

COUNCIL OF EUROPE

COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS

Declaration by the Committee of Ministers on the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters

*(adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 13 May 2004,
at its 114th Session)*

The Committee of Ministers,

Considering that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve a greater unity among its members for the purpose of safeguarding and realising the ideals and principles which are their common heritage;

Emphasising that democracy is one of the foundations of the Council of Europe and that it is inconceivable without elections in line with the principles of Europe's electoral heritage;

Recalling the importance of the effective implementation of the principles of Europe's electoral heritage: universal, equal, free, secret and direct suffrage;

Determined to ensure that all elections within the Council of Europe member states are held in conformity with these principles, at regular intervals and in a transparent manner;

Noting with satisfaction the adoption by the Venice Commission of the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters and its subsequent approval by the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe;

Welcoming the interest the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe show in the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters;

Welcoming also the good co-operation between the Venice Commission and the OSCE/ODIHR in electoral matters;

Noting that free suffrage includes freedom of voters to express their wishes as well as freedom of voters to form an opinion, based on freedom of media and neutrality of public media;

Underlining that the principles of Europe's electoral heritage may be implemented only if certain conditions are fulfilled, in particular respect for fundamental rights, the impartial organisation of elections and an effective system of appeal, as defined by the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters;

Recognises the importance of the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, which reflects the principles of Europe's electoral heritage, as a reference document for the Council of Europe in this area, and as a basis for possible further development of the legal framework of democratic elections in European countries;

Calls on governments, parliaments and other relevant authorities in the member states to take account of the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters, to have regard to it, within their democratic national traditions, when drawing up and implementing electoral legislation and to make sustained efforts to disseminate it more widely in the relevant circles.