Election observation missions (EUEOMs)

Election observation is a vital EU activity aiming to promote democracy, human rights and the rule of law worldwide. It contributes to strengthening democratic institutions, building public confidence in electoral processes, helping to deter fraud, intimidation and violence. It also reinforces other key EU foreign policy objectives, in particular peace-building.

Video of Impact of EU Election Observation Missions

Election Observation Missions

- EOM Malawi 2019
- EOM Sénégal 2019
- EOM El Salvador 2019
- EOM Nigeria 2019
- EU EOM Madagascar 2018
- EU EOM Pakistan 2018
- EU EOM Mali 2018
- EU EOM Zimbabwe 2018
- EU EOM El Salvador 2018
- EU EOM Lebanon 2018
- EU EOM Paraguay 2018
- EU EOM Sierra Leone 2018
- EU EOM Tunisia 2018

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Observation missions

Election observation gives the opportunity to assess an electoral process according to international standards. The EU is a leading global actor in providing and financing electoral assistance complementary to election observation. This dual form of EU election support constitutes a significant contribution to the promotion of governance and development objectives.

With these objectives in mind, the European Union has become a leading force in international election observation. Since 2000 over 120 EU Election Observation Missions (EU EOMs) have been deployed to all continents (with the exception of the OSCE region), following a long-term observation methodology to assess election processes according to international standards and best practices for genuine democratic elections.

Video of EU Election Observation Missions 2017

In addition to election observation, the European Commission is engaged in election assistance, which provides technical or material support to electoral processes. More information on election assistance is available on the Development and cooperation - EuropeAid website.

The purpose of EU election observation missions (EOMs) is to assist partner countries in holding elections of a high standard. In this context, the EU EOM conducts a comprehensive analysis of the electoral process and provides an impartial and informed assessment of the elections to strengthen the confidence of voters to participate freely.

An observation mission assesses all aspects of the electoral process, its constitutional and legal framework, the delimitation of constituencies, the registration of voters and candidates, the training of election staff, voter education, media coverage, the campaign and the preparations for election day, as well as the appeals process. On election day, observers visit pooling stations in order to observe the opening, voting, counting and aggregation of results.

Its fundamental principles are full coverage, impartiality, transparency and professionalism. Its ultimate objective is to become superfluous by entrenching democracy deep within each nation through the development of national capacities.

Its main goals are the legitimisation of an electoral process, where appropriate, and the enhancement of public confidence in the electoral process to deter fraud, to strengthen respect for human rights, and to contribute to conflict resolution.

EU EOMs follow a very precise methodology that is a warrant of the implementation of these principles.

Methodology

The strength and added value of EU election observation missions is given by the fact that they are
based on a robust and comprehensive methodology, which is the warrant of its credibility.

Its fundamental principles of independence, impartiality, consistency, long-term approach and professionalism are set out in the 2000 communication from the European Commission on EU election assistance and observation. They cover all phases of the election cycle: pre-election, election day, and immediate post-election.

EU election observation missions do not interfere in the organisation of the election itself. Instead, they collect and analyse factual information concerning the election process and provide an independent public assessment.

**Handbook for European Union Election Observation**

**Compendium of International Standards for Elections (4th edition)**

**Brochure “Beyond Election Day: Best practices for follow-up to EU Election Observation Missions” (June 2017)**

**Procedures**

An overview of all stages of an election observation mission, from the selection of priority countries to the final report.

All EOMs are required to respect the following stages:

- **Selection of priority countries**

  The HRVP identifies a number of countries where EU election observation missions (EOMs) could be deployed, in consultation with the Council of Ministers and the European Parliament.

- **Exploratory mission**

  A mission is sent to the country to assess whether deploying an EU EOM is advisable, feasible and useful. The exploratory mission should also advise on what conditions must be fulfilled by the host government in order for the EOM to be able to operate fully and credibly. The exploratory mission also proposes implementation arrangements.

- **Selection of the mission chief, core team experts and observers**

  After deciding to deploy a mission, the HRVP appoints a chief observer, normally a member of the European Parliament. The experts of the EU EOM core team are chosen on the basis of their experience from a pool of experts that the Commission has compiled based on a call for interest posted on its website.

  Observers are appointed by the Commission and the EEAS from a selection of candidates proposed by Member States. The European Parliament may also decide to send a separate delegation to observe the elections. This parliamentary delegation is integrated in the EU EOM and works closely with the chief observer and does not issue a separate assessment.
• **Mission deployment**

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• **Observation period**

Regular meetings are held with election officials at national, regional and local levels, political parties, candidates, civil society and media throughout the country. The elections are assessed against international standards, regional commitments undertaken by the host country and national laws.

**Timing**

The EU EOM is normally deployed in country about between 8-6 weeks prior to election day, with long-term observers arriving to assess the preparations for the election at regional level around 5-4 weeks before polling. The short-term observers arrive shortly before election day in order to increase the observation capacities of the mission during polling, counting and the aggregation of results.

A preliminary statement is then presented by the chief observer at a press conference shortly after election day (usually 48 hrs after election day) based on long-term and short-term observations of the entire process.

A final report contains the EOM's conclusions and recommendations regarding the whole electoral process. It is delivered within a month of the EOM ending its activities on the ground. This report gives guidance for electoral reform and possible future assistance.

**Objectives**

Election observation missions (EOMs) do not interfere in electoral processes. They only have the mandate to collect and verify information concerning the election process, analyse the observations and then, after the elections, to publish their findings. As a rule, EU EOMs always operate in a country on the basis of an invitation of the host government.

Observers clearly distinguish between complaints, rumours, accusations and verified facts. Only facts that are witnessed or verified by the observers will be used as the basis of the mission's report. Furthermore, although the mission cooperates with other observer organisations, only information collected by its own international observers will be used for the mission's statement and final report.

The assessment of the elections is based on seven key criteria that have been adopted by the European Union in assessing the quality of elections and which are assessed against regional and international standards. These include:

- The degree of impartiality shown by the election administration
- The degree of freedom of political parties and candidates to assemble and express their views
- The fairness of access to state resources made available for the election
- The degree of access for political parties and candidates to the media, in particular the state media
The universal franchise afforded to voters
Any other issue which concerns the democratic nature of the election e.g. campaign violence, rule of law, legislative framework
The conduct of polling and counting of votes.

Each of the seven areas is assessed by the EU EOM analysts who monitor all components of the election process with the support of both long and short-term observers. This enables them to conduct a thorough and comprehensive assessment of the overall administration of the elections as well as the degree of freedom and access granted to candidates, voters and the media.

**Become an observer**

Information on how join an EU election observation mission, including the criteria for recruitment and training requirements.

**Read more:**

[Job offers at EOM](#)

**The observers**

Since 2000 the EU has deployed more than 120 missions involving the participation of over 11 000 observers. Various types of observers participate in the European Union's Election Observer Missions (EOMs).

European Union’s Elections Observer Missions (EU EOMs) are led by a Chief Observer and are made up of a core team (involving a deputy Chief Observer and some electoral experts) and some long term and short term observers.

The **Chief Observer** is present in the country at all key moments of the mission. She or he has the overall responsibility for the mission, including the final report, and is its only spokesperson. He or she is traditionally a Member of the European Parliament.

Core team experts, including the **Deputy Chief Observer**, support the chief observer, set the analytical framework for the mission, carry out specific tasks such as media monitoring and manage the work of the observers. Other core team experts are knowledgeable in areas such as legal issues, election administration, human rights and gender security, logistics, media monitoring and public relations. They have a sound experience of EOMs and are recruited via specific calls for applications.

**Long-term observers** (LTOs) are ideally deployed around one month before election day and remain after the results are officially announced to observe the resolution of electoral disputes. They are located all over the country and observe the unfolding electoral campaign. They also address particular issues, such as the use of public resources by candidates.

**Short-term observers** (STOs) are deployed to observe the polling day and the early counting of ballots. They are deployed in teams of two. Long-term observers report regularly and prepare the STOs’ observation programme in their area.
Supporting staff provide the mission with the means to fulfil its duties. They work as project manager, security officer, or drivers, translators, IT professionals and any other posts necessary for the day-to-day management of the mission.

Read More:

Code of Conduct for EU Election Observers

Focal points

Each EU Member State has a Focal Point for election observation related matters, either within their own Ministry of Foreign Affairs or in a related external agency. The Focal Points are responsible for the recruitment and proposal of their own country’s candidates for selection as Short-Term and Long-Term Observers to EU Election Observation Missions.

Read more:

List of the EOM Focal Points

Social media channels

EOM YouTube channel

Documents

High Level Conference on the Future of International Election Observation
Code of Conduct for EU Election Observers
Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation
Compendium of International Standards for Elections
Evaluation of EU Election Observation Activities

See also

Focal points
Job offers at EOM
List of EU EOM and EEM missions 1993 - 2019
Election Follow-Up Missions Archive
www.eeas.europa.eu

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