced the desired results. In other member States, the desired results have been achieved. The member States where the policy was not successful could learn from member States where strategies aimed at a higher voter-turnout were successful. This would require an exchange of proper and effective information. This could be achieved through workshops, where countries can share their experiences. A manual of good practices could also be a way forward.

APPENDIX

Table 1

In which years were the last three local elections held, which level of local authority was concerned and what was the percentage of voter participation (=percentage of eligible voters) in each of these elections? N.a (not applicable) if there are no elections for provinces/counties/or regions. [19]

		Communities/ Municipalities		Provinces/ Counties		Regions	
		Year	Turnout %	Year	Turnout %	Year	Turnout %
Austria		2010[20]	71.20%	2010[21]	71.46%		
Azerbaijan		1999	31.86%				
		2004	46,34%				
		2009	32.04%				
Belgium	**Brussels Capital Region**	1994	85.01%	n.a.		1999	82.50%
		2000	83.46%	n.a.		2004	83.58%
		2006	93.37%	n.a.		2009	84.33%
	Flemish Region	1994	94.00%	1994	93.77%	1999	92.20%
		2000	94.00%	2000	93.29%	2004	93.79%
		2006	94.04%	2006	94.35%	2009	93.06%
	Walloon Region	1994	92.32%	1994	92.32%	1999	90.36%
		2000	90.57%	2000	90.57%	2004	92.71%
		2006	91.92%	2006	91.92%	2009	88.99%
Bulgaria		1999	57.60%				
		2003	46.90%				
		2007	42.40%				
Cyprus		1996	90.20%				
		2001	89.50%				
		2006	88.30%				
Czech Republic		2002	45.51%	n.a.		2000	33.64%
		2006	46,38%	n.a		2004	29,62%
		2010	48.50%	n.a		2008	40.30%
Denmark		2001	85.00%	n.a		2001	86.00%
		2005	69.50%	n.a		2005	69.40%
		2009	65.80%	n.a		2009	65.70%
Estonia		2002	52.50%	n.a.		n.a.	
		2005	47.44%	n.a.		n.a.	
		2009	60.57%	n.a.		n.a.	
Finland		2000	55.90%	n.a.		n.a.	
		2004	58.60%	n.a.		n.a.	
		2008	61.30%	n.a.		n.a.	
France		1995	69.42%	2001	65.48%	1998	57.43%
		2001	67.29%	2004	63.91%	2004	60.84%
		2008	66.54%	2008	64.87%	2010	46.33%
Germany		n.a.		2009	67.00%		
				2009	73.60%		
				2010	59.30%		
Greece		2002	72.71%			2002[22]	72.71%
		2006	72.20%			2006[23]	72.41%
		2010	61.03%			2010[24]	60.88%

[19] Armenia also submitted data but explanations are on Armenian language. In Switzerland elections are held for municipalities and for cantons, but these elections take place on different dates and according to different systems, therefore data cannot be analysed.

[20] Based on the average turnout in Lower Austria, Styria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg.

[21] Based on the average turnout in Burgenland, Styria and Vienna.

[22] Elections are for Prefectures.

[23] Elections are for Prefectures.

Hungary	2002	51.10%	2002	51.10%	n.a.	
	2006	53.12%	2006	53.12%	n.a.	
	2010	46.64%	2010	46.64%	n.a.	
Iceland	2002	83.20%	n.a.		n.a.	
	2006	78.70%	n.a.		n.a.	
	2010	73.50%	n.a.		n.a.	
Ireland	1999	53.56%	1999	50.19%	n.a.	n.a.
	2004	57.78%	2004	58.64%	n.a.	n.a.
	2009	58.18%	2009	57.77%	n.a.	n.a.
Latvia	2001	53.80%	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
	2005	52.85%	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
	2009	61.98%	n.a	n.a	n.a	n.a
Lithuania	2002	49.23%	n.a.		n.a.	
	2007	41.30%	n.a.		n.a.	
	2011	44.08%	n.a.		n.a.	
Luxemburg	1993	Compulsory voting	n.a.		n.a.	
	1999	Compulsory voting	n.a.		n.a.	
	2005	Compulsory voting	n.a.		n.a.	
Malta	2009	65.00%	n.a.		n.a.	
	2010	70.00%	n.a.		n.a.	
Moldova	1999	62.70%	1999	62.69%	1999	58.45%
	2003	63.45%	2003	58.26%	2003	58.68%
	2007	52.34%	2007	52.34%	2007	52.34%
Monaco	1999	51.80%				
	2003	51.57%				
	2007	50.07%				
Poland	2002	35.02%	2002	49.48%	2002	44.23%
	2006	48.00%	2006	48.03%	2006	45.91%
	2010	50.08%	2010	50.07%	2010	47.26%
Portugal	2001	60.12%				
	2005	60.94%				
	2009	59.01%				
Serbia	2000	74.68%				
	2004	40.60%				
	2008	60.00%				
Slovak Republic	2002	49.51%	n.a		2001	26.02%
	2006	47.65%	n.a		2005	18.02%
	2010	49.69%	n.a		2009	22.90%
Slovenia	2002	72.06%	n.a.		n.a.	
	2006	58.20%	n.a.		n.a.	
	2010	50.90%	n.a.		n.a.	
Turkey	1999	85.22%	n.a			
	2004	73.27%	n.a			
	2009	84.17%	n.a			
United Kingdom	2008 – all England & Wales	36.50% (England & Wales) 35.40% (England)	n/a		n/a	
	2009	34.50%	2009	34.50%	n/a	
	2010	65.50% (England) 64.70% (Wales)	n/a		n/a	

[24] Elections are for Prefectures.

Table 2

Average percentage of voter participation for the last three municipal elections	No. Countries
0-20%	
20-40%	1
40-60%	14
60-80%	8
80-100%	3

Total 26/30
Data about Armenia are given in Armenian and could not be used. The average percentage of voter participation in Luxembourg and Switzerland could not be determined. Germany did not provide numbers. The average percentage of voter participation in Austria is based on the results in Lower Austria, Styria, Tyrol and Vorarlberg and in the United Kingdom on the turnout in England and Wales. Belgium has been assessed as one country.

Table 3

Average percentage of voter participation for the last three provincial elections	No. Countries
0-20%	
20-40%	1
40-60%	4
60-80%	3
80-100%	1

Total 8/30
The percentages of voter participation in Austria are based on the turnout in Burgenland, Styria and Vienna and in the United Kingdom on the turnout in England and Wales. Belgium has been assessed as one country.

Table 4

Average percentage of voter participation for the last three regional elections	No. Countries
0-20%	
20-40%	2
40-60%	3
60-80%	2
80-100%	1

Total 8/30
Belgium has been assessed as one country.

Table 5

Available data about the level of voter participation of certain groups												
		ethnic origin	**gender**	**Religion**	**age**	**disability, for instance visual or mobile disability**	**(il)literacy**	**social status**	**employment**	**education**	**professional qualifications**	**other groups**
Armenia												
Austria												
Azerbaijan												
Belgium	**Brussels Capital Region**											
	Flemish Region	**X**										
	Walloon Region		**X**		**X**	**X**						
Bulgaria		**X**	**X**	**X**	**X**					**X**		
Cyprus												
Czech Republic												
Denmark		**X**	**X**		**X**				**X**	**X**		
Estonia												
Finland			**X**		**X**							**X**
France												
Germany			**X**		**X**							
Greece												
Hungary		**X**										
Iceland			**X**									
Ireland												
Latvia												
Lithuania												
Luxemburg												
Malta			**X**		**X**			**X**				
Moldova			**X**									
Monaco												
Poland			**X**									

Portugal		**X**		**X**							
Serbia											
Slovak Republic											
Slovenia											
Switzerland		**X**		**X**						**X**	**X**
Turkey		**X**		**X**		**X**	**X**				
United Kingdom											

Table 6

Available data about the number of candidates for elections belonging to certain groups												
		ethnic origin	**gender**	**Religion**	**age**	**disability, for instance visual or mobile disability**	**(il)literacy**	**social status**	**employment**	**education**	**professional qualifications**	**other groups**
Armenia												**X**
Austria												
Azerbaijan												
Belgium	**Brussels Capital Region**											
	Flemish Region	**X**	**X**									
	Walloon Region		**X**		**X**	**X**						
Bulgaria			**X**		**X**					**X**	**X**	
Cyprus												
Czech Republic			**X**		**X**				**X**	**X**		
Denmark		**X**	**X**		**X**				**X**			
Estonia			**X**		**X**							
Finland			**X**		**X**							**X**
France			**X**		**X**				**X**			
Germany			**X**		**X**			**X**	**X**			

Greece		**X**									
Hungary	**X**										
Iceland		**X**		**X**				**X**			
Ireland											
Latvia	**X**	**X**		**X**					**X**		
Lithuania											
Luxemburg		**X**									
Malta		**X**		**X**		**X**		**X**	**X**		
Moldova		**X**									
Monaco											
Poland		**X**							**X**		
Portugal		**X**		**X**							
Serbia											
Slovak Republic											
Slovenia		**X**		**X**							**X**
Switzerland		**X**		**X**						**X**	**X**
Turkey		**X**		**X**		**X**	**X**				
United Kingdom											

Table 7

Level of authority/body/institutions which addresses the issue of voter participation	No. Countries
National government	21
Regional government	7
Local government	15
Civic Associations	8
Other	3
More than one authority, body or institution per member State if possible	

Table 8

National/regional/local/civic association/ etc., strategy or policy to increase voter participation	No. Countries 14

Table 9

Actions undertaken to increase voter participation in general	No. Countries
a. Advanced voting	9 (Austria, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Portugal, Switzerland, United Kingdom
b. Voting by proxy	5 (Belgium, Finland, France, Monaco, Switzerland, United Kingdom
c. Postal voting	9 (Austria, Finland, Germany, Ireland, Latvia, Luxemburg, Portugal, Switzerland, United Kingdom
d. Internet voting	4 (Azerbaijan, Estonia, Slovenia, Switzerland
e. Stretch opening hours of polling booths	10 (Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Iceland, Ireland, Malta, Moldova, Poland, Portugal, United Kingdom
f. Increase the number polling booths	6 (Azerbaijan, Belgium, Finland, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Portugal
g. Increased voter awareness and voter knowledge	
i. Web site	19 (Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Luxemburg, Moldova, Monaco, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Switzerland, United Kingdom
ii. Ads in newspapers	19 (Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, United Kingdom
iii. Banners on the street	11 (Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Latvia, Malta, Moldova, Monaco, Poland, Portugal, Serbia, United Kingdom
h. Other	

Table 10

Certain groups which are especially targeted by the actions undertaken to increase voter participation	*No. countries*
ethnic origin	8
gender	3
Religion	1
age	5
disability, for instance visual or mobile disability	5
(il)literacy	1
social status	1
employment	1
Education	1
professional qualifications	
other groups	3

Table 11

Unintended consequences of the actions undertaken to increase voter participation in general	No. Countries
a. Advanced voting	
b. Voting by proxy	
c. Postal voting	2
d. Internet voting	
e. Stretch opening hours of polling booths	
f. Increase the number polling booths	
g. Increased voter awareness and voter knowledge	
i. Web site	
ii. Ads in newspapers	
iii. Banners on the street	
h. Other	

Table 12

Authorities, bodies or institutions which take the lead in conducting surveys and analyzing voter participation	No. Countries
No such survey	9
Government institution/agency, viz.	13
NGOs, viz.	5
International organizations, viz.	6
Academic institutions, viz.	11
Other organizations (please specify)	8
More than one authority/body/institutions per member State if possible	