

HANDBOOK FOR LONG-TERM ELECTION OBSERVERS



Beyond Election Day Observation

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Foreword

The Warsaw-based Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the main OSCE institution for promoting and protecting human rights, democracy, and the rule of law. A key element of the ODIHR's mandate is the promotion of democratic elections. To this end, the Office has developed a number of election-related programmes and has in the last decade become the principal international election observation agency in the region.

An election is not a one-day event. It is of utmost importance that an election observation mission take account of all of the elements that produce, in combination, a democratic election process: impartial and professional election administration; effective voter and candidate registration; an election campaign that has equitable access to the media and is underscored by the fundamental freedoms of expression, association, and assembly; a credible Election Day process that permits all eligible voters to cast their ballot in an unhindered manner and free of any form of intimidation; an honest, transparent, and timely vote count and reconciliation; and an accessible complaints and appeals process. All of these issues are a focus of attention for long-term observers (LTOs).

This handbook for long-term observers complements the ODIHR's *Election Observation Handbook*, now in its fifth edition. It has been produced to facilitate the specific role of an LTO within the context of an ODIHR election observation mission. LTOs play a unique role in such missions, and their objective is two-fold. They must gather, analyse, and report election-related information and findings from their respective region, and they must also prepare the ground for the deployment of short-term observers (STOs). An STO is deployed for a limited period of time, and therefore the work of the LTO is crucial in maximizing the STO contribution by providing a thorough briefing, debriefing, and necessary logistical support. The role of an LTO therefore requires a broad array of analytical and organizational skills.

LTOs have another important responsibility: they represent the ODIHR election observation mission in the regions, and, as such, they serve as ambassadors for the OSCE at large. It is therefore essential that LTOs discharge their responsibilities to the highest professional standards, and strictly abide by the Observer Code of Conduct. The LTO's role is decisive to ensuring a credible, objective, and professional assessment of an election.

The work of an LTO is challenging but equally enriching. Serving as an LTO allows one to capture the reality of an election process as it unfolds at the local level, and to witness the unique quality of the pre-electoral environment within a condensed time frame. This takes a

high level of dedication to the task at hand. I wish all LTOs success in performing their duties and thank them for their commitment. I hope that this handbook will facilitate their work and help them maintain the high level of professionalism that the ODIHR is known for in the field of election observation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Strohal', with a stylized, flowing script.

Ambassador Christian Strohal
ODIHR Director

Introduction

This handbook provides long-term election observers (LTOs) with an overview of their role, duties, and responsibilities in the specific context of election observation as conducted by the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR). The ODIHR is the OSCE institution mandated to report on participating State compliance with OSCE election-related commitments, and to assist them to meet their commitments in this regard.

The 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document was the first political agreement among states to institutionalize election observation by extending a standing invitation to observe each other's electoral proceedings. The ODIHR's mandate to observe elections is derived from Paragraph 8 of the Copenhagen Document, and is confirmed by the 1990 Charter of Paris for a New Europe, the 1993 Document of the Fourth Meeting of the CSCE Council (Rome), the 1994 Budapest Summit Document, and the 1999 Istanbul Summit Document (Charter for European Security). In recognition that an election process is more than a one-day event, the 1994 Budapest Summit decided that the ODIHR should "play an enhanced role in election monitoring before, during and after elections".

In this context, the Budapest Summit Decision also tasked the ODIHR to devise a handbook to enhance election-monitoring preparations and procedures. The result was the ODIHR's *Election Observation Handbook* – first introduced in 1996 – which outlines a comprehensive methodology for long-term election observation, and which has defined the OSCE's approach to this activity for over a decade. This methodology has permitted the ODIHR to move beyond the incomplete election assessments of the early 1990s that were often characterized by impressionistic statements focused almost exclusively on Election Day.

The ODIHR is now able to match the complexity of an election process with a consistent, structured, and multidimensional approach to observation that covers all key elements. Long-term observation is crucial to this methodology. Therefore, LTO reporting covers the effectiveness and impartiality of the election administration, the implementation of the election law and regulations, the nature of the campaign, and the protection of relevant civil and political rights. The presence of LTOs permits a thorough observation of the pre- and immediate post-election periods, and LTOs serve a pivotal role in enabling the ODIHR to accompany and report on the election process in its entirety. ODIHR election observation is process-oriented, and is only interested in the results of an election to the degree that they are reported honestly, accurately, transparently, and in a timely manner.

While short-term observers (STOs) are a mission's primary resource for observing and assessing Election Day procedures, the LTO's role is essential to ensure that Election Day obser-



Observers fax their observation forms to mission headquarters throughout Election Day. During the March 2006 parliamentary elections in Ukraine, more than 4,000 forms were sent from as many polling stations.

vation is effective. On Election Day, STOs are deployed throughout the country and fill in forms at each polling and counting centre visited, thus contributing to a statistically representative profile of polling-station activity throughout the country. LTOs have a significant responsibility for supporting these activities through planning the arrival, briefing, regional deployment, and debriefing of STOs.

Whenever the ODIHR is deploying an election observation mission, each of the 56 participating States — with the exception of the host country — is invited to second both LTOs and STOs. As LTOs, the ODIHR requests the secondment of persons with experience in the administration of elections, election-related legal expertise, and/or comparative observation experience. LTOs must be capable of independent analysis, and of maintaining objective relationships over an extended

period with municipal or regional authorities, election officials, representatives of political parties and candidates, and relevant non-governmental organizations.

LTOs carry out their duties under the supervision of the head of the election observation mission¹ (EOM), who is appointed by the ODIHR Director. The head of mission assumes responsibility for the day-to-day work of the EOM, in close co-operation with the ODIHR's Election Department. The head of the Election Department represents the Director in all election-related matters. The ODIHR election adviser tasked with responsibility for the observation of a particular election serves as the regular liaison between the EOM and the ODIHR in Warsaw.

In addition to the head of mission, the core team of an election observation mission comprises: the deputy head, the election analyst, the political analyst, the legal analyst, the media analyst, the statistical analyst, the logistics expert, the finance officer, the parliamentary liaison officer, the LTO co-ordinator, and the security expert. On occasion, the core team may consist of two more analysts who conduct focused analysis of issues related to gender and national minorities. The core team liaises with the central authorities of the host country, and maintains an overall perspective of the situation at the national level. It also liaises with representatives of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and other parliamentary observers who regularly observe within the ODIHR election observation framework to form an international

¹ The head of an ODIHR election observation mission, referred to in this document as head of mission, should not be confused with the heads of OSCE field presences, which operate under their respective separate mandates.

election observation mission.² LTOs serve as the primary point of contact for all short-term observers once deployed to the field, including parliamentary observers, and they offer local briefings to set the observation effort within a regional/local context.

The LTO co-ordinator is the main contact person for LTOs and provides guidance, assistance, and instructions. Respective analysts in the core team may advise LTOs on specific issues to follow up on in the regions based on findings at the national level.



Udihr Commons/ODIHR

Not all voters used the option to vote in secret during the 2004 parliamentary elections in Kazakhstan.

The ODIHR's election observation methodology places a premium on collective, rather than individual, findings. The deployment of LTOs in multinational teams of two, usually up to six weeks before Election Day, establishes a broad regional presence for the EOM throughout the election process. LTO reports ensure that the EOM is able to take into account trends and developments throughout various regions of a country as it formulates its overall assessment of an election process.

While serving as an LTO is rewarding, it is also a demanding and challenging experience that requires dedication and perseverance. LTOs must carry out their duties with the highest degree of objectivity and professionalism. They must be able to operate with a considerable degree of flexibility and initiative within a general framework set out by the EOM. LTOs are required to report regularly to the head of mission through the LTO co-ordinator. LTOs may face difficult living and working conditions. Each LTO team will be supported by an interpreter and a driver.

As representatives of the EOM in the field, LTOs may receive questions from the local media. While the head of mission or his/her designated representative are the only EOM members authorized to comment on the electoral process or the substance of the EOM's findings, LTOs may on occasion offer general information about the role of observers.

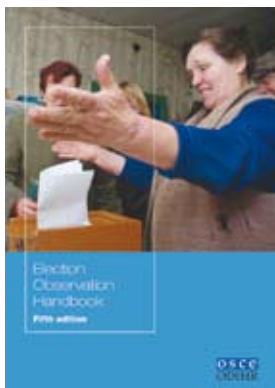
OSCE participating States have made a wide array of commitments to support, protect, and promote democratic governance and human rights, with most of those related specifically to elections contained in the Copenhagen Document (Paragraphs 6-8).³ In order for OSCE states to bring their electoral process closer in line with OSCE commitments, the ODIHR's election observation methodology offers participating States authoritative and constructive recommendations based on well-established fact. The information that LTOs provide in their reports serves as an important element in the development of recommendations that will assist OSCE participating States to meet their commitments.

² The ODIHR is committed to co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and, on occasion, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and potentially other parliamentary groupings that wish to join an international election observation mission within the framework of the ODIHR's methodology for election observation.

³ A majority of OSCE participating States are also members of the Council of Europe and are therefore bound by the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms. In addition, most OSCE participating States have ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, a United Nations human rights treaty.

This handbook for LTOs complements the ODIHR's *Election Observation Handbook*, which is now in its fifth edition (2005) and is available in eight languages.⁴ This handbook covers a range of situations that may arise in the field, from the role of LTOs in the overall observation process to administrative, logistical, and security issues.

Other ODIHR publications⁵ that offer detailed and specialized guidance for members of election observation missions include:⁶



The *Election Observation Handbook* provides a comprehensive overview of the ODIHR's methodology for election observation.

- › *Guidelines on Media Analysis During Election Observation Missions* (forthcoming 2007);
- › *Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections* (2004);
- › *Guidelines for Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections* (2001);
- › *Guidelines to Assist National Minority Participation in the Electoral Process* (2001); and
- › *Resolving Election Disputes in the OSCE Area: Towards a Standard Election Dispute Monitoring System* (2000).

4 Albanian, English, French, Georgian, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, and Ukrainian.

5 All of these publications are available on the ODIHR's website (www.osce.org/odihr). Hard copies can be ordered by sending an e-mail to publications@odihr.pl.

6 Other specific information and analysis are available in papers entitled "International Standards and Commitments on the Right to Democratic Elections: A Practical Guide to Democratic Elections Best Practice" and "Existing Commitments for Democratic Elections in OSCE Participating States: A Progress Report" (available at www.osce.org/odihr).

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Quick-Start Information for LTOs



Clockwise from top left: LTOs attend a debriefing with the core team following the March 2006 presidential election in Belarus; Representatives of political parties count ballots at a counting centre in Tirana following the February 2007 municipal elections in Albania; Valery Shyrokov (right) of Ukraine follows a mobile ballot box to the home of a disabled voter in Moscow during Russia's 2004 presidential election; An election rally in Rome ahead of the April 2006 parliamentary elections in Italy.

This chapter provides an overview of important information for LTOs. It sets out their principal duties, explains what they should expect after their arrival in-country, provides some general guidance on how to operate, and sets out the basic rules of conduct by which they will be bound. Subsequent chapters elaborate on these issues and provide more specific information to guide LTOs in their work. LTOs should consult with the LTO co-ordinator when in doubt or need of advice.

A. General Overview of LTO Responsibilities

During an EOM, LTOs will normally be expected to fulfil the following duties:⁷

- › Observe, assess, and report on the effectiveness and impartiality of the **election administration** during the pre-election period, on Election Day, and in the days following the election;
- › Observe, assess, and report on the pre-election political environment and all aspects of the **election campaign**, including respect for civil and political rights and the extent to which the election process is free from intimidation;
- › Observe, assess, and report on the **handling of election complaints and appeals**;
- › Observe, assess, and report on other election-related issues, such as the **participation of women, the inclusion of national minorities, and access for disabled voters**;
- › Prepare a local **deployment plan** for the STOs who will serve in their area of responsibility (AoR);
- › Make **logistical arrangements** for the deployment of the STOs in their AoR;

⁷ Checklists of key tasks can be found in Annexes A and B. LTOs may be required to perform a variety of other duties, depending on the requirements of a specific EOM.

- › Provide a **regional political and electoral briefing and debriefing** for STOs; and
- › **Manage personnel, financial, and material resources** efficiently and in accordance with ODIHR procedures and regulations.

B. Orientation and Briefing

Upon arrival in-country, LTOs will spend one or two days in the capital city at the EOM's headquarters before being deployed to their AoR. During this period, they will:

- › Meet the core team and the other LTOs;
- › Be introduced to their LTO partner and learn about their assigned AoR;
- › Become familiar with the EOM's work plan, priorities, and timetable;
- › Receive a comprehensive briefing on the general context of the election, legal framework, election system, political background, media environment, and minority and gender issues;
- › Receive a briefing pack with additional information and background documents;
- › Be instructed about reporting and administrative tasks for which LTOs are responsible;
- › Receive operational funds and equipment; and
- › Be given a security briefing.

LTOs will be deployed to their AoR following their briefing in the capital. Staff at the EOM's headquarters will book temporary accommodation for LTOs in their respective AoR and make arrangements for their travel. Specific arrangements vary among EOMs, but LTOs will be briefed accordingly.

C. Deployment, Logistics, and Operational Resources

The EOM will arrange for an **accreditation** document for each LTO from the host government. Whenever possible, the accreditation will be provided to LTOs before they are deployed to their AoR. EOMs usually also provide **business cards** for LTOs.

LTOs are assigned to work in teams of two, and, as a general rule, each LTO team is composed of nationals from different OSCE participating States. Where possible, LTO teams will consist of one man and one woman. Clearly, for LTO teams to work effectively, partners should develop a supportive and professional working relationship. Difficulties should be reported to the LTO co-ordinator in a timely manner.

EOM budgets do not include funding for LTO **office space**. LTOs must work out of their accommodations. LTOs should therefore choose accommodations that can also serve as an office for themselves and their staff, and as a place to hold meetings. LTO teams have often opted to share living accommodations with a common space that can be used for an office; this, however, is an individual choice.

Each LTO team is generally issued a **laptop computer and a mobile phone**. Many LTOs find it convenient to bring their own mobile telephones and laptop computers. However, they should obtain their own insurance for any personal equipment, as *the EOM cannot reimburse LTOs for any damage to, or loss of, personal equipment*.

The EOM will identify an **interpreter** and hire them on a short-term contract (it will be up to each team to decide whether to extend the contract or to hire someone else). Election observation depends on a wide array of skills and professional backgrounds, and while language skills are useful and may be emphasized, a number of observers will not be fluent in the respective language of the host country.



Observers can sometimes travel thousands of kilometres, often in remote areas, during their observation. This car refused to go any further in Kvemo Kartli, during the October 2006 municipal elections in Georgia.

The interpreter should have a good knowledge of English and should also have the interpersonal skills necessary to represent LTOs in meetings in a professional manner. The interpreter also serves the LTO team as their local assistant, and ideally will have a good general knowledge of the area and the overall political environment. Interpreters should be available for the entire time period required and should be willing to work long hours when necessary. It is helpful if the interpreter also has the ability to translate written material and is computer-literate in both English and the local language.

The EOM will also arrange for a **driver** for each LTO team on a short-term contract (it will be up to each team to extend the contract or hire someone else). LTO drivers are expected to use their own cars. It is important to assess not only the experience, reliability, and competence of the driver but also to evaluate the general condition, reliability, and safety features of the vehicle. LTOs should ensure that their driver has a licence and insurance. The fee paid to drivers includes the use of the vehicle. Drivers will also be reimbursed for fuel. It is also helpful for the driver to have some knowledge of English and a mobile phone.

It must be underscored that both the interpreter and the driver should conduct themselves in an objective and neutral manner. Election observation is an impartial activity. While locally contracted support staff are, of course, fully entitled to their own private opinions, they should not actively support or openly identify with any political party or candidate during their assistance to the observation mission.

LTOs are provided with **funds** to cover their operational costs. Authorized expenses generally include salaries for an interpreter and driver, office supplies, official telecommunication costs, and other payments approved in advance by the finance officer at mission headquarters.⁸ Each LTO covers his or her own costs for accommodation, meals, and incidentals from the funds provided by their governments. The EOM will only cover supplemental costs for in-country travel and accommodation for LTOs when they are instructed to attend interim briefings in the capital or when an overnight stay is required to cover remote areas within their AoR. *Expenses for overnight stays must be approved in advance.*

⁸ Details about financial management can be found in Chapter 5.

It is useful for LTOs to familiarize themselves with the contracts of their assistants. LTOs are responsible for ensuring that hours and mileage claimed by their assistants are reported accurately, and, on the other hand, that any overtime or unforeseen working time is accurately compensated.

D. Safety and Security

The ODIHR attaches the highest importance to the safety and security of its personnel. LTOs and their assistants should not take undue risks, and should avoid any events at which they might be caught up in violence or public disturbances. The EOM will advise LTOs about the general security situation in the country and any specific threats of which it may be aware.

Election observation is a civilian activity. However, it is possible for election observation to be conducted in post-conflict situations depending on the establishment of an appropriately secure environment in which observers and election experts can operate, and on the establishment of an equally secure environment for the conduct of a meaningful election process. The value of election observation is essentially negated if it is conducted under stringent security regulations, including under armed guard.

LTOs should exercise the same safety and security precautions they would at home or in any other country, except with extra precautions in a potentially volatile or post-conflict situation. However, they should keep in mind that the security situation can change, particularly in a tense election atmosphere, and they must follow the security guidelines issued by the EOM headquarters.

In general, LTOs should:

- › Inform headquarters immediately of their contact details and of any possible changes to them;
- › Be in direct contact with the LTO co-ordinator at least twice weekly or as instructed;
- › Be sure their partner knows where they are;
- › Carry their passport and accreditation document with them at all times;
- › Carry the contact numbers of headquarters personnel and the numbers of local emergency services with them at all times, and they should know where to find local hospitals and police;
- › Make sure that headquarters personnel are aware of any medical conditions they might have in case of an emergency;
- › Prepare an itinerary of their visits to areas away from their home base, provide a copy to headquarters, and get prior approval of any overnight stays;
- › Always be discreet about carrying money, use only official exchange offices;
- › Use discretion in selecting social activities, and conduct themselves in a professional manner at all times;
- › Pay a courtesy call on the local chief of police to inform him or her of LTOs' presence and general activities, and of the impending arrival of STOs, as this can prove extremely useful if there should be a need to contact the police at some subsequent stage.

One of the biggest safety hazards LTOs are likely to encounter will be on the road. Road conditions in many countries may be poor, particularly in outlying areas. Driving at night requires

extra caution and may not be advisable. It is the responsibility of each LTO to make sure that his or her driver always drives safely and obeys local laws and speed limits. OSCE policy is for all drivers and passengers to wear seat belts and have the car lights on at all times. Snow tires and/or chains should be available as needed.

E. Code of Conduct for ODIHR Observers

All observers are required to adhere to the ODIHR Code of Conduct. Failure to do so will result in the withdrawal of accreditation and repatriation before the completion of the EOM. Although some aspects of the Code apply especially to STOs, all observers, including LTOs and members of the core team, are bound by its provisions, both while on and off duty.

CODE OF CONDUCT FOR ODIHR OBSERVERS

Observers will maintain strict impartiality in the conduct of their duties and will, at no time, publicly express or exhibit any bias or preference in relation to national authorities, parties, candidates, or with reference to any issues in contention in the election process.

Observers will undertake their duties in an unobtrusive manner and will not interfere in the electoral process. Observers may raise questions with election officials and bring irregularities to their attention, but they must not give instructions or countermand their decisions.

Observers will remain on duty throughout election day, including observation of the vote count and, if instructed, the next stage of tabulation.

Observers will base all conclusions on their personal observations or on clear and convincing facts or evidence.

Observers will not make any comments to the media on the electoral process or on the substance of their observations, and any comment to the media will be limited to general information about the observation mission and the role of the observers.

Observers will not take any unnecessary or undue risks. Each observer's personal safety overrides all other considerations.

Observers will carry any prescribed identification issued by the host government or election commission and will identify themselves to any authority upon request.

Observers will comply with all national laws and regulations.

Observers will exhibit the highest levels of personal discretion and professional behaviour at all times.

Observers will attend all required mission briefings and debriefings and adhere to the deployment plan and all other instructions provided by the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission.

In addition, in line with OSCE policy, LTOs and all other EOM staff are prohibited from engaging in any form of harassment or discrimination on any basis. Depending on local circumstances, EOMs may also institute other rules of behaviour. While in the host country, LTOs must ensure that none of their personal or professional activities compromise the EOM's reputation as an objective, independent, professional, and impartial undertaking.

F. Other General Guidelines for LTOs

In addition to the Code of Conduct, there are a variety of general guidelines to which LTOs should adhere:

- › LTO reporting should include both positive developments and irregularities or violations, and should be based on consultation with a representative range of opinion. In case of serious irregularities, LTOs should investigate the circumstances carefully. When reporting, LTOs should annex tangible evidence and corroborating data, testimony, or copies of documents, where possible. LTO reporting should always make a clear distinction between what LTOs actually observed first-hand and what was reported to them;
- › If LTOs wish to scrutinize official documents, this should always be done in the presence of an authorized person after first having asked permission. LTOs should never sign official documents or statements;
- › LTOs should not distribute any flyers, pamphlets, or other written material that has not been specifically approved by the head of mission;
- › While working for an EOM, LTOs should not engage in any business activity or pursue any prior or ongoing professional activity in the host country;
- › LTOs should seek the advice of the LTO co-ordinator before accepting any gifts.

2

The Role of LTOs in Observing Elections



Sophia Petriashvili (centre) interprets for LTO co-ordinator Monique Nobs at a polling station in Gardabani during the Georgian municipal elections in October 2006.

The basic role of an EOM is to assess the extent to which an election process meets OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections, and the extent to which the process complies with domestic law. Just as the core team follows all election issues from EOM headquarters, LTOs follow and assess the same issues from the regional perspective. The following sections provide general guidance and describe basic issues and institutions that LTOs will normally be required to assess in their AoR. LTOs should refer to the *Election Observation Handbook* for further guidance in assessing the election process in their AoR.

A. Establishing Contacts

The effectiveness of LTOs will depend on their ability to develop a broad range of good working relationships commencing immediately upon deployment. LTO interlocutors will include local election commissions, local authorities, political parties, candidates or their representatives, media representatives and journalists, non-governmental organizations, and representatives of women's groups and national minorities. As a courtesy, LTOs should, upon arrival, meet with the most senior local officials, for instance the mayor or governor, informing him or her of their presence, mandate, and activities; however, LTOs should not ask them for assistance with logistical arrangements or accept any offers of assistance. LTOs should meet with a broad array of interlocutors, including a wide range of political parties. They should never confine the scope of meetings to either the governing party/coalition or the opposition.

Each interlocutor is likely to provide a subjective view of the election. To help put these impressions in perspective, and as time permits, LTOs should interview a broad range of interested groups or experts in the community who can sometimes offer alternative views and other insights. This might include local experts and social or political analysts, representatives of international organizations, university professors and student leaders, human rights organizations, trade unions and labour organizations, and other prominent public figures.



Rita Suessmuth (left), the head of the ODIHR's Election Observation Mission to the November 2004 election in the United States, meets with Margaret K. Luca, secretary of the Fairfax, Virginia, Electoral Board.

Some general suggestions on how LTOs should approach their primary interlocutors have been included in the annexes. The points of inquiry and questions proposed in the annexes serve as a guide and reference about relevant points to pursue. The unique circumstances in each country and/or region may need to be considered.

Domestic election observation organizations play an important role. Establishing a good working relationship with credible organizations and maintaining regular contacts are important. Independent domestic observer organizations can provide a wealth

of information. It is, however, important to remember that domestic election observation is distinct from international election observation; there must always be a clear line between the EOM and domestic observer groups.

ODIHR election observation missions and the respective resident OSCE field operations (where applicable) operate under their distinct and separate mandates, and LTOs should underscore this distinction to the authorities. OSCE field operations can be a valuable source of knowledge, expertise, and advice for an ODIHR election observation mission. In some countries with resident OSCE field operations, LTOs may encounter other OSCE field personnel, and are expected to establish good relations with them.

B. Election Administration

Frequently, elections in the OSCE region are administered by election commissions.⁹ In general, election commissions have broad powers to implement and enforce election laws and are responsible for the technical preparation of elections. Their effectiveness is a key element in whether an election process meets OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections. LTOs are therefore expected to spend a substantial amount of their time assessing the performance of the election administration at the local level. LTOs should refer to the *Election Observation Handbook* for further information on assessing the election administration.

The formation of election commissions varies from country to country. Within the OSCE area, election commissions are often structured in a hierarchy, with a central election commission responsible for the overall election, a number of regional and/or municipal election commissions, and a polling-station commission for each polling station. Election commissions may include individuals nominated by political parties, or people from key state institutions. Sometimes, commissions are assembled according to a multi-party formula, and in other instances they may be professional and non-partisan.

⁹ In a number of OSCE participating States, the responsibility for the conduct of elections at the central level could also be vested with the Ministry of Interior.

The EOM's election analyst has primary responsibility for following the election administration at the national level. The regional and/or municipal election commissions will be the primary interlocutors for LTOs during their observation; LTOs are expected to establish a working relationship with them. LTOs should attend meetings of election commissions as often as possible to assess the effectiveness of their technical preparations, how they interact and reach decisions, and how they handle possible controversial issues. It is also important to understand whether election commissions enjoy the confidence of political parties and candidates and, if not, why not. LTOs should also try to meet and assess the pre-election work of a sample of polling-station commissions.



Confusion about voter lists and identification documents was evident at many polling stations during parliamentary elections in Albania, 3 July 2005.

LTOs should limit their role to observation and should not provide advice or assistance to the election authorities. LTOs can, however, question why an issue is being handled in a particular way or why an election regulation is not being followed. LTOs should recognize that mistakes by election officials may result from inexperience or unfamiliarity with the law rather than from a deliberate intention to compromise the integrity of the process.

An additional task for LTOs when meeting election commissions is to collect detailed information on constituencies and the location of polling stations in order to enable them to plan effectively for the deployment of STOs.

C. Complaints and Appeals

An effective and impartial complaints and appeals process is a fundamental element of a democratic electoral process. Citizens, candidates, and parties must have the right to seek redress if they believe their electoral rights have been violated. Moreover, it is not enough for an aggrieved party to be able to obtain a ruling in his or her favour; the ruling must also be prompt enough to be meaningful in the electoral context, and it must be enforced effectively. LTOs should refer to the ODIHR's *Election Observation Handbook, Guidelines for Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections*, and *Resolving Election Disputes in the OSCE Area: Towards a Standard Election Dispute Monitoring System* for further guidance on observing and assessing the complaints and appeals process.

Appeals can be contentious elements of the electoral process. Because of their importance, the ODIHR's policy is to closely follow how the appeals process operates. The EOM's legal analyst has the primary responsibility for following complaints and appeals at the national level. LTOs follow the process at the regional and municipal levels.

Procedures for complaints and appeals vary from country to country. Often, complainants must have their appeal heard by an election commission before they can go to court. LTOs should attempt to assess whether the judiciary is broadly perceived as being independent.

In case of appeals, LTOs should try to get **official** copies of complaints from the complainant or from the election commission, as well as the opinion of both sides on the matter. They should try to attend any regional election commission sessions devoted to dealing with complaints, as well as any court proceedings, and they should assess whether the complaint appears to have been dealt with fairly, impartially, and in a timely manner.

LTOs must remember that their role is limited to observation. If an aggrieved party approaches LTOs with a complaint, they should try to gather all the evidence available and report to headquarters if the complaint appears serious and well-founded. However, LTOs should make clear to their interlocutor that the EOM has no power to resolve complaints or to intervene on their behalf. LTOs should encourage complainants to follow the domestic legal procedure for appeals and to keep them informed of any developments. The LTO's task is to see if the proper process is followed, whether the process is fair and effective, and what the opinions of candidates and political parties are with regard to the process. Ultimately, the EOM must assess the overall complaints and appeals process based on information from around the country. This will be done on the basis of the information provided by all LTOs and the core team.

D. Voter Lists

The quality of the voter lists is an important factor in franchising eligible voters on Election Day. Sound voter lists also provide safeguards against possible election fraud, such as multiple voting, or voting on behalf of deceased people or of people no longer resident in the region. By providing a record of the number of eligible voters, the voter lists become the primary point of comparison when accounting for the number of ballots issued and used. Assessing the quality of the voter lists is therefore an important task for any EOM. Although



A woman checks the voter list in Kvemo Kartli during municipal elections in Georgia, 5 October 2006.

the EOM will often arrive in-country too late to observe the actual voter registration process, it can nevertheless examine the lists and make a general assessment of the process. LTOs should refer to the *Election Observation Handbook* for further guidance on assessing the voter registration process.¹⁰

Establishing accurate voter lists is one of the most difficult and challenging tasks facing any election administration; the state of voter lists is rarely perfect. For example, removing the names of deceased persons

from the lists could often be delayed well beyond their time of death. The administrations in many countries may not be in the position to be sufficiently responsive in updating the voter lists promptly when persons change their place of residence. The process is even more complicated in some countries where soldiers, refugees, or non-citizens may be allowed to

¹⁰ *Election Observation Handbook* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2005), 5th edition, pp. 41-43. The ODIHR is currently preparing guidelines for observing voter registration.

vote in some elections but not in others, requiring modification of the lists for different types of elections.

Whatever the national procedure for voter registration, the essential requirements in a democratic system are that every voter should either be registered automatically or have a simple and easy procedure to register. The system should be transparent, allowing for the inspection of voter lists by citizens, political parties, or others to assess their accuracy. There should also be a simple and well-publicized system for correcting any errors or omissions on the list.

Depending on the laws of the country, the voter registration process is either *active* or *passive*. In an active system, voters must apply or otherwise take affirmative steps to register their names on the voter lists. In countries where the voter registration system is passive, individuals are not required to take any action on their own behalf; rather, the voter lists are compiled from civil records maintained by municipal authorities.

In a number of participating States, however, maintenance of civil records is the legal responsibility of regional offices of state institutions such as the Ministry of Justice. Often, the primary records used relate to individuals' registration of residency in a community. Sometimes, local authorities may undertake a door-to-door registration process. If so, it would be useful for LTOs to assess the criteria for inclusion in the registers. In a number of participating States, laws require individuals to register their residency with the local authorities (frequently the local police) as soon as they move to a new community, and to cancel their registration in the community from which they are moving.

The core team, and in particular the election analyst, will have the primary responsibility for assessing the quality of voter registration, but he or she will rely heavily on the information LTOs provide from the field. LTOs will be briefed on the registration system in the country. They will be asked to examine lists in the regions and at polling stations to help assess whether the required registration procedures are being followed diligently by the responsible officials, and whether there are any significant problems with the lists. LTOs should compare the current numbers of registered voters with the number in the previous election. If there appears to be a significant fluctuation, they should ask for information as to the circumstances that may have caused such a change.

Since it is virtually impossible for an outsider alone to assess the accuracy of a list of names, it is important for LTOs to ask local interlocutors, such as candidates, political parties, civic leaders, and others, for their opinion of the quality of the lists. Complaints could be anecdotal (e.g., "my neighbour's grandfather died two years ago but is still on the list"). If a political party or others should have serious complaints about the quality of the lists, LTOs should ask them to provide specific, detailed evidence to support their claims.

One of the aspects of voter lists to be closely observed is the transparency of the registration process. In most countries, there is a requirement for voter lists to be posted publicly. If such a requirement exists, LTOs will need to determine whether this regulation is being followed. Another important aspect to assess is whether people who wish to make corrections to the list are able to do so and whether decisions can be appealed.

Any indication that certain voters or groups are systematically obstructed or inhibited from registration presents a serious challenge to universal suffrage. This would be particularly grave if there seemed to be a deliberate plan to infringe on the rights of certain citizens or specific communities to participate in the elections. In this regard, special attention should focus on the inclusion of national minorities, such as the Roma community, including through voter education. Issues may also arise regarding the registration of women, displaced persons, military personnel, and prisoners or patients in hospital. Where such conditions become apparent, LTOs should determine what efforts are being made to overcome the barriers that prevent segments of society from participating in the process, and if there is any evidence that these efforts are having any positive effect.

E. Registration of Candidates

The right of citizens to stand for election is a fundamental element of a democratic election process. One of the tasks of the EOM is therefore to assess whether the process for registering parties and candidates is open, transparent, non-discriminatory, and fair. In many cases, candidates and parties are registered at the national level; in such instances, the core team will take primary responsibility for assessing the process. In other cases, however, candidatures may be approved at the regional or local level, and assessing the process will be an LTO responsibility. Although the EOM will not always arrive in the country before the candidate registration process is completed, it is still important to assess the process and the attitudes of candidates and political parties to the process. During the initial LTO briefing, the core team will provide information about the registration process and the political contestants, and will instruct LTOs on any specific issues to look into. LTOs should also refer to the *Election Observation Handbook* for guidance on observation of the registration of candidates and political parties.¹¹

Prospective candidates will also be required to submit a registration application, which can take many forms, including signed papers, lists of voters who support them, financial deposits, and/or a series of financial and other declarations. The registration requirements should be clear and predictable and not involve potentially discriminatory demands such as excessive deposits or an unreasonable number of names and signatures on nomination petitions in relation to the average wage and the size of the electorate.

It is important to determine whether the process is carried out fairly, and whether all political participants receive equal treatment in the review of their applications and documents. As a general principle, candidates should not be rejected because of technical problems with their application documents; instead, they should be informed officially of any errors or omissions and be given an opportunity to make corrections.

Reasonable restrictions on candidacy may include minimum age limits for some offices, or a residency requirement in the country for a certain period of time before an election. Civil servants may not be allowed to run without first resigning from their positions in order to avoid possible conflicts of interest or ensure separation of powers.

11 *Ibid.*, pp. 39-41.

LTOs should meet election commissions and political parties at the regional level to ascertain the list of officially registered candidates and/or parties, and information on any rejected candidates. If candidates have been rejected, LTOs should find out the reasons why. It could be appropriate to meet with rejected candidates to hear their views on the process. If any candidates in an LTO team's AoR file official complaints or appeals about the registration process, LTOs should follow the complaint closely, paying particular attention to inconsistent or selective application of legal provisions, or to any indication of a political motivation for the rejection.

F. Election Campaign

A key component of LTO work is to observe and report on the pre-election campaign. In addition to meeting parties and candidates and following campaign events, LTOs are asked to assess the general political environment in which the campaign is taking place, noting the quality and tone of the campaign and reporting any acts of politically motivated violence. LTOs should refer to the *Election Observation Handbook* for more advice on observing the election campaign.¹²



A pro-independence rally in Podgorica, 18 May 2006. This was the last rally before the referendum in the Republic of Montenegro on 21 May.

Respect for civil and political rights is fundamental to the democratic character of the campaign period. All participants should enjoy freedom of association, assembly, and expression. They should therefore be able to freely communicate their campaign messages and be able to assemble with the electorate free from intimidation or hindrance. The degree to which the campaign period ensures a level playing field for all participants is a reliable indicator for assessing the election process in its entirety.

LTOs should always **meet with the leading parties and candidates** in their AoR and with as many of the other parties and candidates as is practical. In such meetings, LTOs should always explain their role as election observers and the mandate of the EOM. LTOs should seek candidates' opinion of the election administration, the campaign, and any complaints or difficulties they may have. In addition, LTOs should seek to cover issues such as party platforms, campaign strategy, and base of support in the population in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the election process in context. Suggested points of inquiry can be found in Annex E.

In addition to meeting candidates and parties, LTOs should follow and **attend** as many **campaign events** as is practical. They should ascertain whether parties have faced any impediments in trying to organize and hold campaign rallies. In most countries, parties and candidates must apply to local authorities to schedule their campaign rallies and public meetings with constituents. This requirement is usually linked to the government's responsibility to maintain public order. Within this context, however, the general rule should be that par-

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 45-47.

ties and candidates are permitted broad freedom to hold campaign events at the time and place of their choosing. Any denial should be well-founded, for strong and self-evident reasons. LTOs should be alert to any unreasonable restrictions placed on political gatherings, or any favouritism in approving venues for some parties but not for others. If parties or candidates are denied access to meeting premises, LTOs should ascertain the reasons and assess whether the denial was reasonable or groundless. When attending political rallies, LTOs should judge whether security forces are acting appropriately and, if force is being used, whether it is resorted to in a proportionate manner.¹³ They should also monitor whether campaign speakers use inflammatory language. LTOs should always remain at a reasonable distance from the centre of activity to avoid any possibility of being wrongly associated with the event or its organizers.

Any incidents of **campaign violence** are of particular concern to EOMs. The general position of EOMs is that there is no place for violence in a democratic election process and that any violence should be condemned. LTOs should report any incident of campaign violence immediately, by telephone, to EOM headquarters. In the event of violence, every LTO's first concern should be their personal safety and the safety of their driver and interpreter. LTOs should not take any risks or stay in any locations where they may be in danger. Once the danger has passed, however, it is important to gather as much information as possible about the incident and to understand who was responsible. LTOs should speak to the police, political parties, and attendees to try to get a clear and balanced picture of the events.

A related issue critical to a democratic election is freedom from **intimidation**. LTOs should be alert to, and report any indications of, undue pressure on candidates, parties, or voters. In the most extreme instances, intimidation may include violence, arrests, detentions, or closing of media outlets. Some forms of intimidation are more subtle and may be more difficult to confirm. For example, individuals or media supporting specific parties or candidates may be subject to sudden tax audits during a campaign. Shop owners may be intimidated not to display posters of a specific party or candidate. Individuals may be threatened with dismissal from their jobs or expulsion from universities for supporting specific parties or candidates. LTOs should look into any credible reports of intimidation, as these have a direct bearing on whether an election meets OSCE commitments. Information should be reported to mission headquarters, which will determine if these are part of a nationwide pattern of intimidation or just isolated incidents.

Another possible campaign trend to look out for is the **misuse of public resources** to support a particular party or candidate. Laws relating to the use of public resources and campaigning by public officials vary from country to country. In virtually every country, the incumbents will be able to derive a certain advantage from their position, at least through name recognition, news coverage of their official duties, and the public recognition that comes with being in office.

The EOM must carefully assess whether these advantages are used in a way that exceeds legal limits or erodes fundamental principles of equity. LTOs should report where the inherent advantages of incumbency are being abused. Examples of such abuses might include the

¹³ For more details, see *Guidelines on Freedom of Peaceful Assembly* (Warsaw: OSCE/ODIHR, 2007), Part II.

use of government office space for party headquarters, use of public vehicles or other public property for campaign purposes, posters of only the incumbents on or in public buildings, preferential access to publicly owned venues for campaigning, public media bias towards the incumbent, application of pressure on public employees to support the incumbent party, or requirements that public employees, students, or schoolchildren attend rallies.

Campaign financing is another issue for the EOM to consider. In general, assessing campaign-financing issues will be a task for the core team rather than LTOs. However, LTOs should be aware of the rules for campaign funding and expenses. They should observe whether the rules are implemented and enforced to ensure equal opportunities, and how campaign-financing and -expenditure restrictions affect the candidates and the campaign. For example, if spending limits are very low, this may result in curtailing the ability of candidates to get their message out. If the state provides money to the candidates for the campaign, any delay in disbursement could have a significant impact on the campaign of some candidates. LTOs should also be alert to indications that candidates may be spending far more than the legal limits, not complying with requirements to disclose their sources of funding, or using funds to distribute inappropriate favours to voters. In general, campaign financing is difficult to observe since disclosure, if required, only takes place after an election and it might be difficult to establish what has been spent on the campaign.

LTOs should pay specific attention to any possible infringement of fundamental civil and political rights on the grounds of preventing early campaigning. While it is important to ensure that all contestants can start their official campaign within the same time frame, this does not mean that potential candidates' freedom of movement and expression should be restricted prior to the official campaign period. This point is of particular significance in environments characterized by undue advantages of incumbency.

G. Media

Media monitoring is a standard component of an ODIHR EOM in order to fulfil a task contained in the 1994 Budapest Summit Document. The EOM media analyst will have the primary responsibility for monitoring national television and the major national newspapers. LTOs may be asked to record local news programmes for the media analyst and to generally follow election coverage by regionally based media. LTOs should refer to the *Election Observation Handbook* for more guidance on monitoring the election coverage in the media,¹⁴ as well as the *Guidelines on Media Analysis During Election Observation Missions*.

LTOs should meet with representatives of regional and local media to obtain their perspective on the campaign and the role of the media in the election. LTOs should be aware of likely differences in perspective between public and private media. State-controlled or public media outlets have a special responsibility to provide balanced and impartial coverage of the campaign. Private media should provide responsible coverage and equitable treatment, but unless there are national laws to the contrary, it is not uncommon for private media to be affiliated with or to support a particular party or candidate.

¹⁴ *Op. cit.*, note 10, pp. 48-49.



Katerina Krzheska (foreground) monitors a television broadcast during the parliamentary elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in July 2006. Media monitors watch all election-related broadcasts, time them, and assess the tone of the coverage.

In addition to meeting media representatives, LTOs should ask political contestants about their access to the media and their view of the tone and balance of news and editorial coverage. Keep in mind, however, that it is very rare to find a candidate who is satisfied with his or her coverage in the media. It is also worth trying to assess where voters get their news and whether any public-service messages have a useful impact in voter education and in getting out the vote. LTOs will also be asked to monitor the silence period when relevant.

H. Gender

Each EOM should take fully into account how the election process affects both women and men when it draws conclusions on the extent to which an election meets international standards. Gender issues affect all aspects of an election and are therefore an integral part of an EOM's work. The *Handbook for Monitoring Women's Participation in Elections* provides detailed information and guidance on assessing gender issues in the election process.

The work of an EOM includes consideration of women's participation as voters, candidates, and elected representatives; the participation of women in leadership roles within state institutions, electoral commissions, and political parties; and how the legal framework and media structures affect both women and men. Gender monitoring is intended to collect information and assess the extent to which law and practice meet international standards.

LTOs ensure that the EOM has a countrywide scope in gathering information on women's role in the electoral process. Every meeting with an official, a party representative, a representative of the media, or an NGO provides an opportunity to gain insights regarding the rights of women, any barriers to their equal participation in public life, and reforms that might help overcome discrimination where it exists. LTOs should include this information in their regular reports to mission headquarters.

I. National Minorities

As with gender, each EOM should take into account how an election process affects national minorities and how their representation and participation in an election are facilitated. The *Guidelines to Assist National Minority Participation in the Electoral Process* provide LTOs with more information on observing the participation of national minorities in the election process.

LTOs should include a focus on national minorities in their work if appropriate and assess their participation in the election process, as well as their inclusion as members of election commissions, as candidates, and as voters. Each meeting will provide an opportunity to assess the situation of national minorities, and LTOs should include this information in their

reporting. In general, the political analyst will be responsible for analysing information on national minorities. However, some EOMs will have a specific national minorities analyst if the local situation justifies it. In addition, the ODIHR often co-operates with the Office of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities.

3

Reporting



Dutch statistical analyst Hans Schmeets (top middle) and staff sort hundreds of reports from observers during the March 2006 presidential election in Belarus.

Accurate and timely reporting is of vital importance to the success of an EOM. LTOs are responsible for reporting to EOM headquarters about their activities and findings on a regular basis, as advised during the introductory briefing session. LTOs should always submit their findings to the LTO co-ordinator, who will analyse them and forward the information to the head of mission. The findings of individual LTO teams, together with the findings of the core team, provide the background material for the EOM's public reporting, which includes interim reports, a statement of preliminary findings and conclusions, and a final report.

The head of mission submits comprehensive interim reports to the ODIHR in Warsaw. Usually two or three such reports are published during an EOM and are circulated among participating States. Deadlines for submission of LTO contributions for public reports will be established to ensure that information can be incorporated into the EOM's overall reporting.

An EOM's public reports are widely publicized and read in the host country and beyond. Government officials, election administrators, representatives of political parties and civil society, as well as others, often read every report issued by an EOM. Therefore, **it is critical that EOM reports be accurate**. Any possible inaccuracies, even isolated ones, will not reflect well on the EOM.

It must be emphasized that individual LTO findings contribute to the compilation of the broader picture of the election process, which reflects national trends based on collective **LTO findings**. Individual LTO findings may reflect tendencies or represent exceptions. Therefore, the findings of individual LTO teams are made public only in the context of the broader picture, through their inclusion in the EOM's public reports.

LTOs thus have a responsibility to ensure that they have carefully checked their facts before reporting to mission headquarters. When reporting their findings, LTOs should make it clear whether they have verified the accuracy of the information included, in particular if information is based on hearsay, or if it comes from an untested or possibly biased source. Whenever in doubt or in need of advice, LTOs should consult with the LTO co-ordinator.

In addition to regular reporting, LTOs will be required to attend an LTO meeting at mission headquarters at least once prior to Election Day to exchange information on their respective findings.

LTOs will be provided with a CD containing templates for reporting so that all LTO teams' contributions are prepared in a uniform manner. Submissions should be made electronically unless no e-mail connection is available. Submissions could be as follows:¹⁵

Weekly Reporting: LTOs will be required to summarize their activities and findings on a weekly basis. The LTO co-ordinator will advise on when such submissions should be received by mission headquarters. The weekly reporting form allows the core team to easily extract information so that LTO input can be incorporated into the EOM's public reports. LTO findings should be substantive and should set out observations on the key election issues described in Chapter 2 of this handbook. Findings should not be limited to a list of contacts and activities. In general, reporting should be concise, but LTOs should use common sense. If they believe information is of particular significance, they should elaborate and attach documentation. To the extent possible, findings or comments should be in bullet-point form. In all reporting, it is important to distinguish between alleged and confirmed incidents, events that were reported to LTOs and events that LTOs observed themselves. In addition to substantive issues, weekly reporting includes space for reporting progress on preparations for STO deployment.

Flash Reporting: Any extraordinary or particularly important events or developments should be reported immediately to mission headquarters. **Any incidents of violence or obstruction of LTO activities must be reported *immediately by telephone* and followed by a flash report.** Other subjects for flash reports might include serious allegations of violations of the law or of electoral rights, instances of intimidation, withdrawal of candidates, court or administrative decisions affecting the election process, unusual or questionable decisions by election commissions, or particularly noteworthy campaign rallies. Flash reports should be short and usually limited to a single page.

Case Files: Some EOMs use case files to track specific complaints and grievances. Assembling case files can be time-consuming, but the collection and analysis of such files can provide important information on whether specific electoral problems are handled effectively and whether there are nationwide trends of particular problems that should be addressed. The EOM may create a database to help with the analysis of case files.

If instructed by the core team, LTOs should prepare and submit case files of specific election complaints they receive from candidates, party agents, or others. When talking to a complainant, LTOs should remind the person that the EOM cannot intervene or solve a problem on behalf of any individual. They should ascertain whether the complainant has already tried to go through the normal appeal procedures, involving electoral commissions and/or courts, and they should ask for copies of relevant documents. If complainants have not pursued remedies through the appeal mechanisms provided for in the law, LTOs should encourage them to do so. In general, complainants' right to confidentiality should be respected unless the complainant waives confidentiality. While the complainant should provide most of the

¹⁵ Examples of templates and forms can be found in Annexes I, J, K, and L.

necessary information on the case, including names, affiliations, written documentation, and other evidence, it is important to try to speak with all sides in order to obtain complete information. To the extent possible, LTOs should assess whether the complaint is genuine or manipulative, as well as whether it is based on a misunderstanding of rights and rules or is politically motivated.

Final Reporting: Prior to departure from the regions, LTOs should produce a final report summarizing their main findings related to their AoR. This will provide information that can be assessed for possible incorporation in the EOM's final report. The final LTO report should also include any recommendations on improving the election process or ODIHR EOMs in general. The LTO co-ordinator will provide guidance for the LTOs' final written contributions upon request.

4

Preparing for STOs



Short-term observers Kristin Moekel (second from right) of Germany and Arturas Valionis of Lithuania (right) follow early voting in Skopje prior to the parliamentary elections in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia in July 2006.

As Election Day approaches, preparations for the arrival of STOs become an increasing focus of the EOM. Both the core team and the LTOs have important responsibilities with regard to STOs. While these may sometimes seem onerous, it is worth remembering that STO reporting is one of the key elements of the EOM's assessment. The effectiveness with which the EOM deploys and manages STOs will have a major impact on the success of the observation.

General issues regarding the arrival of STOs will be explained in detail during LTO meetings in the capital and in communications from the LTO co-ordinator. LTOs will find out about the numbers of STOs for which they will be responsible, deployment details, and any special preparations required in the regions. It is important to bear in mind that the number of STO teams, as well as their deployment, is subject to change until the last moment. A great deal of flexibility and contingency planning is required, both by the core team in the capital and by LTOs in the field.

Essentially, the core team makes arrangements for STOs' arrival and stay in the capital, their substantive briefing on the election, their accreditation, and their deployment to the regions and back. **LTOs are responsible for all STO arrangements in their respective AoR**, including the regional deployment plan, accommodations, interpreters and drivers, the regional briefing and debriefing, organizing STO reporting, and co-ordinating closely with STOs while they are in the field. LTOs assigned to the capital will have most of these same responsibilities for STOs assigned to the capital. Preparing for the arrival of STOs is one of the primary ongoing responsibilities of all LTOs.

A. Responsibilities of the Core Team

The core team will make preliminary arrangements for the STOs and, with LTO input, will create a countrywide deployment plan defining the number of STOs to be sent to each LTO area of responsibility. The core team will put STOs into teams of two from different OSCE



ODIHR observers always identify their cars with the ODIHR logo, be it in cities or rural areas, such as in Belarusian countryside during the parliamentary elections in October 2004.

participating States, and, to the extent possible, each team will consist of a man and a woman. The countrywide deployment plan will be influenced by a number of factors, including the numbers of STOs seconded by OSCE participating States, the population distribution in the country, and the number of polling stations in each area of responsibility, as well as issues such as the concentration of national minorities and the existence of heightened political tensions or irregularities in a particular area. Distances, accessibility, communications, weather, and terrain must also be considered.

The core team makes all arrangements for the STOs' arrival in-country, and arranges transportation and accommodation for STOs during their stay in the capital both before they deploy to their AoR and when they return for repatriation after Election Day observation. Transport to and from their AoR is also organized by the core team. In addition, the core team obtains official accreditation for all STOs from the appropriate national authority and ensures that accreditation documents are distributed before STOs are deployed to their regions. Depending on the circumstances, each STO team will be equipped with means of communication, either radios or most often mobile telephones.

The core team arranges a comprehensive briefing for STOs in the capital prior to their deployment to the regions. The emphasis of the briefing is on the STOs' specific responsibilities for Election Day. The STO briefing will cover the ODIHR's methodology for observing elections and the Code of Conduct, as well as procedures for polling and counting of votes, the political context, the electoral system, the campaign period, the media, the status of minorities and women in the electoral process, security, and logistics. Each STO will receive a briefing pack and instructions on the use of the observation reporting forms that have to be completed by observers during voting and counting on Election Day, and returned to EOM headquarters for processing.

B. LTO Responsibilities: Creating a Regional Deployment Plan

Once the STOs arrive in the regions where they will observe Election Day procedures, they become the responsibility of the respective LTO teams and work under the LTOs' immediate supervision. For their arrival and deployment to work smoothly, LTOs must do serious preparatory work. One important LTO task with regard to STOs is to have input in drawing up the regional deployment plan.

As noted above, the core team will establish the countrywide deployment plan for STOs and will inform LTOs as far in advance as possible of the number of STO teams to be deployed to their AoR. LTOs will be asked to contribute to this process by reporting important information to the LTO co-ordinator and the logistics expert, as well as by providing views on the ideal number of STOs needed to cover their area of responsibility effectively. LTOs should

keep in mind, however, that the core team is also operating within a variety of constraints and requirements. LTOs may therefore receive more or fewer STO teams than they would consider ideal.

ODIHR STOs are almost always mobile, as they move from one polling station to another, rather than being assigned to cover only one polling station for the entire Election Day. A regional deployment plan must therefore assign each STO team a specific set of polling stations to observe. It must be designed to ensure that voting and counting in the AoR is observed as effectively as possible, that a sample of polling places is covered, that any particular areas or issues of concern receive adequate coverage by STOs, and that STOs do not duplicate each other's work. LTOs will have the best understanding of the unique issues and circumstances that characterize their AoR. Each regional STO deployment plan should be designed to make best use of the STOs assigned to that region and to provide coverage of a broad sample of polling stations. The deployment plan must be ready well before the STOs arrive.

LTOs should consider the following criteria as they draw up their regional deployment plans:

- › Urban centres;
- › "Hot spots", emerging from possible local campaign tensions, procedural irregularities, post-conflict areas, voter registration problems, etc.;
- › Areas of special interest, e.g., minority areas;
- › Special polling stations, e.g., military bases, prisons, hospitals, etc.;¹⁶
- › Balance between urban and rural areas;
- › Security and logistics considerations, such as that coverage of some areas may not be possible due to security concerns, lack of transportation, or difficult road conditions; and
- › Distance and timing considerations.

To maximize the capacity of each STO team, LTOs should map out and divide their region into areas of responsibility for STOs, and assign a separate area of responsibility to each STO team to avoid any overlapping of efforts. Whenever possible, a specific list of polling stations should be assigned to each STO team. This is particularly important in urban areas to avoid overlap among STO teams. Although, in general, STOs visit 10-15 polling stations during voting hours, spending some 30 minutes in each, they may be assigned a much larger number, with the understanding that they will not visit them all. Except in special circumstances, each STO team will decide for itself the order in which to visit the assigned polling stations, and which station to observe during the count. This system helps ensure that STOs arrive at polling stations at random. For practical purposes, however, STO teams should be encouraged to plan their route so that they have reached their furthest destination point somewhere near midday so that they can circle back and be closer to their home base by the time they observe the closing and counting procedures.

STOs are required to observe all Election Day proceedings. Although polling usually lasts about 11-12 hours, an STO's workday extends well beyond this period. Ideally, STOs should

¹⁶ National laws usually dictate the rights of observers in this regard. Mission headquarters will provide information about the possibilities for access to these sites.



Nicolas Kaczorowski of France takes notes at a polling station in Dushanbe during the presidential election in Tajikistan, 6 November 2006.

observe: (1) the setting up and opening of one polling station; (2) voting in some 10 polling stations, some 30 minutes each, including possible repeat visits to one and the same polling station if considered necessary; (3) closing of polling, counting of ballots, and recording of results in one polling station. Often, STOs are asked to accompany polling-station material to a higher-level election commission and observe proceedings there.

Thus, the AoR assigned to each STO team should be reasonable and manageable. The LTOs' assignment of STOs should take into consideration availability of suitable accommodation, driving distances, travel times, and road and weather conditions. When STO teams are deployed away from the regional centre, special arrangements will have to be made to ensure ease of communications for security purposes and for the transmission of their observation report forms. Remember that last-minute circumstances sometimes require STOs to be reassigned and that there may be some late additions or no-shows. LTOs will need to be flexible and have back-up plans for all eventualities.

The security and safety of observers are a top priority and must always be seriously considered when formulating the deployment plan. The security and logistics experts will advise LTOs if certain areas of the country are restricted or partially restricted for STOs. In addition, the security expert will want input from LTOs regarding any situation in their region that warrants special consideration or review. LTOs should discuss security issues with the local administration and international organizations present in their AoR.

C. LTO Responsibilities: Briefing STOs

Another important responsibility of LTOs is to provide region-specific briefings for STOs. This may take place in the capital after the general STO briefing or after their arrival in the regions. The STO regional briefing can be short, depending on whether conditions in the region differ significantly from the national overview provided during the general STO briefing.

The regional briefing should cover details related to the LTOs' AoR, including:

- › The nature of the pre-election campaign;
- › The state of preparedness of local officials;
- › The demographic make-up, including participation of national minorities and women in public life;
- › Any special local concerns for Election Day;
- › The involvement of domestic observer groups in the AoR;
- › Logistics and arrangements for the return of reporting forms and the return of STOs to the capital;
- › Any specific local advice or guidance LTOs may have for STOs.

LTOs should present their briefings in a factual and objective manner and not lead STOs to form any advance conclusions on the conduct of the poll.

The briefing is usually of particular interest to STOs because it may provide the first opportunity for STOs to meet their partners and their LTOs. In addition to the oral briefing, LTO teams must prepare for each STO a briefing pack containing specific information necessary for their stay in the region. The basic contents of the pack should include:

- › A list of contact numbers they should carry with them at all times, including LTO phone numbers, the names and contact numbers of their interpreter and driver, and emergency numbers for local police and hospitals;
- › A schedule indicating the time and place for meetings and briefings, pick-up times for departure to the field on Election Day, any special logistical information for Election Day, where and when to return or transmit their observation reports, and departure times for return to the capital for repatriation;
- › A map indicating the specific territory to cover on Election Day;
- › A list of polling stations in their AoR;
- › The telephone number and address of the intermediate-level election body responsible for their AoR, and the location(s) where polling-station officials will deliver materials and results after the closing of the polling stations and the counting;
- › A factsheet with general information about the area; and
- › Information about restaurants, sites of local interest, money-exchange locations, shops, food safety, drinking water, and personal security.

D. LTO Responsibilities: STO Reporting

It is imperative for LTOs to make adequate arrangements for the timely return of STO observation forms. LTOs should identify fax machines at convenient locations for STOs, such as at their accommodations or on their route during the course of their observation. Such facilities should be at an appropriate location, i.e., not the office of a political party and generally not in a government office. If fax machines are not available, it may be necessary to establish a system of secure drop-off locations for completed report forms, together with a courier system to ensure their timely delivery to mission headquarters. Forms are sensitive and must always be safeguarded. They must not be left in the care of persons not associated with the mission.

STOs must ensure that any serious incidents are reported either to LTOs or to the core team immediately, and that they are reflected on the report forms, which include special space for this purpose. LTOs must ensure that an appropriate communications plan is in place to meet this requirement. Information on any serious incidents reported to LTOs should be passed on promptly to the core team.

The LTO co-ordinator will provide LTOs with specific instructions on debriefing STOs and reporting their findings to the core team in time for inclusion in the EOM's preliminary statement. This is a further requirement, additional to the submission of STO forms, which enables the EOM to capture trends and impressions and to contextualize any additional information that might not be clear from analysing the forms. This regional debriefing can be done in any of a number of ways. Most commonly, LTOs meet or speak individually with STO teams



Voters in Kyiv were faced with numerous and lengthy ballots during the parliamentary and municipal elections in Ukraine in March 2006.

late on Election Day to gather their principal impressions and pass them on. Alternatively, LTOs may arrange for a group debriefing of STOs in their region and report the key findings to the core team. In any event, it is important to adhere to the reporting deadlines set by the core team so that reporting will arrive on time to be used in preparation of the statement of preliminary findings and conclusions.

Even if LTOs speak to each STO team individually regarding their general conclusions, it

can still be important to schedule a regional debriefing where the entire group of STOs (if possible) can share their experiences and offer their characterization of the election. This debriefing should take place before their departure to the capital. Whenever possible, the core team will schedule an additional group debriefing for STOs before they depart for their home countries. Such a central debriefing will also enable STOs to acquire a broader picture of the conduct of the election.

LTOs should make sure that arrangements have been made for the departure of STOs and that all STOs are aware of the time and pick-up point for their return to the capital. In many cases, departure for the capital may immediately follow the regional debriefing.

E. LTO Responsibilities: STO Accommodation

LTOs are responsible for locating suitable accommodation for each of the STOs assigned to their AoR. This must be arranged prior to the arrival of the STOs.

Accommodation will preferably be in hotels, but may in exceptional cases be in private housing or other facilities if necessary. When identifying the options, LTOs should take into account:

- › Price in relation to per diem rates;
- › Availability of electricity and hot water;
- › Communications possibilities, such as e-mail, phone, fax, etc.;
- › Personal security and the safety of personal belongings;
- › Convenience with regard to observation area and deployment from, and back to, the capital; and
- › Possible meeting space.

LTOs should, whenever possible, personally visit each place of accommodation to ensure that it is suitable. STOs are advised before their arrival that, in some instances, the level of available accommodation may be modest or that they may need to share accommodation. When making bookings for STOs, LTOs should make clear that each STO will be responsible for paying his or her own bill for accommodations.

F. LTO Responsibilities: Recruiting STO Staff

The recruitment of competent interpreters and reliable drivers is essential to the success of the work of the STOs. To the extent possible, drivers and interpreters should be hired from the same community or area where STOs will observe. This will ensure their familiarity with the area and that they have the opportunity to cast a ballot. Each STO team will share one interpreter and one driver.

In some instances, the core team may be able to supply LTOs with contact information for interpreters and drivers in their AoR who have worked successfully with previous ODIHR EOMs. In seeking additional names, LTOs should check with relevant international organizations, universities, language schools, and other contacts they make in the course of their activities. Often, LTOs will be able to place an announcement at universities. It may be possible to place advertisements in local newspapers. The LTOs' own interpreter and driver are likely to be able to assist with further suggestions for recruiting more personnel. If all else fails, LTOs should consult with the core team to receive further support.

The roster of potential drivers and interpreters should exceed the number of STO teams expected, to ensure that an alternative could be selected if someone becomes ill or is not available. During interviews with candidates, however, it should be made clear that no commitments on employment will be made until the number of STO teams is finalized. It is also important to make clear to interpreters and drivers that they will be paid directly by the STO teams. Gasoline costs are also shared by the team based on receipts or fixed rates.

In hiring all staff, LTOs should stress the confidentiality of the work and especially that anyone working for the EOM as an interpreter or driver will be expected to forgo all political activity and to behave in a politically neutral manner during the entire period of their employment. Also, LTOs should make sure that potential staff are aware of the long hours and the exact terms of employment, including reimbursement. Note that, while every effort will be made to enable staff to vote on Election Day, it may not be possible for them to get to their polling station in the course of the observation. If there are legal provisions for alternative voting methods, such as early or absentee voting, LTOs should encourage staff to avail themselves of such mechanisms.

All prospective interpreters should be interviewed to confirm their suitability. Those hired should be given a glossary of election terminology to study prior to Election Day. Even when one STO team member speaks the local language, it will still be necessary for that team to have an interpreter in order for both members of the team to have full access to complete and equal information as they pursue their observation duties.



The chairwoman of a polling station in Riga provides Mirella Marchese (right) of Italy with information about the voting during the parliamentary elections in Latvia in October 2006, while Ilona Kunda (centre) interprets.

In arranging for drivers, LTOs should ensure that they are in possession of a valid licence and insurance. LTOs should personally look at each vehicle to ensure that it appears safe, and is

reasonably comfortable and presentable. For observation during the winter season, snow tires should be strongly encouraged and tire chains should be used if possible. Four-door cars are preferable. Specific terrains might require four-wheel-drive vehicles. It is a decided advantage if drivers can speak some English and if they have a mobile telephone, although neither of these is a requirement.

It is useful to have a meeting with all locally recruited support staff prior to Election Day, at which LTOs can introduce themselves and explain the nature of the work and what is expected of drivers and interpreters throughout Election Day and into the night. This meeting can also serve to go over practicalities, e.g., to have mobile phones charged, cars fuelled, contact arrangements in place, routes mapped out, etc.

G. LTO Responsibilities: Co-ordination of STOs on Election Day

Election Day is a busy day for LTOs. Since LTOs may not be able to see many of their STOs on Election Day, they should make sure in advance that everyone is well briefed about Election Day arrangements, especially timing, routes, submission of observation forms, and other reporting procedures. LTOs will need to plan carefully to ensure that all aspects of the observation work effectively in their area of responsibility. While LTOs themselves may wish to visit a few polling stations on Election Day, their primary responsibilities are to oversee the STO observation in their region, to be available to debrief STOs in the course of the day, to look into any significant electoral problems that may arise in the AoR, and to stay in contact with mission headquarters.

As basic guidelines, LTOs should:

- › Ensure that STO teams have arranged their morning pick-up early enough to enable them to observe the opening of a polling station;
- › Prepare a schedule for STOs to call or meet LTOs during the day;
- › Remain available to respond to STO calls and any incidents that may occur;
- › Report to the core team/LTO co-ordinator during the day as instructed;
- › Ensure that communications are working for the return/faxing of report forms;
- › Ensure timely transmission of the reporting forms;
- › Make sure that all STOs have returned safely to their accommodations.

After observing the count in a polling station, STOs are usually asked to follow the ballots and other election material to the regional-level election commissions and observe part or all of the tabulation process at that level. This information is critical to assessing the integrity of the tabulation and transmission of the results. In certain cases, some STOs should start their observation activities later in the day and focus their attention on the counting and tabulation process. The core team will provide specific instructions for any observation at regional election commissions. If this forms part of the observation methodology, it will also affect how LTOs prepare their regional deployment plans.

H. LTO Responsibilities: Parliamentary and Locally Recruited STOs

Recognizing the value of co-operation with parliamentary observer groups, the ODIHR is fully committed to co-operation with the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA), the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the European Parliament, and, on occasion, the NATO Parliamentary Assembly, and potentially other parliamentary groupings that wish to join an international election observation mission within the framework of the ODIHR's methodology for election observation. In the context of elections for local government authorities, the ODIHR often co-operates with the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

The ODIHR has established regular practices and procedures for support and co-operation with the respective parliamentary bodies, including the provision of a briefing for parliamentary observers and logistical support for their deployment. The ODIHR core team usually includes a parliamentary liaison officer who facilitates these preparations. Joint Election Day observation efforts are conducted in the name of the respective organizations and under the inclusive umbrella of an international election observation mission.

With regard to the ODIHR's co-operation with the OSCE PA, the two bodies exchange information throughout an election process, and the OSCE PA is regularly invited to accompany ODIHR needs assessment missions. In addition, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office may designate a senior member of the OSCE PA to be a special co-ordinator to lead the short-term observation for a particular election. When appointed, the special co-ordinator delivers the preliminary post-election statement in conjunction with the head of mission and the leaders of delegations from other parliamentary assemblies.

The core team will advise LTOs if parliamentarians are among the STO teams sent to their AoR. Deployment and repatriation of parliamentary STOs is likely to be at a different time than that planned for other STOs, and other special arrangements may also be necessary. A flexible approach is required. **Adequate attention must be devoted to ensuring that suitable arrangements are made for parliamentary observers.**

In addition, often as a courtesy, the ODIHR accommodates a few international personnel nominated through local embassies of OSCE participating States. Locally recruited STOs supplement the total number of STOs that the ODIHR requests to be seconded by participating States, and they should be viewed as a symbolic, rather than a substantial, contribution. Most often, they will provide their own drivers and interpreters, and at times will deploy in teams of two persons from the same embassy. Most often, locally recruited STOs will be incorporated into the general deployment plans drawn up by LTOs on the same basis as seconded STOs. They should participate in regional briefings and debriefings, and they should complete regular observation forms and comply with other instructions from the EOM.

5

Administration and Finance

The ODIHR places a premium on sound management of resources. LTOs are responsible for accounting in detail for all funds placed in their care. The EOM finance officer will provide LTOs with any specific guidance and instructions, and will be available to assist LTOs with any finance-related problems. To facilitate the standardization of the mission's administration and finance, LTOs will be provided with hard copies or electronic versions of standard forms and templates.

Per diems of seconded LTOs are paid to them directly by their respective sending state. **LTOs should arrive in-country with sufficient means to cover their living and incidental expenses for the entire duration of their stay, as the EOM will not be in a position to assist with these costs or to advance funds on behalf of a government.** Before arriving in-country, LTOs should have a clear understanding of what their government expects from them in terms of managing the money provided (e.g., saving receipts, etc.). LTOs whose per diem is being funded by the ODIHR through the Fund for Enhancing the Diversification of Election Observation Missions will receive instructions accordingly.

The ODIHR will cover LTO expenses linked with operations in their respective AoR in line with the LTO team budget. Authorized LTO expenses include:

- › LTO interpreter and driver salaries and related payments, such as gasoline, parking costs, pay tolls;
- › Office supplies;
- › Copying costs;
- › Costs related to official telecommunications and installation and use of e-mail;
- › Costs for travel between the capital and the AoR for initial deployment and return, and for meetings convened by mission headquarters; and
- › Costs for travel within the LTO team's AoR, when approved in advance by the finance officer.

Additional costs not foreseen in the budget must be approved in advance by the head of mission and the finance officer.

To cover these expenses, LTOs will receive operational cash advances in several instalments. The advance is usually in US dollars or euros and in local currency. In the event that the local-currency advance runs out, the LTOs must obtain exchange certificates indicating amounts in US dollars or euros and local currency when exchanging this money into local currency. LTOs

must ensure that all cash is properly safeguarded. **LTOs must obtain an original invoice or receipt for every payment they make.** In some cases, if a vendor does not issue an invoice, it may be replaced with a payment voucher.¹⁷ LTOs must record their expenses in accordance with guidelines provided by the finance officer.

The operational advance issued to LTOs must be accounted for, cleared, and recorded by the finance officer during LTO meetings based on supporting documentation: receipts (translated into English), contracts, and payment vouchers. A new instalment is paid after partial reconciliation based on the level of spending of each team and projected operations. At the end of the mission, the finance officer will audit the remaining funds and perform a final record of expenditures prior to LTO repatriation. To simplify the audit when advance funds are accounted for and cleared, LTOs are asked to tape or glue all receipts onto A4 sheets of paper separated into the following categories:

- › Receipts/payment vouchers for payments in US dollars or euros;
- › Receipts/payment vouchers for payments paid in the local currency;
- › Exchange certificates (if any); and
- › Copies of contracts.

Employment of locally recruited staff, including interpreters and drivers, must be confirmed by a contract. The logistics expert will provide templates, as well as a list of additional documents required. The completed and signed contracts (original) together with other relevant documents must be returned to mission headquarters. It is preferable to prepare two original contracts, one for each party to the agreement. Even when a formal contract exists, an invoice or payment voucher must still support all payments made in relation to the contract. Every effort will be made to provide copies of local-staff contracts in both English and the local language, but the English-language version is always the binding one.

Remuneration for LTO drivers and interpreters should be made according to the schedule advised by EOM headquarters. Locally recruited staff are required to keep a record of their attendance and overtime, upon the basis of which remuneration will be paid in accordance with services rendered. The original record should be attached to the payment voucher.

Before departing from their AoR, LTOs should meet with their landlords, as well as with possible suppliers, to make final payments, get final receipts, turn over keys, and return rented equipment. **LTOs must have no outstanding bills when they leave their AoR.**

¹⁷ A sample of the payment voucher form can be found in Annex M.

6

The Role of LTOs in Closing Down the Mission



The 37 long-term observers who took part in the observation of the March 2006 presidential election in Belarus attend a post-election debriefing with the core team in Minsk.

A. Follow-up and Farewell Meetings

After STOs travel back to the capital for repatriation, LTOs will generally be required to remain in the field for several more days to follow up on key aspects of the election process and to make courtesy farewell visits. The core team will inform LTOs of any particular issues that they are expected to follow up on. **LTOs should make farewell calls on key contacts, including regional or local officials, election administrators, leaders of political parties and NGOs, and others they have co-operated with during the observation.** These meetings should also be used to get post-election views and opinions on election-related developments.

B. Administrative Close-down of the Mission

There are a number of logistical and substantive steps that must be taken to close down an ODIHR EOM. Following Election Day, all STOs will return as soon as possible to the capital and complete any necessary debriefing processes before their departure. LTOs should remain in their regions for a few days longer, depending on local circumstances, to observe any remaining elements of the election process before returning to the capital for a final debriefing with the core team and subsequent departure.

Another aspect of close-down procedures is to organize papers for submission to mission headquarters. LTOs should keep any substantive documents that might be valuable for the EOM's final report or for eventual follow-up, for example, evidence or testimony on election complaints. It can also be useful to keep lists of drivers, interpreters, contacts, and polling stations, as well as maps and materials prepared for the STOs; these can be very helpful in case of observation of repeat or future elections.

All of these materials should ideally be in electronic format and copied onto a CD for mission headquarters. Copies of all substantive reporting by the LTO team should also be on the CD. Any documents that are available only in hard copy, not in electronic form, should

be organized into as few binders as possible, preferably just one, or scanned for inclusion on the CD. Make sure that no documents, whether in electronic or paper format, are left behind in the AoRs. Materials should be destroyed securely or taken to mission headquarters for destruction.

Laptop computers should be returned with all documents removed so that they are ready to be used for the next observation mission. For those who rent a computer, it is especially critical that it be returned “clean” and with no mission documents or templates remaining on the hard drive. LTOs should remember to empty the computer’s recycle bin and ensure that laptops and cell phones provided by mission headquarters are in good order and ready for return with all peripherals intact.

Because of the need to make farewell calls and to finalize administrative matters, LTOs should begin the process of closing their regional operations several days before their scheduled departure to the capital for repatriation.

Mission headquarters will schedule a specific time for each LTO team to meet with the finance officer and logistics expert for a final financial reconciliation and return of equipment.

Normally, the core team will schedule a final debriefing session for LTOs a day or two before their scheduled departure from the country. This meeting serves to share any final analysis and conclusions about the election, as well as the EOM’s findings and recommendations for future action. It also provides a forum to discuss and assess the organization and efficiency of the EOM itself and to develop recommendations for future missions. These will be addressed in conjunction with feedback from STOs. LTO input is invaluable in helping the ODIHR meet the highest standards possible.

Annexes

Annex A

Checklist of Key LTO Tasks and Responsibilities

Establish yourself in your area of responsibility:

- › Inform the LTO co-ordinator when you have arrived in your area of responsibility;
- › If you are not satisfied with the performance of your interpreter or driver, hire new ones;
- › Locate and lease accommodations that can also serve as your office;
- › Establish communication links with mission headquarters (telephone, fax, e-mail);
- › Contact the LTO co-ordinator and the logistics expert to share all details of the above and any possible problems that may need to be addressed.

Organize initial meetings and introduce yourself and the EOM to:

- › Regional and local government officials;
- › Regional and local government election officials; co-ordinate these meetings with the election analyst;
- › The regional and/or local police chief; co-ordinate these meetings with the security expert;
- › Regional offices of the main political parties; co-ordinate these meetings with the political analyst;
- › NGOs, such as domestic observers, human rights groups, and women's organizations; co-ordinate these meetings with the political analyst;
- › Other community leaders or informed persons (minority groups, media and university representatives if relevant, etc.).

Observe the:

- › Performance of election commissions and their preparations for Election Day;
- › Election campaign;
- › Situation of civil and political rights with regard to the election;
- › Regional media coverage;
- › Possible electoral disputes and court cases.

Respond to possible EOM requests relevant to your AoR, such as:

- › To investigate specific allegations or issues;
- › To gather further information on specific issues related to the electoral process or election observation activities.

Report to the EOM regularly:

- › Regular phone contact, at least twice a week or as instructed, with the LTO co-ordinator;
- › Weekly reporting and flash reporting;
- › Immediate telephone reports of any violence or any interference with your activities.

Make preparations and provide full support for STOs:

- › Prepare a regional deployment plan;
- › Make logistical arrangements, including drivers, interpreters, and accommodation;
- › Establish a reporting framework;
- › Brief and debrief STOs;
- › Oversee all Election Day observation and reporting in your region.

Follow financial and administrative guidelines:

- › Obtain receipts for all expenditures;
- › Make sure all personnel are properly contracted;
- › Follow EOM close-down procedures.

Annex B

Checklist of LTO Tasks to Prepare for STOs

Contribute to preparation of a deployment plan in co-ordination with the deputy head and logistics expert:

- › Define possible observation areas for each STO team:
 - ✓ Obtain or prepare maps of observation areas;
 - ✓ Acquire lists of relevant election bodies and locations of polling stations;
 - ✓ Identify priority polling stations, if relevant;
- › Make arrangements for visits to special polling stations, such as military institutions, prisons, hospitals, etc.;
- › Identify STO teams for observing tabulation at regional/local election commission.

Recruit drivers and interpreters:

- › Recruit a sufficient number of interpreters and drivers, including substitutes;
- › Make arrangements for drivers and interpreters to pick up STOs upon arrival in AoR as needed.

Arrange accommodations:

- › Arrange accommodations for each STO, including those deployed away from home regional base;
- › Confirm telephone and/or fax capacity, or **alternative possibilities**.

Prepare STO briefing:

- › Select and confirm site for STO regional briefing;
- › Prepare presentation with regional overview;
- › Prepare STO briefing pack, including:
 - ✓ Maps, lists of polling stations, and lists of regional/local election bodies;
 - ✓ Information sheets pertinent to specific coverage areas and priority sites;
 - ✓ List of fax numbers to use for transmission of observation reports;
 - ✓ List of LTO/headquarters contact numbers and emergency services;
- › Schedule for Election Day, including times for reporting and faxing reports.

Election Day co-ordination:

- › Schedule locations and pick-up times for STO departure;
- › Clarify times for STOs to report to LTOs;
- › Arrange access to fax facilities for transmission of observation reports during Election Day;
- › Contact STOs regularly and report their findings to the LTO co-ordinator;
- › Arrange debriefing of STOs after observation of Election Day procedures has been completed; send summary of STO conclusions to LTO co-ordinator for preliminary statement;

- › Have STO check-in list ready to account for all STO teams.

Post-Election Day:

- › Conduct STO debriefing and prepare summary of regional findings and conclusions;
- › Arrange pick-up time for transportation of STOs back to capital.

Annex C

Suggested Points of Inquiry for Election Commissions

Method of appointment and general duties:

- › How are the commission members appointed?
- › Have any members resigned or been removed from office?
- › Is training provided to the commission? If so, by whom?
- › Are sufficient resources provided to the commission to carry out its responsibilities?
- › Does the commission rely on regional or municipal authorities to perform some election tasks, such as:
 - ✓ Preparation of voter lists?
 - ✓ Verification of petitions in support of a party or candidate?
 - ✓ Registration of parties, candidates, or candidate lists?
 - ✓ Formation of polling-station commissions?
 - ✓ Approval of applications to hold party rallies and campaign events?

Representation of political parties on commissions:

- › Are political parties allowed to have representatives on election commissions?
- › Do opposition parties fully participate in the discussions?
- › Do some parties dominate in terms of the numbers of members? Of leadership positions?

Inclusion of women and national minorities:

- › Is there a balance of men and women on the election commissions?
- › What share of the leadership positions (chairpersons, deputy chairpersons, secretaries) are held by women?
- › Are national minorities represented on election commissions?
- › If women or national minorities are under-represented on the commissions, what circumstances or obstacles hinder their participation?

Impartiality (independence) of election commissions:

- › Who directs or supervises the commission? A higher commission? A local government body or official?
- › Who may overturn or countermand a decision of the commission?
- › Who may appeal a decision of the commission, and how are appeals decided?

Transparency and confidence in the process:

- › Can you assess whether there is a lack of confidence in the process?
- › Are commission meetings open to the public and the media? Are domestic observers (partisan and non-partisan) allowed to be present? International observers? Representatives of political parties?

- › Does the commission hold regularly scheduled meetings?
How are members notified of meetings?
- › How does the commission make decisions? By decision of the chairperson? By vote of the members? Is a quorum required?
- › Are minutes of meetings and decisions recorded? Published? Available if requested?
- › Is the commission required to publish information or voter-education material? If so, what kind?
- › What outreach programmes does the commission engage in to encourage the participation of voters? Are there programmes specifically aimed at national minorities or women?
- › In areas with high concentrations of national minorities, are materials made available in the language of the minority?
- › Are tabulated results produced to show details by polling station? Who is entitled to get copies? Are they made public and when? Are they published in the local press in that format?

General inquiries:

- › Ask for copies of the lists of polling stations with their addresses;
- › Ask for contact details for lower-level commissions;
- › Ask about the rejection of any party, candidate, or nominating petition;
- › Ask about domestic observer organizations accredited to observe the election process; ask whether any applications have been denied and, if so, why?
- › Ask about the complaints and appeals process and possible cases?

Annex D

Suggested Points of Inquiry on Voter Registration

Preparation of the lists:

- › Is the overall system for compilation of voter lists active (each eligible voter needs to state his/her decision to vote and register for each election) or passive (voter lists include the names of all eligible voters)?
- › Which local bodies are responsible for various aspects of preparing the voter lists (for example, local police offices may hold residency records, while municipal authorities may be responsible for organizing the list)?
- › What measures exist to eliminate possible multiple entries, remove the names of deceased persons, add new voters who may have come of age since the last election, transfer individual entries from one list to another in the event a person has moved, or update the names of women who have married and changed their surnames?
- › Were the lists manually produced or maintained in a computerized database?
- › Were the lists completed on time?

Notification and public inspection:

- › Were there any voter-education efforts in regard to the voter lists? If so, did any of these target women, minorities, or young voters?
- › Were voters notified that they were registered and of where they should vote?
- › Were the lists posted publicly for review?
- › Were voters able to request possible corrections easily?
- › Were there any formal complaints or appeals on the voter lists? If so, can it be assessed whether they were handled effectively and impartially?

Other considerations:

- › Do the lists appear to be accurate and complete?
- › Compare the current numbers of registered voters with the numbers in the previous election. If there appears to be a considerable fluctuation, ask for information as to the circumstances that may have caused such a change.
- › Are any particular problems evident, such as non-registration of minorities?

Annex E

Suggested Points of Inquiry for Political Parties and Candidates

Party organization and structure:

- › Is the party a mainstream one or is it regionally or ethnically based? What is the estimated membership? What is the current support for the party?
- › With whom is the party politically aligned? Is the party part of a coalition?
- › When was the party registered? Did it encounter any problems in the registration process?
- › What is the strength of the party (based on prior results, current seats in parliament and local assemblies, current posts held in central and local government)?
- › Does the party publish its own newspaper? Does it own a radio or TV station? Does it enjoy the support of a particular media outlet?
- › Does the party intend to field party observers on Election Day? How many observers will the party be able to recruit? Will the party provide training for them?
- › How is the party funded?

Possible problems during the pre-election period:

- › Has the party encountered any violence, intimidation, or interference with its activities or campaign efforts?
- › Have any party activists or members been arrested or detained?
- › Has the party encountered difficulties in holding public meetings? Getting approval from local authorities? Was any application denied for a meeting or rally? If so, on what grounds?
- › Have state or local authorities attempted to interfere in the electoral process?
- › Were any of the party's candidates rejected or removed from their candidate list? If so, why?
- › If a petition was required to register candidates, was the party hindered from gathering signatures or having their petition certified?
- › Does the party have confidence in the national, regional, and local election commissions, and the electoral process in its entirety, including in retrospect?

Expectations and possible concerns for Election Day:

- › Does the party have any concerns about potential problems or irregularities on Election Day?
- › Does the party see a particular need for the presence of international observers in a certain area or at certain polling stations? Where? Why?
- › What do they expect the voter turnout to be in the region?

Selection of candidates:

- › How does the party select its candidates? If the election system is proportional, how does the party decide the order of candidates on its list? Is there a democratic process within the party to make these decisions?
- › What proportion of the party's candidates are women or members of national minorities?
- › Are candidates required to pay a fee or contribute to the party to become candidates?

Inclusion of women and national minorities:

- › How many women hold leadership positions within the party? Which positions? Are women represented in the party's candidates' list?
- › Does the party represent the interests of a specific national minority? If not, does the party ensure that national minorities are represented in its candidates' list?
- › Does the party's platform address issues of particular interest to women? To national minorities?
- › Is there a "women's wing" of the party, and, if so, how important is it?

Campaign strategies:

- › What campaign methods is the party using to reach voters?
 - ✓ Mass media?
 - ✓ Rallies and political events?
 - ✓ Door-to-door canvassing?
 - ✓ Posters/flyers?
 - ✓ Other?
- › What does the party consider to be the major issues in the election? What themes are being promoted in the party's campaign messages?
- › Are they satisfied with their access to the media?
 - ✓ Amount of time provided free of charge?
 - ✓ Amount of time provided through paid advertising?
 - ✓ In public media? In private media?
 - ✓ Are they satisfied with the balance of media coverage?
- › What do they consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of their campaign?

Annex F

Suggested Points of Inquiry for NGOs and Domestic Observers

Priorities and objectives:

- › What is the organization's main field of interest?
- › What does it hope to achieve? How? Are there obstacles to achieving its goals? If "yes", what are the main ones?
- › What does it consider to be its role in, or relationship to, the election? Has it been following the election process and, if so, has it drawn any conclusions? Has it issued public reports?
- › What are the organization's main activities?

Organization and structure:

- › Is the organization a nationwide one or it is regionally based?
- › What is the organization's membership? Representing a national minority? Representing women and women's issues?
- › Is the organization affiliated with any political party? Government agency? Labour organization? Religious organization?
- › Does the organization have paid staff? Do they rely on volunteers?
- › How is the organization funded? Does it receive government contributions? International contributions? Contributions from private sources?

Relations with the authorities:

- › How does the organization generally judge local government authorities in terms of their co-operation? Efficiency? Responsiveness?
- › Is the organization registered? If so, did it encounter any difficulties when trying to register?
- › Has the organization encountered any interference or harassment from the authorities?
- › If the organization intends to deploy election observers, has it faced any difficulties in recruiting or registering them?

Expectations and possible concerns for Election Day:

- › Is the organization concerned about potential problems or irregularities on Election Day?
- › Does the organization believe that any particular region or polling station warrants special attention by international observers? If so, where? Why?
- › Will the organization observe on Election Day?
 - ✓ If so, in which areas?
 - ✓ How many observers will it deploy?
 - ✓ What methodology will it use?

- ✓ Will the observers be trained prior to Election Day?
- ✓ Will the organization prepare a report of its findings? When will the report be released?
- ✓ What kind of co-operation does it expect from polling-station officials?
- ✓ Does it expect any obstructions or restrictions in their observations?
- › Although the ODIHR must rely solely on the findings of its own observers in its statement of preliminary findings and conclusions and in its final report, would the organization be willing to share information about its impressions, including possible incidents or problems it has encountered that might warrant follow-up by, or collaboration with, international observers?
- › Would it be possible to make contact with the organization on Election Day? Contact numbers?

Annex G

Suggested Points of Inquiry for the Media

- Remember that you are not allowed to give interviews on any substantive aspects of the elections and the election observation findings. See the next annex for guidelines on dealing with the media.
- When you talk to journalists, remember to formulate your answers in a neutral way and to refrain from expressing any opinions on election-related issues.

Media information:

- › What is the estimated audience/readership of the media outlet?
- › What is the range of broadcasting (electronic media) or circulation of issue (print media)?
- › Is the outlet public or private? If private, who owns the media outlet?
- › Does the media outlet have any political affiliation?
Does it support any candidate or party?
- › How many employed and freelance journalists work for the outlet? How many are women?

Election coverage:

- › What kind of election coverage does the outlet carry? How many electoral debates and programmes are they broadcasting?
- › Does the outlet provide free time or space to the candidates?
- › Does the outlet broadcast or print paid political advertising?
 - ✓ If so, are the conditions the same for all parties and candidates?
 - ✓ What is the price, and how does this compare to an equal amount of commercial advertising?
 - ✓ Have candidates and parties actually purchased airtime or print space?
 - ✓ Have any candidates been refused airtime or print space?
- › Has the media outlet broadcast or published any voter-education information?
- › Have any formal complaints been filed against the outlet as a result of its election coverage? If so, by whom? What was the result?

Opinions:

- › What are the key issues in this campaign?
- › Has the campaign provided equal conditions for the candidates?
- › Are there any significant differences between this election and previous elections?
- › What is their opinion on the level of development of the media in the country?
Are they independent, professional, and free to express their views?

- › Does the media outlet face any problems in its election coverage (e.g., violence, intimidation, pressure, censorship, self-censorship, harassment, tax audits, court actions, unusual problems with distribution or obtaining newsprint, or other types of interference)?
- › Are media regulatory bodies impartial? Have these bodies imposed any sanctions on the media outlet in regard to its election coverage?
- › What influence do the media have on public opinion? Are they trusted and perceived as reliable sources of information?

Annex H

Guidelines on Dealing with the Media

Strong interest in the presence of the EOM may lead journalists to approach LTOs and ask for a statement or interview about the EOM and its findings. The ODIHR believes in the value of transparency in its work and wants to foster good relations with the media. However, it is important that any election mission speak with a single voice and send a consistent message in all its public statements about an election process. Therefore, certain guidelines must be followed by all observers when dealing with the media.

In essence, observers may speak with the media about their work, but not about their opinions or their findings. The Observer Code of Conduct advises that observers not make personal comments about the substance of their observations to the media. This should be taken seriously, as past experience shows that comments to the media can be taken out of context, misrepresented, or portrayed as the EOM's official view on the election, even if they are clearly presented as personal opinions. LTOs must therefore refrain from public comment or conclusion on the substance of their observations. For example, they should not offer any opinion on the political environment; speculate on the election result; or give an assessment of the general level of competition, equality of conditions, or integrity of the election. They should also refrain from comparing the election publicly to any other elections they may have observed in the same country or elsewhere.

LTOs are not obliged to give interviews or respond to questions posed by the media if they do not wish to. However, it is important to avoid statements such as "I am not allowed to talk to journalists". LTOs are free to speak to the media or answer questions about the purpose, organization, and method of observation. For example, LTOs should feel free to make the following types of points to the media:

- › Who they are and what country they come from;
- › That they are part of a team of observers invited by the government to observe;
- › That their presence reflects the importance of these elections and the level of international interest in them;
- › That all OSCE participating States are committed to inviting observers, in recognition that observation has the potential to enhance transparency and public confidence in the election process; that the ODIHR follows electoral issues in all OSCE participating States;
- › The total number of ODIHR observers who are in the country;
- › That they are meeting with a wide variety of candidates, parties, officials, election administrators, civil society, and others;
- › That they are looking into all aspects of the election, including the legal framework, the election administration, complaints and appeals, the political campaign, performance of the media, etc.;
- › The number of STOs requested for Election Day;
- › The general methodology for observing on Election Day;

- › That a press conference will be held in the capital the day following the election to announce the EOM's preliminary findings and conclusions and that all media representatives are welcome to attend.

If a media representative persists in requesting information or comments beyond the types of points listed above, they should be referred to the core team. **Only the mission head may make substantive comments on behalf of the ODIHR EOM to the media.**

If an LTO does speak to the media, he or she should make a record of who interviewed them and what media outlet or outlets they represented. They should inform mission headquarters. They should also try to get a copy of any article published or a tape of any interview broadcast to see if their remarks were reported accurately.

Annex I

Suggested LTO Weekly Report Form

ODIHR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO: _____
[country, type, and date of election]

WEEKLY LTO OBSERVATION REPORTING FORM

Team No.	
Location and AoR	
Period Covered	

1. Executive summary (In bullet-point form, highlight this week's most noteworthy events or issues.)

2. Local election commissions, local administration and their status of preparation for the election

3. Political parties, coalitions, and candidates

4. Campaign activities and the media

5. NGOs, domestic observers, other interlocutors

6. National minorities/women's participation

7. Complaints and appeals

8. Identified shortcomings, irregularities and/or violations of electoral legislation or regulations, OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections

9. Logistics/preparations for STOs/security or safety issues

10. List of contacts made:

TYPE <i>NGO, Party, Official, Media, Other</i>	NAME	ORGANIZATION	CONTACT PHONE #	ADDRESS

11. Any other business or request for assistance from headquarters

Annex J

Suggested LTO Flash Report Form

ODIHR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO: _____
[country, type, and date of election]

FLASH REPORT

Team No.	
Location and AoR	
Date of report	
Subject	

(Briefly describe the development or event, your source of information, and whether you are planning any follow-up action.)

Annex K

Suggested LTO Case File Report Form

ODIHR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO: _____
[country, type, and date of election]

CASE FILE

FORM FOR FOLLOW-UP TO COMPLAINTS, VIOLATIONS AND IRREGULARITIES

Team No.	
Location and AoR	
Date of report	

Date of alleged activity: _____

Activity/Category (check appropriate item(s)):

- | | |
|---|---|
| ☐ Violence | ☐ Campaigning by public officials |
| ☐ Detention/arrest | ☐ Election commission misconduct |
| ☐ Harassment of activists | ☐ Media (coverage, access, harassment) |
| ☐ Voter lists | ☐ Preparations for voting |
| ☐ Published campaign materials | ☐ Rallies |
| ☐ Misuse of public resources | ☐ Other |

Details (if known, include constituency and precinct, and legal provision allegedly violated):

IF A FORMAL COMPLAINT HAS BEEN FILED WITH AUTHORITIES

In what venue was the complaint filed? ☐ Election Commission
☐ Court
☐ Prosecutor

When was the complaint filed? _____

Complainant: _____

Title/affiliation of complainant: _____

Defendant/accused: _____

Title/affiliation of defendant/accused: _____

Status/outcome of complaint: _____

Follow-up required? _____

IF NO FORMAL COMPLAINT HAS BEEN FILED

Is the complaint from a credible source? Unless source requests confidentiality, provide name and contact information.

What evidence supports the complaint?

Have you been able to verify it independently?

Additional comments:

Annex L

Suggested LTO Final Report Form

ODIHR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION TO: _____
[country, type, and date of election]

LTO FINAL REPORT

Team No./Names	
Location and AoR	
Date	

1. Overall view of the election in your area of responsibility

Briefly highlight your key conclusions on the election in your AoR. Was it overall in line with OSCE commitments and other international standards for democratic elections, or were there shortcomings and/or irregularities? If not, what were the main problems? Do you have any additional comments for the EOM's statement of preliminary findings and conclusions? If so, please provide details.

2. Follow-up

Are there any outstanding issues related to this election and before the process is completed that would require follow-up after the departure of the EOM?

3. Recommendations for the EOM's final report

Do you have any suggestions for specific recommendations to the authorities that should be included as part of the EOM's final report?

4. Comments and recommendations on the operation of the EOM

Please provide your views on EOM operations, any problems we should be aware of, and any suggestions on how to improve future EOMs.

5. Any other comments

Annex M

Payment Voucher Form

OSCE IMPREST FUND PAYMENT VOUCHER	Voucher No.: Date: Office/Mission: Cheque/Cash/Transfer
---	---

Paid to (name, ID#, phone#, address): _____

The sum of: _____

Purpose: _____

Approved for payment	Paid by	Payment received
..... Name & Title	 Fund Custodian	 Payee

Account to be charged		
Code or Title	Amount	=USD/EURO
1. For ALL expenses, LTOs are required to obtain supporting documentation, i.e., original invoice or receipt. 2. In some cases, when a vendor does not issue an invoice, it may be replaced with a payment voucher. 3. The payment voucher should be filled in completely to include payee’s details, amount, service or commodity description, date, payer’s and payee’s signatures. Examined & found correct by: Chief of Accounts		

Annex N

Specific Election-Related Commitments Contained in the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document

The paragraphs of the OSCE Copenhagen Document of 1990 related directly to elections are reproduced below.¹⁸ Additional OSCE commitments relevant to elections are included in the ODIHR's *Election Observation Handbook* (fifth edition, 2005).

- (6) The participating States declare that the will of the people, freely and fairly expressed through periodic and genuine elections, is the basis of the authority and legitimacy of all government. The participating States will accordingly respect the right of their citizens to take part in the governing of their country, either directly or through representatives freely chosen by them through fair electoral processes. They recognize their responsibility to defend and protect, in accordance with their laws, their international human rights obligations and their international commitments, the democratic order freely established through the will of the people against the activities of persons, groups or organizations that engage in or refuse to renounce terrorism or violence aimed at the overthrow of that order or that of another participating State.
- (7) to ensure that the will of the people serves as the basis of the authority of government, the participating States will
 - (7.1) hold free elections at reasonable intervals, as established by law;
 - (7.2) permit all seats in at least one chamber of the national legislature to be freely contested in a popular vote;
 - (7.3) guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens;
 - (7.4) ensure that votes are cast by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure, and that they are counted and reported honestly with the official results made public;
 - (7.5) respect the right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination;
 - (7.6) respect the right of individuals and groups to establish, in full freedom, their own political parties or other political organizations and provide such political parties and organizations with the necessary legal guarantees to enable them to compete with each other on a basis of equal treatment before the law and by the authorities;
 - (7.7) ensure that law and public policy work to permit political campaigning to be conducted in a fair and free atmosphere in which neither administrative action, vio-

¹⁸ The full text of the Copenhagen Document can be accessed at www.osce.org/docs.

lence nor intimidation bars the parties and the candidates from freely presenting their views and qualifications, or prevents the voters from learning and discussing them or from casting their vote free of fear of retribution;

- (7.8) provide that no legal or administrative obstacle stands in the way of unimpeded access to the media on a non-discriminatory basis for all political groupings and individuals wishing to participate in the electoral process;
 - (7.9) ensure that the candidates who obtain the necessary number of votes required by the law are duly installed in office and are permitted to remain in office until their term expires or is otherwise brought to end in a manner that is regulated by law in conformity with democratic parliamentary and constitutional procedures.
- (8) The participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other [OSCE] participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent permitted by law. They will also endeavour to facilitate similar access for election proceedings held below the national level. Such observers will undertake not to interfere in the electoral proceedings.

About the OSCE's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the OSCE's principal institution to assist participating States "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and (...) to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society" (1992 Helsinki Document).

The ODIHR, based in Warsaw, Poland, was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today, it employs more than 120 staff.

The ODIHR is the leading agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. It co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of several observation missions with thousands of observers every year to assess whether elections in the OSCE area are in line with national legislation and international standards. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into all elements of an electoral process. Through assistance projects, the ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include the following thematic areas: rule of law, civil society and democratic governance, freedom of movement, gender equality, and legislative support. The ODIHR implements more than 100 targeted assistance programmes every year, seeking both to facilitate and enhance state compliance with OSCE commitments and to develop democratic structures.

The ODIHR promotes the protection of **human rights** through technical-assistance projects and training on human dimension issues. It conducts research and prepares reports on different human rights topics. In addition, the Office organizes several meetings every year to review the implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments by participating States. In its anti-terrorism activities, the ODIHR works to build awareness of human dimension issues and carries out projects that address factors engendering terrorism. The ODIHR is also at the forefront of international efforts to prevent trafficking in human beings and to ensure a co-ordinated response that puts the rights of victims first.

The ODIHR's **tolerance and non-discrimination** programme provides support to participating States in implementing their OSCE commitments and in strengthening their efforts to respond to, and combat, hate crimes and violent manifestations of intolerance. The programme also aims to strengthen civil society's capacity to respond to hate-motivated crimes and incidents.

The ODIHR provides advice to participating States on their policies on **Roma and Sinti**. It promotes capacity-building and networking among Roma and Sinti communities and encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in policy-making bodies. The Office also acts as a clearing house for the exchange of information on Roma and Sinti issues among national and international actors.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations.

More information is available on the ODIHR website (www.osce.org/odihr).