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MPEs returned from their summer holidays at the end of August fresh and full of enthusiasm for the final year of this parliamentary mandate. Whether retiring or seeking re-election (to a Parliament whose composition changes every five years more than most), their minds will be concentrating on the demands of electoral politics at home. And the prime weakness of democracy in the European Union, the staging of 28 simultaneous national electoral contests for election to the EP rather than one genuinely pan-European contest, will again be exposed.

Lobbying on two controversial draft Directives due for decision this autumn - the tobacco products directive and the anti-money laundering directive - has become intense. The former has been in the policy-making sausage machine for over five years now and the tobacco industry has thus far managed to keep delaying a decision. The latter is much more recent and is seen by some as an attempt by Commissioner Barnier to crack down on online gaming which, he claims, deprives national governments of the ability to levy tax revenue on gambling transactions.

The Vilnius summit, touted as the highlight of the current Lithuanian EU Presidency and designed to crown a closer and more structured relationship between the EU and its eastern neighbours, looks more and more like a damp squib as the neighbours remain prey to Russian influence and fail to consolidate democracy, the rule of law and free market economies. Even the one clear success story, Georgia, finds itself hampered by the unwillingness of Europe’s largest political party, the European Peoples Party, to accept the democratic outcome of last year’s election in which the party of President Saakashvili was ousted by the country’s voters. The conflicts in Egypt, Syria and other southern Mediterranean countries can be expected to continue to command attention from policy makers, even if the EU’s influence over them remains extremely limited. Whether Israel’s use of white phosphorus in its attack on Gaza some years ago or Syria’s use of chemical weapons this year, atrocities continue to blight the lives of innocent civilians and refugees continue to pour across borders in search of salvation.

With the danger of a wider regional conflagration increasing, we can expect Parliament and Council to keep this near the top of their agendas. Parliament’s committee of inquiry into alleged spying by the US and other EU countries, established before the summer break in reaction to the revelations by Russia-sheltered whistleblower Edward Snowden, will get into full swing this autumn. The issue of data privacy in a rapidly digitalising world will thus continue to be a focus of attention. Citizens’ rights in other areas too have been heightened by developments over the summer, notably the rights to freedom of movement of the 30,000 citizens of Gibraltar, the 7,000 or more people from across the border who work there and the many thousands more visitors who have been harrassed by the actions of the government of Spain. Most worrying perhaps is the demonisation and vilification of the Gibraltarians by Spain’s right wing government and its franquista followers.

In this edition of The Government Gazette we look at the EU’s regional funds. With a deal on the 2014-2019 budgetary framework due to be signed in September between Council and Parliament and programmes for the new seven year financial planning period due to commence in the New Year, much work remains to be done in approving member states’ spending plans. Moreover, since nobody can seriously contend (after the unseemly haggling earlier this year on the EU’s spending needs) that the limits to intergovernmentalism have not been reached, the debate about the future financing of the EU looks likely to play a prominent role in forthcoming European elections.

The passing of a national election in the EU’s economically strongest and most populous member state, Germany, has cleared the way for further discussion of how to keep heavily indebted countries with weak balances of income and expenditure within the eurozone. Mark Twain’s famous quip ‘rumours of my death have been much exaggerated’ continues to apply to the single currency which, despite almost daily prognoses of its imminent demise, has now facilitated travel and trade considerably for over a decade.

Renewal of the United Nations’ framework convention on climate change remains a matter of controversy. The European Union continues to take the lead in trying to secure global agreement, as it has done since the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. This year’s meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention will take place in November in Warsaw, where the ubiquitous Commissioner Hedegaard and the MEPs who follow these issues will be on prominent display.

All the above, and the contents of this edition, document a Union which continues to grow in importance and impact. It is therefore puzzling - and, to many, troubling - that voter participation in European Parliament elections has continued to fall since the first elections in 1979. Moreover, while economic recession has highlighted the interdependence of Europe’s member states, public support for EU integration has plummeted (according to a recent report from the Pew Institute) by 25% in the last year. Will the mainstream political parties, each due to adopt its electoral manifesto this autumn and to prepare for the selection in the New Year of its candidate for the Presidency of the European Commission, be able to withstand the forces of nationalisation and extremist populism to which democracies are so easily prey in difficult times? President Barroso’s summoning of a select group of MEPs early in September to discuss ‘the future of Europe’ suggests that such worries are held in the highest echelons of our Union’s institutions.
Energy

Smart Grids: Technology Challenges and Opportunities (Cont’d)

network and the energy markets. Large-scale resource management problems have long been the focus for MAS research and particularly efficient, scalable solutions have been developed that employ local computation and communication.

These MAS solutions can be applied in the smart grid to manage the power flow within the networks, where a particular objective might be to minimise the carbon emissions of the generators subject to a constraint that ensures the capacity of no distribution line is exceeded.

Energy Co-operatives

The widespread adoption of renewable generation at the level of individual homes and businesses will lead to the creation of markets composed of millions of ‘prosumers’. These both produce and consume energy and will need to optimise this balance in order to make real-time trading decisions to maximise the profits they can make by buying and selling. Moreover, individual stakeholders could form groups for cooperative energy purchasing.

In this setting, the stakeholders can be represented by software agents that employ automated negotiation technologies to settle micro-contracts for energy purchasing. These agents would be equipped with efficient algorithms that predict prosumers’ consumption and generation profiles and exploit their predictions to maximise profits in the electricity trading market. Moreover, MAS technology can be used predict whether multiple individuals could maximise group profits by banding together at scale within the smart grid.

Concluding Remarks

This article has discussed a number of smart grid technology challenge areas. What they have in common is a requirement for autonomous systems to solve complex prediction and resource allocation problems in the presence of uncertainty and multiple stakeholders. The article has noted that agents and MAS technology are very well matched to this requirement.

The smart grid challenges also have in common the need for software agents to interact and cooperate with humans (and vice versa) in a meaningful and trusted way. The authors believe that a fundamental new science is needed to design and build such human-agent collectives (HACs).

In the context of smart grids, this science should address questions relating to: the flexibility of autonomy; the agile teaming of human and software agents; the engineering of incentives (e.g. on consumers to reduce personal energy use); and the accountability of the information infrastructure (i.e. to generate reliable decisions). Rigorous and practical answers to these questions are required for the full potential of smart grids to be realised.

Further Information

The authors are involved in a number of projects that are pursuing the vision of a smart grid in which AI technology (and specifically multi-agent systems) plays a central role.

The following project websites may be consulted for further information:

Intelligent Agents for Home Energy Management. www.homeenergyagents.info
ORCHID: Human-Agent Collectives. www.orchid.ac.uk
Development of Smart Grids and Smart Meters – the Swedish Experience

By Karin Widegren, Director of the National Co-ordination Council for Smart Grids in Sweden

The Swedish electricity market was deregulated in 1996, since when electricity trading and generation have been open to competition, while network operations are a regulated monopoly. The electricity system is increasingly integrated within the Nordic and Baltic electricity markets, and there is a joint renewable electricity certificate market together with Norway.

Sweden consumes a substantial amount of electricity per capita (~15,000 kWh per person per year), with a total electricity consumption around 140 TWh. The explanation for this is a large energy intensive industrial sector and high penetration of electrical heating and heat pumps in single family houses. The electricity supply is almost carbon-free with around 45% of generation coming from hydro power and 40% from nuclear. The remaining 15% comes mainly from solid bio-fuels and waste (~8.5%) as well as wind power (~5%). Wind power is the fastest growing source of renewable electricity supply.

The need for the development of smart grids in Sweden is primarily pushed by a rapid increase of renewable intermittent electricity production, mainly from wind, in combination with the uncertainty in the future long term capacity of nuclear power. The potential for demand response is also expected to be rather significant in the future due to the high level of electrical heating and possibilities for thermal storage using existing heat pumps and district heating systems as parts off future smart energy solutions.

Policy Conditions

The aim of Swedish energy policy related to the development of the electricity market is to foster fair competition and customer empowerment while safeguarding security of supply and fulfillment of environmental targets on both European and national levels. Sustainable development is central in Swedish energy policy and national targets are in several aspects more far reaching compared to the European 20-20-20 goals for climate change, renewables and energy efficiency. More specifically there are four national targets which are expected to have a large influence on the need for future smart grid solutions:

- Objective to reach at least 50% renewable energy by 2020 as a share of total energy use
- Objective to reach 20% more efficient energy use by 2020 requiring Increased consumer engagement
- Spatial planning target of 30 TWh wind power production by 2020 (7 TWh 2012)
- Objective to have a vehicle stock that is independent of fossil fuels by 2030

The challenges for all market actors are significant. A massive scale of investments will be needed in the years to come – not only in new sustainable power production but also in new distribution and transmission infrastructure. These investment needs are closely linked to the development of smart grid and smart meters. New technology will enable the electricity system to handle larger proportions of renewable intermittent electricity production and facilitate the implementation of demand response, empowering consumers and stimulating development of new energy services to all customers.

Smart grid is also an opportunity for economic growth since the global market for smart grid solutions is expected to grow substantially. Sweden is well placed to become a pioneer in smart grids. We have a deregulated, well-developed electricity market with environmentally aware customers and a well-expanded ICT infrastructure. Sweden has gained substantial practical experience through the full roll out of smart meters, already installed in around 90% of Swedish households.

Smart Meter Roll Out

Sweden was the first EU country to indirectly mandate smart meters or more correctly automatic meter reading (AMR) also resulting in the deployment of advanced meter infrastructure (AMI). The AMR/AMI system architecture consists of the meters, data collectors and the network company’s data management system for billing. Sweden’s large scale deployment of AMR began in 2003 when the Swedish parliament decided that by 2009 all electricity customers should have monthly billing based on actual consumption from monthly meter readings for residential and small business customers. The reason for the relatively long transition period was to give enough time to prepare and make the necessary investments.

In 2006 additional amendments to the legislation were made relating to larger customers. The new legislation lowered the threshold for mandatory hourly meter readings from customers with fuses above 200 A to all customers with fuses above 63 A. Altogether, these requirements resulted in a full scale installation of AMR/AMI systems for nearly all Swedish consumers.
Development of Smart Grids and Smart Meters (Cont’d)

(5.2 million). Over the six years of the roll-out smart meter technology advanced significantly, resulting in different types of meters throughout Sweden based on when a network company procured the meters. The total cost for the full roll out of AMR/AMI systems is estimated at 1.5 billion euro.

The main goal of the 2003 electricity meter reform was increased consumer awareness and ability to control their consumption with more accurate electricity bills, simplification of the supplier switching processes, and better information about their actual consumption. It should be noted that there was no regulation as regards to functionalities of the metering system. Smart meters rather became a consequence of the mandatory monthly billing based on actual consumption, requiring automatic and remote meter reading.

Before the reform, electricity for most private customers was read on a yearly basis with billing based on the previous year's consumption. Customers received a reconciliation bill for the difference between the previous year’s consumption and the actual consumption, as the network company didn’t know the actual consumption until the end of the year. To a large degree this also made customers unaware of their actual consumption, causing frustration once a year when customers were at risk of receiving a large reconciliation bill for the whole year before learning about any change to their consumption. Since July 2009, customers receive monthly bills based on their actual consumption which has led to increased customer awareness and activity in the retail electricity market.

The next important legal step in the introduction of a fully developed smart meter infrastructure was taken in 2012, when a bill was passed in the parliament enforcing hourly metering at no extra cost for any consumers subscribing to an hourly-based electricity supply contract. This new legal requirement was in force by 1st October 2012. Although limited, early experiences show that so far rather few consumers have signed-up for this type of contract.

Lessons Learned

By 2009 all Swedish customers had smart meters and AMR systems. As with many jurisdictions, a critical factor for the Swedish roll-out of Smart Meters was the allowance for network companies to include smart meters as part of the asset base to ensure cost coverage.

There wasn’t much public opposition to Sweden’s smart meter roll-out. In part this was because the majority of the electricity bill in Sweden is the cost of electricity supply, not the network costs, so the cost of implementing the AMI/AMI was only a small fraction of the bill. Compared to other European countries, in Sweden concerns about the accuracy of data and customer privacy in conjunction with the smart meters has generated little discussion. In general the handling of the meter data is regarded as acceptable by the customers.

Over the years since deployment, many DSOs found that their roll-out led to both expected financial benefits and to non-financial benefits in service quality, customer satisfaction and improved safety on the network.

The improved understanding of the grid behavior and load pattern has allowed network companies to make more strategic decisions about infrastructure upgrades and has reduced the risk of over-sizing assets. As a platform for other smart grid technologies, many future services will be enabled by the data and the functionality of the AMI.

For Sweden, the first step for enabling the customer to participate in a more efficient market was to build their awareness of their consumption. Increased customer awareness was a major driver for AMI/AMR deployment in Sweden. Once customers began to move from annual meter readings to monthly readings, they became more aware and concerned with their electricity use.

This has set the stage for future technology and market pricing that will allow the customer to participate in a more active retail market.

In terms of AMI/AMR functionality, Sweden’s infrastructure does not yet have all of the components for customer demand response activities. Dynamic pricing, easy customer access to their own data with visualization tools or other components that improve a customer’s control over their consumption are not yet common across the systems, however the functionalities are in most cases sufficient to deliver significant benefits compared to the alternative of not rolling out the Smart Meters. With the new possibilities for all customers to sign-up to an hourly-based electricity supply contract customers will need support to facilitate their response to price signals from the market and any other load management programmes.
Renewable Energy: Shifting Sources of Power

By Rick Bosman & Daniel Scholten

Renewable energy sources are often hailed as the panacea for a plethora of challenges associated with the use of fossil fuels. Partly for good reasons; while a large-scale utilization of renewables diminishes energy scarcity and lowers various kinds of pollution, their potential to address energy related geopolitical tensions among producer, consumer, and transit countries remains to be seen. Whereas the political implications of the geographic and technological specificities of fossil fuels are well known, it is still highly uncertain what such implications are if we would move to an energy system based on renewable sources.

This poses interesting questions regarding the future of our energy system: what does the development of renewable energy sources and supporting technologies imply for energy-related patterns of co-operation and conflict between producer, consumer, and transit countries? Will a transition to a renewable energy system provide solutions to the geopolitical challenges associated with the use of fossil fuels or merely replace old challenges by new ones?

We aim to investigate these questions by taking the reader on a thought experiment envisaging an energy system that is completely run on renewable sources of energy, keeping all else equal. We basically ask ‘what if renewable energy would power the contemporary world?’ and then explore what political concerns may be expected to arise between energy producer, consumer, and transit countries. This way we hope to discuss a topic that currently remains underexposed in the energy transition debate while avoiding deliberations on the likelihood and desirability of uncertain futures yet retaining the possibility to learn from the thought experiment for such futures.

Geographical and Technical Characteristics of Renewable Energy

Our thought experiment starts by focusing on the geographical and technical characteristics of renewable sources and accompanying infrastructures and how they might shape a renewable energy system. Five important observations stand out in this regard. First and foremost, the availability of renewable sources of energy, especially that of wind and solar, far outstrips that of fossil fuels and uranium. Second, every country has access to at least some form and amount of renewable energy, be it wind, solar, biomass, hydro, or geothermal, thereby all countries could become energy producers. Third, because renewable energy can be more efficiently harvested at certain locations than others, some countries can generate energy cheaper than others. Fourth, electricity is the energy carrier for most renewables and especially those with the most potential (solar and wind), influencing the distance over which energy is transported and traded. Fifth, a great part of renewable energy production is of an intermittent nature and electricity generation may be distributed in a large number of small units.

Renewable Energy Markets

The geographical and technical characteristics of renewable energy systems have four major implications for renewable energy based markets. First, when every country has the ability to source energy domestically (at least a strategic part), but some countries are able to harvest energy more efficiently, one may assume that there are a) many (potential) producers in the market; b) production shifts to those countries that can do so most efficiently; and that c) most, if not all, countries face a make or buy decision, i.e. need to choose between cheaper electricity imports from regions with more favourable conditions on the one hand and the security of domestic supply on the other. The sheer possibility of switching producers and/or to domestic production gives consumer countries leverage on the bargaining table when push comes to shove. Put differently, renewable energy markets are likely to be buyers’ markets. Nevertheless, consumer countries will have to deal with two issues: a) while resource scarcity might be out of the way, the availability of solar and wind energy at the right moment is not guaranteed, likely leading to higher electricity prices at times with little wind and sun; and b) sufficient generation and storage capacity becomes a cause for concern as electricity is more difficult to store than fossil fuels.

Second, with electricity as the main energy carrier, energy markets become limited to the size of the grid. The nature of electricity transport implies a tightly integrated infrastructure that physically connects producers and consumers (unlike, for example, oil tankers that traverse open seas). In a renewable energy system without the grid there is little or no energy trade. A few considerations matter in this regard to the size of the grid: a) electricity transport is hindered by the loss of load over large distances; b) the larger the grid, the more energy sources may be included; c) the larger the grid, the more geographical fluctuations in availability of renewable resources can be balanced and exploited; and d) the larger the grid, the more likely that it is vulnerable to disruptions. As a consequence electricity grids tend to span countries and continents, but not the globe. Renewable energy markets are thus expected to exist nationally or regionally. In turn, the geopolitical interdependencies shrink to the size of the grid, even though global markets might exist for the material input and technology necessary to produce electricity from renewable sources.

Third, renewable electricity harbours the possibility of distributed generation and with it new business models that are different from centrally operated systems. Domestically, countries have to decide whether they prefer centrally or decentrally produced electricity and whether to rely on incumbent energy companies and grid operators or to empower households and local communities with their own production and distribution networks (either connected to the grid or not). If the distributed option is chosen, energy markets become locally oriented, likely to involve a mix of private and communal companies.

Finally, the variability of renewable energy generation is likely to result in more volatile electricity prices as compared to fossil fuels and in a need for storage and balancing capacity to create stable energy markets. Solar panels and wind turbines operate at near zero marginal costs. In times of plenty of sun or wind the market is hence flooded with extremely cheap electricity. Of course, the opposite also holds: in times of little sun or wind, electricity is likely to have a much higher price than current coal power plants provide. Moreover, daily demand also knows its ups and downs. To stabilize energy prices balancing capacity is of great value (not just for operational reliability).
Options are large-scale storage facilities, investment in renewable sources that are able to deliver at times of peak demand, and great interconnector capacity to link various sources to the same cross-border grid to manage intermittency effects.

(Geo)Political Implications
Considering the general implications discussed above, it becomes clear that a renewables based energy system could take shape in different ways with varying geopolitical implications. The resulting diverging strategic concerns for producer, consumer, and transit countries can be captured best by exploring two extreme scenarios: a centralized Continental and decentralized National scenario.

A Continental Scenario: control the grid
In this scenario the buy decision and central production and transportation prevail, because considerations of overall cost-efficiency dominate over security of supply. Therefore, energy is produced where it is cheapest and then transported to consumer countries via one interconnected grid using long distance high voltage direct current (HVDC) lines. In the context of Europe, for example, this could imply that Mediterranean solar energy (Spain, Italy, North Africa) and North Sea wind (UK, Netherlands, Germany) are both fed onto the same ‘copperplate’ grid that spans the continent. Visions that resemble such an energy system are the European Roadmap 2050 and Desertec.

The Continental scenario implies a mere shift in dependencies between countries compared to the current fossil fuel based energy system. The categorization according to producer, consumer, and transit countries, often used by geopolitical scholars studying conventional energy, largely remains intact in this scenario, albeit with different players. The most important change is that while minor dependencies exist to those countries that can produce most efficiently, consumer and transit countries have the option to switch to domestic production. Consequently, concerns shift from getting access to foreign resources to controlling the transportation grid and thereby being able to dominate related markets. This results in questions over who owns, manages, and protects the grid. However, the interconnected nature of the grid makes targeted interventions like cutting off a single country largely unworkable. Finally, as renewable electricity will be the main energy carrier, strategic value is no longer found in availability of fuels and the maintenance of strategic reserves but in grid capacity and storage or balancing capacity. Therefore, countries having ample supplies of dispatchable hydropower, standing reserves, or interconnector capacity possibly enjoy (indirect) geopolitical influence over other countries connected to the continental grid.

A National Scenario: DIY
In the second scenario the make decision prevails as security of supply is valued more than overall cost considerations. Consequently, a predominantly decentralized energy system where countries or even local communities will largely provide in their own energy needs is envisioned. Early signs of such an energy system seem to already be materializing in Germany, for example, where over 50% of new renewable capacity are decentralized energy systems owned by private people, farmers, and energy co-operatives.

The National scenario implies a landslide in energy dependencies and in the way the energy system is organized as compared to the current fossil fuel situation. In this scenario consumer countries become ‘prosumers’ and the need for cross-border energy trade becomes much smaller or non-existent. As a result, the distinction between producing, consuming, and transit states starts to blur. Geopolitical implications become limited to the supply of materials to build energy production capacity. Once such capacity is in place, countries own their energy supply, which drastically reduces strenuous foreign energy relations. Furthermore, possibilities for distributed generation also hint at a business model that could upset the position of incumbent energy companies and the way national grids are operated. Issues of integrating new (decentral) renewable production technologies into existing grids or setting up local energy markets and accompanying regulatory frameworks to facilitate energy trade among local parties and/or communities would arise. In this case energy moves out of the geopolitical realm all together and becomes a ‘mere’ market commodity.

Continental, National, or something in between?
The thought experiment shows us that the potential geopolitical implications of a renewable energy based system depend greatly on which scenario materializes in a possible future, i.e. whether countries will prefer to import cheap renewable energy from abroad or utilize secure domestic sources. When the buy decision prevails, a centralized Continental scenario emerges resulting in a mere shift in energy dependencies from getting access to resources to control over grid operations. If the make decision prevails, a decentralized National scenario emerges that lessens cross-border energy trade and in turn greatly reduces geopolitical tensions. In either scenario electricity will become the dominant energy carrier. Considering the difficulty of storing electricity and the intermittent nature of the most potent renewables, grid infrastructure and storage and balancing capacity become crucial strategic assets in a renewable energy future.

The most likely outcome, of course, is a mix of both scenarios. In the National scenario there would still be opportunities for efficiency gains through cross-border trade of energy and storage and balancing capacity. Moreover, in the Continental scenario countries would still want to limit their dependence by investing in domestic generation and storage capacity. It is highly probable that countries will strike a balance between security of supply and efficiency gains. Vital functions of society could be powered by local energy sources, probably including local storage capacity. Less vital functions could rely on intermittent domestic energy production and foreign trade. The question remains, of course, where that balance should lie and in how far a country is able to create the space for such a decision.

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Globalizing Gas Markets and European Energy Security – Three Sobering Thoughts

By Andreas Goldthau, Head of Department of Public Policy and Associate Professor, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary

Over the past years, European policy makers and industry executives have had to jealously watch a ‘shale gas revolution’ unfold on the other side of the pond. There, thanks to new drilling techniques, US gas production skyrocketed to some 680 billion cubic meters per year, now ahead of Russia’s 590 bcm, making the US the globe’s number one gas producer, and spot markets see record lows of 3 USD per MMBTU. The US Energy Information Administration has recently estimated Europe’s recoverable unconventional gas reserves to be on par with America’s, fueling hopes of replicating the US success story on the old continent. What’s more, with lots more gas coming on-stream, gas markets are said to see an end of the decade-old regional gas model, where three different markets co-exist aside each other.

North America, Eurasia and the Asia-Pacific, the hopes are, will soon merge into a global gas market; liquefied gas will be shipped easily where needed; and prices will consequently come under pressure because of gas-on-gas competition unfolding on an international level. For many European leaders, this scenario appears as a silver bullet to their energy woes – high import dependency on Russia, the increasingly difficult Eastern neighbour; energy prices currently three times as high as in the US and spelling disaster for Europe’s chemical and steel industries; and an urgently needed and secure fuel ‘bridging’ Europe’s path into a low carbon future without pushing the continent’s energy system to the verge of collapse. Yet, Europeans may need to rethink on three fronts.

1. European domestic production won’t make the difference

For one, as stressed by several observers, Europe will need to get its frameworks right for the shale game. Regulation remains inappropriate in most European countries, service industry is lacking, and so is infrastructure. Given their 150 year history in oil and gas extraction, the US enjoys a competitive lead that will be hard to make up for even if the Europeans tried hard. Yet they actually don’t. French, Bulgarian and German citizens fundamentally oppose unconventional gas drilling on environmental grounds, mainly for fears of groundwater contamination and the use of chemicals in the fracking process, besides issues of methane leakage and wastewater management.

Governments in Paris, Sofia and Berlin have therefore tied their hands, and effectively locked the Paris Basin, the Carpathian Basin and the North German Plains off for exploration for years to come, if not for good. Poland has just demonstrated how not to get regulation right, and scared off foreign companies urgently needed to bring capital and technology. Exxon, Talisman and Marathon have pulled the plug; others might follow. And the UK, self-proclaimed leader in unconventional gas, has become home to a veritable ‘fracking war’ over the contested technology. Evidently, the Tory government’s plans to put in place the ‘most generous tax breaks in the world’ for unconventional gas extraction has not even convinced its own constituencies, usually unequivocally fond of less taxes, smaller state and lower regulation.

The cruel truth, however, is: even if holes were drilled and tight rock beds were fracked where ever it is technically feasible in Europe, it would not make a difference on the import dependence front. In the best of all worlds, shale gas production might then stabilize domestic European gas production, and not reduce import dependency. The latter will still grow to some 74 percent of total consumption within the next two decades, as the International Energy Agency estimates. In short, indigenous European production will not be decisive for future European energy supply.

2. Europeans don’t get to decide on the new gas pricing model

In fact, the main energy security question Europe is facing is not where their gas will come from in the next decades, but at what pricing model it will be sold on domestic markets. The incumbent model – Long Term Contracts (LTCs) that typically peg the price of gas to the price of oil – is clearly eroding.

Since 2008, excess Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) cargos hit European spot markets and started to put oil-indexed piped gas out of the money. Security pundits welcomed these developments, as they forced key producer countries such as Russia and Norway to grant concessions, and weakened Moscow’s position on European gas markets. Yet the not so good news is that it is unclear what the future pricing model will look like. Worse, the Europeans probably won’t have much of a say in designing it.

By contrast, much will depend on future gas cargos leaving the US, where excess capacity currently depresses prices below production cost, making energy companies look for export markets elsewhere. In fact, if realized, currently approved or planned LNG export facilities in the US would add up to some stunning 40 percent of world LNG trade and make the US a key force in global gas markets. While free markets rule the US in theory, gas exports have therefore become subject to a fierce political debate in Washington DC.

An interesting coalition of industry leaders, energy security wonks and environmentalists point to cheap feedstock and the opportunity to ‘reindustrialize America’, and argue ‘American gas must stay home’. In the still not so unlikely event that at least some gas exports take place, much of it – as the world’s excess supply more generally – will likely be soaked up by Asian markets, notably China. Japan will be looking for cargos, too, forced to at least partially replace nuclear in its post-Fukushima energy mix, and will be eager to lower prices for LNG imports, which are currently among the world’s highest.

US companies willing to export will have a good reason to do so before Qatar and Australia plug the holes in emerging Asian economies. By exporting their gas, US companies will, however, also export their pricing model: Henry Hub, which will be serving as the base reference for any cargos destined to other world regions. In the end it will therefore be US domestic politics that will determine which way international gas markets go, and whether European gas markets get linked up with North America and Asian ones.

All the Europeans can do is follow the US model and further liberalize their gas sectors, in the hope to make others come and play on an attractive import market and fully aware that the rules of the new gas pricing game will still be decided on elsewhere.
3. Globalizing gas markets don’t mean lower prices. And they are no easy ride either

Indeed, a sizeable import market for international natural gas cargos, Europe has no reason to shy away from pricing gas on actual market fundamentals. This will make domestic and foreign gas producers fight for market shares through spot and futures based pricing mechanisms, and Russian pipeline gas compete against LNG cargos from, say, Qatar.

A slowly developing European unconventional gas sector could feed additional volumes into the market, fostering its liquidity and competitiveness. But the Europeans should make no mistake, either: globalizing gas markets by no means imply lower prices. What’s for sure is that they at least mean high price volatility. A quick look at German border prices – a fairly good proxy for oil-indexed and LTC based Russian gas imported into Europe – reveals by far smoother price developments over the past years than the UK National Balance Point, which works on a spot basis.

And not much time has passed since the US Henry Hub saw prices as high as 13 USD – 4 times today’s levels. Such volatility means adjustment costs for households and industry, particularly for energy intensive ones such as the steel and chemicals sector. So while internationalizing gas markets and gas-on-gas competition may strengthen the supply security side for European consumers, they may come with strains on their pockets. What’s more, transitions never are an easy ride, and particularly not in energy markets. They are bound by uncertainty, for all market participants.

For ‘traditional’ European suppliers such as Russia, a new gas pricing model will come with uncertainty on long term demand and margins in their most important consumer market. They may therefore rethink future upstream investment, until they have a better picture of where things are going. The same holds true for European utilities which no longer dispose of long term planning security in the end user market, thus possibly taking a more cautious approach towards contracted volumes and time horizons.

Uncertainty on price levels and investment decisions in the gas market will certainly spill over to the renewable energy sector, too, a direct competitor in power generation and heating. In short, if natural gas is meant bridge Europe’s way into a low carbon future, then European policy makers had better have a plan on how to manage some of the unintended side effects coming with gas going global.

Are these reasons to stop incentivizing domestic natural gas production, integrating the European gas sector and embracing internationalizing markets? They are not. But for Europeans it will be important to be clear what they will get, and what they won’t. The new gas world will probably allow recalibrating Eurasian market asymmetries a bit.

Clearly on the upside therefore, Russia – while still important – will be assigned the role of one among many competing gas suppliers, presumably to the liking of many Central Eastern Europeans.

But the European economy will probably not see much of a relief on the pricing front, at least not in the short run. What’s for sure is that neither shale gas production nor new pricing models are a silver bullet to Europe’s energy challenges.

As a strategic good, energy will always require the special attention of governments, markets designed to account for its nature as a private commodity, but also tailored policies catering its public goods characteristics. Markets alone can’t make up for this, nor fix policy shortcomings – neither with regards to import dependency, nor with regards to prices and the desired transition to a low carbon future.
Step by Step Modernisation of Ukrainian Energetic Sector: Reality and Tendencies

By Prof. Igor G.Chervanyov, V.N. Karazin Kharkiv National University, Regional Centre for Alternative Energetics & Energy Efficiency, Ukraine

Ukraine is one of the largest countries in Europe, whose area and population size (over 47 million) lie between those of France and Spain. Vast fossil fuel resources and unwise policies of the past historical period, when energy intensity has been considered a sign of economic growth are among the main reasons that have lead to a situation which has not always seen effective development of the Ukraine energy sector. Obviously, the situation as described above, is incompatible with promising economic opportunities provided by the present stage of modern development of the energetic sector of the Ukrainian economy.

Modern Energy Management Strategy

In recent years, modern Ukrainian authorities have taken a number of vigorous efforts towards critical improvement of the situation by a consistent "step by step" strategy. Among these large efforts embodied in the Energetic Strategy of Ukraine in years 2012-2030, the three steps are of tremendous importance, specifically: energy saving, reducing consumption of traditional fuels, and development of alternative (unconventional, renewable) energetics. The strategic programme specifically implies the reduction of energy intensity as a percentage of GDP, a 20% reduction of carbon dioxide emissions into the atmosphere and the development and using of alternative energy sources. As a useful by-product of performing this "step by step" strategic program, we expect essential diminishing in the impact on climate change.

Implementing the described step-by-step strategy, the legislative and executive branches of the Ukrainian Government have taken a number of critical steps that clearly indicate the intention of Ukrainian society to become a fully recognized EU member.

Step-by-step development of Alternative Energetics

The Law of Ukraine "On Alternative Energy Sources" first accepted in 2003 and accomplished only recently (2009, 2013), has legislated two basic actions:

• implementation of the "green" (feed-in) tariff (a policy mechanism designed to accelerate investment in renewable energy technologies, including those based on solar, wind, mini-hydro and biomass sources)

• legal obligations of the compulsory inclusion of alternative energy into the power grid of the country or any of its regions. The implementation of the "green" tariff under the described Law has created very favorable conditions for renewable energy producers.

At present, Ukraine presents a rapidly evolving market for developing alternative energetics based on the extensive use of the solar and wind power stations. Currently, the cost of the electricity produced from ground-mounted solar power plants is one of the highest in the world (4.2-4.8, depending on the conditions). For wind and bio-energy sources this factor is greater than 2. The described indicators of high efficiency of the alternative energetic sources has caused a "boom" in the development of this sector of innovation, including the active involvement of international business.

The main practical conditions for introducing the "green" tariff are:

• the presence of owned of borrowed power generation equipment operating on unconventional energy sources

• the availability of ready-to-go power generating facility connected to a network (in the case of construction of a new facility).

As one useful consequence of the described developments, a number of solar power stations and wind power stations have been installed and set in operation in the year 2012. These stations are considered to be among the largest stations of their kind in the world based on their installed capacity and output volume.

Last but not least, these recent achievements have directly stimulated an improvement in the trends and quality of environmental education in Ukraine (technical, geographical and ecological), observed in recent years.

Educational aspects

Development of education in the academic fields relevant to alternative energy is one of the most important aspects that determines the future of innovations in the energetic sector of Ukraine. The positive trends of the alternative energetics of Ukraine are in turn inspired by the progress in the academic development in this field, which has been significantly pushed forward by international co-operation. To name several successful examples of international co-operation directly involving the author as a co-ordinator, I would like to mention the first scientific and educational international project TEMPUS-TASIS (2001-2004), which has been performed by a consortium of universities in Ukraine (two universities), UK, France and Spain. This co-operation has resulted in many significant achievements in alternative energetics - relevant education in Karazin Kharkiv National University (KKhNU).

As a second example, the Faculty of Physics and Energy with a unique specialization “Energy Management” were created in KKhNU. At this faculty, the Regional Center for Alternative Energetic and Energy Efficiency has been established. Among the most important tasks of this Center are the future studies of the resources of alternative energy available in Ukraine and supporting innovation in its rational use. Yet another central objective of the created Center is an international exchange of professors and students, designed to support progress in this innovation field. In addition, the Center supports all sorts of student activity and initiatives of researches in the practical work on the improvement of alternative energetics. This includes small projects in increasing energy efficiency, rational use of resources and management of local energetics. To set a model example of an outstanding student project, I mention the innovation project on the development of warming of selected student campuses, which has been accepted for realization in the innovation programme of energy efficiency of KKhNU. Some of the students who volunteered in the Programme TEMPUS have accomplished Master Degrees in the specialism of “Management of Regional Development of Renewable Resources” and have continued towards their PhD studies in this field.

Currently, the Center for Alternative Energetic and Energy Efficiency actively contributes towards innovations in the Ukrainian energy sector, which is considered to be one of the most promising fields in the world of high technologies supporting sustainable development, the main strategic task of this century.
Climate change and energy security are central to the most pressing issues faced by the EU today. The EU has seen happier days. It faces several challenges, the biggest one being the financial crisis and the myriad impacts this has had. These include the exacerbation of existing issues such as the possible fracturing of the Eurozone and even the seemingly unthinkable possible exit of an EU member state from the union, with the UK seriously considering a public referendum on whether they will stay in.

Yet prior to all this, the EU was succeeding in finding its feet and defining its position on the world stage. While it might not have claimed to have an abundance of hard power there was an increasingly firm sense of its unique attributes including its soft/civilian power. One area in which this was particularly apparent was in that of climate change negotiations. Prior to COP 9 in Copenhagen it seemed that the EU might be able to lead the negotiation and implementation of a new and improved successor to the Kyoto Protocol with a realistic approach to tackling the international climate change mitigation and adaptation strategy. Alas, COP 9 did not live up to the hopes and expectations of the international community, and crucially, while its success might have been seen largely as a success for the EU, the failure also had a natural owner.

Nevertheless the EU was then, and remains, uniquely positioned to lead the international green movement and reap the benefits that developing a competitive advantage in green technologies can bring. The EU is already meeting and exceeding its Kyoto targets – although this is in part attributable to the reduced industry caused by the recession. This unforeseen reduction in industrial emissions also had the unfortunate consequence of contributing to the failure of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme. The EU has a highly skilled workforce, excellent universities and research facilities and perhaps most importantly, an existing strong ethos of enthusiasm and willingness among its citizens to actively participate in environmental schemes and measures. In fact as well as the widespread compliance with regulation, the green thinking can be seen to have a voluntary take up in the popularity of the Fair Trade labelling.

As well as the potential that the EU doubtless possesses in this area, there is an element of necessity to take action. The EU continues to face a serious lack of energy security. There remains a heavy reliance on fossil fuels and with insufficient resources of its own, it is still at the mercy of Russia’s whims, and its current divide and conquer policies. Furthermore, given its championing of human rights it can find that having to rely as heavily as it does on fossil fuels from the Middle East jars with its core beliefs, where human rights records are not always in line with the ideals of the EU. This energy insecurity promises only to worsen as peak oil approaches and there is increasing competition from newly industrialised areas for increasingly limited resources. Talk of meetings on the subject of energy guarantees between the Saudis and Russians in the light of the Syrian situation can only make the policy context of EU energy dependency even more complicated.

Europe should learn from mistakes of the past when they lost out as a result of dragging their feet. The most painful reminder of this is surely when they missed the opportunity of capitalising on the development of the internet. While the technology for this was initially developed in Europe, it went on to be exploited by the USA which in turn benefited most from the quick and dirty development of ICT. While the USA is less well positioned in the case of green development expertise, there is also possible competition for the top spot from the USA, but also China, which has already developed large scale hydro-electricity infrastructure.

These days the EU’s international reputation as a leader in climate change negotiations is a dubious honour. The current system of international climate negotiation has arguably become an industry in itself with delegates agreeing on just enough at each COP to guarantee the need for another one. At present there is an understanding that the follow up to the Kyoto Protocol will be made by 2015. The many flaws and failings of the Kyoto protocol have been documented at length. However, as yet no feasible scheme has been proposed to address these failings and satisfy the varying demands of the world’s governments and the climate change community.

This complex collection of issues seems impenetrable. While it seems that more and more people are in agreement about the necessity of acting to address the real issue of climate change, it is hard to know where to begin. There are several steps that the EU could take to increase their green edge and live up to their self proclaimed ‘climate change champion’ status.

- Introducing requirements for all goods manufactured and sold within the EU to include labelling information on their carbon footprint
- Further enhancing tax incentives for green industry and entrepreneurial activities
- Investigating measures to prevent the private sector from acquiring and not using low carbon technologies
- Increasing the focus on mainstreaming of climate change considerations across all policy areas
- Enhancing the focus on low carbon futures, utilising current skills, for example applying expertise in offshore gas and oil extraction to offshore wind farms
- Encouraging the use of low carbon public transport in an effort to reduce the more carbon intensive driving

Some of these measures may be more feasible than others. However all should be considered. Given the deadlock that the climate change negotiations seem to be in, it is high time for an attempt to break free with some new and innovative thinking. One such way is to attempt different methods and pilot schemes.

Perhaps the biggest advantage the EU has in the case of green competition is its green minded and forward thinking citizens. It is high time for them to empower and utilise this unique lead. Should the EU enhance their climate expertise they can benefit from being early adopters. This area more than any is an opportunity for the EU to both prove its soft power and through green growth begin to address some of the woes caused by the financial crisis.

[1] Including the implementation of plastic bag levies in several countries and smoke free work places

[2] As part of a new EU focus on mainstreaming, the EU commission has already proposed that the EU budget for 2014 to 2020 should have 20% reserved for climate relevant activities.
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Secure our Future: Towards a European Energy Strategy

By Günther H. Oettinger, European Commissioner for Energy

Energy is the lifeblood of our society. Our way of life is inconceivable without reliable and affordable supplies of energy: electricity, heat and fuel. Never before has the world needed so much energy: we use almost twice as much as in 1980. If this trend continues, it will be difficult to avoid a major energy crisis, with electricity cuts, petrol or gas shortages.

We cannot afford to wait

The energy challenges are among the greatest tests which Europe has to face: We have to act to prevent global warming. At the same time, we need affordable energy prices as our economic competitiveness depends very much on competitive energy prices and a reliable energy supply. Growing EU dependence on imports from third countries is also a matter of great concern, in particular for oil (85 %) and gas (65 %). All these challenges must be addressed and require strong action.

A new strategy for the next decade

National policies are not sufficient anymore to allow a strong economic recovery and maintain our welfare. Any decision taken by one Member State has an impact on the others. Fragmented markets undermine the security of supply and limit the benefits of fair competition, while our investments for the future will only be profitable and efficient within a continental market. We must promote a common energy policy serving our joint policy objectives: competitiveness, sustainability and security of supply.

An example of the need to think internationally is gas supply. Many Member States are reliant on gas imported from Russia. We are all agreed that diversifying our gas supply will benefit citizens and businesses across the EU and we are looking to bring new, additional gas from the Caspian region to the EU. In the past few years, the EU Commission has held continuous talks with governments and companies alike to convince them to deliver gas from this region to Europe. And in June, this European effort will finally bear fruit. In Azerbaijan, the final decision will be taken on how much gas will be delivered to Europe and which pipeline project will be chosen for the first ever direct supply of Azeri gas to the EU.

In very general terms, I see 5 pillars for action to the benefit of all Member States and citizens.

**Focus on energy savings**

First, there is a vast amount of untapped potential to save energy, which would save money for individuals and businesses alike. Faced with commitments to reduce drastically our emissions and achieve the objective to increase energy efficiency by 20% by 2020, action on energy demand has the most potential with immediate impact for saving energy, reducing waste and maintaining our competitiveness. To this end, the EU has adopted a new energy efficiency directive which obliges Member States to implement binding measures such as an obligation scheme for energy companies to cut down energy consumption at customer level and an obligation for Member States to renovate annually 3 per cent of the central government’s building. It also encourages energy audits for SMEs and an obligation for large companies to assess their energy saving possibilities.

**A strongly integrated European Energy Single Market**

We should no longer tolerate barriers which impede energy flow within the EU. National borders can threaten the benefits of the Single Market, the competitiveness of our industry and the supply of basic needs to all our citizens. Fair competition, quality of service and free access must be guaranteed. The full and proper application of EU legislation is a must. But the existence of the adequate infrastructure is a condition sine qua non. It is time energy is given comparable pan-European infrastructure, as other sectors of public interest such as telecommunication and transport have enjoyed for a long time: by 2015, no Member State should be isolated from the European internal market in energy supply. This means that we have to concentrate our efforts on
Secure our Future (Cont’d)

By Günther H. Oettinger

Concrete projects necessary to achieve our goals: solidarity, an inter-connected market, new power capacities, an "intelligent grid" and large scale production of renewables available to all at competitive prices. A single European Energy Market will also increase the competitiveness of renewables, allowing excess energy generated in the sunny South to power homes in Northern Europe during times of light wind or vice-versa on blustery days in the North for cloudier days in the South.

Citizens first

These efforts should always focus on the impact on citizens. Consumers should benefit from wider choice and take advantage of new opportunities. Energy policies have to be more consumer-friendly and this will require further transparency and information: I would like all tools, like the Consumer Check List, to be improved and applied more widely. This also implies that all consumers enjoy their right to basic energy needs at all times, including in a supply crisis.

EU energy policy also aims to achieve more transparency, access to better and more information, better functioning of the retail market, development of adequate infrastructure and safety nets for vulnerable consumers. This is in addition to constant efforts for more safety and security in energy production and processing. Today, the EU represents a decisive added-value for all citizens by ensuring that the highest standards are applied in all Member States for nuclear safety and security, offshore oil and gas extraction or the development of new energy technologies. We must keep on track and continue to be vigilant.

Towards a technological shift

In energy technology, we must consolidate and extend Europe’s lead. I would like to develop a European reference framework in which Member States and regions can maximise their efforts to accelerate market uptake of technologies. Europe has some of the world's best renewable energy companies and research institutions: we need to keep this leadership. Beyond the implementation of the Strategic Energy Technology Plan, we have already launched a few large scale projects with strong European added-value:

- Smart grids to link the whole electricity grid system to individual households and give better access to renewable sources of energy
- The 'smart cities' innovation partnership to promote throughout Europe integrated energy systems at local level and facilitate energy savings

Strengthening the EU leadership in the world

The EU should be a favoured partner in international negotiations. The present situation, where external partners can 'divide and rule', is untenable. The EU has the world’s largest regional energy market – 500 million people. It accounts for one fifth of the world's energy use. We import on average around 3 million tonnes of oil equivalent every day. The EU is also the world's biggest economic trading block. We must exploit our geopolitical weight in the world and enjoy the benefits of the Single Market. Every time that the EU has spoken with one voice, for instance in the nuclear international co-operation, it led to results. The integration of energy markets with our neighbours is a must which contributes to both our and their security. But our international relations must go further and should aim at establishing strategic partnerships with key partners. A common European policy is a strong leverage to strengthen our position in difficult negotiations and secure our international leadership.

Time for action

This year we will discuss our energy and climate goals for 2030. We will decide whether we choose three targets as we did for 2020 - CO2 reduction, increase in renewables and energy efficiency - or just one or two, and whether they should be binding or not. We must decide this year, in order to allow Member States to prepare and to give certainty to investors in industry. As Jean Monnet said: “Where there is no vision, people perish”. Our generation must take the opportunity to make of this strategic vision a reality.
All those on the list will benefit from a much shorter permit granting procedure than is normally the case for such large infrastructure projects - rather than waiting for 10 years or more for a building permit, the so-called ‘projects of common interest’ will benefit from an accelerated procedure which generally will not exceed 3 years and 6 months. The procedure will also cut administrative costs by on average of 30% on the promoters’ side.

In addition, these projects may also be eligible for EU co-funding under the new Connecting Europe Facility foreseen for the long term budget 2014-2020. It is clear that the bulk of the investment must be made first and foremost by businesses. But there will be cases where it is simply not worthwhile for firms to expand the networks because the market is simply too small. This applies, for example, to the Baltic countries or Malta. We will therefore also have to discuss whether, in such cases, the EU will provide co-funding for connecting pipelines.

The EU can be a great asset in projects that stretch across borders, which will be more common after the completion of the single energy market. European funds can be used to support infrastructure that benefits more than one Member State. Such examples can be found below.

My aim is to bring Europe closer to the long held vision of a European energy policy based on a sound network. Networks are the arteries of our energy system. By investing in them, we will be investing in the economy and helping consumers.

PROJECTS

Gas

**EEPR 2009-INTg-RF-CZ-PL**

This project is the first gas interconnection between the Czech Republic and Poland, one of the important pieces of a North-South gas corridor in Central-Eastern Europe. It allows gas to flow in both directions that is available for cross-border regions in emergency situations, as well as for reverse-flow towards Slovakia through diversification of supply routes. The EU contribution (EUR 14m) allowed a considerable improvement in the security of supply of a region vulnerable to disruptions.

**EEPR 2009-INTg-BE**

The reinforcement of the Belgium gas transport network from the German border to Zeebrugge has contributed to the development of the European gas market by providing reverse flow gas capacities on the France–United Kingdom–Belgium–Germany axis. The EU contribution (35M€) helped the project to be realised without any delays and increased the security of supply of the above mentioned axis.

**EEPR-2009-INTg-RF-CZ-01**

The project is aiming at increasing of transmission capacity through the Czech Republic by 15mcm/d in the northwest-east direction. The implementation of the Action will allow the diversification of gas supplies for the Slovak Republic, Austria, Hungary and Southern Germany (Bavaria).

**EEPR 2009-INTg-Baltic-DK**

The aim of the project is to maintain and increase gas supply to Denmark, Sweden and the Baltic region, following the decline of gas production in the Danish gas fields. It could also help to increase the security of gas supply in Central Europe, by supplying consumers with Norwegian Gas. The new infrastructure will enable better market integration, by expanding the gas transmission capacity from the entry point at Ellund, on the Danish/German border. This will also provide an operational link between the German network and the Danish transmission system.

**EEPR 2009-INTg-LNG-PL**

This project involves the construction of the infrastructure for a Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) terminal. It is composed of four parts: an LNG terminal; a docking area; a gas connection pipeline, and infrastructure providing access to the external port, including the breakwater. Once completed, it will provide an important synergy with other planned infrastructure projects. The aim of the project is to increase security of gas supply, by the diversification of suppliers, thus reducing dependency on Russian gas (currently 69% of Polish gas imports). The project will help to secure approximately 36% of the current demand for gas in Poland.

Electricity

**EEPR 2009-INTE-DE**

The interconnector Halle/Saale - Schweinfurt couples the control areas of two independent transmission system operators, namely the North-Eastern part of Germany of 50Hertz Transmission GmbH and the South-Western part of TenneT TSO GmbH. The transmission line will be mainly designed as an overhead line. The interconnector is important because it connects wind farms in Northern Sea with the main consumption centres in Germany. The expected date for the completion of the project is end 2017.

**EEPR 2009-INTe-Nordbalt01**

Nordbalt01 will transmit electricity between Sweden and Lithuania. This is one of the preconditions for the integration of future power market between the Baltic Member States and Nord Pool Spot. The new submarine cable connection will play an important role in the development of the electricity market in the Baltic Sea region.
In addition, Nordbalt will also increase the reliability of the Baltic power system while decreasing its dependency on the Russian power supply. The NordBalt01 project comprises the interconnection of the Swedish and Lithuanian electricity systems by a High Voltage Direct current submarine and land cable with a capacity of 700MW. The general outline of the project is to allow power to be transmitted between the Swedish and Lithuanian electricity transmission systems. The project is being implemented by the Swedish and Lithuanian TSOs. The completion of the project is anticipated by mid-2016.

**EEPR 2009-INTe-Nordbalt02**

In line with the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP) roadmap, the Baltic States will introduce an electricity market based on NordPool principles. It is necessary to develop infrastructure in order to provide possibility for external market players to join the electricity market in the Baltic States. Thus it is necessary to develop Baltic interconnection with other EU countries: Sweden, Finland and Poland. In addition to this it is necessary to develop internal infrastructure in order to provide possibility for significant amount of electricity to be transferred via Baltic transmission network. Nordbalt 02 aims to remove existing bottlenecks in Riga region 330 kV transmission network and reduced loading of 110 kV Riga Ring transmission lines, which will in turn unburden the connection of new 110 kV substations in Riga to the existing 110 kV transmission network. The interconnector will significantly improve power supply reliability and security in case of emergencies and repairs to the transmission grid. It will help increase the availability and reliability of transit flow in the Latvian-Lithuanian direction and to reduce restrictions in the transmission network in that region. In addition, Nordbalt02 will establish a sufficiently reliable power transit and power flow corridor significantly increasing the reliability and efficiency of network use for the Baltic power market developments. The expected date for the completion of the project is end 2016.

**EEPR 2009-INTe-Estlink2**

The new submarine cable connection is important for the development of the electricity market in the Baltic Sea region as it will increase the electricity transmission capacity between Finland and Estonia by up to 1 000 MW. This is particularly relevant, as it is one of the preconditions for the integration of the future power market between the Baltic Member States and Nord Pool Spot. In addition, Estlink 2 will also increase the reliability of the Baltic power system while reducing its dependency on the Russian power supply. Estlink02 includes grid connections in Finland, grid reinforcements and interconnections in Estonia as well as an HVDC cable line between Finland and Estonia. The rated power of the planned Estlink 2 HVDC interconnection will be 650MW with a DC voltage of 450 kV. The HVDC section will consist of ca 145 km HVDC submarine cable, ca 11 km HVDC underground cable in Estonia and ca 14 km HVDC overhead lines in Finland. Conventional Line Commutated Converter (LCC) technology will be used in converter stations. The project significantly contributes to the further interconnection of the Nordic and Baltic electricity market with the aim to create a common electricity market. Estlink02 is expected to finish by end 2014.

**EEPR 2009-INTe-IRL-UK**

The East-West Interconnector (EWI) project involved the construction of a High Voltage Direct Current (HVDC) cable, capable of carrying 500MW from County Meath in Ireland to Deeside in Wales (United Kingdom), and vice versa. The Project progressed very closely to schedule and was completed in due course, September 2012. Consequent commissioning tests followed to make EWI fully operational since December 2012. A very positive aspect was the permanent consultation with the public and other stakeholders, thus making possible efficient and timely management of permits. This is the first electrical interconnection between Ireland and the isle of Great Britain and is considered a European Interest Priority Project according to the guidelines of the Trans-European networks for Energy. The HVDC interconnector operates on direct current (DC) between the two converter stations. The EWI cable is approximately 256km in length, broken down into 185km of marine (under sea) cable and 71km of terrestrial cable (below ground). The converter stations turn the direct current to alternating current (AC) for onward transmission on the networks in the UK and Ireland. The EU, through the EEPR scheme, contributes up to €110,000 million (about 32% of the total).

The project will:

- enhance security of supply and diversification of sources of energy to the Irish electrical system
- underpin further all-island and regional energy market development
- facilitate the integration of wind generated energy in the system - promote further competition in the electricity market as it will allow third party access

**EEPR 2009-INTe-FR-ES**

The electricity interconnection between France and Spain, when completed by end 2014, will double the interconnection capacity between France and Spain (from 3 to 6%). The project will increase the security of the Spanish electrical system and help to reduce the likelihood of blackouts. It will allow for the integration of renewable energies produced in Spain (wind, hydro, and solar) into the European grid and expand trade between Spain and France. Following the decision of the Spanish and French authorities to underground the high voltage line after 20 years of intense opposition from the local population, the EU aid (220M€) secured the financial needs of the project which increased substantially due to the higher cost of an underground line compared to an aerial one (7 times higher).

**EEPR 2009-INTe-ES-PT**

The two electricity interconnections between Spain and Portugal (Douro and Algarve regions) aim to upgrade and extent the Portuguese electricity network to increase exchange capacities between Portugal and Spain. Since their completion in 2012, these projects have increased security of supply of the region, contributed to the development of the Iberian Electricity markets and connected the Algarve and Douro regions to sources of renewable energy. The EU contribution (46.4M€) secured the construction of the projects in a situation of financial and economic crisis where Portugal has been highly impacted.
Energy markets: Putting the consumer in the spotlight

Energy is a multi-billion euro business, but for most households it is just a commodity. For consumers, energy is just what switches the light on, heats their water or cooks their food. Therefore, consumers need reliable access to affordable energy in a consumer-friendly market environment. Is this merely an ideal or is it where Europe’s energy market is actually heading to? Is it also the fundamental priority for Europe’s energy sector?

What is the reality for energy consumers?

When it comes to signing up to an energy supplier, millions of consumers in countries such as Greece, Bulgaria, Romania, Cyprus or Malta do not have the choice between different suppliers or else it is an extremely limited one. For those millions of consumers, a liberalised, competitive EU market is nothing but a theory.

In countries such as Spain, Portugal, Italy, Belgium or France, many European consumers, although the market has liberalised to a degree, still do not reap the benefits promised to them such as downward pressure on prices and better services due to competing suppliers.

There are countries such as the UK, Finland, The Netherlands and Sweden in which liberalisation has actually delivered real competition. Unfortunately however, competition does not solve all consumer issues and the level of consumer satisfaction is often low. A recent European Commission study concluded that two-thirds of consumers are dissatisfied with their suppliers.

Energy services are very important for consumers for obvious reasons. Nonetheless, the need to champion the importance of making energy more affordable for all European citizens, without exception and in particular for those in vulnerable situations, is ongoing. For instance, the reality for many Lithuanian consumers is living on a €300 salary and €200 gas bill per month. Winters are particularly difficult.

Finally, important issues for consumers such as understandable billing, ease of switching, accessing redress or price comparison tools are still commonplace problems. The study mentioned above cites 72% of consumers being unhappy with how their complaints are treated and 50% of consumers surveyed say they are unaware of how much electricity they consume.

Our vision for the future of energy consumers

Together with the Council of European Energy Regulators (CEER), we identified a number of general principles which we want the sector to enact and which inspired a Joint CEER/BEUC 2020 Vision for Europe’s energy customers.

The sector is embarking on a period of profound change in the way energy is produced, transported, commercialised and consumed. As the sector undergoes transformations on many levels, consumers must not be left behind, but placed at the centre of our collective thinking. The Joint Vision outlines the pillars on which the energy sector should firmly stand vis-à-vis its consumers. These pillars are reliability; affordability; simplicity; protection and empowerment.

Reliability means the supply of energy is always there when consumers need it, even more importantly during cold winters. Consumers need to be able to trust their energy suppliers and know they are looking after their supply while doing their utmost to provide quality customer care when required.

Affordability is key as it is an essential service in consumers’ lives. In every European country there is a vast number of consumers who believe energy prices are too high, while too many are struggling to pay their bills. Energy prices should reflect the real cost of production.

As we move towards a more sustainable society, of new infrastructure and where renewables are the norm, not the exception, investment costs should be fairly distributed across different levels of the value chain.

Simplicity because being an energy consumer can never be a full-time job. Consumers must receive information about their consumption in a simple manner, by easy-to-use and accessible means. It must be easy to understand bills and manage energy consumption using available technologies. It should also be simple to switch operators,
while new technologies such as smart metering should not be imposed.

In terms of protection and empowerment, the holy grail of consumer policy, it means that consumers must be harboured against unfair commercial practices, abusive contract terms, misleading advertising, aggressive marketing etc.

The balance of power in the energy market must also be set right. Consumers must be sufficiently empowered as market actors by being able to choose their preferred operator, defend their rights, vote with their feet when dissatisfied and obtain redress where damage has been done or detriment suffered.

Many BEUC members are now leading the charge on this front with collective switching campaigns, a new way to persuade energy companies to be more competitive and adjust to consumers’ wishes.

A smart future?

These pillars can lay the foundations of a consumer-centred energy sector. But while these foundations are still far from being achieved, the sector’s attention seems to be more often interested in promises about a ‘smart energy future’ involving smart grids, smart consumers, smart consumption and all this thanks to smart meters.

Smart meters are at the forefront of a misguided effort to address the existing problems with the wrong cure. If EU legislators and Europe’s energy companies were to be believed, smart meters are indispensable for energy consumers.

Smart meters are currently en vogue and this comes as no surprise. They represent a multi-billion euro market and so many companies hope to secure a share.

Beyond the production, sale and installation of smart meters, the energy sector hopes to cash in on them with more effective grid management, easier (dis)connection of customers or reduced meter reading expenditure.

But, the biggest beneficiary would be the energy consumer. Or at least so we are told. The argument put forward by smart meter industry groups and the European Commission alike is that of energy savings. Households with smart meters would be able to reduce their energy consumption level by at least 10% thanks to the availability of real-time consumption data.

Contradicting this wave of enthusiasm almost feels like heresy, but our own data suggests that energy savings of 2-3% are more realistic, and they will not in the end materialise for all consumers. The main reason for such diverging numbers is that smart meter advocates make overly optimistic estimations of consumers’ ability to change behaviour.

Let’s be clear: installing smart meters will not lead to automatic savings. Reducing consumption will heavily depend on how much we use the smart meter and how much we modify our habits, for instance at what time of day we use the washing machine. On this point, more realism is urgently needed.

For many of us the topic of energy does not trigger much excitement. Even those who engage from the beginning and change habits might relapse to their old attitudes when even the fanciest smart meter loses its attraction. Our principles of simplicity and empowerment outlined will not be addressed by merely installing smart devices in peoples’ homes.

Unfortunately, there are more reasons to be cautious. There are unanswered questions on the protection and security of data. That smart meters collect personal information such as details on what electric appliances are used and when, or consumption patterns which allow companies to predict how many people live in a home or when a family is on holidays, all present an important privacy challenge. Such data protection concerns and in particular the issue of where consumers’ personal data is stored have not been resolved.

There is no such thing as a free lunch – smart meters are expensive and have a considerably lower life expectancy than conventional meters. Inevitably the consumer will face the bill. But is this fair when businesses are expected to profit most?

Consumer organisations are not against a smarter energy future and achieving energy efficiency through new technologies. In fact, consumer groups throughout Europe have campaigned relentlessly to receive better information on our energy consumption.

What we ask for is that everyone involved takes a step back and carefully considers what measures would really help consumers and fix existing problems in the energy market. And where there are investments and new costs involved, they should be split fairly between all involved.

An outlook of sustainability

It is in all our interests to construct a more sustainable society, one which takes care of generations to come and strikes the right balance of values, economic and environmental interests.

We all know the transition to a sustainable future cannot happen without energy consumers. Therefore it is crucial the pillars outlined above are turned into a reality for all.

Only by defending consumer rights, empowering them and fostering their trust can we ensure they will engage effectively in energy markets, learn how to be more energy efficient and trust those who provide energy to their homes.

This is not a push which consumer organisations and regulators can do on their own – it needs the collaboration of policymakers, industry and regulators.
Smart Grids: Technology Challenges and Opportunities

By SD Ramchurn, A Rogers, NR Jennings, and D Nicholson, University of Southampton

Smart grids are electricity networks that intelligently monitor, communicate, and control the actions of generators and consumers in order to deliver sustainable, economic, and secure electricity supply. This vision poses technology challenges in core areas such as power-systems engineering, telecommunications, network security, and artificial intelligence (AI).

The AI challenge is to deliver the “smarts” into smart grids – algorithms and software that solve complex problems involving the interaction between multiple self-interested actors (e.g. generators and consumers). These tools must be capable of efficient and reliable operation despite the significant amounts of uncertainty and dynamism that exist throughout the grids.

Following a brief introduction to AI, in particular the sub-field of AI known as Multi-Agent Systems (MAS), this article presents four smart grid technology challenge areas: smart homes, electric vehicles, smart distribution networks, and energy co-operatives. The article outlines how MAS can address these challenges and in doing so provide opportunities for the benefit of smart grids to be realised by consumers, suppliers, and society at large.

AI and Agents

AI is the branch of computer science concerned with the study and development of intelligent agents and software, an agent being a system that perceives its environment and takes informed actions. Within AI, the sub-field of multi-agent systems (MAS) concerns multiple actors, distinct stakeholders, and interactions that involve co-operation, co-ordination and negotiation. These concerns are particularly aligned with the distributed intelligence, automation, and information exchange needs of the smart grid. In particular, MAS research focuses on the relevant problems of how to provide automated assistance to users in complex decision making tasks, how to allocate resources efficiently under competing demands, and how to co-ordinate decentralised systems. The next sections make an explicit connection between MAS and smart grids by considering how MAS could be used to solve specific challenges arising in four key components of smart grid systems.

Smart Homes

Smart homes, equipped with smart meters, will provide domestic energy users with real-time cost and carbon emission feedback. This presents consumers with the opportunity to better understand and control their energy consumption. However, home-owners already grapple with the complexity of the feedback and advice provided by such meters and this issue is likely to be exacerbated when more complex tariffs are introduced.

Software agents can improve the utility of smart meters by autonomously modelling the home and providing energy advice. For example, the agents can learn a thermal model of the home and combine it with a prediction of external factors (e.g. air temperature, carbon intensity of grid electricity) to optimise heating and provide feedback to consumers. MAS technology can also help consumers to break down their total energy consumption into individual appliances, empowering them to take steps toward reducing their consumption. For example, one step a consumer may take in this regard is to partially shift the daytime loads of certain appliances (washing machine, dishwasher, or tumble drier) to night time.

In practice there must be interaction between software agents and human agents (householders) to deliver benefit through the automated management of home appliances to take advantage of real-time pricing tariffs. The software agents need to explicitly model the householders they interact with, knowing when to act autonomously and when to seek approval for their decisions to shift loads or to turn them off. This is particularly important if the aim is to elicit behaviour change in householders by appropriately tailoring the feedback that agents provide.

Electric Vehicles

The projected numbers of electric vehicles (EVs) on UK roads in coming years will place a significant extra load on the electricity grid infrastructure. Smart approaches will be needed to schedule the charging of EVs given the fluctuating demands on the grid imposed by the movement and charging of vehicles within it, and the variable supply of renewable energy.

Agent technology can help to meet this challenge by drawing on methods for prediction under uncertainty and online mechanism design. Uncertainty arises in the behaviours of large numbers of EVs and their impact on the grid. Software agents can mine data such as network load information and traffic information to predict future movements of consumers to specific locations. Given these predictions, MAS techniques can be used to elicit users’ travel requirements, schedule the charging of their EVs, and suggest peak and dynamic pricing to shift demand across a city.

In more detail, agents can predict individual users’ EV charging needs based on data about their daily activities and travel needs. For example, they may predict aggregate EV charging demands at different points in the network given the continuous movement of EVs, the available charge in their batteries, and the social activities of the users. The MAS techniques coordinate where, when and for how long the EVs are charged, in order to satisfy the predicted needs of users and maximise profits generated from participating in discharging back into the grid.

Smart Distribution Networks

The widespread deployment of renewable generators (e.g. solar panels, wind turbines, and biomass combined heat and power), and the constrained capacity of existing infrastructure, suggest that flows within the grid will have to be actively managed to make optimal use of renewable generation without overloading the network. Moreover, this resource management problem must be solved on a scale that can accommodate millions of loads and generators.

This challenge can be met by representing or managing each generator in terms of its own autonomous agents within the physical
The Attract-SEE project started in October 2012 and will end in September 2014. It involves 10 partners, an EU Associated Strategic Partner and 8 Observers from 9 countries of South East Europe.

Effective territorial monitoring system of territorial capital assets and better coordination among different development and sectoral policies are basic conditions for achieving territorial cohesion and territorial development goals on transnational, national, regional and local level. The South East-Europe project ATTRACTION-SEE will support policy makers to achieve better coordination of territorial attractiveness policies – based upon place-specific assets – as well as their implementation and evaluation.

The aim of the project is to establish a framework concept of territorial attractiveness at SEE scale as well as to develop tools useful for policy makers to enhance the quality of decisions concerning territorial cohesion and growth.

Firstly, a common territorial monitoring framework will be established, based upon a shared concept of “territorial attractiveness” as well as upon its assets. The objective is to create a model of a monitoring system suited to the needs of policy and decision makers, in view to provide outputs useful for supporting policy development and implementation. Through the establishment of a shared system of indicators, the model will then be applied to monitor territorial quality and attractiveness. Secondly, a policy coordination process will be designed, promoting, supporting and actively moderating participation and involvement of policy and decision makers from different sectors and administrative levels.

Defining territorial attractiveness and a set of common indicators at transnational level
Firstly, we defined territorial attractiveness. Territorial attractiveness grounds on a mobility concept and implies the capacity of a place to attract and retain subjects from other places, due to its advantageous features.

Based on defined attractiveness we defined indicators for territorial monitoring on transnational level. The indicators that were not included at the transnational level can still be used in the list of indicators at national level or in a Project Partner’s wish list for each country/region.

Preparation of territorial quality and attractiveness report for each involved region/state
Selected attractiveness indicators for territorial monitoring on transnational level will be one of the inputs for preparation of territorial quality and attractiveness reports for each involved region/state and also for Common Territorial Monitoring Framework (CTMF). Separate territorial reports will be carried out in different pilot areas. Territorial reports will be prepared on the basis of available indicators and on the basis of existing national/regional analysis in the field of territorial attractiveness and quality. In the report indicators and analyses will be interpreted in a clear and simple way.

Reports will be prepared for policy and decision makers and other stakeholders as a support in decision or policy making process on regional, national and transnational level.

The design of common territorial monitoring framework (CTMF)
This framework gives general directions for building up a fully operational territorial monitoring system on regional or state allowing to further develop and complete it following their specific needs. The development of the framework will be complemented through workshops with stakeholders, their needs will be gathered and the framework will be adjusted accordingly.

Project stakeholder involvement and policy coordination
The establishment of a permanent policy coordination network and a continuous policy coordination process in each country/region and on transnational level are very important for project implementation.

The main result of policy coordination process is the improvement of dialogue among policy makers and among different public policies resulting in better coordinated policies and their implementation.

Policy makers and stakeholders involvement in the project work is crucial for the success of project results. The policy coordination process is expected to result in a more long term coordination network of policy makers and stakeholders. To support the activities a policy coordination handbook has been prepared as guide for experts for territorial development in establishing stakeholder networks. This document defined the strategy for involving stakeholders. Stakeholder involvement is being implemented at national workshops where project results are being verified and discussed with stakeholders. In such way project and stakeholders benefit the expert knowledge and experiences in the field of territorial monitoring.

Such a concept of stakeholder involvement will enable regular verification of intermediate results and will strengthen the stakeholder networks.
Centralab – Living Labs: Generation of Collaboration across Europe

Not long ago, the term ‘Living Lab’ wasn’t even in our vocabulary, because there was very little cohesion between public institutions, SMEs and end-users. Not anymore. With Web 2.0 solutions and the Living Lab concept, we will assess if active participation of end users can create innovative processes and solution in the field of Ecotouristic services, Climate change, eHealth, Energy efficiency, environment & education, media & creativity, mobility, Rural development, Waste management and SME-networks.

Centralab is based on an approach that has emerged in the arena of ICT under the name “Living Lab”. In this model, technology R&D brings infrastructures into real-life contexts to enable a “co-design” process with end users. This method ensures greater relevance and faster time to market for R&D results, as demonstrated by the 345 Living Labs in the ENoLL network (www.openlivinglabs.eu). The specific objective of CentraLab is to apply the Living Lab approach transversally across a broad range of policy fields relevant to Central European regional development, constructing a multi-level governance network for a trans-national Central European Living Lab. It thus contributes to “enhance the framework conditions for innovation” (Area P 1.1), particularly in the organisational and policy dimensions of a new methodological research infrastructure.

- 8 collaborating countries
- 10 transnational partners working together
- Transforming Central Europe into a broad-reaching laboratory for innovation and competitiveness
- “Co-design” process with end users
- New policy framework for Knowledge Economy

10 pilot initiatives are:

**Slovenia:** Ecotouristic services - With Web 2.0 solutions and the Living Lab concept, we will assess if collaboration of tourists and tourist service providers can result in a co-creation of new innovative touristical services.

**Italy:** Climate change – We will become a point of reference for Municipalities for the implementation of energy saving projects.

**Poland:** Micro-SME-networks – We are focused on creating a network of entrepreneurs (mainly SMEs and micro-companies) whose offer or needs are related to the widely understood issue of design.

**Italy:** eHealth – We will introduce eHealth services that facilitate access to healthcare, whatever the geographical location, thanks to innovative telemedicine and personal health systems.

**Slovenia:** Energy efficiency – We will enable users to now be able to see the direct impact on their overall economic value when they choose to make their buildings/homes more energy efficient.

**Czech Republic:** Environment & Education – We are focused on providing educational material to the environmental sector. We will develop a catalogue of existing educational products oriented to environment and its protection.

**Germany:** Media & creativity – With the project „mobile usability lab“ we will create a usability platform for testing user-oriented functionality of new websites, web applications and mobile Apps.

**Austria:** Mobility – We will create a sustainable ecosystem for innovation in the e-mobility sector in the Vorarlberg region in cooperation with the electric car trial VLOTTE in Vorarlberg, Austria.

**Slovakia:** Rural development - Knowledge networking has become an essential management task. Our purpose is to share knowledge and experience of individual experts as a basis for generating viable innovations and enabling organizations to achieve constant advancement.

**Hungary:** Waste management – We aim to find, ground and establish a system where ecological, economical and public administration requirements can be harmonized. Collection and processing of waste is not only an environmental question but should also be beneficial from a business point of view.

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**Project:** CentraLab – Central European Living Lab for Territorial Innovation
**ERDF funding:** € 2 515 464
**Duration:** 2011 – 2014
**Project Website:** www.centralivinglab.eu
Social innovation, a growing but as yet little understood concept in Croatia

Social innovation is a relatively new concept in Croatia and the broader Western Balkan region. We at Social Innovation Laboratory, (www.socinnovationlab.org), understand social innovation as new strategies, concepts, ideas, processes, business models, tools and methodologies or a combination of all that meet social needs. It is also change in the relationship between service providers and users, public authorities and other stakeholders and between human and physical capital. We also recognize that the relationship between Non-profit, Public and Private (for-profit) sectors impacts how stakeholders view the role of philanthropic, (social), business in society, and how those relationships and views will effect social innovations development.

The majority of innovation development activity in Croatia is currently taking place in the business sector and academia and through projects financed by the pre-ascension and now structural and investment funds in the fields of science and technology, R&D, innovation, SME competitiveness. However, “social innovation” as a broad concept is still not well understood and has not yet been recognized as an umbrella platform for bridging sectors, addressing needs in a more responsible and multidisciplinary way, or as a means of creating economic value while generating societal benefits. It has yet to develop as an area that receives targeted funding support. However, aspects of social innovation such as social entrepreneurship and social inclusion are mentioned in the programming, (strategic documents), and among funding priorities (e.g. measures with particular attention given to equal opportunities and social entrepreneurship, strengthening entrepreneurial learning etc.), which is, while smaller in scope and social impact, a step in the right direction.

As in Europe, one of the biggest challenges that Croatia is facing related to social innovation is identifying efforts that meet established criteria, both in terms of impact as well as methodology. This has various knock off effects in that it inhibits trans-national partnerships and slows regional networking by actors that promote innovative, community-based solutions, which prevents the sharing of experiences and best practices between even the strongest of organizations. Part of this is due to the lack of broad recognition and poor understanding of the concept as a whole, but also, many social innovators often do not recognize themselves as such and as a result do not promote relevant practices. The compound effect of these problems complicates defining socio-economic challenges, creating a baseline for mapping social innovation and then defining methods for promoting those practices to broader public. Despite lack of methodologies and indicators for measuring and mapping, there are in fact a surprising number of social innovations and social innovators that should be further promoted and supported in Croatia and the region. Supporting this, in cooperation with the private university VERN’, SIL has initiated a course focusing on creative learning and social businesses that is the first of its kind in the region, bringing together private, civil and academic sectors in advancing social innovation.

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About Social Innovation Laboratory (SIL)
SIL is a regional hybrid organization registered in Croatia but working throughout the western Balkans, dedicated to supporting and developing social innovation. As social innovation is already underway in Europe and worldwide through networks such as Social Innovation Exchange and Euclid Network, SIL has already built relationships that includes participation as a partner in EU projects, specifically the recently approved “Social Innovation: Driving Force of Social Change”, SI-DRIVE, a research project examining social innovation on a global perspective, (with 26 partners from Europe and other regions of the world). The project is funded through the FP7 program and is set to start in January 2014.

The overall goal of SIL is to act as a regional leader, providing a platform for social innovations advancement, where knowledge, ideas and practices meet to find solutions for development challenges in the region. Current focus is on identifying and promoting cross-cutting, innovative initiatives and practices, which demand cross-sector cooperation, and provide innovative policy recommendations based on contextual, evidence-based analysis and research.
With the adoption of the EU Floods Directive 2007/60/EC, EU Member States sharing transnational river basins are requested to join their efforts and coordinate their activities aiming at a more effective and integrated flood risk management.

The river Danube is, with its 2,857 km length, the second largest river in Europe. About 83 M million people live in the Danube basin, which covers territory in 19 countries. Thus the river Danube is a considerable challenge among the major EU rivers to which the requirement of the EU Flood Directive mentioned above has to be applied.

In order to face this special challenge, the ETC SEE project DANUBE FLOODRISK (www.danube-floodrisk.eu) was initiated. The overall aim was to develop and produce stakeholder-oriented hazard and risk maps for the Danube floodplains, in order to provide adequate risk information for water management, spatial planning and the general public.

Different pilot projects were conducted within DANUBE FLOODRISK, providing recommendations for stakeholder involvement in flood risk mapping, and aiming to give transnational guidance for flood risk information.

The chosen flood scenarios, the flood simulations, hazard and risk mapping, and stakeholder involvement activities and results brought into focus the range of possible different flood risk management measures. But decision makers should be convinced on the usefulness of the proposed investments based on certain aspects such as humanitarian, social, environmental, and economic considerations.

Cost–benefit and multi-criteria analysis could be useful tools in this respect for the comparison of the different proposed interventions. This is the importance of the follow-up project – the Flood CBA – which highlights the best European practice in Cost Benefit Analysis and results.

Flood CBA project is an initiative co-funded by the Civil Protection Financial Instrument of the European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection – ECHO. It aims to establish a sustainable Knowledge Platform for the use of stakeholders dealing with the Cost-Benefit Analysis (CBA) of flood risk management measures in the context of the different socio-economic environments within the EU.

The project is being undertaken by a consortium of six partners: SIGMA Consultants (Lead Partner) from Greece, the Flood Hazard Research Center at Middlesex University (UK), The National Institute of Hydrology and Water Management (Romania), the Research Centre for Geography and Regional Planning, University Nova de Lisboa (Portugal), the University of Kassel (Germany), and the University Pablo de Olavide (Spain).

The partners have identified their areas of investigation either at a regional or a national level. The Danube basin was established as a pilot area on behalf of the Romanian National Institute of Hydrology and Water Management.

The consortium intends to assess the baseline conditions underpinning the implementation of the economic appraisal of flood prevention measure. It will create flexible Knowledge Exchange Networks ensuring the active involvement and cooperation of target stakeholder groups. As a main output an IT tool, in the form of Knowledge Base Platform, will be established which will include and make available to stakeholders the cost-benefit and multi-criteria analysis approaches and methodologies used in flood risk management, as well as case studies and examples of best practices. Guidelines will be developed for competent authorities on how to take into account cost and benefit aspects as well as social and environmental criteria during the compilation of a flood risk management plan.

Flood CBA has a duration of 24 months starting from the 1st of January 2013 until the 31st of December 2014. Further information is provided in the project’s website, www.floodcba.eu.
ClusterCOOP Project is a first time ever endeavour of a Hungarian Ministry (the Ministry for National Economy) to lead manage a project within the framework of the EU European Regional Development Fund’s Central Europe Programme. It is done in partnership with the Czech and the Slovak ministries of economy their respective background institutions, the CzechInvest and the Slovak Innovation and Energy Agency, the Italian Region of Piedmont, the University of Ljubljana, the Polish city of Rzeszów, MAG Hungarian Economic Development Centre and INNO AG from Baden Württemberg.

The ambitious 3 year project beginning April 2011 has a general objective to help clusters better exploit their innovation capacities and improve their competitiveness so that in the long term, their development and effective cooperation improves the position of the CE Region in the European Economic Area. Considering common challenges the Partnership defined specific objectives aiming at enhancing framework conditions for efficient transnational cooperation among their countries and regions in three fields, namely:

1. Enhance existing and create new synergies among national/regional cluster policies and funding frameworks;
2. Facilitate emerging industry development through cross regional cluster cooperation and
3. Promote the flow of information between, and provide a common knowledge base for clusters of CE to facilitate their networking and cooperation.

The above objectives are achieved through the following main project results: a set of common proposals pertaining to:

1. optimisation and harmonisation of national regulatory frameworks with regards to transnational cluster cooperation,
2. the alignment and integration of different funding schemes, including measures and modifications leading to more innovative and efficient practices,
3. promotion of the development of emerging industry through cross regional/border cluster cooperation,
4. setting up a joint Central European cluster qualification system; and finally the establishment of a Virtual Interactive Platform helped by an international network of Cluster Contact Points providing extended knowledge of clusters within Central Europe on the possibilities and framework of transnational cooperation.

Given that clusters provide conditions conducive to innovation they remain fundamental in promoting new ideas, leveraging economic growth potential thereby creating or increasing their excellence by way of creating linkages (e.g. networking) with other relevant stakeholders and exploiting complementarities, which makes them the best suited organisations for achieving collective impact. Hence when the task of establishing Smart Specialisation Strategies based on Research and Innovation Strategies is on the agenda as new approach to economic development involving targeted support for research and innovation the results of ClusterCOOP feed in swiftly to the process thus helping decision makers on all levels.
Making Traditional Markets Central to our Cities Again

The current decline of traditional markets is a concern for Central European local authorities. Markets, once the backbone of towns and city centres, are suffering from increasingly competitive commercial centres.

CENTRAL MARKETS rediscovers and enhances markets as an engine for the development of urban districts by developing transnational governance and revitalisation strategies for city markets.

CENTRAL MARKETS project, co-financed by the EU through the Central Europe Programme and led by the City of Venice, involves 9 partners cooperating for the enhancement of competitiveness for the cities involved by means of new and innovative market revitalisation concepts.

The project, started on 1 July 2012 aims at developing and implementing effective strategies for the revitalisation and promotion of traditional markets, which are highly considered for their economic, social and cultural role in the territories concerned by the project. Building on the shared assumption that markets remain fundamental places of economic animation, source of employment and integration, the CENTRAL MARKETS partnership is willing to collaborate in order to improve market governance and related services, adopt efficient communication strategies for markets and develop innovative concepts for the creation of new markets in urban and peri-urban areas.

To achieve these goals the project envisages four main actions:

• Research Activities on Central Europe markets
• Planning and implementation of Pilot Actions
• Consolidation of existing and new networks
• Political Strategy and Commitment

The research activities focused on the assessment of relevant EU/national legislations and policies, the collation of quantitative and qualitative data on markets and on their governance system providing a transnational state of the art picture of city and regional markets in Central Europe. A Draft Strategy stems from the research and analysis phase aiming at outlining policy recommendations to animate and revitalise traditional markets in urban and regional contexts. In order to test the effectiveness of proposed revitalisation strategies, 8 Pilot Actions are currently being implemented in the 8 partners’ cities/regions in Central Europe. Results of Pilot implementation will lead to the adoption and dissemination of the final Common Transnational Strategy which will be also supported by a joint political commitment. This final document will illustrate an innovative and integrated approach to market management and promotion and it will be addressed to policy makers and stakeholders in Central Europe and beyond.

To reinforce the project’s transnational cooperation and ensure proper transferability of project results and activities, CENTRAL MARKETS will constantly work for the reinforcement of existing networks of markets at EU level. Transnational exchanges will help exploring new ways to enhance markets’ role in cities/regions and increase market management capacities.

At the end of the project, the partnership aims to achieve the following results:

• Shared knowledge on Central Europe markets
• Raised awareness on the existing gaps in the integration of trade services and retail framework policies
• Effective cooperation among relevant stakeholders for the implementation of local pilot activities
• Strengthened market governance in urban and regional areas involved
• Consolidated network of partner cities and regions benefiting from mutual learning
• Enhancement of political commitment for effective market revitalisation in Central Europe
The Project
CURE stands for ‘Creative Urban Renewal in Europe’. It is an EU-funded project (INTERREG IVB NWE) which aims to facilitate triggered growth of the creative economy in decayed urban areas in medium-sized cities in Northwest-Europe. This will be done by developing and testing the innovative transnational model ‘Creative Zone Innovator’ to plan and to develop creative zones. The project brings together 7 project partners in Germany, Belgium, France, the Netherlands and the UK.

The CURE Mission
CURE will drive the regeneration of urban areas in North-West Europe by using the pioneering Creative Zone Innovator model to support creative businesses and nurture entrepreneurialism.

Facts:
Funding: INTERREG IVB NWE
Lifetime: 02 / 2011 – 12 / 2013

Project Partners:
- Stadt Hagen (Lead Partner), DE
- Stad Brugge, BE
- Colchester Borough Council, UK
- Stadt Dinslaken, DE
- Grundstücksgesellschaft Kettwig Stausee mbH & CO.KG, DE
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Open Days 11th European Week of Regions and Cities

By Simon Gillon, Managing Editor, Government Gazette

Open Days is by now a well and truly established annual feature in the calendar of anyone involved in regional policy and in the implementation of regional development projects in the European Union.

Every October, thousands of delegates come together in the Committee of the Regions main offices in Rue Belliard to participate in seminars, discussions, meetings and cultural events, or to showcase their particular region or project.

It is a really great and interesting event, highlighting both the diversity of Europe’s regions and nations, as well as showcasing the driving force from the centre in Brussels, the Committee of the Regions itself, which co-ordinates so much independent and inspired activity across the continent, for the benefit of its citizens and the improvement of the quality of their lives and their living standards.

This year, the event takes place from Monday 7th – Thursday 10th October. It is the 11th European Week of Regions and Cities.

The 2013 working sessions are distributed as follows:

- 25 workshops/debates organised by regional partnerships, i.e. consortia of regions and/or cities
- 34 workshops/debates organised by the Regional and Urban Policy Directorate General of the European Commission
- 34 workshops hosted in the Committee of the Regions’ premises, known as the ‘Meeting Place’
- 8 ‘Open Days University’ seminars on the theme ‘Challenges and solutions’.

This year, regions and cities will be finalising preparations for the 2014-2020 cohesion policy, rural development and fisheries programmes. The event will offer EU institutions, managing authorities and final beneficiaries a chance to exchange and network on new approaches even before the new operational programmes (OPs) are implemented in 2014.

Regions and cities will also be able to present the results of their 2007-2013 EU-funded programmes and projects, showcasing the impact these have on regional development, i.e. contributing to smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Open Days 2013 thematic priorities

Marking the new timeline towards the Europe 2020 strategy, the Open Days 2013 will be held under the slogan ‘Europe’s regions and cities taking off for 2020’. 

Workshops will address one of the following themes:

1. Managing change 2014-2020: Workshops will present and discuss innovative approaches to the implementation of the 2014-2020 thematic priorities. Practitioners, academics and EU institutions and regional experts would share their experience on the new elements in the implementation of the 2014-2020 programmes (e.g. integrated territorial investment, the joint action plans, governance issues, features of the new performance framework, financial instruments, simplified cost options, etc.).

2. Synergies and cooperation: Identifying how to cooperate, coordinate and ensure synergies between different EU and national and regional policies and sources of funding will be the discussed here. This includes synergies between cohesion policy objectives. Approaches to cooperation such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation and macro-regional strategies could also be presented, as well as examples of sound cooperation between national, regional and city administrations and expert institutions.

3. Challenges and solutions: Every European region and city is facing challenges that it finds hard to deal with on its own. But solutions to improve people’s quality of life exist throughout Europe and elsewhere. They can be shared and perhaps adapted to different regional and urban contexts. Workshops will aim at presenting practical solutions to common regional and urban challenges, e.g.: SMEs’ access to credit and to the global markets, youth unemployment, demographic challenges, waste, water and natural risks management, congestion, pollution or high energy consumption.

As always, there are also several side events, taking place away from the main event itself.

Full details of these can be found on the Open Days website at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2013/side_events.cfm

Also, the huge range of locally organised events across the whole of the European Union, is listed by country on the website at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2013/localevents_map.cfm

This gives a good idea of the degree of involvement and interest that exists, both from the point of view of organisers, and also participants and local beneficiaries, in the range of activities carried out under the umbrella of the Committee of the Regions, and it enables participation in the overall event by thousands more citizens across the continent, who are not able to make it to Brussels for the week.

The other elements of the event in Brussels are the Open Days University, and the 100 EUrban Solutions exhibition, which is on display all over the EU quarter of Brussels, and which is hosting networking activities in the evening of Tuesday 8th October.

Full details of all the activities are to be found on the event’s official website at http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/conferences/od2013/index.cfm
Solidarity’ is one of those oft-quoted words in the European policy-making sphere - its over-use perhaps diluting the force of its meaning. However what is certain is that nothing embodies the idea of European solidarity better that the EU’s regional policy.

The basic idea is a simple one: to reduce differences in economic development between rich countries and poor countries - or more specifically rich and poor regions. But the EU’s regional spending - which is set to account for just under 40% of the EU budget between 2014 and 2020, is not actually the result of pure altruism.

Although the EU’s regional development fund dates back to the 1970s, the cohesion fund - the money destined for Europe’s poorest regions - was in fact created as a counterweight to (or payback for) the birth of the single market and Economic and Monetary Union in the early 1990s.

Everyone knew that the single market was going to benefit Europe’s economic heartland disproportionately, favouring south east England, the Benelux countries, the Paris basin, southern Scandinavia, southern Germany and northern Italy. Furthermore, Economic and Monetary Union required budgetary and fiscal criteria which poorer countries would struggle to meet.

So a deal was done. It was decided that a large chunk of the EU budget should transfer money from this rich ‘core’ to the poorer ‘periphery’. Just as progressive taxation is used to redistribute wealth from the rich to the poor in any individual country, the same principle was applied to European regions.

The emphasis on regions and not countries is an important one, as the money is never supposed simply to flow into national treasures. And even in some of the EU’s richer countries, such as Germany and the UK, there are regions such as Saxony or Cornwall, the very tip of my South West England constituency, which receive a considerable amount of EU support.

Turning to the present day, regional policy is as important as ever. With Greece going one way and Germany the other, differences in economic development, or ‘disparities’ as they are known in Brussels, are becoming more and more pronounced.

As things stand the plan is for about €322 million to go to the EU’s cohesion policy between 2014 and 2020, down from €354 million in the last seven year spending period. Although it sounds like a big cut, cohesion actually got a proportionally smaller cut than other parts of the multiannual financial framework - infrastructure investment, the EU’s external spending and research were all far bigger losers.

This is in large part thanks to the ‘Friends of Cohesion’ group of enlargement countries that got together during the negotiations to protect the EU’s regional policy spending. It worked - one of the first things European Council President Herman Van Rompuy did when he took over the MFF negotiations was to make an overall cut to all areas of spending - pleasing no one - and then bring cohesion up again to bring the ‘Friends’ on board.

This round of negotiations on the rules governing how regional funds are spent is also, thanks to the Lisbon Treaty, the first time the European Parliament has had co-decision power over structural and cohesion funds. This means that Parliament has a say equal to that of the Council in how the money is allocated. As this newspaper was going to press, the European Parliament and the Council were still battling it out in ‘trilogue’ negotiations.

The key sticking points in the talks are the rules surrounding an extra 5% of money awarded for good results called a ‘performance reserve’ and the possible suspension of funding for countries that do not follow the EU’s macro-economic policies - the latter is being fiercely resisted by the European Parliament.

Also for the first time local - as opposed to regional - government will have more of a role in spending the funds, in an attempt to bring decisions down to the lowest level, to the people who really know their area.

And this year is also important because 2013 is the year that the EU’s transition regions will cease to get EU regional policy money - a ploy invented after the 2004 enlargement to slowly ease the middle income parts of the old member states off cohesion money. (One downside of cohesion spending is that it creates a culture of ‘donor’ and ‘recipient’ states in EU budget negotiations, and no matter what side they are on, all see it as ‘theirs’ money.)

Though it represents only 0.5% of the EU’s GDP, the EU’s regional policy is a noble achievement. It was and is an expression of basic economic solidarity first between North and South, and now East and West, that puts the rhetoric into action - puts the EU’s money where its mouth is. Long may that continue.
Taking off for 2020 – Europe's Regions and Cities make it Happen

By Ramón Luis Valcárcel Siso, President of the EU Committee of the Regions

In 2014, EU cohesion policy will take off for a new period and see the launch of about 320 national and regional programmes in the 28 Member States, worth about EUR 325 billion of EU funding to be spent by 2020. All 272 regions of the EU will have to manage programmes that aim to make our economies more competitive, create jobs for the unemployed and help Europeans, in particular young people, to find their way into the labour market. These programmes have to be “smart, sustainable and inclusive” and Europe’s regions are currently striving to make that happen: for the benefit of everybody, wherever they live in the EU, with a focus on the less-developed regions.

That’s what EU cohesion policy is about: ensuring that people and places can profit from a unified Union and that nobody is left behind.

Over the past months, the EU institutions have negotiated the budget and the conditions of a reformed cohesion policy. In the midst of crisis, these discussions have not always been easy and are in fact not yet concluded at the time of writing. Agreement on the EU budget for 2014–2020 was reached before the summer break, but details of the implementation of EU cohesion policy are still to be adopted by the European Parliament and the Council.

During the debate, the Committee of the Regions has been the voice of Europe’s regions and cities. We have supported several new elements such as the policy’s alignment with the Europe 2020 strategy. We have, however, in agreement with the European Parliament, been critical of other elements of the reform and have, for example, advocated making the administration of the European Structural and Investment Funds simpler.

What counts in the end is the delivery of results on common objectives, and they can be achieved in different ways in different regions. Our most important concern, again in agreement with our colleagues from the EP, is still on the negotiation table. It concerns the proposal of “macro-economic conditionality” and the suspension of EU funds where Member States do not comply with rules and recommendations in the context of the so-called European Semester and better economic and financial governance. We are not convinced that regions and cities should pay the bill for issues that are potentially beyond their influence because they are dealt with by the national government, and are against such a rule linked to EU funding for the poorest regions.

The preparation of the new cohesion policy programmes should also leave time for reflection, to learn from each other and to come forward with new ideas. This is what the European Week of Regions and Cities-OPEN DAYS is about.

Between 7 and 10 October, the 11th OPEN DAYS will be held under the overall slogan “Europe’s regions and cities taking off for 2020”. The Committee of the Regions has again joined forces with the European Commission’s Regional and urban policy DG and 200 regions and cities from all over Europe.

Together, we will hold 101 workshops, debates, and networking activities on three thematic priorities: (1) managing change 2014-2020; (2) synergies and cooperation; and (3) challenges and solutions. 600 speakers – politicians, officials, representatives of the business world and the NGO sector and academics – will discuss with some 6,000 participants how to make more of the existing possibilities at regional and local levels.

These figures make the OPEN DAYS not only the No. 1 event in Brussels and the “not-to-be-missed” conference for regional and local authorities, but they also make the event the biggest annual conference worldwide dealing with regional and urban development.

New elements in this year’s OPEN DAYS programme include an exhibition route on “100 EUrban solutions”, with the Committee of the Regions’ building in the centre and ten regional offices in the European quarter showcasing best practices. Moreover, there will be a master class for 77 early career researchers from some 30 countries in the field of regional and urban policy. Last not least, over 300 local events are expected to be organised between September and November all over Europe, bringing OPEN DAYS close to the citizens.

All in all, I am convinced that the OPEN DAYS make a valuable contribution to both capacity-building among regional and local authorities and to communicating EU cohesion policy among its various stakeholders. In this sense, the event will continue to follow the policy cycle of the European Structural and Investment Funds and play its role as the annual rendezvous of politicians, experts and academics in the field of urban and regional development. Let’s take off together!
The Role of Cohesion Policy in the Achievement of Energy Efficiency Goals

By Mojca Kleva Kekuš MEP

At the heart of Europe’s strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth, the benefits of energy efficiency have long been recognized. Nonetheless, the EU is facing a severe challenge to meet its objective of reducing the overall energy consumption by 20% by 2020, where policies fostering energy efficiency could and should play a stronger role. Energy efficiency improvements are decisive for European competitiveness and represent a win-win option in the fight against climate change. Investing into energy efficiency measures can bring about immediate and tangible benefits for households and businesses, such as reduction of costs, creation of employment opportunities and growth as well as an encouragement of the transition towards a low carbon economy.

With cohesion policy being one of the major sources of support to put the EU back on track to reach the energy efficiency objective, the Commission has responded to this challenge by proposing for the next programming period (2014-2020) almost double the proportion of the Cohesion Policy budget dedicated to climate-related expenditure, including energy efficiency. Increased financial commitment, strengthened position within upcoming legislative texts (thematic concentrations) and a clear role of energy efficiency measures within implementation procedures (operational programmes) are three pillars of support for the future of energy efficiency measures within Cohesion policy.

I fully support this focus as I believe that the European Structural and Investment Funds can help provide incentives for private investment in energy-efficient products, transport modes, buildings, industry, works and services, including energy efficiency services and can help reduce public expenditures on energy bills, giving better value for public money.

It is of crucial importance that in the future Member States see the use of European Structural and Investment Funds for energy efficiency as an investment opportunity with a high leverage effect and not as an expenditure.

The Commission has already highlighted that increased focus on energy efficiency requires in particular increased efforts in more efficient transport and more efficient housing and buildings, areas where public authorities, in particular at regional and local level, play a decisive role.

We, policy makers on all levels, should therefore make sure that the greatest energy saving potential does not remain untapped in the upcoming programming period 2014-2020.

I am excited to see that in the upcoming 7 years a greater proportion of the ERDF funding will be dedicated to energy efficiency across all types of regions.

The upcoming programming period also represents a good opportunity to eliminate fuel poverty within the EU. With nearly 9% of our citizens (in 2010) unable to heat their homes adequately, this share represents a serious anomaly where a policy response is necessary. Particularly severe in new Member States, fuel poverty and its links to energy efficiency promotion and vulnerable consumers have to be examined in detail by the Commission.

We should also strive to generate new employment opportunities through energy efficiency measures, where especially the building and transport sector can see concrete results already in the short and medium terms.

Furthermore, the issue of social housing construction and renovation should go hand in hand with energy efficiency objectives and standards. Member States and all stakeholders should take account of social housing already in their national reform programmes and in the shaping of strategic priorities under partnership agreements.

While the need to invest upfront is one of the greatest obstacles to realizing energy savings at local and regional level, we should ensure that measures taken at EU level take due account of the implications for municipalities and regions. In this regard, local and regional representatives should be consulted when development guidelines are being established in the field of energy.

I strongly believe that concrete contribution to overcoming this obstacle also stands in the strengthened role of new innovative financial instruments, where especially in combination with grants, financial instruments can serve as a successful and innovative approach to leverage private funding, create new models of private-public partnerships and enhance innovation.

Add to the difficulties with upfront financing, market and regulatory barriers, and also the pressing effects of the economic and financial crisis, and it becomes clear and essential that in the future Europe finds new innovative ways of financing energy efficiency projects.

The Commission has already showed its support for the enhanced role of financial instruments in the programming period 2014-2020. Nonetheless, I would like to see a timely delivery and legal clarity to be guaranteed without delay and presented together with proposals for off-the-shelf financial instruments that are to be available in the future.

The factors adversely affecting energy efficiency development have in the past seven years (2007-2013) been more practical than regulatory – for example inadequate information and financial incentives, low profile of energy efficiency and inadequate implementation of existing legislation.

That is why I believe we need to build on this further and make sure our local and regional representatives together with the civil society and businesses are included in the process of designing strategies and programs for energy efficiency already at an early stage of policy design and implementation. Strengthened communication and understanding of legislative opportunities can further help to make the implementation of energy efficiency measures a real success. With the help of Cohesion Policy’s strengthened commitment to energy efficiency, I am hopeful that Europe can reach the goals and ambitions to which we committed ourselves in our Europe2020 strategy.
Croatia and the Region

By Gvozden Flego MP, Croatian Representative to the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly

On the 1st of July this year, after almost ten years of negotiations, Croatia became a member of the European Union. It was the first country which has become a member after the conclusion of the Lisbon Treaty.

It negotiated in a completely different way, both in reference to extended criteria for membership of the EU. It was the first country of the ‘Western Balkans’ which has completed this task successfully.

During the decade of negotiations with the EU, Croatia has changed the structure of its institutions. We adopted the EU legal system (circa 600 Croatian laws were transformed, or the new ones adopted), we started to introduce the new judiciary network and new methods for its operation, and we recently opened the long and slow process of the de-politicization of the public administration and other public services.

We have initiated changes in the health and social care system, and new laws on social care and on labour are in preparation. Agriculture and fishery, commerce and market competition, the stock market and higher education, research and ship building were also the subjects of transformation.

Accession to the EU was the individual process of an individual state but it has also happened in the political and economic context, among the surrounding countries.

And the situation in these surrounding is anything but easy. The consequences of the former war (in human victims, refugees and material devastation) are still present, and in many countries there are serious economic crises.

Some of our neighbours have hostile relations with each other, and in some, there are ethnic tensions of differing intensities. In spite of these difficulties, the Croatian inner transformation and its successful accession have become a role model for others in the region.

It is in the interest of every country, Croatia and the European Union included, to live in peaceful and stable conditions, to enjoy friendly relations with their surrounding countries, to promote regional cooperation, and to make joint efforts for the better.

Since all these elements are constitutive parts of the EU politics and public policies, there is a political consensus among political parties in Croatia, particularly in the position of the newest EU member, about our willingness to assist our neighbours to adopt the EU legal and economic standards and to implement them in their public life, in co-operation with their neighbours and in their private – national and international – relations.

Croatian measures of assistance are quite concrete. Since we speak very similar and mutually quite understandable languages (except Macedonian and Albanian), we have donated to the countries in the region several dozen thousands of pages of translated EU legal documents.

There are, too, frequent working visits and many exchanges of views of diverse ministerial and parliamentary delegations, during which we share our experiences of the negotiations, chapter by chapter, subject by subject, with our guests, and present them our reforms and transformations.

The Croatian Ministry of Foreign and European affairs has established the Centre of Excellence, which has recruited people who participated in negotiations and experts in the fields who are very willing to share their expertise with the colleagues from other countries.

Whenever we have an opportunity, we stress that the adoption of the EU legal standards, or approaching them, is not beneficial because of the intended accession to the Union, but primarily for the sake of their own citizens, their security, and their welfare. Although required restructurings are deep and many, although this way is challenging and not always easy, we keep underlining that Croatia is a good example that systemic societal transformations are desirable and possible.

In every aspect, I consider that sharing our experiences and spreading the EU spirit is our first strategic task in our regional and international activity. Our negotiations with the EU and our membership became a paradigm, that other countries in the region follow.

Besides these international activities and the bilateral specificities, there are at least two joint efforts that the countries ‘in the region’ are jointly working on.

Since narcotic and people trafficking is par excellence international, the fight against it is much more successful when it is done in an internationally co-ordinated way. In this sense the ministries of interior in the region co-operate well, and so far have carried out several successful actions in cutting the ‘Balkan narcotic route’.

Identifying, detaining and processing the actors of criminal deeds has become an issue of a common concern, which has resulted in common activities.

As the newest EU member state, Croatia finds a particular responsibility and a leading role in these activities.

Another shared regional problem is a care for national minorities. Croatia has adopted a constitutional law on national minorities. The recognition and the implementation of minority rights is a solid basis for good relations between the states of the respective nations.

All these efforts we make in the belief that we are contributing to the welfare of others and to the promotion of peace and stability in the region.
Regional Focus

Croatia in the EU: the City of Vukovar is leading the Way

By Željko Sabo, Mayor of Vukovar

About the City of Vukovar

The City of Vukovar is an antique baroque city with rich cultural heritage, situated in the Homeland war in 1991. Because of its position, Vukovar is an important transport hub and out of the five inland ports in Croatia, Vukovar is only port on the Danube River, navigable 365 days a year. Vukovar’s economy is based on trade, processing industry, agriculture and tourism.

As part of its membership of the European Union, in the current financial perspective 2007-2013, 655 million Euros are available for the Republic of Croatia. A major part of these funds is related to the cohesion funds. For these resources, Croatia has prepared nine major investment projects, including the project “Vukovar”, worth 48 million Euros.

The Vukovar project includes the construction of water supply, drainage and the means for wastewater treatment in the City of Vukovar. The construction is expected to start at the beginning of next year, 2014. It is one of the largest projects of this type in Croatia, through which, in the next few years, the sewage system in Vukovar will be built, upgraded and reconstructed, together with the means for wastewater treatment on the Danube River. Furthermore, the water supply network will be reconstructed. With the implementation of this action, the standard of water and sanitation in Vukovar will be upgraded to the European level.

Moreover, this large investment will certainly reduce the loss of water (which is now around 35%) and will improve the quality of life in the town and places that rely on the Vukovar water supply system. The project is expected to be completed by 2017.

The City of Vukovar has previously successfully withdrawn EU funds through IPA – the Instrument for Pre-Accession. Projects that have been granted IPA funds were in the field of tourism (components IIa Regional Competitiveness and II Cross-Border Programme Croatia-Serbia) and entrepreneurship (IPA Component II Cross-border Programme Croatia-Bosnia and Herzegovina). Funds from the European Union were also used for projects in culture, such as restoration of facade of the Grand Hotel, a historical building situated in the centre of the town, also known as the Workers Hall. It represents the complex that enjoys the highest possible level of cultural protection. The impetus to restore the exterior came from the European Parliament, as part of a regional initiative to encourage post-conflict recovery and reconciliation by rebuilding war-damaged architectural monuments.

For the future usage of available EU funds, we have planned projects such as the completion of the reconstruction of the National Archaeological Museum Vucedol at the archaeological site just outside the town, and the construction and full landscaping of the embankments of the Danube River, from the centre of the town all the way to the archaeological site of Vucedol.

The project of the Eco Tour Vukovar here also needs to be pointed out – a touristic project worth 57 million Euros in the area of Adica and the river Vuka (a Forest Park and picnic area situated at a distance of only 5 km from the very centre of the City).

Implementation of the project is planned in three phases. The first is an extension of the restaurant of the Eco Center Adica from the current 50 to 500 seats and an increase in the accommodation capacity to 250 beds with 3 stars standard, together with the construction of a new parking lot for buses and cars outside the forest.

The planned value of investment in this phase is about 9 million Euros and it will be completed by the end of 2014. The second phase involves the construction of the tourist resort of Slavonia and Syrmia village of Old Vuka with 360 beds of 4 stars standard with all facilities, worth about 23 million Euros. Completion of this is expected by the end of 2016. Finally, the third phase includes the construction of the World Eco-ethno village EXPO, on the area of 221 059 m2, which will be a permanent exhibition of the world’s traditional construction from 50 countries. Total investment in this phase is 25 million Euros. This complex will be integrally linked with the town and will be recognized as the European eco-ethnological Destination of Excellence, which will make Vukovar the tourist center of the rural European area.

Project Vukovar in numbers

- Repair and reconstruction of 28 kilometres of drainage system,
- Construction of 66 kilometres of sewerage network in Vukovar and the settlements of Borovo and Bogdanovci,
- Construction of the means for wastewater treatment,
- Repair of 10.6 kilometres of water supply network in Vukovar and the settlements of Bogdanovci and Petrovci,
- Replacement of hydraulic equipment in the settlement of Svinjarevci,
- Reconstruction of 10 kilometres of the main pipeline in Vukovar,
- Construction of seven kilometres of pipeline between the settlements of Bobota and Pacetin as well as on the intersection of Trpinjska road and Vera,
- Construction of the water reservoir with a capacity of 2,800 cubic meters.
The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) was established in 2011. Upper Austria had closely followed its preparatory works, and was ready to start when Brussels gave the green light for its implementation. But why was connecting with the Danube Region an important goal for Upper Austria?

One of Upper Austria’s most important economic motors is export. Our export quota currently stands at approximately 60%. For exports, markets are unquestionably a vital prerequisite. Emerging markets in East and South East Europe have much potential to grow. We could wait for this to happen on its own, or we adopt a strategic approach and try to shape and assist their growth. Upper Austria chose the latter option.

In order to access markets, reliable contacts and networks are required on all levels. The EUSDR connects people, they learn how to best work together and build up trust. Upper Austria has longstanding and good relations with its partners in the Danube Region - on the governmental level, between universities and research institutions, as well as between companies. Now it is time to establish even closer links.

These newly connected people experience how things are done elsewhere. They draw their lessons to be implemented in their home country or region. This includes policy learning, but it is also true for matters of innovation and technology. Putting two bright people with different backgrounds together leads to new solutions that neither one of them could not have thought up on his or her own.

Upper Austria is small. We need to focus on specialized niches and regional strengths in order to stay competitive. When other regions and countries do the same, we can jointly build a synchronized innovation chain that creates an economic benefit for all partners. This approach is also in line with the European Commission’s concept of Smart Specialization. In order to avoid duplication we need to communicate. The EUSDR is an excellent platform for such communication. As a joint force, our strengths are also better visible in Europe and in the world.

Finally, in the Danube Region, we face common challenges that one country or region alone cannot solve. The river Danube is the best example. In June 2013 a flood affected several Danube Region countries. The risk of such natural disasters must be faced jointly. Moreover, floods are also a cross-sectoral issue. To take care of flood prevention, a systemic level is necessary that includes climate change, river regulation, offering natural areas that can be flooded, and in their aftermath floods also impact the economy as well as environmental issues such as water quality or biodiversity. Analogies can be drawn for the economic crisis, or, looking into the future, for facing the challenges of an ageing society. In short, the list of common challenges seems endless.

While Upper Austria closely follows and supports the work of all eleven EUSDR priority areas, we pay special attention to priority area 8 “Competitiveness including cluster development”. Upper Austria is represented in its Steering Group, and also leads its working group “Clusters of Excellence”.

This working group is currently fine-tuning a project that aims at establishing a Danube Region-wide cluster network. On the basis of a common cluster strategy for this macro-region, DanuClus (Danube Cluster Networks) offers a platform for exchanging experiences and best practices among cluster experts, managers and policy makers. The members of DanuClus together develop ideas for concrete innovation projects that unite the economic strengths of the macro-region. They also assist the implementation process of these projects with their expertise. Furthermore they ensure that these projects stay on track with the common goals of DanuClus and the EUSDR.

Clusters in the Danube Region are very diverse, ranking from mature clusters with ample experience as instruments of innovation, to newly established and embryonic efforts with little funding or political backing. Cluster co-operation projects in DanuClus therefore need to cater to the needs of this large spectrum of clusters in order to increase the innovative potential in the Danube Region. Innovation is widely regarded as a vital precondition for competitiveness, which in turn ensures prosperity.

Funding is still a challenge for all areas of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region, and also for DanuClus. Now is the time to co-operate on the governance level in the Danube Region, to make sure that our regional and national goals are in sync across borders, and correspond with the related budgets for the coming years. Now is also the time to make sure that new EU-funding programmes, starting in 2014, are aligned with the targets of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, and that its projects can be financed. This is the task of the political and administrative level across countries in the Danube Region.

Regional policy today is not possible anymore when stopping at one’s borders. In a globalized and interconnected world, countries and regions influence each other. What could be more effective than bundling these powers and pushing for common goals while solving confrontational issues within our networks of reliable partners. For prosperity, we need to jointly work towards realizing a shared vision.
The 2009 Lisbon Treaty has strengthened the subsidiarity principle, enshrined local and regional identity, encouraging several Member States to carry out institutional reforms to enhance decentralization. In general terms, the degree of decentralization has therefore increased in many countries in recent years.

Although EU Member States are under no obligation to choose a particular model for their institutional structure or for decentralization, it has to be pointed out that the EU treaties recognise and respect local and regional self-government, showing that the EU sees local and regional democracy as one of the foundations of its own legitimacy.

However, the effects of the financial and economic crisis that erupted in 2009 and the following debt crisis had negative effects on the process of boosting decentralization.

Hence we have to note a contrary trend in some Member States, in which the financial autonomy of local and regional authorities or the right to self-government at sub-national levels has been substantially curtailed.

National and European public debates in the context of the current economic and financial crisis were often combined with the erroneous assumption that the behaviour of sub-national authorities is preventing national budget targets from being hit, despite the national states’ main responsibilities for the crisis.

Financial and debt crisis are seriously threatening the real economy of cities and regions.

In some Member States the situation is used as an excuse to further centralise powers, to devolve powers without providing corresponding financial resources or to rationalise, reduce or abolish sub-national bodies altogether, which will end up weakening local and regional democracy, a trend that is based on the mistaken assumption that transferring public services to the central government level will make them more cost-effective.

On the contrary, the relationship between national governments and the European institutions has profoundly changed. The national states are not able to solve their budget problems autonomously, so the budget surveillance power is shifted more and more to Brussels.

As a reaction, in many of the Member States the economic criteria in the current economic and financial crisis have distorted the democratic foundations of regional and local autonomy. This violates the European principle of subsidiarity.

Specifically in times of crisis, the benefits of regionalization and decentralization should be used to overcome these severe problems: in many policy areas, decentralised executives are significantly more efficient, both from the point of view of cost and in terms of the quality of services and their proximity to the citizens.

Local and regional authorities, as grassroots institutions, are aware of people’s needs and are best placed to define and respond to their needs at a time of crisis.

In these difficult times it is important for the people of Europe to identify with their regions and cities, which play a particularly crucial role as a counterweight to the increasingly international, global and therefore anonymous, nature of job markets and economic relations.

Strong regional and local authorities can make a key contribution to reduce the current social and economic disparities between Europe’s regions, helping to reduce the negative consequences of a rural exodus from poor regions to big cities. There is a positive connection between decentralization and successful, sustainable European regional policy.

As studies are showing, cohesion policy produces better results in devolved Member States. Cohesion policy is implemented particularly inefficiently in centralised Member States since centralised administrations are often unfamiliar with regional problems and challenges and therefore the sub-national authorities should be much better involved in the management of the funds.

Functioning local and regional administrations and effective decentralization should be based on the principles of subsidiarity, proportionality and multilevel governance and conducted through democratically elected and fully representative bodies that are accountable to their people.

In this respect, all EU Member States are called on to establish an appropriate legal framework for their sub-national authorities at the highest possible level.

The European Commission’s recent report on public finances in the Economic and Monetary Union concerns financial decentralization and highlights the fact that own resources, i.e. independently raised sub-national taxes, are a more efficient funding tool than transfers from central government.

Regions that are primarily financed from their own resources manage the available funds in a responsible manner and therefore have solid public finances. Therefore the Member States should replace transfer payments, as far as possible, with own financial resources.

These are numerous good reasons for strengthening regions and municipalities in Europe. It is essential that any vision for the future of Europe includes the regional and local levels.

I think a Convention on these subjects is necessary, including greater recognition of local and regional democracy in future treaties, considering to what extent decentralization together with effective local and regional self-government could become a condition for EU membership.

In this sense decentralization has to be put on the European agenda.
Regional Focus

Cross-border Co-operation – Intrinsic to Carinthia!

By Dr Peter Kaiser, President of Carinthia, Member of the COR

Ordering Italy and Slovenia, the Austrian region of Carinthia has always been an intersection point of three cultures and languages. Being the most Southern of Austria’s nine regions, Carinthia has a population of 555,473 inhabitants, out of which 95,450 live in the capital Klagenfurt. Germanic, Slavic and Italian influences have been shaping the Carinthians’ daily as well as cultural lives for centuries, allowing Carinthia to become a hub for multilingualism and multiculturalism far ahead of time of other European regions. With cross-border co-operation thus being virtually intrinsic to the region, it can understandably be called one of the pioneers in cross-border partnerships. Indeed, the first official cross-border contacts between the Italian region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Carinthia and Slovenia began as early as 1940. Unsettled by the war and the post-war period, cross-border partnerships were starting to be perceived as a fruitful way of fostering future peaceful development. What started with mere cultural contacts was soon followed by development in the field of sports, and only a little later included the fields of economy and politics. By 1965, the regional heads of governments had formed working groups on culture and science, traffic, tourism, water management, regional planning and landscape protection, and by the end of the decade, the co-operation between the three regions started to be referred to as “Alps-Adriatic”; an expression nowadays frequently mentioned in one breath with successful cross-border co-operation.

With a constantly growing European Union, borders represent steadily diminishing barriers, and member states continuously grow to be an ever tighter community. Carinthia gladly witnessed Slovenia’s accession to the EU in 2004, ensuring that the region will assure to make the best use of the new financial period starting in 2014, our region will assure to make the best use of the new EU programmes.

Allow me to outline two of our best-practise examples. A great cross-border project which Carinthia successfully participated in together with Friuli-Venezia Giulia and with the Austrian region Salzburg is the “CICLOVIA ALPE ADRIA RADWEG” (CAAR), a bicycle track between Salzburg and Grado (IT). Since the completion of the track, cyclists have been able to cycle this distance within a week. The project had successfully aimed at the creation of the necessary infrastructure as well as at targeted marketing for the bicycle track. Amongst the activities undertaken were the joint cartography, the planning as well as the realisation of the measures for the completion of CAAR and finally the promotion of the results. Competences were clearly defined and the budget of EUR 1,200,000 first equally shared between Austria and Italy, while Austria then divided their 50% again equally between Carinthia and Salzburg. The project CAAR is a wonderful practical example for an EU-funded co-operation, which does not only aim at improved cross-border connections and the development of the border regions; just as important is the increase of sustainable mobility as a concrete action in terms of the EU commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 % until 2020.

To move on to another example, the aim of the still running EU-project “GOAL” is to further develop co-operation between the transnational EU-programme Central Europe and hopefully the new Adriatic-Lonian macro strategy. Eagerly awaiting the new financial period starting in 2014, our region will assure to make the best use of the new EU programmes.

Allow me to outline two of our best-practise examples. A great cross-border project which Carinthia successfully participated in together with Friuli-Venezia Giulia and with the Austrian region Salzburg is the “CICLOVIA ALPE ADRIA RADWEG” (CAAR), a bicycle track between Salzburg and Grado (IT). Since the completion of the track, cyclists have been able to cycle this distance within a week. The project had successfully aimed at the creation of the necessary infrastructure as well as at targeted marketing for the bicycle track. Amongst the activities undertaken were the joint cartography, the planning as well as the realisation of the measures for the completion of CAAR and finally the promotion of the results. Competences were clearly defined and the budget of EUR 1,200,000 first equally shared between Austria and Italy, while Austria then divided their 50% again equally between Carinthia and Salzburg. The project CAAR is a wonderful practical example for an EU-funded co-operation, which does not only aim at improved cross-border connections and the development of the border regions; just as important is the increase of sustainable mobility as a concrete action in terms of the EU commitment of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 20 % until 2020.

The experiences we have made in Carinthia have convinced me: a strong and united Europe can be a strong and safe Europe.

How much importance Carinthia accords to cross-border partnerships, is also displayed in the strong commitment it has proven to the Alps-Adriatic Working Committee as a founding member since its establishment in 1978. The general secretariat of the Working Committee, which currently still consists of 6 members and will soon be transformed into the Alps-Adriatic Alliance, is located within the Carinthian government.

What is more, Carinthia, Friuli-Venezia-Giulia and the Italian region Veneto were among the first regions to effectively use the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation. With the help of this legal instrument – EGTIC –, the regions set up one of the first “Euregios”, the EUREGIO SENZA CONFINI.

The experiences we have made in Carinthia have convinced me: a strong and united Europe listens to its citizens and gives a strong voice to its regions. Only if we strengthen the EU, while we at the same time remain united in diversity, we will be able to continue this wonderful project called European Union. I am aware and very proud that I, as the president of Carinthia, bear full responsibility for Carinthia within the EU, as well as for the EU in Carinthia.
Investing in Urban Jobs for Growth

By Henk Kool, Vice-mayor of the city of The Hague; First vice-chair of ECOS of the Committee of the Regions

The financial, economic and budgetary wave that is hitting Europe, hits the European urban areas particularly hard.

Urban areas do their utmost taking steps to reduce the worst misery. Cities invest billions in their physical and social infrastructure and yet the labour market is not really showing much improvement. There is, therefore, the need for urgent help. Is rescue anywhere in sight?

In the spring of this year 2013, the European Commission (EC) proposed a EU package for social investments. At first when you read it, the proposed package has many similarities with the EC report on Active Inclusion (2007) that came out before the outbreak of the financial crisis that then plunged us into the current budgetary and economic crisis.

Moreover, how different is the present situation compared to the one in 2008? The figures we presently refer to are far off from the ones in 2008.

Our concern then was to provide a new perspective to all people who were furthest away from the labour market or even the ones completely removed from it. That group was quite well defined.

Today, however, we face an increasing influx of people who have become unemployed and the ones outside the labour force. Even in the prosperous Netherlands, unemployment figures are still shifting significantly.

In The Hague, the labour market has faced a decrease of 10,000 jobs since 2008. The labour market dropped from 265,000 in 2008 to 255,000 jobs in 2012.

On the other hand, the population has grown by more than 25,000 persons from 475,904 inhabitants in 2008 to 502,802 persons in 2012.

In other cities of the Netherlands, the picture is a little less dramatic, but the growth is still visible. In fact, unemployment has increased in the Netherlands from 300,000 unemployed in 2008 to 540,000 in 2012.

To put it into another perspective: the number of homeless in the cities is rising again.

From a European point of view, the economic crisis has greatly affected the urban areas in particular. Problems of poverty and social exclusion are therefore most obvious in the urban areas where 80% of the European population lives and accounts for 85% of GDP.

A new package of social investments is therefore urgently necessary.

Work is the key to financial independence for our citizens. Earn your own bread and thus your existence. That is what the people want.

The Government, from the European Union to the cities and the regions, has the task to provide the people with education, housing, healthcare, vocational training etc.

The Government has never done that alone and is certainly not going to now. That does not suit our European society model. That model is mainly the governance model of co-creation. That terminology makes it clear that the local authorities cannot do it alone. Financial and policy involvement by the social and institutional partners are therefore essential to make it all possible.

Time has come to work together once again. I am talking about the trade unions whose members should be willing to invest in lifelong learning. I am talking about the employers who are willing to give the unemployed people furthest away from the labour market a chance by means of contract compliance. I am talking about the banks and institutional investors that are willing to give the economy and housing market an impulse. I am talking about the Governments within the European Union in all its layers, which must work together.

Believe me: the package of measures that the European Commission has proposed with her Social Investment Package (SIP) is quite impressive. Nevertheless, is the Commission’s package good?

The package makes it clear, that the European Union cannot realize this alone. It is not only comprehensive, it also asks for customization. Only the regions and the cities can provide that customization. There is where you will find the major European social problems, also the economic potentials. That is why we must also ensure greater European financial support for these Governments. To begin with there should be additional resources for European structural funds such as ESF and ERDF. The SIP does not provide this! That is a major shortcutting for the cities and regions.

However, there has to be work or work must also be provided.

Social measures are therefore not sufficient. Europe is suffering from a strict austerity regime whereby Governments are reducing their budget even more. However, it would be a good thing, when the EU, as has happened in the US, sets up the creation of jobs as a second main goal within their policy. The monetary policy of the US FED is subsequent. The FED is pumping money into the economy and that really helps. The European Union desperately needs such a flanking policy. Rotterdam Mayor Aboutaleb and I have successfully defended this statement in the Committee of the Regions based on Aboutaleb’s opinion on the Social Investment Package.

With such flanking policies, the European Union would have a stronger case with her citizens. It would not just be a brutal cost-cutting machine, but also an Institute that promotes in times of crisis, the EU budget and the national budgets to include employment programmes and social investment programmes.

Let me make it very clear, we must not only formulate the objectives, but also make them smart. After all, the objectives are already available: according to the Europe 2020 project, 75% of the population between 20 and 64 years must have work. That is, up to the present, year 2013, in the whole of the European Union only 68.5%[1].

With additional resources for the structural funds and a genuine employment policy (75% of the population between 20 and 64 at work), we will have a financially and socially healthy Europe.

There is still plenty of work to be done!

Since the European Commission presented its proposals for the Reform of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in October 2011 debates have been dominated by the new Greening measures for all European farmers. Without any doubt, these mandatory Greening measures signify an important shift towards a greener CAP within the European Union, but there is more about the CAP-Reform than merely Greening.

When we talk about agricultural policy we need to stress that an important part consists of rural development. For many Member States and regions the Fund for Rural development, which is part of the CAP-Reform, is the most important tool to realise projects in rural areas. We should not neglect this so called 2nd pillar and its wide range of opportunities.

Within the recent CAP-Reform we opened up the Fund for Rural development for projects which go beyond agriculture and which are aimed at fostering vital and innovative rural areas, environment and cultural heritage.

For many years now we had to observe the phenomena of young, well-educated people leaving rural areas and moving to the cities. This is not only dangerous for farms and farmers, but for the socio-economic structures in these areas in general. It is not enough to support agricultural activities itself. We need to seize and foster the whole spectrum of possibilities in our rural areas.

Agriculture and especially downstream markets and activities can substantially contribute to Europe’s economy, create employment and revenues. Therefore the Fund for Rural development offers new opportunities in the years to come: • help farmers diversifying their activities (direct marketing, tourism, etc.); • promote innovative small and middle sized enterprises in rural areas; • develop and foster tourism; • create local and short supply chains to carry out production, processing and marketing within one region; • supply fast and reliable internet access; • support the establishment of social activities (child care, care for elderly or disabled people).

For me personally it was important to open up the Fund for Rural development for a broader range of activities. Within Europe and within my constituency I can observe a huge economic and social potential.

In my home region in southern Germany I realise that people are beginning to appreciate the advantages of local food production and marketing. Local farmers and processors should be able to use this potential, create local supply chains and contribute to rural development and the region’s economy.

At the same time we should support the establishment of small and middle-sized enterprises and make sure they have the general framework to promote and sell their goods all over Europe. One important point is fast internet connections. Although my home region is well developed there are problems with internet and network connections which are a huge hurdle for start-up companies.

Furthermore there is a lack of facilities for child care, and young women in rural areas often have to decide whether they want to have children or a professional career. On the other side our society is getting older and it is difficult for old people in smaller villages to stay in their familiar surroundings. The lack of child care and of care for elderly people needs to be addressed as a society. So there is a social duty and at the same time a good possibility for new employment to support the establishment of such facilities.

In addition, there is a lot to be done in the tourism industry. The Fund for Rural development offers a huge range of additional incentives to foster and extend tourism in rural regions. Farmers can participate in measures to protect the environment and landscape, communities are able to get funding to maintain cultural heritage, such as traditional orchards and steep slopes, organisations that produce and promote regional specialities, such as liquors or juices, can receive financial support and a lot of other small and bigger possibilities are offered.

All the possible programmes and projects are usually prepared on-site in co-operation with stakeholders, authorities, farmers and the people living in the area. Consequently, one of the big advantages of the Fund for Rural development is that the measures are specifically tailored to the needs of the region and to the possibilities of the people who live and work there. In many regions this concept has been a success story and of major benefit for the society.

A recent study of the Berlin-Institute says that it is getting too expensive to support rural areas and to maintain infrastructure and social services for only few people. The study concludes that people in less populated areas should move to densely populated regions and small villages should be abandoned.

Not only do I think that people should have a real choice whether they want to live in cities or in rural areas and consequently we have to make sure to provide equal circumstances. But further I am convinced that a huge economic potential lies in our rural areas and nowadays, we cannot afford to leave it unused. I believe that it is high time to recognize and seize all these opportunities.
Regional Focus

Eastern Partnership Dilemma: the EU or Russia – Democracy or Autocracy?

By Gediminas Kirkilas, Chairman of the Lithuanian Parliament European Affairs Committee

The European Union’s (EU) Eastern Partnership countries face the dilemma of choosing between getting closer to the EU or joining Russia’s initiative of customs union and ultimately the Eurasian Union in future. However, it is not only their choice between the two economic integration projects, but also between democracy and the authoritarian path of political development.

Armenia, which very recently has demonstrated a decent democratic promise, in the early September, announced that it was joining Russia’s customs union, being created together with Belarus and Kazakhstan. For Europe, this is not happy news.

Lithuania has been providing democratic assistance to the post-soviet countries and making efforts of bringing them closer to the EU. Naturally, the first post-soviet Baltic country holding the EU Presidency has hoped that the EU and Armenia’s Association and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement would be initialled during the EU Eastern Partnership Summit on 28-29 November in Vilnius.

Sitting on the two chairs, i.e., trying to integrate into the EU and into the Eurasian Union is impossible, not for political, but for primarily economic reasons. If Armenia eventually joins the Russian project, the country cannot sign the free trade agreement with the EU, because of different tariff requirements. This also means the closure of the biggest market in the world and that Armenia’s further co-operation with and integration into the EU might lose its momentum.

Moreover, Armenia’s latter decision, if it stays so, might have a negative impact on the country’s democracy, which is the 114th in the Economist’s democracy ranking for 2012, scoring 4.09 points out of 10. With the leadership of Russia, ranking 122nd, Armenia inevitably faces risks regarding its democratic future.

Finally, Armenia’s choice has inevitable implications for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova as well as for the EU immediate policy towards these three countries.

For Lithuania, given the country’s European integration experience, the Eastern Partnership has naturally become the No 1 priority of its EU Presidency. Lithuania strongly maintains the position that these countries should be helped to make a ‘right’ decision towards Europe and given a credit of trust in advance, especially now, when Armenia might be lost to Russia’s geopolitical project. Demand or “waiting and seeing” strategy is no longer feasible, if Europe doesn’t want to lose the other three.

The major battle is now for Ukraine (democracy ranking 80th). Georgia and Moldova will likely follow the pattern afterwards. Therefore, Lithuania hopes that during the Vilnius Summit of Eastern Partnership, the EU Association Agreement will be signed with Ukraine and the Free Trade Agreements will be initialled with Georgia and Moldova.

Zbigniew Brzezinski, in his famous book “The Grand Chessboard”, which is very popular in Eastern Europe, states, that “with Ukraine, Russia is an Empire, without Ukraine – it’s not.” The politicians in Russia took it very literally and are doing everything in their power to keep Ukraine in their sphere of influence”.

I strongly believe that signing the EU Association Agreement with Ukraine will actually provide the EU with more and the more effective instruments of influence towards this country, especially regarding democratic reforms and human rights. Within such a framework, Ukraine will be politically assigned to the democratic path and a united Europe, and therefore become less susceptible to the non-democratic stimuli from outside.

Otherwise, as happened in the case of NATO enlargement, postponing the Ukraine’s Association Agreement with the EU might be understood by the Ukrainian people and its democratic forces as a rejection, or as the country’s ban from Europe. The non-democratic powers, on the other hand, might accept such a gesture as an easy licence to move towards the consolidation of the non-democratic regime.

This year is a turning point for Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, meaning, that making a delay now might turn into a continuing delay.

If the Eurasian Union project expands, it can create new and long-term divisions in international politics, as well as renewed rivalry between democracy and dictatorship in the world more than 20 years after the proclaimed victory of democracy in Eastern Europe.

The ball to throw is today being held not only by Ukraine, Georgia and Moldova, but also by the EU.

Moldova (ranking 67th) has more recently made so far the biggest progress towards integration into the EU. Let’s just hope it will stay on the right track.

Georgia (ranking 93rd) together with Ukraine, mostly thanks to the foreign policy of the Lithuanian President Mr Adamkus, from 1998-2003 and 2004-2009, has been Lithuania’s favourite in the Eastern Partnership. Despite some recent doubts regarding Georgia’s commitment to the rule of law, I am confident that the entire democratic input delivered by the EU and also the Lithuanian diplomatic forces cannot easily drain away. I see the current Georgian government as rational and thus understanding the prestige and benefits of belonging to democratic Europe.

Azerbaijan (ranking 139th) is more concerned with getting closer to the EU merely economically, rather than democratically or in terms of membership. Europe needs to find a way to work closely with a country such as Azerbaijan to keep it on Europe’s horizon. However, Azerbaijan would need more than successful Eurovision performances to win Europe.

Belarus (ranking 141st) remains the most complicated case due to president Lukashenka’s openly authoritarian regime. Nevertheless, time is on our side, and Europe hopes that ultimately Belarusian society will be democratised and Europeanised through the democratic assistance, the NGO development, democratic intellectuals or such projects as the European Humanitarian University, which found its exiled home in Vilnius and where the future Belarusian political elite is studying.

Gediminas Kirkilas is the Vice-Speaker of the Lithuanian’s Seimas and the Chairman of the European Affairs Committee. She was the Prime Minister of Lithuania, 2006-2008.
Environmental Priorities during the Lithuanian Presidency

By Vice Minister Mrs Daiva Matonienė, Environment Ministry, Lithuania

The Lithuanian Presidency will seek to steer the decision making process as an honest broker and to ensure its continuity, as well as the inclusion of all relevant partners.

We will focus on three main goals of creating a Credible, Growing and Open Europe, aiming to reflect these goals in the Environmental agenda as well.

The European Union has the one of strictest environmental protection standards in the world. Thus we truly appreciate this opportunity to take part in the decision making process and be able to improve conditions for the environment.

Implementation of the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region is among the questions which will be given specific importance during the Presidency. It would be the first macro-regional strategy of the European Union. As a result, today there is successful collaboration between Member States and other interested parties in the sphere of environmental protection, with a particular emphasis on opportunities for economic growth and job creation. The fourth annual forum on the Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region shall take place in Vilnius on 11–12 November 2013, involving discussions among partners on the implementation of the strategy, with a specific regard on environmental protection.

The Lithuanian Presidency’s main priority will be to focus on an effective and smooth legislative process.

Due to that, I would like to briefly present you our priorities in the environmental area.

It is evident that climate change issues are of great concern, having an impact on a number of important areas such as industry, energy, transportation, agriculture and other segments of the economy. The legislative proposals presented at the Council will concern the mainstreaming of climate change objectives by reducing greenhouse gas emissions in these sectors.

The Lithuanian Presidency will aim to agree on the Regulation on fluorinated greenhouse gases, in order to contribute to achieving the EU’s climate objectives by discouraging the use of these gases in a number of different application fields, such as refrigeration and air conditioning, foams, aerosols, fire protection and electrical equipment.

This piece of legislation is an important signal to the international community in the context of the upcoming 25th Meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol and the 19th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Acknowledging the importance of the proposal on Regulation on Access to Genetic Resources and Sharing of Benefits in the implementation of the Nagoya protocol, we will seek a first reading agreement. Our intention is to pave the way for the European Union and its Member States to ratify the Nagoya protocol before the first Conference of Parties, which will serve as the Meeting of Parties of the Nagoya protocol, takes place. This is one of the key priorities of Lithuanian Presidency in the environmental area.

The proposed Regulation would oblige users – feed and food industry, biotechnology sector, pharmaceutical and cosmetics industry, universities, collections of genetic resources and museums, researchers – to check and declare that genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge have been accessed in accordance with the applicable legal requirements in the country of origin and that the benefits are fairly and equitably shared upon mutually agreed terms. Users found in breach of the Regulation would be sanctioned.

Adoption of this regulation would be an important step for the European Union and, consequently, would make a proper sign at the global level. Doing that will allow the Union to deliver on “Target 16” of the CBD Strategic Plan 2011–2020, which foresees that by 2015 the Nagoya Protocol will be in force and operational.

In order to achieve that result we look forward to working in close co-operation with the European Parliament.

The Review of the Environmental Impact Assessment Directive is of particular interest. We intend, therefore, to intensively carry on with the work already done on this topic so far.

We will try to reach a common agreement on this issue, as well as discussing possible rational measures, increasing the quality of assessment, simplifying and accelerating procedures avoiding the creation of additional administrative or financial burden for public and private sectors.

We will seek significant progress on the ILUC Directive on the quality of petrol and diesel fuels and the promotion of the use of energy from renewable sources in the formats of the Environment Council and the Energy Council.

Intensive consultations within the Council throughout the previous semester reiterate the fact that indirect land-use change from the production of bio-fuels is a serious issue that needs to be addressed.

Therefore, the Presidency is ready to seek a balanced solution alongside other Member States that will have a positive impact on the environment, economy, business and EU citizens.

Lithuania has been closely following discussions on the Emissions Trading System Clarification dossier. We acknowledge the political sensitivities and difficulties surrounding this file. Nonetheless, the Presidency will be ready to engage with all parties to explore possible avenues for the follow-up.

We will start working with proposals on Ambient Air, Invasive Species, and International Waste Shipment Inspections, as soon as they are submitted by the Commission.

In the autumn, Lithuania will initiate discussions on the review of the Thematic Strategy on air pollution and its legislation. These discussions will relate to more ambitious goals of reducing emissions of ambient air, as well as additional measures to diminish pollution.

During our Presidency we hope to reach progress in deliberating the proposal on invasive species that will be submitted by the Commission in a short while.

Invasive species are globally considered as one of the major threat to biodiversity. In the past, human kind has greatly benefited from the introduction of alien species, such as potatoes and maize in Europe. However some species become invasive in their new environment and cause significant damage to native species and ecosystems with significant economic consequences. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment...
identified invasive species as important driver of biodiversity loss with an increasing trend.

We assume that legally binding legislation would contribute to diminishing negative effects on the biodiversity in the European Union. This would allow for unified actions to be taken to tackle problems caused by invasive species.

Another question is on Forests. While forests are a symbol of the beautiful natural landscape of Lithuanian, I would like to present you our ambitious plans in this field.

We will put every effort to ensure a co-ordinated implementation of sustainable forestry principles in Member States. We plan to adopt Council conclusions at the European Union level instrument – the New forestry strategy. The strategy should be based on the principles of respect to existing national competences, while giving particular priority to climate change and renewable energy issues.

The Presidency faces a very busy international environmental agenda, particularly on climate change, chemicals, desertification, biodiversity and forestry issues.

The Lithuanian Presidency will put specific efforts for the most important international event of 2013 – Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Warsaw. In October, the Council will adopt conclusions formulating a common EU position for this conference.

The conference will involve discussions on the new climate change agreement entering into force from 2020.

One further area in which Lithuania is focusing its attention at the moment is on housing problems and renovation. Lithuania has a population of about 3m. About 66% of the population lives in multifamily buildings built before 1993 (> 38,000 multifamily buildings and > 800,000 apartments). 97% of them are privately owned and 65% of buildings are supplied by district heating system. The main problem with these numbers: poor Soviet construction standards and little maintenance, inefficient heating systems and engineering equipment, bad quality windows, roofs, seals between panels. All of it leads to huge energy losses. Lithuania is not the only one suffering from such problems – most of the post Soviet countries of the EU have the same issues.

In 2004 the Lithuanian Housing Strategy was approved by the Government of the Republic of Lithuania. The Strategy implementation period is foreseen to last until 2020. Priorities of Lithuanian Housing Strategy are:

- to expand the social and non-profit rental housing sector. Rental housing will account for 18% (currently 10 %), including the social housing 4-5% (currently 2,4 %);
- to improve maintenance administration of multi-apartment buildings aiming at optimizing their value;
- to encourage the renovation and modernization of residential buildings to increase their energy efficiency. For the majority of multi-apartment houses up until 2020 the fuel ratio per 1 unit of useful residential floor space will be reduced by at least 30 %;
- to provide State support to low-income households to maintain housing. To decrease homelessness and promote social cohesion in society;
- to develop measures to improve training, education and to raise public awareness.

The main political goal of the Ministry of Environment is the promotion of energy efficiency through housing modernization.

The National Government took the decision. The main task is to make conditions for ensuring effective use of existing housing, maintenance, upgrading and modernization, including the rational use of energy resources.

The first programme for the modernization of multi-family buildings in Lithuania was approved in 2004. Experience from energy efficiency upgrading projects in Lithuania shows that a combination of measures can reduce energy consumption by around 50%. Measures are: replacement of windows and external doors, insulation of external surfaces: roofs and walls, and modernization of heating substations and balancing of heat distribution around the building.

But there has always been a lack of initiatives on home-owners to prepare investment projects, and psychological concerns in taking out loans, and in implementing modernization.

After analyzing a lesson learned by the slow progress of the programme, in February of 2013 a New Model, based on programmes on Energy efficiency of Municipalities was created:

- 56 Municipalities (out of 60 in Lithuania) started with participation in the new model;
- Selection of 839 inefficient multi-family buildings (already selected approx. 1500 buildings consuming more than 150 kWh/ m²/ year);
- 150 investment plans are approved by HEEA (from 13 municipalities);
- 800 investment plans are expected to be approved;
- Second stage for renovation is being launched.

Solving our housing problems solves several problems too: energy consumption drops (therefore helps to fight with CO2 emissions), the process creates many new workplaces, people save money on heating, and can spend their revenue on other commodities.
The Project
ENCLOSE aims to raise awareness about the challenges of energy efficient and sustainable urban logistics in European Small and Medium Historic Towns (SMHTs). The project is halfway through its programme of work and will develop successful examples of good practice and measures that deliver a more sustainable approach to the distribution of goods and services to and within SMHTs.

The project is supporting the development of Sustainable Urban Logistic Plans (SULPs) in 9 SMHTs involving partners from 13 EU countries – Austria, Bulgaria, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Norway, Poland, Romania, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, The Netherlands and the UK – with the potential to reach a much wider audience thanks to the participation of the international networks Heritage Europe (European Association of Historic towns and Regions) and European Walled Towns.

The Aims
Innovative city logistics projects have already been undertaken in many European capitals and major cities e.g. Barcelona, Berlin, London, Paris, Stockholm, etc. SMHTs, however, have not to date generally been able to follow these examples, as they have had to face and overcome significant barriers often related to their size. These include shortage of resources, professional expertise, and insufficient critical mass in terms of the scale of distribution operations to be able to effectively adopt and implement appropriate plans and measures towards sustainable city logistics.

Nevertheless there is a developing recognition in many of Europe's historic towns, inspired by what has been achieved elsewhere, of the need to overcome these barriers and address the impacts of environmental pollution on the historic environment and on the lives of their citizens. Delivering sustainable city logistics in SMHTs in practice, however, requires practical guidance on what is possible and that is the overall aim behind the ENCLOSE project.

The project seeks to significantly increase the adoption of good practice in the management of urban logistics in European SMHTs. It will do this by demonstrating practical solutions and raising awareness through local dissemination and media events in all 13 partner countries. The project’s conclusion and recommendations will be widely disseminated through the Heritage Europe and European Walled Towns networks of SMHTs to over 30 European countries.

The results
Within the project lifecycle, ENCLOSE expects to achieve over 50 toe/year primary energy savings and a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of about 900 tCO2e/year. In the longer term (EU 2020 objectives), through wider uptake, the impact of ENCLOSE is estimated to amount to total primary energy savings of 2.600 toe/year and over 55.000 tCO2e/year reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.

More information on the project, its progress and latest news can be found at: www.enclose.eu

As part of the ENCLOSE project Heritage Europe will be hosting the forthcoming workshop:

Sustainable Transport Workshop
“How to Improve Energy Efficiency and Air Quality in Historic Centres”

This one-day workshop will look at practical measures that can improve the quality of life in our historic centres through improvements in energy efficiency and air quality – benefiting residents, visitors and the historic fabric.

Learn first hand through European case studies from
Lucca – Italy  Trondheim – Norway
Den Bosch – Netherlands  Treviso – Italy

This major event will be held in Norwich, UK on the 10th October 2013.
For further information and how to register visit www.historic-towns.org

Follow up reports to the workshop will be posted on Heritage Europe’s website (www.historic-towns.org) after the event.
Northern Ireland has just endured a summer of hate as the peace process deteriorated into its most volatile state since the 1994 terrorist ceasefires.

The media recorded the worst riots since the 1981 republican hunger strikes and the 1996 Orange Order parade standoff at Drumcree.

The diabolical situation has left many wondering how the peace process crumbled given the highly successful G8 conference in Fermanagh, which included a public relations coup with President Obama; Londonderry celebrating the UK City of Culture year, and Ulster hosting the prestigious World Fire and Police Games.

The peace process unravelling gives the perception the island is returning to the bitter sectarian conflict which has gripped Ireland for the past eight centuries. At first sight, the reasons for the unrest seem politically stupid.

Firstly, there is the decision by Belfast City Council to fly the Union flag on designated days rather than all year round. The Council was once the bastion of Unionism, but now has a republican and centre Alliance Party ruling coalition.

The Parades Commission, which rules on the routes of many of Northern Ireland’s contentious marches, is being blamed for its decision to refuse loyalists from marching along the Catholic Ardoyne Shops’ in north Belfast, and republicans holding their Tyrone Volunteers parade near Castlederg town where the IRA murdered numerous people.

There is also the equally controversial future of the former Maze prison, which once held some of Europe’s most dangerous terrorists. It was the location where 10 IRA and INLA hunger strikers died in 1981.

Republicans want one of the so-called H Blocks retained; Unionists say the so-called peace centre will become a terrorist shrine. This summer’s rioting has again witnessed numerous police officers injured, and thousands of pounds of lost business.

Millions of pounds in European Union funding is also at stake for the peace centre, when DUP First Minister Peter Robinson, dramatically withdrew his support for the peace centre project, sparking speculation that he bowed to pressure from Right-wingers in his party and placing his leadership in serious jeopardy.

Supporters of the peace centre must be wondering how they will guarantee the EU funding before any referendum on the UK’s EU membership, especially if the British electorate votes to leave the EU.

Robinson is now facing the same crisis which forced his predecessor Ian Paisley senior – now Lord Bannside – out of both the DUP leadership and First Minister’s post. Again, at first sight, the solution is simple – replace Robinson with a more traditional Right-wing Unionist.

But the current peace process held because Sinn Fein and the DUP have been able to maintain the power-sharing Executive at Stormont since 2007. It has been one of the longest periods of devolved government in Northern Ireland since the original Stormont Parliament was axed in 1972.

The Union flag row, parade disputes and Maze shrine argument have all combined to lift the lid on the underlying cause of the unrest which, if not addressed, will unhinge the peace process – the growing political disengagement in the loyalist working class.

The 1994 ceasefires and especially the 1998 Good Friday Agreement which shifted the peace process into top gear saw the emergence of dissident terrorist movements in both republicanism and loyalism.

Over the last almost two decades, republicanism has witnessed the development of terror groups opposed to the peace process, such as the Continuity IRA, Real IRA, New IRA and Oglaigh na hEireann. Although these organisations have been heavily infiltrated by the security forces on both sides of the Irish border, the Police Service of Northern Ireland has constantly warned about the threat posed by republican dissidents.

This summer’s rioting from Protestants has now seen the development of a dissident loyalist terror movement, not witnessed since 1999. The 1994 loyalist paramilitary ceasefires were called by the umbrella organisation, the Combined Loyalist Military Command, which represented mainstream terror groups – the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Ulster Defence Association.

In 1999, dissident loyalists formed the rival Protestant Military Alliance, which represented the Orange Volunteers, Red Hand Defenders and Real Ulster Freedom Fighters. As with the dissident republicans, the British security forces used their network of agents and informers to penetrate and neutralise the dissident loyalists.

Loyalist street violence this summer has seen more than 50 police officers injured. The Police Federation, which represents ranks and file police officers, has called for more officers to be recruited to cope with the troubles. The PSNI leadership has had to rely on police officers from mainland Britain being sent to Northern Ireland.

The core of the crisis is that the loyalist working class feels abandoned by the mainstream Unionist parties, perceiving that the peace process has substantially benefited the Catholic communities.

There is particular anger directed towards Robinson’s DUP. Although it was founded in 1971 as a predominantly Protestant working class movement, to overtake the rival Ulster Unionist Party, the DUP has had to eat into the electorally lucrative Unionist middle class.

However, in becoming the dominant party in Unionism, the perception has now been created among loyalists that the DUP has abandoned them in favour of power at Stormont, and power with the most extreme form of republicanism at that.

Many loyalists remember that the DUP fought its 1985 local government election campaign under Paisley senior on a ‘Smash Sinn Fein’ platform. Loyalism has interpreted Sinn Fein’s ability to secure peace funding for nationalists areas as an attack on British heritage and culture.

In this respect, the DUP has fallen into a political pitfall which Sinn Fein has tactically avoided. Like the DUP, Sinn Fein’s main power base from 1981 onwards was the Catholic working class. To become the dominant force in Northern republicanism, Sinn Fein had to capture the nationalist middle class; the traditional ground occupied by the moderate Catholic Social Democratic and Labour Party. This electoral victory by Sinn Fein over the SDLP was achieved in the 2003 Assembly poll and has been held ever since.
However, Sinn Fein has been able to target electorally lucrative Catholic middle class voting areas while retaining its support base in working class republican strongholds. It is a fine cross-class balancing act which Robinson’s DUP has been unable to copy.

Such has been the alienation between the DUP and the loyalist working class, Robinson has even been forced to seek support from a significant minority of pro-Union Catholics, commonly called ‘Castle Catholics.’

This has propelled the DUP into voter territory which it was traditionally unaccustomed to – the centre pro-Union fraternity. The DUP found itself in a tough election battle with moderate UUP. Alliance, the Northern Ireland Tories, and the new moderate pluralist party spawned from the UUP, known as NI21.

Policy-wise, the 2013 Robinson-led DUP found itself on the same political ground as the 2003 UUP then led by First Minister David Trimble, now Lord Trimble of the Conservative Party.

Working class loyalists have begun to organise electorally against the DUP; going in urban areas mainly to the socialist-leaning Progressive Unionist Party, viewed by some as the political wing of the terrorist UVF and Red Hand Commando. The Union flag protest campaign has also led to the creation of the hardline Protestant Coalition party.

The 2014 European elections have also thrown another wild card into the political mix for the three Northern Ireland seats – UKIP. In mainland Britain, especially in England, the Nigel Farage-led Eurosceptic movement has been gaining ground substantially and may even emerge as the United Kingdom’s largest party in the European Parliament ahead of the Tories and Labour.

Over the summer, Farage pulled off a public relations coup when he visited Northern Ireland to promote UKIP and went ‘walk about’ in the loyalist working class stronghold of East Belfast – Robinson’s Assembly constituency.

Farage made it very clear in his speeches that while Sinn Fein and the UUP seemed likely to retain their MEPs, the DUP’s European seat was vulnerable given the working class backlash against the DUP.

To avoid the electoral fate of the UUP and Trimble, the DUP may be forced to lurch politically to the radical Right and offer Robinson as a sacrificial lamb. But the present stability of the Stormont Executive is finely balanced on Sinn Fein and the DUP being able to work together in the middle ground.

It was this effectively working scenario which earned Paisley senior and Sinn Fein’s Martin McGuinness the nickname of The Chuckle Brothers – after the popular children’s TV programme - but which was to lead to Paisley senior’s eventual demise.

The question, therefore, given that the DUP has a reputation for putting party survival first and keeping politicians, is when, not if, Robinson will quit. His departure will see a three-horse leadership race with the winner having to make some substantial Right-leaning policy shifts to placate grassroots Unionists before the 2014 European poll.

The choices are Executive Minister Arlene Foster, a former UUP member from the rural Fermanagh border constituency. She is a Robinson supporter who could maintain the DUP’s slender relationship at Stormont with Sinn Fein.

There is former Executive Minister Sammy Wilson, the East Antrim MP and ex-Belfast Lord Mayor who has strong working class credentials, and would be a popular choice to rebuild the DUP’s links with loyalism.

The outsider would be East Londonderry MP Gregory Campbell, viewed as being on the party’s Christian fundamentalist wing. When Paisley senior was leader, he was also Moderator of his fundamentalist Free Presbyterian Church of Ulster which he founded 20 years before the DUP in 1951. Since his departure from the leadership, the fundamentalists have largely been a minority voice within the party.

Another wild card in the survival of the Stormont Executive and ultimately the peace process will be the outcome of the September 2014 referendum on Scottish independence. If Scotland voted to leave the Union, could it mean more Westminster cash for Northern Ireland?

If Scotland narrowly voted to remain within the Union, would it trigger the maximum devolution scenario – the so-called ‘Devo Max’ solution – whereby the Scottish Parliament was given even more devolutionary powers? This would effectively mean total Home Rule for Scotland, the next best step to full independence.

A consequence of this would be to kick-start a ‘Devo Max’ project for the Stormont Assembly. Again, this would be akin to granting Home Rule to Northern Ireland. Ironically, many Unionists are staging centenary commemorations of Unionism’s fight against Irish Home Rule plans when Ireland was one nation under the Union and which brought the island to the brink of civil war. That sectarian slaughter was only averted with the outbreak of the Great War in Europe in August 1914.

Likewise, a strong UKIP showing throughout the UK in 2014 will have a clear impact on the Republic of Ireland, the only other EU state to have a land border with the UK in Northern Ireland.

The Republic, like Greece, has had to be given a massive multi-million euro bailout to help the country survive the effects of the disastrous collapse of the once-thriving Celtic Tiger economy. Already there are rumours of some shops on the Southern side of the border abandoning the euro and trading in sterling.

If the North leaves the EU as part of a general UK departure following any future referendum, the South will have no other option financially but to follow the UK. The South’s only other option would be to re-negotiate its re-entry back into the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, formed originally as the Empire Parliamentary Association in 1911. Ireland was a founder EPA member when Ireland was entirely under British rule.

The seeds of a new political map for the British Isles could now be sown. This could see Scotland out of the UK, but still in the EU, with England, Wales, and Ireland (North and South) out of the EU, but in a new Union of the British Isles.

The key to this scenario becoming a reality is the future survival of the Stormont Assembly. If the Executive collapses amid street violence and paramilitary terror, could it reinvigorate violent nationalism in Scotland and Wales?
Much of the current public discussion of the UK’s role in the EU is based on very selective or inadequate evidence. At the popular level it often relies on simplistic sound bites and distorted statistics. There appears to be little that is both easily accessible and authoritative about the potential cost of a policy decision that could fundamentally change so important a relation as that with our European neighbours. As Lord Jenkins famously complained more than a quarter of a century ago, the debate about Europe tends in Britain to be obsessive without being illuminating.

In their 2010 Coalition Programme the governing parties pledged to “examine the balance of the EU’s existing competences”, and in July last year the Foreign Secretary announced a government review of just that. He asked all departments to draw up a Domesday Book, examining what powers the EU currently exercises and how they affect the UK.

The political context for this review was opposition among some Conservative MPs and their constituents to the Conservative leadership’s soft line on Europe, as well as the increasing popularity of UKIP, which appears at least in part attributable to its hard line on the EU. In response, mainstream Conservatives have criticised the EU currently exercises and how they affect the UK.

The Foreign Secretary has asked departments across government to bring together all legislative and regulatory documents that relate to the EU, and to assess their impact on the UK.

The FCO, which is co-ordinating the exercise in close co-operation with the Cabinet Office, described the review as “an audit of what the EU does and how it affects the UK…. It is important that Britain has a clear sense of how our national interests interact with the EU’s roles, particularly at a time of great change for the EU.”

At its simplest, this exercise might have been little more than a listing of EU/primary and UK secondary legislation, and would have made remarkably dull reading. But the Conservative leadership needs more than that to calm unruly backbenchers now and to differentiate the Coalition parties before the next election. It needs more than just a quantitative audit; it needs a qualitative assessment. Will this review deliver that?

However much you might like or loathe EU-inspired laws and regulations, their listing would – in legal terms – simply be a tally of the status quo. But if the audit also includes how it affects the UK, then it is – at least potentially – entering onto highly contested political ground. The document laid before Parliament tried to square this circle by claiming, “The review will not be tasked with producing specific recommendations. It will not prejudge future policy and it will not be asked to look at alternative models for Britain’s overall relationship with the EU.”

A final decision will be taken closer to the time of great change for the EU. The reports, drafted by civil servants, steer clear of any overt political stand-point or conclusion. Such conclusions would have been highly problematic, because the two parties in the coalition government – the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats – are not united in their attitude to the EU.

But if you look further you can find subtle and not so subtle differences – alongside plenty of political reticence – in the six reports.

Some of the issues are of course “no brainers”. In tax matters, for instance, the Treasury report concludes, “UK policy places priority on ensuring that the Government retains maximum flexibility to shape UK tax policy to suit UK economic circumstances. In line with the Coalition Agreement, the Government opposes any extension of EU competence in the area of taxation. Therefore, the Government believes that tax matters should remain subject to unanimity and upholding the veto on tax is a key priority.” Any other conclusion would certainly have made the headlines.

In the report on animal health, however, you can read between the lines that DEFRA and the Food Standards Agency are less antagonistic to the idea of reforming change in the EU. In its introductory paragraph the DEFRA report echoes the earlier document laid before Parliament, but stresses that the review will serve to “provide a constructive and serious contribution to the national and wider European debate about modernising, reforming and improving the EU in the face of collective challenges.”

The UK Review of the Balance of EU Competences

By Dr Martyn Bond, Visiting Professor of European Politics and Policy at Royal Holloway, University of London
DFID was even more strongly supportive of working with the EU on development aid issues. Approving the current division of competence between the EU and the national authorities, the DFID report underlined the fact that one piece of evidence submitted to it in its consultation called for "a strengthening of EU competence in humanitarian aid in the interests of ensuring that the efforts of all donors are fully in line with each other." Its list of five advantages of working through the EU also reads substantially more positively than the five balancing disadvantages it subsequently listed.

BIS was also bullish about the benefits of the Single Market. Its report ran through the historical development of the Single Market, its legal framework and also its impact on the UK’s national interest, noting that “most studies suggest that the GDP of both the EU and the UK are appreciably greater than they otherwise would be, thanks to economic integration through the Single Market.”

It concluded that integration “has also spread the UK’s liberal model of policymaking more widely across the EU.” On balance it concluded that, in answer to the question whether the trade-off between cost and benefit, between economics and politics was of overall benefit to the UK, “most observers, and indeed most of the evidence received for this report, answer positively.”

But it cannily reserved its position as far as reporting on the four freedoms – free movement of goods, of persons, of services and of capital – was concerned. They will be the subject of future reports, the first two later this year and the latter two in 2014.

The FCO’s own report on foreign policy hedged its bets. It underlined the complexity of the foreign policy problems addressed by the EU: human rights in Burma, the Arab Spring, Iran’s nuclear ambitions, restoring order in Mali, ensuring long-term stability in the Western Balkans, case studies which showed how security and defence interests were increasingly interdependent with broader aspects of foreign policy such as trade, energy, transport and environment.

The balance of competence lies squarely with the member states in this area of policy at the moment, not with the EU; all decisions are made by unanimity and each state retains the power of veto. Nonetheless, the FCO report went on to say that, based on the evidence, “it was strongly in the UK’s interests to work through the EU in a number of policy areas.”

As a large, wealthy and militarily powerful member state, the UK has the advantage of a complex network of alliances and partnerships beyond the EU through which it can also work, but the report concluded that it would need both a reformed and more efficient EU as well as the diversity and flexibility offered by these other networks in order successfully to “tackle the challenges and harness the opportunities of the twenty-first century.”

Little wonder that the launch event was low key and the media coverage sparse.

The message is mixed, and unexciting. The reports call for reform without being specific; if they favour any extension of EU competences, they generally do so implicitly rather than explicitly.

So far they have underlined the advantages of current arrangements, which may not please the vociferous minority in Parliament that wants to end our relationship with the EU, but probably reflects the experience of civil servants who live with the reality of European integration daily rather than politicians who make speeches about it at the weekend.

By laying out the facts and refraining from partisan commentary, the first six departmental reviews of EU powers may not have solved the Coalition parties’ desidera completely, but they have at least paved the way for a more informed public debate, dragging the argument away from the obsessive and bringing it nearer to the illumination that Lord Jenkins wanted long ago.
I n his State of the Union address last week in Strasbourg, Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso highlighted the importance of EU funding. As he pointed out, some regions lack the resources for public investment and are almost completely reliant on the EU budget as the only source of funding in the area.

Today’s difficult economic climate, with member states facing serious challenges and regional economies struggling, means that EU investment through structural funding is more important than ever.

We should seize the opportunity invest these funds in infrastructure, jobs, skills training and businesses to help member states and regions overcome the economic and social challenges they face.

Since 2007, the €347 billion investment in the 27 member states has made a huge impact in some areas. However, despite progress being made towards EU convergence over recent years, disparities still exist between EU regions and the future round of EU funding will bring critical investment to many regions in need of economic and social regeneration.

European institutions reached political agreement on the 2014-2020 MFF before the summer and it is imperative that once it is formally endorsed by the Parliament and Council programmes get underway on the 1st of January 2014.

Raising the performance of the funds, with visible and tangible results for citizens is the cornerstone of the next round of structural funding.

In order to achieve this and boost recovery in regions, member states and regions must be well prepared for post 2013 funding.

Member states are currently drafting Partnership Agreements and Operational Programmes and some have presented their drafts to the Commission for comment. It is clear that member states are at very different stages of preparation; while some are making good progress others are further behind.

Adjusting to the new proposals in the regulations could cause a certain amount of interruption for national, regional and local governments and it will be interesting to see the different approaches taken by the member states to the new regulations.

The lessons that they have learnt from the 2007-2013 period will be crucial in shaping their investment priorities and strategic direction for the next round and, with this in mind, collaboration at regional, local and national level is imperative.

Some of the most important proposals in the new regulations will encourage more contribution from regional and local actors in the preparation, development and implementation of cohesion policy funding. Ensuring that local and regional representatives, those closest to the level of the citizen, are fully involved in the process will hopefully make sure that projects are focused on a region’s specific needs.

Also key to success for the next round of structural funding will be how the new elements of the 2014-2020 regulatory framework will be put into practice. The way in which member states and regions adapt to programming changes, to the thematic concentration, the increased focus on performance and the new coherent approach to territorial development will give an indication of the success of the next seven years of funding.

The Common Provisions Regulations (CPR) aims to ensure better co-ordination and integration of funding programmes so that funds have a greater impact. Important proposals within the CPR, such as simplification, a results-led approach, multi-level governance and a greater use of financial instruments, will contribute to creating a much needed streamline approach to European funding.

As I mentioned in my Own Initiative Report for the Regional Development committee on the subject of territorial development at the beginning of the year, this will be important when it comes to making the CPR funds more accessible to applicants. It also opens up the possibility of aligning CPR funds with other funding programmes, such as Horizon 2020, which would maximise the use of EU funds, improve visibility and use structural funds in an innovative way.

I am pleased that my region of Wales, which is often referred to as having an excellent record of allocating and implementing EU funded projects, is taking a proactive approach to the new CPR proposals.

The portal will combine the application procedure with the payments, monitoring and evaluation process for all CPR funds. The proposed creation of a single portal in Wales to allow access to information on all funds covered by the CPR will allow potential synergies and integration between funding streams to be identified centrally, creating a harmonised and simplified process.

It is initiatives and ideas like this that I hope will encourage investment and increase the impact of EU funds on the ground.

A recent overview presented by the European Commission shows how EU investments under the ERDF, ESF and Cohesion Fund from 2007-2013 led to progress and improvement for many citizens. Now we must build on this in the next round of funding to ensure that money is effectively spent on projects that will bring direct results and improve the lives of citizens.
After five years of crisis and continuous reforms for adjustment of our economies, some positive signs of recovery have appeared. Despite this fragile achievement, we all know that Europe has to continue to take more measures towards a sustained economic growth. This implies a shift towards a new growth model, with new drivers searching for synergies among European and national policies, financial instruments, and multi-level governance stakeholders. Innovation is one of the crucial elements that have been taken into consideration when designing the foundation of the future growth.

We Europeans, have paid more attention to the innovation driver, because Europe’s competitiveness gap has widened in the last decade and led, in various degrees, to significant macroeconomic imbalances in most of the EU’s regions. This is why policy efforts have been concentrated on providing a framework for innovation, supporting the creative industries, searching for technological progress, making European economies more resilient and reinforcing the entrepreneurial skills within the Union.

Europe 2020, through its flagship such as the Innovation Union, along with Union’s policies have been designed to gather synergies at the EU and national levels using innovation as a new driver of our growth. Thus, regional policy has been adjusted to better contributing in the most effective and efficient way to the sustainable and inclusive growth of the regions of Europe.

Subject for the first time to the ordinary legislative procedure after the Lisbon Treaty, innovation has been put by the Parliament at the foundation of the main public investment policy of the Union during the negotiations of the 2014 – 2020 Cohesion Policy legislation. The future policy, currently in the last phases of negotiations, will be more focused, with fewer thematic priorities, greater conditionalities (like smart specialisation strategies for example) and improved access to new forms of financial instruments and reduced administrative burdens.

In designing the new legislation, the role of the European stakeholders, national, regional and local authorities along with the involvement of private sector and academic community as enablers and drivers of innovation at the regional level, has not been forgotten. Consequently, based on this new legislation the European regions should be able to combine their macroeconomic assets with effective microeconomic measures and (re)design their regional innovation strategies and implement them. Some of their proposals could benefit from the 325 billion euro, the amount allocated for the regional policy in the next budget seven-year budget cycle. Regional policy is also a catalyst and partner in the shape of Horizon 2020, a programme designed to implement the Innovation Union.

Due to the heterogeneity of our economies, there is a certain polarisation concerning innovation among the European regions. The Commission’s 2012 Regional Innovation Scoreboard has confirmed this situation. We could also observe that the most innovative regions pertain to the most innovative countries, where the majority of the innovation leaders and high performing innovation followers are. These regions have built balanced performance structures, while the moderate and modest innovation regions were not able to do so. The champion regions were able to build strong public – private partnerships that represent powerful tools in delivering innovation and growth.

The best practices should be shared among enablers and drivers of the innovation, helping thus the least “equipped” regions to develop themselves. Only in a concentrated effort, the trend of polarisation in the innovation sector can be reverted. Otherwise, Europe will continue to suffer from this innovation fragmentation, having high performance of a few European technological “hotspots” and a relative high number of the regions lacking innovative capacities.

Innovation along with technological progress represents an engine and Europe must use it in the next decades. Regional policy offers a framework for both hard and soft investments designed to reduce disparities among regions within Member States, and between our countries and the main global competitors. Europe cannot afford to lose time, when globalisation has elicited a shift to new innovation frontiers. The EU has to kick-start its convergence machinery, whose basement should lie on the Single Market. Moreover, barriers in several components of the Single Market, including the innovation sector, should be removed as soon as possible. We should also try to better use the local growth potential, selecting rapidly the elements that can boost innovation.

The future cohesion policy legislation has been designed with a view to changing the paradigm of the current regional policy, insisting on innovation as a growth driver. Within this framework, it is up to us to use a mix of policy tools that can combine clusters of creative people, mobilise talents, financial resources, encourage entrepreneurship, job creation, and better use the public private partnerships among enablers and drivers of innovation. Therefore, despite the reduction in the appetite for innovation due to the economic crisis of the last years, I do believe that we, Europeans, are able to better use innovation as a key driver of competitiveness. This is why we can bring Europe back as a key player on the global innovation scene and assure a sustained growth model. We have done so many times over the last few centuries.
Die Hard: The Republican Growth and Opportunity Report v the Radical Right

By Dr Niall Palmer, Dept of Politics and History, Brunel University

A fter Ronald Reagan’s 1980 election to the presidency, the U.S. electorate appeared to shift markedly to the right, beginning an era of resurgent conservatism which forced the once-dominant Democratic Party to nominate ‘centrist’ presidential candidates, dilute its liberal policy agenda and accept defeat or humiliating compromise on issues ranging from taxation and deregulation, to gun control and welfare spending.

The ‘Reagan revolution’ delivered three consecutive presidential election landslides for the G.O.P. and was confirmed by the ‘Republican revolution’ of 1994, when the party took control of both houses of Congress for the first time since the mid-1950s. By 2005, Republicans had won or held the White House in five of the previous seven electoral cycles and had enjoyed almost unbroken control of Congress for a decade.

This record appeared to confirm political analyst Kevin Phillips’ famous 1969 prediction of an “emerging Republican majority” at the national level based upon long-term demographic, social and economic changes.

In 2000, Karl Rove, George W. Bush’s ideological ‘guru’, foresaw a permanent ‘realignment’ of the electorate. Large swathes of the white working and middle classes appeared alienated by liberal Democrats’ focus on social and cultural issues such as affirmative action, environmentalism and gay rights, rather than on ‘traditional’ issues such as employment and taxation.

Republicans were now overhauling Democrats in the race to control a majority of state governorships and legislatures. Meanwhile, Christian evangelicals provided the wealthy, highly-motivated ‘base’ for the G.O.P. that unions had once given the Democrats. Infiltrating state Republican organisations across the south and west, they pushed a hardline conservative agenda – intolerance of homosexuality, feminism, abortion and taxation and hostility to both the federal government in Washington and ‘media elites’ in Hollywood and New York – which aspiring Republican officeholders learned to adopt and promote, whether or not they sincerely believed in them.

Responding to these changes, the Democratic party stumbled badly at first and suffered landslide losses in 1984 and 1988, which reinforced right-wing Republicans’ confidence that loyalty to the first principles of Reaganism was the core element of electoral success.

Bill Clinton’s 1992 victory, the first Democratic presidential win since 1976, was attributed to his party’s acceptance that they had largely lost the ‘battle of ideas’.

Clinton’s free-market economic policies and almost apologetic ‘progressivism’ demonstrated that the only electable Democrats in the 1980s and 1990s were, as he put it, “goddamned Eisenhower Republicans”. Under George W. Bush, the moderate rightward march resumed, with deficit-busting tax cuts in 2001 and 2003, the shelving of the Kyoto agreement, two new conservative Supreme Court justices and an aggressively neoconservative foreign policy which disturbed some of the G.O.P’s Old Guard.

Around 2006, however, the ‘revolution’ began to consume itself. Intra-party disputes over immigration, domestic spending and corruption ended the Republicans’ nearly twelve-year control of Congress. The 2007-08 financial collapse damaged the party’s reputation for fiscal responsibility but radicals, galvanised by the anti-tax rhetoric of Grover Norquist, rejected calls to abandon right-wing economic orthodoxy and instead denounced the T.A.R.P. emergency bailout package as ideological heresy.

In Barack Obama’s first term, Republican congressional freshmen, elected in 2010 and supported by the Tea Party movement, intimidated traditional conservatives and moderates and viewed even Newt Gingrich and John Boehner as ideologically suspect.

The confrontational rhetoric of House radicals during the 2011 debt ceiling negotiations helped Obama to occupy the vital political centre ground, closer to public opinion. While some Tea Partiers called the president a socialist and a secret Muslim, others openly encouraged Donald Trump’s fixation with Obama’s birth certificate.

In the face of this barrage of trivia and obstructionism, Obama secured two notable victories - the killing of Bin Laden in May 2011 and a Supreme Court endorsement for the constitutionality of the central element of his 2010 Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This latter success, which provoked furious radical attacks on the conservative Chief Justice, John Roberts, was the totemic liberal victory on healthcare which had eluded Democratic administrations for decades.

In retrospect, the margin of Mr Obama’s re-election victory in 2012 was not as surprising as it first appeared. While many grass-roots G.O.P. activists blamed Mitt Romney’s ineptitude for the loss, more pragmatic party figures, including Arizona Senator John McCain and former New Jersey governor Christine Todd Whitman, had been questioning the right’s strategy of disruption, non-co-operation and doctrinal purism for some time.

On March 18 2013, Reince Priebus, chair of the Republican National Committee, held a press conference to launch the 98-page “Growth and Opportunity Project” report produced by a five-member panel which included former Bush press secretary Ari Fleischer and former Mississippi governor, Haley Barbour. The panel contacted over 7,000 political activists, consultants and spin doctors, polled more than 2000 Hispanic voters and 2,640 women and ran an online survey attracting 36,000 participants. 750 meetings or phone calls and 800 conference calls were held with selected groups. Billed as a plan to “grow the Party”, the seven chapter report is also a frank assessment of the growing problems the G.O.P. faces with its deteriorating public image and dwindling voter base.
Neither the panel nor Priebus bothered to downplay its negative conclusions, using unusually stark language to describe its findings. Greater flexibility was needed and a willingness to listen on issues such as immigration and gay rights, even if this offended the rigid ideologies of the base, Priebus observed.

Reacting to criticism that the party was perceived to be pandering to an ageing white male electorate while losing touch with ethnic minorities, women and younger voters, he added, “We have to stop divorcing ourselves from American culture.”

Priebus also noted failings in the party’s messaging – “We’ve done a really lousy job of marketing who we are” – and in its appeal to younger voters – “Young voters are increasingly rolling their eyes at what the party represents.” The price of failure, the report warns, could be political self-marginalisation.

Despite right-wing triumphalism, the party’s national election performance has steadily weakened. Republicans have lost the popular vote in 5 of the last 6 presidential elections. There has been no convincing Republican presidential win since 1988.

In the period from 1968 to 1988, the party averaged 417 electoral votes to 113 for the Democrats. Since 1988, it has averaged only 211 to the Democrats’ 327. The two Bush victories of 2000 and 2004 were hardly reassuring. The first was controversially awarded by the Supreme Court while Bush scraped only 16 votes more than the minimum 270 required in 2004, with an unimpressive popular vote margin of 50.7% to 48.3%.

Geographically, the party is in full retreat in its old New England bastions and rising numbers of Hispanic voters threaten to alter the political complexion of key states such as Florida to the Democrats’ advantage. California, the home of the 1978 ‘Taxpayers’ Revolt’ – the starting point for the ‘Reagan Revolution’ – was reliably Republican for over 30 years. It fell to Clinton in 1992 and has been a ‘blue state’ ever since.

Some analysts predict that the influx of Hispanics into Texas will turn the state ‘competitive’ by 2016 and blue by 2024. Joining New York (which has not endorsed a Republican since 1984) this lethal combination could produce a built-in Democratic advantage of 151 electoral votes, effectively locking Republicans out of the White House for years.

Population experts predict the U.S. will be 30% Hispanic by 2050, with whites shrinking to less than 50% of the population. There is traction in the claim that Hispanic voters naturally identify with core G.O.P. values such as low taxation, help for small businesses and religiosity. George Bush, for example, did well with Hispanic voters as Texas governor and as President but the party is still electorally threatened. “We have to engage them and show our sincerity”, the report urges.

The implication: publicly associating Hispanics with welfare ‘scrounging’ or referring to migrant workers as “wetbacks” are now as unpromising tactics for future success as rampant homophobia. An NBC/ Wall Street Journal last year revealed 55% of Hispanics polled supported ‘marriage equality’. Similar polls show declining opposition to gay marriage among black voters.

As the ethnicity and sexuality cards lose their clout as mobilisation tools, moderate Republicans insist the party must abandon ‘scapegoating’, social groups and find more positive ways to attract voters (a practice even the internal report admits went on in some state parties). Further, it is estimated that more than 20% of the active electorate consists of single women, yet surveys suggest nearly 70% of this group voted Democrat in 2012, a repeating trend over the last few elections attributed to Democratic policies on healthcare, abortion and equal pay.

Republicans captured a majority share of married white women but this, again, is a shrinking demographic. Heavily represented in the black and Hispanic communities and among younger voters of all ethnicities, single women are growing in political influence and appear disturbed by the Christian fundamentalist precepts which have crept into G.O.P. rhetoric since 1980. Similarly, younger voters are deserting the party. Romney lost voters under the age of 30 to Obama by a 5 million vote margin.

The report notes, rather enviously, Democrats’ deployment of “young supporters as precinct captains and boots on the ground” and calls for Republicans to shed their cross, middle-aged image and “change the tone we use to talk about issues”.

Priebus’ biggest problem is that many of the report’s critics refuse to accept that any serious problem exists, much less a problem which cannot be cured by more doses of brutalistic rhetoric. When ex-Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, interviewed in May 2013 on Fox News Sunday, suggested that the RNC hang a “closed for repairs” sign on its door while it searched for new and positive policies, the conservative Washington Times denounced him as “an aisle-crossing dealmaker”.

The editorial dismissed his comment that Reagan himself would struggle to succeed in the modern party as “preposterous.” Yet Dole was right. Reagan’s pragmatism toward the Soviet Union after 1983 outraged neoconservatives, while his deliberate failure to put the weight of the executive behind campaigns to outlaw abortion and reintroduce prayer into public schools left Christian activist leaders disillusioned.

Instead, the Times praised the Tea Party movement for galvanising the party, ignoring opinion polls suggesting that the group had become a negative factor for the broader, more moderate electorate. This defiance was echoed by Jenny Beth Martin, co-founder of the ‘Tea Party Patriots’, who claimed the party lost to Obama simply because it “failed to promote our principles.”

Similarly,
Phyllis Schlafly, veteran campaigner on ‘family values’ issues, urged Republicans not to be diverted by the “myth” of the growing importance of Hispanic voters but to concentrate on fully mobilising the white electorate.\(^{(5)}\)

Talk show host Rush Limbaugh claimed that party leaders were out of touch with the Republican base.\(^{(6)}\) Ironically, Limbaugh was echoing the report itself, which opens with the claim that “The G.O.P. today is a tale of two parties. One of them, the gubernatorial wing, is growing and successful. The other, the federal wing, is increasingly marginalizing itself.”\(^{(7)}\) This criticism, in particular, bodes ill for party unity.

Limbaugh’s comment reflected a growing trend among grassroots activists to attack the congressional party and the RNC at any hint of compromise with Democrats. Opinion polls, meanwhile, continue to suggest voters are turned off by such intransigence. Republicans have already gambled and lost twice on this tactic - once during the 1995 government shut-down over deadlocked budget talks and again during the 2011 debt ceiling impasse. They emerged from both confrontations more damaged than the Democratic presidents they opposed.

To an extent, conservatives have become victims of their own success. The proliferation of right-wing media outlets since the late 1980s, the network dominance of FOX News and the high profiles of abrasive commentators like Limbaugh, Bill O’Reilly and Ann Coulter encouraged the right to retreat into comforting ‘information silos’, there to feed on Reagan-worship, while demonizing liberals, secularists, gays, illegal immigrants, the dependent poor and single mothers as subversives undermining the ‘American Dream’. The tone of their rhetoric was brash and defiant, repelling many voters who are fiscally conservative but socially progressive. Hence Priebus’ urgent call for a change of tone. “When someone rolls their eyes to us”, he argues, “they’re not likely to open their ears to us.”

Liberals, of course, have their own silos but the Democratic Party under Clinton and Obama has become rather more light-footed than its opponents. Democrats learned the hard way that electability depended on a pragmatic balancing of short term goals with longer term political and cultural trends.

The Republican ‘base’ seems unwilling to accept that revolutions run out of steam. Twenty four years have passed since Reagan left office – the same gap separating the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt from the moon landing.

America is changing fast and moving on. New issues are trending and new ways to motivate voter groups are essential. Attempting to force new voters into an out-dated ideological straitjacket will only guarantee a return to minority status.

We have been here before. In the 1980s, die-hard liberals refused to see the writing on the wall, idealised a former president (FDR for the older generation, JFK for the younger) and chanted ideological mantras to drown out warnings that they had lost touch with mainstream voters.

Years of internecine struggle were needed before pragmatists could regain control and steer the party back towards the centre. Rather than learning from this harsh lesson, the die-hard purists of the right seem hell-bent on repeating it.


2. Growth And Opportunity Project. 4.


7. GOP p.4.
Between Iraq and a Hard Place: Transatlantic Relations under Strain

By Mitchell Belfer, Head of Department, International Relations and European Studies at Metropolitan University Prague

The clouds of war are again gathering along the eastern Mediterranean littoral. The US is intent on punitive actions to ‘degrade’ Syria’s military capabilities while Russia is expending its diplomatic and military energies to deter such actions. No other country really matters. France may pledge its fidelity to the US, but its words weigh heavier than its deeds. The UK – degraded from a pillar of transatlantic relations – did not even manage to show rhetorical solidarity. Perhaps this is because the brewing conflict is not about Syria at all; it is about something far less tangible and yet far more important. The conflict over Syria is about projection and counter-projection, about geopolitical advances and retreats, about international leadership and band-wagoning.

This is hardly a novel characteristic for a region plagued by centuries of turbulence; however it is exposing two fundamental problems.

First, the EU and most of its members no longer support US leadership. This may be a reflection of so-called “Iraqitis” – a mixture of disappointment and fear over the Iraq debacle – or produced by growing EU foreign policy confidence. Irrespective of its sources, the internal EU swaggering is signalling to Washington that it remains uncommitted to upholding international standards by use of force. Instead, many US allies have preferred to appease Assad and his Russian patrons. So, for the first time since assuming the Oval Office, Obama has developed a realiseable objective, and a strategy for achieving it, and yet is being forced into unilateralism. This will certainly have long-term repercussions for EU-US relations since the commitments that have bound them together for nearly a century are being eclipsed by transatlantic egoism and estrangement. It is, of course, not too late to revive the faltering alliance, however with some voices on Capitol Hill calling for the deconstruction of NATO (as an expensive set of shackles for US foreign policy) time is of the essence and European leadership is needed to meet the US halfway since any US disengagement from Europe will certainly undermine the stability this continent has come to take for granted over the past two decades.

A second problem is in regards to the decidedly peripheral role the EU has come to inhabit in international relations. Sure, French and British forces intervened in Libya and Mali. However, the EU is now 28 members strong and if it is to remain internationally relevant, it needs to utilise its full capabilities, it needs to stop buck-passing and free-riding and actually contribute to security in Europe through enhancing security around Europe. It would be wrong to suggest that the EU has not identified its neighbourhood, particularly its Southern Mediterranean neighbours, as intrinsically volatile and unstable. It has devoted many millions of Euros to the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and like-projects, which are essentially a one-way street; of EU funding to Middle Eastern and North African states for the purpose of building and maintaining civil society organisations so that democratic tendencies take root on the social level instead of dictated from above. Hindsight has revealed what a haemorrhaging of monies such projects have been. The EU did not empower civil society in Egypt, Tunisia or Syria. If anything, throwing money at social destruction of Syria despite having a willing leadership in Obama and collective capabilities to make a lasting difference.
Funding an International Emergency Response: an NGO’s Perspective on Funding

By Emma Le Beau, Head of Syria Crisis Programme, Medair

This is an insight into how an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) can exercise their agility and implement their expertise, to relieve human suffering. The way the organisation relates to different funding mechanisms provides the link between those in need and those pledging to help.

Now in its third year, the Syrian civil war has killed over 100,000 people, half of whom are believed to be civilians, and millions have been displaced from their homes. An average of 5,000 Syrians are fleeing their country every day, joining the two million already living as refugees throughout the region. This number is expected to reach 3.5m refugees by the end of the year.

The resulting immense humanitarian needs are being addressed as much as possible by a range of actors, especially local agencies, host governments, humanitarian UN agencies and INGOs. An important factor of this response is the part played by INGOs specialised in emergency relief. One of those is the Swiss-based humanitarian relief and recovery NGO, Medair.

The conflict, the plight of refugees, the political complexity, and the largest humanitarian funding appeal in history, have all been well publicised. What is less well known are the inside workings of funding the response.

Explained here is an insight into the constantly revolving relationship cycle involving the funding mechanisms and the emergency response operation set in motion. How the process itself, of delivering emergency aid, brings critical but lower profile needs to attention, through sharing information. How increasing awareness and understanding then helps to inform and influence stakeholders. And how NGOs work with institutional donors in that process, to adapt the nature and availability of their funding to enable the humanitarian needs to be appropriately met.

Emergency response covers a range of situations including natural disasters, conflict, complex political emergencies, and both slow-onset and rapid-onset events. As a humanitarian relief and recovery agency, Medair deploys an emergency response team when the needs of the affected communities have exceeded the local response capacity in countries that fit the organisation’s mandate criteria. Medair is operating in 10 countries, of which seven are among the world’s 10 most failed states (FT 2013 Failed States Index), and also in the highest ranking 10 countries of the ECHO Global Needs Assessment Final Index combining Vulnerability and Crisis indices.

Syria had been a watching brief for Medair since spring 2012. The sharp increase in refugees into neighbouring countries during July and August led to the organisation’s on-the-ground assessment and consequent emergency response in early September. The quick impact response began in the border regions of neighbouring Lebanon and Jordan.

On the surface, for an agency that focuses on reaching people in need who are ‘difficult to reach,’ Jordan was not an obvious choice. The rapidly expanding Zaatari Camp was at the centre of the world media buzz, with ‘A Listers’ from Prince Charles, Samantha Cameron, to Princess Mary of Denmark, John Kerry and Angelina Jolie all paying a visit. Millions of dollars of aid per week was, and still is, being channelled into a very tangible and visible response.

The combined resources of the Jordanian military and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) have provided a structured and contained movement of refugees from border to camp. In February 2013, at the transit site close to the border where the two operations transfer refugees from one set of buses to another, the team witnessed over 700 people crossing within less than two hours. This was under darkness of night when refugees had a greater chance of avoiding danger. A Jordanian lady living nearby commented that ‘Syria will be empty soon’ at watching the rate of arriving refugees. However these numbers are not the entirety. There are at least 100 unofficial crossing points between Jordan and Syria where Syrians are entering into the northern governorates, avoiding the camp and entering into towns and cities in the region.

The camp is no easy place to work, with reports of rocks thrown at aid workers, sanitation facilities being vandalised and fighting among residents. But the less tangible and more difficult to reach people have been, and still are, the two out of every three Syrian refugees in Jordan who are living outside of the camps. They are living with host families or living in rented apartments that many can ill afford.

Medair’s response focused on shelter, providing families with a place of protection for the coming winter months. Emergency Aid has two fundamentals of Access and Availability that contribute to determining the appropriate response. Taking the
provision of shelter in this context as an example; in a relatively barren and arid area where Za’atari camp has developed, there is certainly not sufficient pre-constructed housing available. Therefore tents are distributed, either purchased locally or flown in accordingly. Whereas in developed cities, such as Amman, Mafraq, empty housing is available on the open market. Availability is not the problem, rather accessibility is prevented by way of financial barriers.

Once a family’s assets have exhausted, they face eviction or turn to much worse negative coping mechanisms to make ends meet. Cash-based programming is an appropriate solution, especially when coupled with providing legal advice regarding rental contracts. The distribution process in an urban context has the same basic stages as any other but with a different set of complexities. The first step involves finding the refugee families who are dispersed and effectively ‘invisible’ in hundreds of different apartment blocks, then assessing their needs, co-ordinating with other agencies to check eligibility and avoid duplication, and effectively distributing the aid. The contrast of the political and logistical complexity in Jordan, compared to Medair’s aid response in Lebanon, is significant.

The Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, a rural area 30km east of Beirut, is at an altitude of 1,000m. The result of the Lebanese governments ‘no camps’ policy here has been the widespread array of informal tented settlements, where families have gathered on rented farm or wasteland or along the fringes of agricultural fields. Syrian families cross over the mountains and onto the plain of this agricultural plateau, some by foot, but many by vehicle. From the border, Damascus is 40km on a tarmac road. This border is considerably more porous in comparison with the Jordanian border. Opposition forces hold part of the other side of the border and crossing to date has been relatively open. A multiple sources map published by SNAP (ACAPS) shows the areas held by the different forces inside Syria and helps to explain the displacement within the country and the direction of movement of people as they navigate the areas of conflict and contention.

Official records of the numbers crossing into Lebanon are not available, but the number of ‘people of concern’ being registered by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) is known. The figure was 726,340 as of 5 September 2013 (www.unhcr.org). Of these people, 252,187 are in Bekaa, equating to 52,308 households.

In these areas NGOs can assist with shelter materials such as wood and plastic coverings and insulation materials for the upcoming winter, but refugees construct their own shelter. Medair is also distributing critical relief items to new arrivals for hygiene, cooking, sleeping and heating.

As settlement sizes grow and people stay longer, the risks of poor sanitation conditions are growing and are certainly not what most arriving Syrians are accustomed to. Having fled from a developed country and now living under a plastic sheet, this is survival in unfamiliar surroundings, in more ways than one.

Humanitarian Aid funding is insufficient to meet the needs of all displaced persons inside Syria and the two million refugees outside. Aid agencies are co-ordinating to spread the available resources thinly but fairly, but with a growing funding gap, the humanitarian needs are certainly not being fully met.

The growing enormity of the problem has potentially been masked by the spring and summer months in Bekaa, when some casual labour has been available and the climate is less harsh than the winter months. But the looming onset of another winter and with 15 times more refugees now in Lebanon than last year, the problem and needs are growing exponentially.

The forecast for neighbouring countries is no better in this protracted crisis. By May 2013 the requirements of the Syria Regional Response Plan (RRP January to June 2013) had a funding gap of 27%, but on revision to include the needs forecasted to end of December 2013, the funding gap has increased from 27% to 60%. This equates in financial terms to $1,798,219,062 (RRP Funding Status 23 August 2013). Inside Syria, the response is represented by the Syria Humanitarian Assistance Response Plan (SHARP) which, when also revised since the expansion and intensification of the crisis since December 2012, has a current funding requirement of $1.4 billion. Only 43% of the needs were covered as of September 2013.

As noted in a recent IRIN analysis report, ‘the Syrian crisis has attracted, in dollar figures, more than almost any other crisis. ECHO [E.C. Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection], for example, has contributed more than half a billion euros to the Syrian crisis in the last year and a half’. Despite this, the scale of the humanitarian needs and the related funding gap remain vast.
Funding an International Emergency Response (Cont’d)

The limited proportion of the international funding pledges granted directly to INGOs, compared to UN agencies, has been an issue that has had a significant impact on many small- to medium-sized humanitarian INGOs not previously present in the region. This disparity was greatest in the early phases of the crisis, yet this was at the time when fast-response INGOs had greatest added value. They have the ability to both reach into un-assessed geographical areas and also gain the depths of community-level knowledge of needs that the UN agencies cannot reach on their own. Many INGOs are therefore contracted by UN agencies as partners for operational delivery.

Sharing of information and co-ordinating aid delivery are central activities to any humanitarian aid agency. As the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) slogan goes, ‘co-ordination saves lives’ and it’s true. Therefore, alongside Medair’s emergency relief quick impact actions in September 2012, the team were gathering data, for sharing and reporting. Collecting and analysing the data determines Medair’s own response and improves the organisation’s own effectiveness and efficiency. Sharing those data then improves the humanitarian response as a whole.

OCHA co-ordinates the response inside Syria, and as this is a refugee crisis, The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has taken the lead in neighbouring countries. The agency is mandated by the UN General Assembly to lead and co-ordinate international action to protect refugees and resolve refugee problems worldwide.

As one of the few humanitarian agencies operating from early on in the Bekaa Valley, Medair took it upon themselves to bring the refugee situation to the attention of UNHCR and others. The existence of Syrian seasonal migrant workers in the Bekaa Valley was well known, but the fact that refugees were living amongst them was not readily recognised.

Aided by a local Lebanese NGO partner, Medair assessed the situation in these informal communities, meeting with community elders and also with leaders in the host community towns nearby. Migrant workers earning a wage from working the fields were not requesting help, but they directed the team to kinsmen who had fled the conflict and were now present in the same area, often living in a makeshift shelter immediately alongside. Technically these are refugees and therefore are a legal interest of international aid actors under the 1951 Geneva Refugee Convention. Additionally many workers who in previous years returned to Syria after the harvest season found it too dangerous to do so and so stayed in the Valley for the uninviting winter. Their families also began to make the journey to join them.

The Medair field team proactively guided a visit from Beirut of international actors and decision-makers who needed to understand this, and consequentially these refugees’ needs began to rise on the agenda of UNHCR inter-agency meetings. The team were not waiting for that change before assisting them. Thanks to quick release funds from Swiss Solidarity and private donors, the activities had already begun, but further international funds did become increasingly available as the profile of the plight of these refugees also increased.

Sharing findings of assessments is paramount to Medair’s work. Sometimes this is by written publications or in sector co-ordination meetings, or as described above by hosting visits, which has been especially true in this crisis. Syria’s neighbours are flooded with refugees and are easily accessible both logistically and in terms of general security. This accessibility, coupled with the high media interest that can also operate in this situation, makes it almost impossible for high profile visitors not to make an appearance. This brings an additional dimension to aid work in this context and the expectation that time and effort will be committed to hosting visits.

Medair hosted a visit of EU Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva to one of our project sites in Lebanon. Last year, ECHO delivered 46% of its humanitarian operations funding through NGO partners. ECHO was the first institutional donor to offer Medair a 12-month grant agreement at the start of 2013, which enabled the organisation to plan and expand the operations necessary for meeting the predicted increasing needs of this year.

A visit of Sahel Saeed, CEO of the UK Disasters Emergency Committee (DEC), to Jordan was also hosted by Medair and other NGOs. DEC is an umbrella organisation for 14 humanitarian NGO aid agencies. This visit offered a good opportunity to
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Visits such as these provide the opportunity for Medair to play their part in shaping the humanitarian field representatives' positions and policies towards Syria and neighbouring countries. The field team can convey and illustrate first-hand the activities that are working well as an effective response to the humanitarian needs, before partnering with many NGOs.

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Funding an International Emergency Response (Cont’d)

their funds in short and erratic bursts from contributing governments. Consequently, UN-contracted NGO partners must self-finance the gaps between funded contracts. Again the importance and value of private funding is highlighted.

The other recognisable shift among many institutional donors has been the acceptance of single country projects to address context specific needs. However, regional programming continues to be desirable for donors to gain greater coverage with fewer partners. In 2012 and early 2013, requests were for the submission of proposals of significant scale across multiple countries. As the differences in needs and politics in each country has been increasingly profiled and understood, this emphasis has diminished.

Whilst thankful for changes in donor approach, and at the same time keeping project design focused on Syrian refugee survival, all actors must be acutely mindful that the true bedrock to support a protracted crisis is the host community.

The generosity of hosts is undeniable. Truly heart-warming stories, including that of a Jordanian woman who met a Syrian family walking the streets and paid for a hotel for them for several nights whilst helping them find an apartment, contrasts with stories of war, violence, torture and trauma. This crisis subjects those involved to the broadest spectrum of human behaviour imaginable. However, even with a good dose of empathy and patience, there is a sense that no one wants a house guest to stay for too long.

Host community tensions have been identified as a potential crisis. NGOs must recognise the potential and be prepared to respond accordingly. It is critically important for aid agencies to integrate conflict-sensitive analysis into their programme design, not only in this context, but throughout all activities. This is a staple for abiding by the humanitarian principle of ‘do no harm’. In simple terms, Medair analyses the power stakeholders and how the use and distribution of resources, be it procurement, salaries, transport or end aid item distributions, have the potential to enhance or diminish power from the groups involved. In turn activities are then planned accordingly for fairness and peace.

In the first year of the Syrian refugee crisis in Jordan it was easier to secure funding for projects supporting Iraqi refugees, with funding still available to meet that previously recognised and on-going need. If projects designed to help Syrian refugees could also include a high percentage of aid for Iraqi refugees, then more funding options would open. The Medair field team had the mandate to help Syrians, therefore had to wait for the respective donors to reward the conditions of their funds available in Jordan, and tailored them to meet the current crisis.

By the end of this year it is predicted that approximately 25% of people living in Lebanon will be Syrian refugees, and 10% of those in Jordan. With sectarian differences aside, this poses a dramatic resources demand issue in itself. In particular, that of water, electricity and fuel supply and in the health, education and economic sectors. The concern of the host population, that the availability of services and resources is rapidly depleting due to the influx of refugees, is a valid point of tension.

Stakeholders do now recognise the protracted nature and the scale of the crisis, as illustrated, and the reactions and changes are visible. Importantly, as an NGO community, we also need to make sure our message includes the impact on neighbouring countries, and the need for all donors to develop a joint comprehensive and long-term response strategy and financial plan. The plan should be developed in collaboration with the governments and civil representatives of the neighbouring countries affected by the crisis, and include a plan to reinforce these countries’ capacity to manage and co-ordinate their response while continuing to absorb refugees.

Medair’s original trigger for entering the region as an emergency response INGO, was at the point where emergency needs exceeded local capacity. Now, while actively engaged, great importance is given to growing and strengthening local capacity. For each operational project, Medair has a monitoring plan with indicators and measures that guide the planned exit. The exit strategy is predetermined and each of Medair’s country strategies is closely tied to the capacity of local actors being able to meet the demands, in this case of the needs of refugees.

Another aspect of the ‘do no harm principle’ is to not hamper or harm pre-existing developments that a country is making. As an example, Lebanon’s development of a welfare system was beginning to include financial benefits to the poorest of Lebanese society. For an aid agency to use cash programming to Syrian refugees living amongst Lebanese beneficiaries of that new system, had potential to confuse, upset or even harm the country’s welfare advancements. With input from Lebanese government representatives attending UNHCR inter-agency co-ordination meetings, this was avoided.

Aid agencies have the responsibility to liaise closely with local authorities, not only to avoid harm, but also to be complementary to our requested efforts for donors to work with these neighbouring country governments, to reinforce their capacity to manage their own response.

Saving the lives of the most vulnerable is the priority and Medair continues to serve those who escape the conflict to neighbouring countries. Along with other INGOs, Medair also continues to seek access to those most in need inside Syria. There is an urgent need for a UN Security Council resolution under Chapter VI calling on the Syrian government to allow UN cross-border humanitarian assistance. This would enable a significant increase in desperately needed humanitarian aid inside Syria and improve access to civilians in need throughout the country.

Alongside the resolution is the need for the provision of sufficient and flexible funding to support cross-border humanitarian assistance.

INGOs such as Medair remain focused on the humanitarian needs in the region and will continue to address them whilst resources and access allow.

Continuing to assess and reassess the changing needs, bringing critical low profile needs to attention, and contributing knowledge, information and experience to inform and influence stakeholders, especially working with institutional donors, so that the billions of dollars of funding, and the channels and mechanisms through which it is delivered, have the greatest positive impact in relieving suffering and saving lives.
It is no secret that Indonesia is an up and coming nation with plenty of potential economically, politically, and socially. Many experts commend Indonesia for creating a larger middle class population, but still direct well-founded criticism at certain areas, such as poor infrastructure, corruption, human rights violations, poverty and Islamist extremism.

National politics in Indonesia have always been secular since its independence in 1945 because it revolved around Pancasila, the national constitution. That states the interests of Indonesia’s wellbeing, which are: freedom of religion, democracy, just and civilized society, and unity. Indonesia is considered a leading example of ‘modern Islam’ because of this doctrine and how it is practiced in everyday life, in which the citizens manage democracy, western ideals, and treat minorities. Lately, it seems that Indonesian politics is moving away from secularism towards Sharia and this may impede upon the country’s development. Islamist political parties may be a small minority in Indonesian politics, but their influences are beginning to be felt particularly in the economy. Indonesia is home to 250 million people, and is the fourth most populated country in the world. Approximately 85% of the 250 million people are Muslim, with as few as 28% of registered voters affiliated with one of the many varying Islamist political parties. The majority of Indonesians embrace a secular government because they believe that their government should not intervene in religion and vice versa. If the majority of Muslims in Indonesia believe in a secular government, then ideally Islamists should not have power over government decisions. Islamist political parties, like other political parties have changed their tactics and appeal to the masses. They call for promoting a ‘modern Muslim democracy,’ tackling corruption, helping the poor, and other universal issues that Indonesians face. Since Islamist political parties are small, they have created coalition governments to support the current president Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono and his secular Democratic party. One such political party called PKS (Prosperous Justice Party) has an affiliation to the Muslim Brotherhood, and is gaining influence in Indonesian politics even though they only hold 8% of the legislature seats.

The PKS wants laws to be based on conservative teachings, but not necessarily implementing Sharia law nationwide. The PKS define themselves as modern Islamists because of their religious and secular goals. The definition of modern Islamist itself is very fluid and therefore an arduous task in attempting to identify them as such. Even with the arrest and money laundering charges of the PKS Chairman Luthfi Hasan Ishaaq in January, the PKS’ reputation has not been completely tarnished and their agendas are still being carried out. Besides implementing conservative Muslim laws, they also have economic agendas that have slowly been implemented and clash with foreign investments and economic prosperity for the country.

Islamist political parties have had a growing power regardless of them being a very small minority. They have pushed for strict laws against pornography, such as being subject to imprisonment if a person is caught distributing it. There is also a pending law that enforces all foods to be halal, and a steer against importing regulations. Complaints to the World Trade Organization have been issued by the US because Indonesia decided to add horticultural goods. The US also complained about restrictions based on importing permits added for foods, beverages, textiles, and livestock, agricultural goods and other products. Even with attempted negotiations, Indonesia refused to succumb to the US’ request to reduce restrictions and no action was taken until WTO intervened. The Indonesian government said these actions were made to help local Indonesian
farmers by eliminating competition, but backfired and resulted in significant inflation in overall prices.

Indonesia’s government also sought to nationalize the oil and fuel industry. Multinational oil companies Chevron from the United States, and Total from France found themselves in conflict with the government’s interests. As nationalist policies continue to appear, Chevron and Total refuse to place their assets in Indonesian banks for fear of losing their investments. Because Chevron has the largest share at 45% of the nation’s oil production, they refuse to place their revenues in local banks due to Indonesia’s unstable currency and imposed bank charges.

Indonesia’s Islamist groups are finding that they have more authority even as a minority in a coalition government. The government’s decision in nationalizing natural resources and restricting imports are said to be ways to self-sustain the country. Decisions such as nationalizing natural resources and limiting imports are actions influenced particularly by the Islamists Prosperous Justice Party.

Indonesia’s growing middle class is a sign of prosperity and improvement. Investors continue to tolerate the government’s growing nationalist and Islamist sentiments because of the growing markets. In 2012, Indonesia’s economy grew by 6.2% and in 2013 it has a goal of 6.8%.

There have been significant increases in spending everywhere including the aviation industry which saw an increase of 13% passenger numbers within the last year itself, an increase in car sales rise by 18% within the first quarter of 2013, basically an overall increase in purchasing power by the middle class.

With the increasing power of Islamist political parties, the economy may take a downturn. The Islamist Prosperous Justice Party publicly stated that they did not want to implement Sharia law to all of Indonesia, but they seem to have taken steps in taking certain political actions that are supported by Sharia.

This includes the goal of nationalizing the majority of Indonesia’s oil industry within the next few years and restricting imported products. By taking such actions, Indonesia creates fear among international investors and therefore deters them from continuing to invest or pursue investment in the country.

A lack of foreign investments will be detrimental to Indonesia’s economy. Foreign investment significantly rose 22.9% from 2011 to 2012, because of the growing middle class and their growing demand for material goods, but that may soon change and decline with new regulations imposed by the growing power of Islamist parties.

Many experts believe that Indonesia’s crumbling infrastructure and corruption will end Indonesia’s rise as quickly as it started. It is important to understand that Islamism is also a factor for the country’s potential downfall. Indonesia continues to take serious measures to investigate corrupt politicians and invest in building new highways, tolls, and other new infrastructure. Affiliating with such ideas allows for Islamist parties such as PKS to impose other laws and policies that adhere to Sharia law. Surely goals for tackling corruption, poor infrastructure and overall improvement were advertised by Islamist parties and secular parties alike because those are important issues to all Indonesian voters.

Although the government allocated an increase in funds towards infrastructure improvement and corruption, many Indonesians have not seen any significant structural upgrades, resulting in fears of continued corruption. For some reason, the Indonesian government refuses to take advantage of opportunities provided by international investors in which they can help pay for infrastructure improvement, bring in jobs, and even help the middle class grow.

Indonesia’s shift in political power towards a non-secular party is damaging any chances of further prosperity. The country has plenty to do in terms of bridging the growing gap between rich and poor, addressing human rights violations, political corruption, and religious and ethnic conflicts. From what has already been done with the support of Islamist parties, and from what they have proposed, Indonesia’s economy may be reverting back to its darker days.
Hunger Grains: Are EU Policies Undermining Progress on Development?

By Dr Duncan Green, Oxfam GB’s Senior Strategic Adviser

In recent years, there has been much to celebrate in terms of the role of agriculture in development. An intellectual turning of the tide has recognised that improving small farmer production is often the most effective way to turn growth into poverty reduction, and more research and brainpower has been invested in how to ensure that farming lifts people out of poverty (rather than traps them in it). A useful synthesis of a recent Oxfam-hosted online debate can be found on Oxfam’s website at http://policy-practice.oxfam.org.uk/publications/the-future-of-agriculture-synthesis-of-an-online-debate-296522.

That intellectual shift has been mirrored in public policy, with initiatives such as the Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme (CAADP), and aid from traditional donors rising from $2.3bn in 2002 to $5.3bn in 2011 (and that does not include a rising amount of agricultural aid from new donors like China and Brazil).

But another aspect of public policy is proving much more problematic, and this is the lack of coherence between this renewed focus on agriculture, and some misguided economic policies in more powerful economies, especially in Europe and North America. Two examples stand out: land grabs and biofuels.

Land grabs, more neutrally known as ‘large scale land acquisitions’ (or at least those that go wrong), are big business. ‘Buy land. They’re not making it any more,’ joked Mark Twain, and around the world, a lot of investors are taking his advice to heart. In the past decade an area the size of Italy has been sold off (33m hectares from 2000-2013). More than 30 per cent of Liberia’s land has been handed out.

That might be a good thing if the investment went to small farmers, and boosted food production. Oxfam estimates this land could feed a billion people, equivalent to the number of people who go to bed hungry each night. But currently, that is not happening. From around the world come stories of small farmers being expelled, often at dead of night, to make way for foreign investors in what are often decidedly dodgy deals: land grabs and bad governance go hand in hand.

Instead of food, land is either left idle as a speculative investment (a particularly criminal waste), or, in two thirds of cases, turned over to export crops.

The growing evidence and some effective campaigning have overcome initial denials of the problem. In April, World Bank president Dr Jim Yong Kim acknowledged that “The World Bank Group shares concerns about the risks associated with large-scale land acquisitions”. In June, the G8 followed suit with the Lough Erne declaration, saying “land transactions should be transparent, respecting the property rights of local communities”.

But such good intentions face significant obstacles. A new era of high food prices has pushed up land values. That means big returns for speculators, and money talks, in politics as well as in economics. But do public protest, champions inside the corridors of power and clear research evidence of the negative impacts of the land grab tsunami. With so much at stake, the struggle for land is likely to be a hot issue for the foreseeable future.

Closely linked to land grabs is biofuel policy. In 2009 EU governments agreed that by 2020 all ground transport fuel sold in the EU would contain about 10% biofuel. That prompted a surge in investment, much of it via land grabs: new data from ActionAid show that in sub-Saharan Africa six million hectares of land are now under the control of European companies planning to cash in on the policy windfall.

But as evidence piles up, it is becoming increasingly clear that what may have started as a well-intentioned policy to try to make our transport fuels greener has turned out to be disastrous for global hunger.

By 2020, EU biofuel targets could push up the price of vegetable oils by up to 36%, maize by 22%, wheat by 13% and oilseeds by up to 20%. It also turns out that many biofuels are harmful to the environment – leading to deforestation and greenhouse gas release.

As with land grabs, there is some recognition of the need for reform, but progress is slow. In October last year, the European Commission proposed amending the EU’s Renewable Energy Directive by introducing a 5% limit for counting food-crop-based biofuels towards the 10% renewable energy target, improving sustainability criteria and promoting the use of advanced biofuels.

In July, the European Parliament’s Environment Committee (ENVI) adopted a report proposing to limit the share of biofuels made from food crops to 5.5% of the EU’s energy demand in transport by 2020. In September, the European Parliament will take its final vote, triggering negotiations with the 28 European governments on a final deal on the reform of Europe’s biofuels policy.

These are timid steps that fail to measure up to the scale of the problem. Using food for fuel should no longer be an option. The EU should ensure that the use of food crops to produce fuel is completely phased out by 2020.

But with the vested interests in the biofuels industry pouring their resources into a major lobbying effort, support for reform by the EU’s member states hangs in the balance. Not for the first time this is a straight fight between special interests in Europe and the rights of millions in developing countries, but it’s also worth noting that food multinationals like Unilever and Nestle have joined the protests. In the coming months, European leaders will show which side they are on.

Duncan Green is Oxfam GB’s Senior Strategic Adviser and author of a daily blog on development, From Poverty to Power.
Technology Delusions in International Development

By Kentaro Toyama, Researcher, UC Berkeley, School of Information

In 2004, I moved to Bangalore, India, and found a new research effort for Microsoft. Our goal was to explore how electronic technologies could contribute to the socio-economic growth of the world’s poorest communities. We spent months in remote rural villages and urban slums, and we immersed ourselves in the lives of rice farmers and domestic servants.

At the time, the international development community was excited about applying personal computers and the Internet to address challenges in smallholder agriculture, rural healthcare, and public education. A colleague at the renowned Indian Institute of Technology aimed to double rural incomes through “telecenters” – Internet cafés with a social mission. Internationally, Kofi Annan, then the Secretary-General of the United Nations, hailed the arrival of the low-cost “One Laptop Per Child”. “These robust and versatile machines will enable kids to become more active in their own learning.”

I am a computer scientist by training, and nothing would have pleased me more than to proclaim technology’s ability to transform global poverty. Yet, after six years of research in information and communication technologies (ICT) for international development, I have come to an altogether different conclusion: That as much as technology can support development efforts, it rarely does in practice. A good understanding of this failure is critical to the optimal use of technology and for the larger question of development priorities.

A Brief History of ICT in Development

“What if the full power and vividness of [technology X] were to be used to help the schools develop a country’s new educational pattern? What if the full persuasive and instructional power of [technology X] were to be used in support of community development and the modernization of farming?”

These questions were asked by Wilbur Schramm – the father of communication studies – in a book jointly published by UNESCO and Stanford University in 1964. For Schramm of course, “technology X” was the television.

In hindsight, it seems quaint, even slightly absurd, to have expected television to do much for development. A half-century of television has shown us that whatever the technology’s potential, what dominates the airwaves are sitcoms and reality TV. Public programming is constrained by budgets and drowned out by commercial television; and commercial television is a race to the bottom for the mass market.

Meanwhile, even deliberate attempts to use TV for productive purposes only occasionally achieve their goals. Schramm himself investigated an attempt in the Samoan Islands to use television as the basis of their educational system and found it deeply flawed. Within a couple of years of the programme’s inception, teachers, parents, and even students clamored for change – they knew they weren’t learning much.

Today, few people suggest that television is a significant force for international development, but we have new technologies and therefore new hopes. NGOs were excited about personal computers in the mid-1990s. In the early 2000s, it was telecenters.

Today, the mantle has passed on to mobile phones and social media. It’s impossible to walk the halls of the WHO without hearing about mHealth, and just last month, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg announced Internet.org – an effort to increase Internet availability in the developing world for the sake of “driving humanity forward.”

Each new technology offers new promise. Television exceeded radio with moving imagery; computers allow interactivity; mobile phones offer two-way communication; and social media raises the bar with multi-way co-ordination. One day, we may have direct brain-to-brain quantum transmitters, but whatever the technology, the hard challenges of development will remain just as they always have been.

The Limits of Technology

In my research group in India, one of our projects sought to help the women of a south Bangalore slum. Their primary source of income was informal domestic work: They cleaned toilets, mopped floors, and cooked meals for urban middle-class families. They found jobs by word of mouth, and they were always looking for more work.

The situation seemed ripe for a technology solution. Potential employers had access to the Internet at home or at work, and a local community center had a couple of underused computers. We decided to build a job-search kiosk in the spirit of LinkedIn or Monster.com.

We focused our efforts on the user interface. We drafted and re-drafted graphics which made sense to non-literate users. We produced short video clips that explained how the kiosks worked. And after several months of prototyping and testing, we had a system that the women could navigate to find jobs. The technology worked.

But then, the real challenges came. In order to build up a database of jobs and workers, we had to go door to door, signing up women interested in work and canvassing apartment complexes for households seeking domestic labor. Potential employers had idiosyncratic expectations.

Some mentioned caste-based constraints. Others sought specific cooking skills. Still others didn’t want workers to use their toilets.

Meanwhile, many of the workers lacked standards of basic professionalism: They couldn’t commit to specific times of day. They’d miss appointments without notice. They sometimes requested advance payment for personal reasons.

To address these problems, we drafted standardized contracts. We trained workers in cooking, cleaning, and work etiquette. We hired full-time staff to manage client and worker interactions. Pretty soon, the original job-search kiosk ceased to matter.

It was the least of the components needed to make the whole system work. Our costs didn’t seem worth the outcomes, so after trying hard for two years, we shut down the effort. A website – no matter how easy to use – didn’t address the hard parts of the problem.

We were not the only ones in India trying to match informal workers with employers.
There are similar projects across the country, a few of which I have since become familiar with. LabourNet sets up job search and training centers. Babajob.com uses mobile phones and informal social networks to identify clients. What separates the successes from the failures, however, has little to do with the technology. Instead, it has everything to do with how well the organizations behind them perform basic tasks – effective management, aggressive recruiting, choice of clientele, and ability to sign-up employers.

Technology can help a strong organization do its work better; and it can help capable workers find more work; but it’s not the cause itself of efficient management or good employment.

Over the last decade, I have been involved in fifty-odd projects that applied digital technologies to social challenges in education, agriculture, governance, healthcare, and finance. Throughout, the lesson has been consistent: Technology amplifies underlying human forces, but it only amplifies them.

Where human forces are capable and positively inclined, technology can further improve outcomes. Where human forces are corrupt or dysfunctional, technology – no matter how well-designed – doesn’t have the desired outcome. In the end, there is a human finger on the “on” switch, and a human hand at the controls.

Ironically for technology proponents, this means that exactly those situations most in need of help are the ones where technology itself isn’t a solution.

The Myth of ICT

By thinking of technology as an amplifier of human forces, and not as a net addition to, we can effectively predict where ICT-centric approaches to solving problems will fall short. For example...

- If a healthcare system is too weak to deliver vaccines in rural households, then SMS helplines or mobile apps for healthcare workers will do little to increase vaccination. Vaccines are among the simplest of healthcare interventions; a system that can’t deliver them successfully is hardly likely to make effective use of digital gadgets to improve its performance.
- If a country has undertrained teachers or under-motivated school administrators, then neither laptops nor electronic textbooks will improve educational quality. Without adult guidance, children with electronic gadgets end up playing video games. Technology can support learning, but it cannot replace high-quality human supervision.
- If a society is torn by political strife or if its policies and practices do not address systemic problems like inequality, then technology penetration by itself will not alter the socio-economic landscape. The United States, for example, has experienced a golden age of ICT innovation since the 1970s, having given birth to the personal computer, the Internet, the mobile phone, Microsoft, Google, and Facebook. Yet, during that same span of time, the country’s rate of poverty has not decreased at all, and inequality has skyrocketed. Meanwhile, America’s two political parties have rarely been so polarized. Technology by itself doesn’t alleviate poverty or political conflict.

In each case, the social or institutional substrate for meaningful impact is missing, and so technology has no positive force to amplify.

A Healthy Approach to Technology

Despite its inability to cause socio-economic changes on its own, technology remains a powerful tool. What are the best ways to put it to positive use?

First, it’s important to distinguish between the production of technology and the consumption of technology. Technology production can contribute to a country’s economic growth. Technology consumption by itself does not. People cannot consume their way out of poverty.

Apple is a successful company not because it uses technology (though it does), but because it produces technology that others want. It is Apple shareholders and employees who get rich from iPhones and iPads, not users. (Of course, for technology production, there must be enough of a population with the skills required to produce the technology – developing those skills again requires strong educational institutions.)

Second, for anyone constrained to use ICT as part of a development programme, the best approach is to collaborate with entities already having the relevant kind of impact.

For example, if improving rural healthcare is the goal, look for organizations that are already having healthcare impact in remote villages. Then, seek to amplify their impact using technology.

Whether they are non-profits, for-profits, or governments, it’s exactly the organizations with high capacity and commitment that are able to capitalize on technology to further their mission.

(And, if you represent such an organization yourself, seek technologists eager to support your work, rather than people intent on imposing new technologies for their own sake.)

Last and perhaps most important – social, political, economic, and cultural issues must remain priorities even in an age of technology. Laws must be enacted; institutions must be well-funded and well-managed; staff must be well-trained for their roles; dialogue must occur in local communities and in the public sphere.

All of this takes time, expertise, and resources, but there are no technology shortcuts.

No one expects a failing for-profit company to become successful with the injection of new smartphones, social media tools, or a state-of-the-art datacenter. Why then, should we expect such simplistic solutions to address the more complex problems facing governments and nations?
China and Europe in Africa: Like a Jaguar racing a Ford Fiesta

By Stephen Chan, Professor of International Relations, SOAS

There is still far more trade between Europe and Africa, and far greater aid flows from Europe to Africa, than anything involving the Chinese at this moment in time. Yet the Chinese profile in Africa has seriously disturbed European sensibilities. For African governments, the advent of the Chinese in their modern guise – in terms of government-to-government agreements and transactions at least – is a huge blessing. It gives these governments options, and it gives them leverage in their economic relations with Western partners.

Europe has not been accustomed to leverage being used against it. In a way, it has not been used to its former colonies exercising choice and agency – but, in a postcolonial world, choice and agency has in fact been slow in coming.

There are three things to say at the outset. Firstly, the Chinese have been in Africa for almost all of the continent’s independent history. However, the Chinese presence was seen very much in terms of the Cold War and its rivalries; but Chinese aid to liberation movements has been huge, and China has always made a priority, in its showpiece developmental projects, of infrastructural construction.

What has changed since the Cold War has been China’s economic boom and its accompanying industrialisation – so that Chinese largesse to Africa is now closely related to resource-expropriation, and these are resources the West will itself need in the future. How this took the West by surprise is an indictment of lazy Western intelligence, a treatment of African states as having little policy capacity, and an assumption of extended hegemonic relationships with former colonies.

The second thing, however, is that the Chinese presence in Africa is a double-whammy. Quite apart from official relationships and largesse, the spreading flood of Chinese migrants to Africa – with business interests often in competition with African traders and producers; and often with gross racism – has meant a public relations nightmare for the Chinese Government. The Chinese have learnt to deal with adverse public relations, e.g. in the case of celebrity-endorsed Western campaigns over Darfur, by pressurising dictators like Sudanese President Bashir to lighten their heavy hands; but they seem to have no control over their own citizens who have gone to seek fresh pastures in Africa. It should be added that older Chinese migrant communities can look as askance as their African neighbours at the poor behaviour of the newcomers. And the Chinese have been living in Africa for some time. The previous Chair of the African Union, Gabon’s Jean Ping, was half Chinese. At the 1955 Freedom Charter Congress in Klctown, Soweto, that inaugurated the fightback against Apartheid in South Africa, the thousands of protesters were fed by Chinese grocers.

The third thing is that there are 54 African countries, all with different ways of dealing with the Chinese. Angola is probably the most advanced country in terms of refined negotiating capacity, and the ability to ‘push back’ against Chinese demands.

But this capacity is being looked at very seriously by other African governments, so that the present relationship between the many African countries and China is likely to be dynamic, perhaps sometimes volatile, and certainly changing in the years to come.

Having said that, the ‘standard’ Chinese template of front-loaded benefactions, against resource benefits in future years, can simply be implemented faster and better than European methodologies of aid-for-trade.

The intimate linkages between the Chinese Government and Party, and Chinese multinational corporations, can allow co-ordinated action without policy delays. The front-loading can be treated almost deliberately as a short-term loss-leader for the sake of the long term – so that the Chinese can simply plan for an extended future that European budgetary procedures and justifications cannot allow.

But the Chinese have also learnt more quickly than Europe what should go into front-loading. The minute the Chinese proposed - in addition to roads, railways, clinics and schools along the transport routes – the building of universities, as they did in a controversial aid-for-trade proposal in Democratic Republic of Congo, was the minute Africa understood that the Chinese in turn understood African aspirations. Here, in Europe, we are still stuck in the basic education/primary education paradigm – as if Africa needed nothing more and parents aspired to nothing more for their children.

The huge cell-phone penetration of Africa was led in its first incarnation by China – with pirate and other Chinese-produced handsets. The second and current phase of cell-phone penetration sees some of the Chinese lead being taken over by Western producers (although none of them is European). The third phase, which has not yet begun, will see a competition to be the providers of choice of tablets and solar-charging stations. This will have huge benefits for education at all levels, make the delivery of books-as-aid a thing of the past as an entire library can be loaded on one tablet, and will be perhaps the greatest empowering tool to have reached Africa in the 21st century.

In Nigeria, India and China, a tablet can be built for less than £20. The Chinese will be in this battle to supply tablets. We have lost this battle before it even begins. We don’t even think this will be a battle – our imagination of Africa being so static and pastoral and old.

So that the Chinese, for all their faults and problems, have moved and will move in Africa in a way that is simply speedier and smoother than anything Europe can imitate. It’s like watching a jaguar seeing off a bunch of Ford Fiestas at the traffic lights. And that means it sometimes seems like watching something embarrassing. Perhaps we don’t like the Chinese presence in Africa because, intuitively, we know that our paradigm in Africa is stale and we have thought of nothing new.
Discover the “Electoral Stakeholders Network”

The Electoral Stakeholders Network (ESN) is a secure, interactive website, which encourages engagement between electoral officials, electoral administrators, academic experts and electoral suppliers. All members of the ESN are enabled to discuss current international electoral affairs, share research information and access and upload relevant news articles to the network. The website also features forums devoted to specific subject areas and allows members to message one another directly. During the course of each year, meetings and events will take place, focusing on specific electoral issues, to which members will be invited to attend.

What the “Electoral Stakeholders Network” offers you:

• Access to an election specific news feed, which is updated on a daily basis.

• A comprehensive archive of articles focussing on issues regarding elections, good governance, observer missions and much more.

• Summaries, reviews and full reports of academic research and latest scientific publications about, electoral studies, electioneering, governance issues, et al.

• A selection of videos and short films about observer missions, expert interviews, news, reports and ICPS events.

• An event calendar to keep you up to date.

• A discussion board and discussion function which makes it possible to comment on articles or research publications and share opinions with other members.

• The possibility to directly contact members of the network via the internal messaging function.

• The possibility to upload and share election specific information, publications and other written or recorded work with the members of the network.

• Presentations of past conferences.

• Member benefits for ICPS events.

Since going live we have recorded a steep daily increase in members from all around the globe. We are constantly introducing new functions that will make the network even more interactive and informative.

The “Electoral Stakeholders Network” has been established to connect the globally dispersed community of electoral practitioners, electoral officials, electoral administrators, academic experts and electoral suppliers.

The network lives from the participation of its members. Do not hesitate to let people around the world know about the network, so they can benefit and learn from the experiences you have had and help to increase the potential and strength of the electoral community.

For any additional inquiries regarding the Electoral Stakeholders Network, please contact:

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Regulating the Use of Discriminatory Language in Electoral Campaigns

By Sarah Birch, University of Glasgow

Fair and open election campaigns are a central feature of democracy, yet unethical campaigning practices occur when candidates use inflammatory or discriminatory language against their opponents. This short analysis considers alternative means of addressing this problem from a comparative perspective.

There are a variety of different approaches to regulating the use of discriminatory language in election campaigns. In order of decreasing formalisation, the principal tools include:

- Formal proscription of discriminatory language via statute (general prohibitions against hate/discriminatory speech).
- Binding codes of conduct regulating election campaign activities (including the use of language)
- Non-binding codes of conduct regulating campaign activities
- Codes of conduct internal to political parties or media outlets
- Reliance on cultural norms and media scrutiny to generate ad hoc condemnation of discriminatory practices

These tools are not mutually exclusive; indeed it is common for them to be used in combination.

**Proscription of discriminatory language via statute**

Proscription of discriminatory language via statute is the most highly-formalised means of regulating campaign discourse. The advantage of legislation is that it represents a strong deterrent. Legislation can also be seen as a means of shaping cultural norms, in as much as democratically-mandated laws are in effect the embodiment of collective public opinion.

However, legislation must acknowledge the right to freedom of speech, and this may narrow the extent to which it is possible to restrict language use (see ECHR, 2013 for examples). Most jurisdictions only formally prohibit hate speech when it incites violence (aceproject.org) and the Council of Europe Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters maintains that European standards are violated by an electoral law which prohibits insulting or defamatory references to officials or other candidates in campaign documents, makes it an offence to circulate libellous information on candidates, and makes candidates themselves liable for certain offences committed by their supporters’ (Council of Europe, 2003).

Another obvious disadvantage of the legal approach is that access to the courts is often time-consuming, cumbersome and costly. In this sense, it may not in all cases represent an effective remedy for all people.

Finally, legal rulings can in some cases have counter-intuitive effects. A recent study on the Netherlands shows that court a ruling against MP Geert Wilders for the use of discriminatory language actually led to a significant increase in support for his party (van Spanje and de Vreese, 2013).

**Codes of conduct (binding and non-binding)**

Codes of conduct may apply to political parties, candidate, officials, media outlets and voters.

In the electoral sphere, codes of conduct were first widely employed in post-conflict situations where recourse to the law was often seen as an unreliable means of regulating campaign conduct. More recently, codes of conduct have been adopted in established democracies, including the UK, Canada and India, for aspects of the electoral process.

Codes of conduct are often formulated and agreed by political parties, but they can also be drawn up by electoral authorities, media regulators or other bodies. Once agreed, they can either provide informal, non-binding guidance to best practice, or they can be binding (along the lines of local government codes of conduct in the UK). (See the Appendix for examples). If they are legally binding, they become in effect election-specific legislation.

The ACE Project electoral encyclopaedia notes that non-binding codes of conduct can be highly effective if political parties have taken part in drawing them up and have voluntarily agreed to them (aceproject.org; cf International IDEA, 1999). Guy Goodwin-Gill echoes this view when he says that ‘negotiating or mediating a code of conduct within a political community relations and minorities during political campaigning’ (Goodwin-Gill, 1998).

In some codes of conduct, political parties are held responsible for making sure that their supporters adhere to the code, though it is typically easier for parties to police the use of language by their candidates than by their members and supporters.

The disadvantage of non-binding codes of conduct is that they can be disregarded. Indeed, this was the UK Electoral Commission’s objection to the recommendation in the ‘Report of the All-Party Parliamentary Inquiry into Antisemitism’ for a ‘contract of acceptable behaviour which outlines the duty of all election candidates to exercise due care when addressing issues such as racism, community relations and minorities during political campaigning’ (All-Party Parliamentary Group against Antisemitism, 2006). The Commission is cited in the Government’s response to the report as noting: ‘We have developed codes of conduct for party activists in other areas and our experience suggest that parties – both large and small – are not enthusiastic for codes and protocols that go beyond the requirements of electoral or other law. The Commission has no power to compel compliance with any of its advice or guidance, and so it is doubtful whether any “contract” which went beyond what the law regards as permissible would be practically enforceable’ (UK Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, 2007).

Even when there is active party involvement in the design and implementation of the code, there may still be instances where violations occur, especially when there is no impartial body whose job it is to interpret the code and adjudicate disputed cases.

Another approach to regulating the use of language in electoral campaigns is the use of internal party codes of conduct. If parties make codes of conduct part of their own regulatory structures, they can enforce them...
vis-à-vis their own candidates, even if they are not legally binding.

The same is true for media outlets or professional associations, which can regulate the language employed to describe candidates and impose sanctions on their members for violations of their internal codes. As part of their internal codes, media outlets also typically have policies of right of reply which ensure that the object of an inflammatory or discriminatory statement has the opportunity to respond to allegations made.

Codes of conduct thus vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction according to how they are agreed, the categories of people/organisations to which they apply, the period during which they apply, and the mechanisms for adjudicating disputes arising from alleged violations of the code (see aceproject.org, International IDEA, 1999 and Goodwin-Gill, 1998 for further details).

Cultural norms and media scrutiny

Reliance on cultural norms, as manifest in informal discussion and media reports, is in some sense a minimalist approach to addressing the issue of discriminatory campaign language. This approach does have the advantage that it is rapid and it can serve to mobilise public opinion around a particular instance of reprehensible behaviour. When this happens, the electoral costs for the person responsible for using discriminatory language can be very high, making this potentially an effective tool. Comparative evidence indicates that the quality of media coverage in a state is among the most important determinants of electoral quality (Birch, 2011), which suggests that the media represent a powerful tool in shaping public reaction to misconduct by individuals.

In cases where there is a history of hate speech inciting violence (Rwanda, Kenya), informal campaigns against the use of inflammatory and discriminatory language can be effective in curbing this practice, particularly when government, civil society and the media all take part. The 2013 Kenyan election is a case in point. Where there are lower levels of urgency and mobilisation around the issue, informal campaigns and initiatives may be less successful, however.

It may therefore be concluded that in many contexts, reliance on cultural norms and media coverage alone to regulate the use of discriminatory language may not be adequate, in as much as norms vary across sectors of the population and not all voters access the same media sources. This informal approach might best be thought of as an adjunct to the more institutionalised approaches outlined above.

Appendix: Extracts from Codes of Conduct

Inter-Parliamentary Union Model Code of Conduct for Elections (Goodwin-Gill, 1998: 66): ‘Political parties and candidates should ensure that their campaign activity does not incite violence, aggravate sectional differences, create mutual hatred, or cause tension between different groups or communities. Abusive, inflammatory or indecent language should be avoided, and all the necessary steps should be taken in good faith to avoid violent confrontation.’

International IDEA, Code of Conduct for Political Parties: Campaigning in Democratic Elections: ‘Speakers at political rallies will avoid using language that – (a) is inflammatory, or defamatory; or (b) threatens or incites violence in any form against any other person or group of persons’ (International IDEA 1999: 18)

Elections Manitoba, ‘Shared Code of Ethical Conduct’ ([http://www.electionsmanitoba.ca/en/Political_Participation/Shared_Ethical_Code_of_Conduct.html](http://www.electionsmanitoba.ca/en/Political_Participation/Shared_Ethical_Code_of_Conduct.html)): ‘Political parties and Members, in their advertising, campaigns and promotional material, shall strive at all times to make statements that are accurate and to avoid statements that are misleading or deceptive.

‘Members shall not sponsor advertising nor issue other promotional materials, such as pamphlets, brochures, handbills, newsletters, electronic messages, signs or posters, that make defamatory references to another Member, leader, or any candidate of another political party, or another political party generally.

‘Members shall not sponsor advertising nor other promotional material containing language or other visual representation that promotes hatred toward any individual or group.’

Election Commission of India, ‘Model Code of Conduct for the Guidance of Political Parties and Candidates’:

(1) No party or candidate shall include in any activity which may aggravate existing differences or create mutual hatred or cause tension between different castes and communities, religious or linguistic.

(2) Criticism of other political parties, when made, shall be confined to their policies and programme, past record and work. Parties and Candidates shall refrain from criticism of all aspects of private life, not connected with the public activities of the leaders or workers of other parties. Criticism of other parties or their workers based on unverified allegations or distortion shall be avoided.

(3) There shall be no appeal to caste or communal feelings for securing votes. Mosques, Churches, Temples or other places of worship shall not be used as forum for election propaganda.

References

ACE Project electoral encyclopaedia at aceproject.org.


When California voters looked at their ballots for the 2012 Presidential Primary and General Elections, they saw the following language, printed in small type at the top of the list of candidates for U.S. Senator:

“All voters, regardless of the party preference they disclosed upon registration, or refusal to disclose a party preference, may vote for any candidate for a voter-nominated or nonpartisan office. The party preference, if any, designated by a candidate for a voter-nominated office is selected by the candidate and is shown for the information of the voters only. It does not imply that the candidate is nominated or endorsed by the party or that the party approves of the candidate. The party preference, if any, of a candidate for a nonpartisan office does not appear on the ballot.”

Voters called their local elections offices to ask for an explanation of this confusing election-speak. They didn’t understand the instructions because they were not written in plain language.

The confusing language on ballots for the 2012 Primary and General Elections is required by California’s “Top Two Candidates Open Primary Initiative,” a new state law which went into effect for the 2012 Primary and General Elections in California. Because California State Election law stipulates the precise wording of the voting instructions on ballots, County Elections Officials could not re-write these instructions in plain language to make them easier for voters to read and understand.

Plain language means writing that is clear, concise, well organized and directed to the audience it is trying to reach. It means that the reader is able to understand information in one reading.

The concept of using plain language in government communications to the public has a long history in the U.S. Federal Government. In her A History of Plain Language in the United States Government, (2004), Joanne Locke recounts the evolution of the plain language movement in the US Government during the 20th Century. In the 1940s, the book, Gobbledygook Has Gotta Go, by John O’Hayre, an employee in the Bureau of Land Management, brought attention to the problem of confusing government language. In the 1970s, President Nixon ordered the Federal Register to be written in “layman’s terms.” That was followed by President Carter’s executive order to federal agencies to make government regulations easy to understand. In 1998, President Clinton issued orders that required federal employees to write regulations in plain language. Recently, Congress passed The Plain Writing Act (Public Law 111-274) which was signed by President Obama in 2010. The purpose of the Plain Writing Act is to “promote clear government communications that the public can understand and use.” The Act applies to federal agencies and requires plain language training for agency staff.

In 2011, the Plain Language Action and Information Network (PLAIN), an association of federal employees, published plain language guidelines to implement the new Act. These guidelines explain the elements of plain language and give examples of government agency writing before and after it was translated into plain language. A few of the plain language principles in the May 2011 Federal Plain Language Guidelines are:

- Write short sentences
- Use short, simple, everyday words
- Use the active voice for verbs
- Use the simplest form of a verb

The Census Bureau encourages the use of plain language for its employees and advises them to “minimize census-speak.” There is a quote by Albert Einstein on the Census Bureau’s website that says, “If you can’t explain something simply, you don’t understand it well.”

Voters, candidates and poll workers are target audiences for an Elections Department. Voters need to know how to register to vote, and where, when and how to vote. Candidates need to know about important deadlines and forms they must fill out to get on the ballot. Poll workers need to know how to help voters and how to manage ballots, equipment and paperwork at the polls.

Plain language communication to voters, candidates, and poll workers is a priority for the Marin County Elections Department. Since 2008, the Department has worked with language specialists from Transcend Translations, Davis, California, to write voting instructions, the Candidate Guide and poll worker training manuals in plain language. Following are examples of written communications to voters, candidates and poll workers before and after they were translated into plain language.

**Voters**

In 2008, the Brennan Center for Justice, NYU School of Law, published Better Ballots (Norden, Kimball, Queensbery, Chen, 2008) which showed how poor ballot design can frustrate voters and cause problems with voting on Election Day. As part of the study, language specialists translated the voting instructions on the 2008 Marin County Primary Election ballot into plain language. Voters tested a sample of the ballot for usability and gave it a high rating. Below is an example of what the voting instructions looked like before and after they were translated. Although the language in the “before” instructions is required by the California Elections Code, the language in the “after” instructions is much clearer and means the same thing. When voting instructions are clear and easy to understand, voters are more likely to follow them and avoid mistakes that could prevent their vote from counting.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructions Before</th>
<th>Instructions After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If you wrongly mark, tear or deface any portion of your ballot sheet, replace the sheet in the secrecy folder and return it to the Precinct Board Member and obtain another ballot.</td>
<td>If you make a mistake or damage your ballot, ask a poll worker for another ballot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The location of your polling place is shown on the back cover of this sample ballot.</td>
<td>See back cover to find out where to vote.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Candidates**

Candidates need information that explains their filing obligations, forms and deadlines. The candidate nominations requirements written in California election law are already confusing. If candidates don’t understand
their filing requirements and make mistakes during the nominations period, they may lose access to the ballot. Earlier this year, the Elections Department translated its Candidate's Guide for the November 5, 2013 General Election into plain language. The language and layout changes transformed the Guide from a 54 page difficult-to-read document to one that was 17 pages of clear, plain language. Following are examples of before and after language in the Candidates’ Guide:

The candidate’s ballot designation is limited to three words that must describe your current profession, vocation, occupation of incumbency status. It appears on the ballot under your name, and it is optional. Candidates must complete a Ballot Designation Worksheet to justify the ballot designation. A sample of the required worksheet is shown on the following page.

Poll workers

One of the challenges before an election is to train poll workers on election procedures so they can learn how keep the polling place running smoothly during the long day of voting. In addition to using interactive, hands-on training techniques that are effective with adults, Marin County gives plain language instruction manuals to poll workers to use at training classes and at the polls. The Poll Worker Instruction Manual covers basic polling place procedures. It is in the form of a “flip guide” with key topics printed in large letters on the bottom portion of each page. Poll workers find the topic and then flip to the page that describes what to do. It is a fast and easy way for poll workers to find the answers to their questions. In 2010, the Elections Office translated all of its poll worker guides into plain language. Following are before and after examples in Marin County’s Poll Worker Instruction Manual:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructions Before</th>
<th>Instructions After</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Candidates for certain offices may elect to purchase space for a candidate’s statement in the voter information portion of the county sample ballot.</td>
<td>Candidates are allowed to file a statement that gives more information about their education and qualifications. This statement will be printed in the Voter Information Pamphlet.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The candidate’s ballot designation is limited to three words that must describe your current occupation or incumbency status placed on the ballot. These words are called your ballot designation. To request a ballot designation, you must fill out a Ballot Designation Worksheet (sample in the Appendix section), and file it with your other candidate papers by the deadline.</td>
<td>You may have up to 3 words that describe your current occupation or incumbency status printed on facing ballot pages with the remarks column of the Roster next to the names of all voters whose names are on the Vote-by-Mail Voter list.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Poll workers may elect to use a Vote-by-Mail Voter list. If you do, you must update the Roster. Mark “VBM” in red pencil in the Remarks column of the Roster next to the names of all voters whose names are on the Vote-by-Mail Voter list. You may receive a Vote-by-Mail Voter List by the Monday before Election day. If you do, you must update the Roster. Mark “VBM” in red pencil in the Remarks column of the Roster next to the names of all voters whose names are on the Vote-by-Mail Voter list.

Instructions Before | Instructions After
---|---
Update Master Roster-Index by marking "VBM" in red pencil next to the names of voters that correspond to the names on the Vote by Mail Voter list. This is a list of VBM voters added after the Roster was printed. You will receive this list by mail the Monday before Election Day only if there are VBM voter's names to update in your precinct. | You may receive a Vote-by-Mail Voter List by the Monday before Election day. If you do, you must update the Roster. Mark “VBM” in red pencil in the Remarks column of the Roster next to the names of all voters whose names are on the Vote-by-Mail Voter list.

Arrange the polling place so that ballot box and voting booths are in clear view of the precinct board(s). Connect the voting booth lamps to each other (make sure that all cords are safely out of the way.) Set up your polling place so all poll workers can clearly see the ballot box and voting booths. Connect the voting booth lamps to each other. (All cords must be away from foot traffic.)

Information Design

Information design – how the written information looks on the page – goes along with plain language. Writing can be clear, but if it is not presented clearly on the page, readers may not completely understand it.

In her book, Design For Democracy; Ballot + Election Design (2007), Marcia Lawson, Professor of Graphic Design at the University of Illinois at Chicago, explains the importance of the visual display of information and instructions on ballots and in other election publications. She gives examples of the following five principles of ballot design (Lawson, p.23):

- Use lowercase letters for greater legibility
- Understand and assign information hierarchy
- Keep type font, size, weight, and width variations to a minimum
- Do not center-align type
- Use shading and graphic devices to support hierarchy and aid legibility

An example of how poor information design confused voters was the “butterfly ballot” that was used in the Votomatic voting devices in North Palm Beach County, Florida for the 2000 Presidential Election. Voters were confused when they saw the candidates of different political parties printed on facing ballot pages with the arrows next to each candidate pointing to the same line of punch positions in the space where the pages met each other. Some voters claimed that they had voted for the wrong candidates because they were confused by the layout of the ballot. The vote for president was extremely close in that election which resulted in recounts and intervention by the U.S. Supreme Court to end the election chaos that was created in part by the design of the North Palm Beach County ballot.

A common example of poor information design is voting instructions that show voters both the right and wrong ways to mark their ballots. For example, in some counties, the instructions for marking an optical scan ballot show the correct way to mark the ballot, which is an oval filled in. Next to the oval, the instructions also show...
an x and a checkmark, which are incorrect ways to mark the ballot. Voters will see all three marks without reading the text and think they can use any one of the marks to vote for a candidate or measure. The problem with using incorrect marks is that they may be outside of the scan area, so the scanner can’t read them. When the scanner can’t read the voter’s mark, the vote will not count.

Poor information design and dense, confusing language are serious problems when they interfere with voting, but there are obstacles that block elections officials from using the principles of plain language and information design when presenting important election information.

The most common obstacle to providing plain language election information for voters is state election law. There is no equivalent to the federal Plain Writing Act in California to encourage the use of plain language. In California, requirements for voting instructions and for ballot layout are prescribed in detail in the California Elections Code. For example, contrary to the principals of good information design, the Elections Code requires that candidate’s names be printed on the ballot in all uppercase letters and that the heading for the ballot be centered on top of the ballot. Instructions for the ballot language for California’s new open primary election are spelled out verbatim in the law and can’t be modified by elections officials. While there are good reasons for requiring uniformity of ballot language and layout throughout the state; it would be more helpful to voters and elections officials if the language requirements in the law were written in plain language and the ballot layout requirements followed established information design principles. A plain writing law at the state level, similar to the federal law could help improve communications to voters, candidates and poll workers.

Another obstacle is that writing plain language and designing the way information is presented are specialized skills that must be learned and practiced. Election departments generally do not have experts in these specialized areas on their staffs, yet they communicate regularly with voters, candidates and poll workers through letters, manuals, and training materials. It would be helpful for elections officials to have training in how to write information in plain language and in the principles of information design.

Could the use of plain language in voting instructions and other election information influence voter turnout? The June 2012 Primary Election was the first time that California voters saw the confusing language on their ballots and voter turnout was extremely low. Statewide, the turnout was 31.06%. In Marin County, it was 49.81%.

After the June 2012 Primary Election, Professor Elizabeth Bergman, Cal State East Bay, conducted a survey of non voters in Marin County. The survey found that young, low income, and minority voters were confused by the mechanics of voting. While more research is needed to determine the impact of confusing ballot instructions and poor ballot design on voter turnout, election information should be accessible to all voters, not just those who are skilled in decoding government election-speak. Clear instructions and election information are especially important for young voters who are voting for the first time; for voters who don’t speak English well; for voters who are not competent readers; and for infrequent voters who aren’t familiar with the voting process.

When election information is clear and easy to understand, voters, candidates and poll workers are more likely to avoid mistakes that could interfere with their right to vote, their right to ballot access, and their ability to help voters on Election Day.

References
Bergman, Elizabeth, Marin County Voter Survey, June Primary Election Analysis, Cal State East Bay, San Jose, CA, September 2012
Norden, Kimball, Quesenbery,and Chen, Better Ballots, Brennan Center of Justice, NYU School of Law, New York, 2008.
Plain Writing Act of 2010, Public Law 111-274
The Marin County Candidate Guide and Poll Worker Instructions translated by Transcend Translations are posted on the Marin County website, www.marincounty.org.
Decentralization and Voter Turnout

By Benny Geys, Vrije Universiteit Brussel & Norwegian Business School BI

The question of why people participate in elections has triggered much debate among both political scientists and economists. A significant share of the academic debate thereby focuses on how a jurisdiction’s institutional setting affects voters’ cost-benefit calculation. Evidently, political institutions – such as compulsory voting, registration systems, quorum rules, concurrent elections and computerized voting – receive most attention. However, other institutional factors also play a role. The institutional design of public good provision is one example. Since this is likely to influence voters’ expected benefits of voting, it might well affect turnout decisions.

To see how this works, it is fruitful to consider how public good provision can be institutionally organized. Although a vast array of different institutional designs are employed throughout the world, most of these reflect three ‘prototypes’ differing with respect to who is elected to decide if, how and how much public goods should be provided. The first type – henceforth ‘centralized provision’ – concentrates all competencies for public good provision at one central level of government, such that the differing geographic reaches of various public goods are simply ignored. That is, all decisions on the provision of different public goods – independent of their geographical reach – are taken and administered under central control. The second type – henceforth ‘federal provision’ – divests all competencies for public good provision in line with the geographical reach of different public goods. As such, there are independently elected parliaments to decide upon the amount of public goods with a broad reach (e.g. roads) and a narrow reach (e.g. child care facilities). Evidently, an extreme interpretation of this view becomes unpractical, since there would be a different elected body responsible for each public good. Finally, the third type – henceforth ‘confederal provision’ – concentrates political authority over public good provision at one level of government, but introduces co-ordination mechanisms for public goods with a broader geographical reach. Hence, this type corresponds with centralized provision in the sense that voters only have one vote (i.e. there is only one directly elected government body), but resembles federal provision by divesting actual decision authority on public goods in line with their geographical reach.

In terms of their electoral consequences, two important effects of these institutional designs can be distinguished. The first relates the benefit of voting, whereas the second is related to the probability of an individual’s decisiveness in the election (which implies him/her affecting the outcome of public good provision). Starting with the former, we have argued above that under confederal and centralized provision, there is only one elected body, such that voters only have one vote to cast. Hence, they have to optimize their expected payoff by choosing the party offering the best policy bundle across all different types of public goods. Under federal provision, however, voters have multiple votes, and can therefore optimize by choosing (the party/parties offering) their preferred policy for each public good. It can be shown that the benefit of voting (and thus the incentive to turn out to vote) under federal provision can therefore never be less than that under confederal or centralized provision.

Turning to the probability of being decisive in the election, the three prototypes of public good provision influence the number of eligible voters deciding upon public good provision. Specifically, under centralized provision, elections are held only at the highest level of government, while under confederal and federal provision elections also (or only) take place at lower levels of government. Given that the size of the electorate therefore is largest under centralized provision, any individual voter becomes more powerful (and thus perceives an increased incentive to turn out to vote) in federal and confederal settings compared to a centralized setting.

Taking both effects together, one can hypothesize that voter turnout is likely to be highest under federal provision and lowest under fully centralized provision. The intuition for the first hypothesis is that federal provision allows voters to express a distinct preference for a set of policies (rather than a party). Similarly, all other things being equal, a shift of the institutional setting from confederal to centralized, is linked to a 1.9% lower turnout rate on average. This is due to voters’ relatively small probabilities of being pivotal in favor of a desired policy, which reduces their incentive to vote.

Although it should obviously be taken into account that these results are obtained using municipal data (where the mean turnout rate is just under 55%) and have not (yet) been verified at higher levels of government, they do point towards the importance of maintaining a close link between the geographic reach of public goods and the decision authority responsible for their provision. Assigning responsibility to the ‘right’ level of government appears to affect not only the efficiency of public good provision (as often argued by economists), but also on voter turnout.

Further reading
The Fascinating World of Election Observation Missions

By Hans Schmeets, Department of Political Science, University of Maastricht

It was terribly cold in Moscow, in December 1995. At that time, I was asked to participate in the EU Election Unit to process and to analyse the international election observers’ findings to assess the Russian legislative elections. Since then, I have become heavily involved in this fascinating world of Election Observation Missions. In the capacity of a statistical analyst, working mostly within the OSCE/ODIHR Core-Teams, I have been privileged to cover over 60 of such missions.

Six months after the State Duma-elections, the 1996 Russian presidential elections were assessed. A new design of observer report forms was introduced for this election and the methodology – based on a mixed quantitative and qualitative approach – was also adopted for the September 1996 EOM in Bosnia-Herzegovina. As a result of the Dayton Agreement, this EOM was covered by some 900 international observers under the mandate of the OSCE/ODIHR. They filled in over 5,000 forms, which were processed and analysed on Election Day. A few weeks later, I asked to have those forms sent – from Sarajevo and via Vienna – to Maastricht. I still have them as well as the forms from various other EOMs, nicely in order of the records in the Database, in many boxes at home.

Election Observation Missions (EOMs) are mostly conducted under the umbrella of intergovernmental organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Union (EU), the Organisation of American States (OAS), and the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). All these organisations have in common that they assess the elections by means of international observers who visit various polling stations in order to report on the circumstances and procedures adhered to. However, those organisations also show a substantial variation in the methodology applied. The most striking difference is the number of observers who stay a week only in-country – the short-term observers (STOs). The OSCE deploys hundreds of STOs, in some EOMs even beyond 600. All other organisations send lower numbers, often less than 100, and also in many cases only a handful of observers are on the ground.

This variation is remarkable considering the fact that in 2005 thirty-two international organisations, among the abovementioned, signed the Declarations of Principles for International Election Observations, in which the key characteristics of an EOM are outlined. However, due to a shortage in a standard approach, in roughly a third of the observed elections, the international organisations disagreed with one another about their overall assessment.\(^1\) Such a shortage of standardisation has produced a flexibility of interpretation that undermines the credibility of observation missions.

How can we explain this lack in standardisation? One obvious explanation is the variation in the applied methodology between international organisations when it comes to findings of the STOs. Apart from the fielded number of observers, and consequently the number of polling stations visited, there is a huge variation in the content and layout of the observer report forms. Furthermore, the sample designs (i.e. the deployment of the observers in the country and assignment to the polling stations), the data-processing and data-analysis are not standardised at all. This is however not new. Already on 20th September 1999 in an expert meeting organised by the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) in Warsaw, the paper ‘Statistical Methodology for Election Observation Missions: How a standard design can enhance the transparency of an ODIHR mission report’ was discussed.\(^2\)

In this paper a plea was introduced for a comparison of observers’ findings by a standardisation of the methodology, including standard observer report forms, analyses, and consequently a standard and transparent interpretation of the findings. The outcome of the meeting was in this respect, however, rather disappointing. The general view in those days was that ‘elections should not be compared, even not elections within the same country.’ It took 12½ years before ODIHR organised the next meeting in Warsaw with the promising title ‘Towards Standardised Statistical Reporting on OSCE/ODIHR Missions’ on 23rd – 24th February 2012. The notion of the need for comparing elections was broadly acknowledged, and additionally the need for more analyses based on the observers’ findings.

What do we learn from statistics? Evidently, apart form the observers’ findings in a specific EOM, a comparison is needed with the results of previous EOMs in the OSCE-region. For that sake a database has been created in which the findings of a total of 96 EOMs from 1996 till 2010 are included. This concerns following 20 OSCE countries (number of missions in brackets): Albania (6), Armenia (8), Azerbaijan (6), Belarus (3), Bosnia (7), Croatia (2), Czech Republic (1), Estonia (1), Georgia (8), Hungary (2), Kazakhstan (3), Kyrgyzstan (6), Kosovo (5), Macedonia (14), Moldova (4), Montenegro (4), Russia (4), Serbia (1), Tajikistan (3) and Ukraine (7).\(^3\)

On average 330 observers (115 teams) per EOM were on the ground, making a total of over 30 thousand observers. In the ‘early years’ a few missions were observed by less than 100 STOs, for example the 1998 elections in Hungary (2 rounds), and the Czech Republic, the second rounds in Macedonia 1998, 2000 and 2008, and the 1999 elections in Estonia. On the other hand, some EOMs exceeded 700 observers including the EOM in Bosnia-Herzegovina on 14 September 1996 as a result of the Dayton Agreement.\(^4\) Other large missions, which were apparently very popular among observers, took place in Macedonia (2002) and Ukraine (2004, 2006, 2007, 2010).

Based on these EOMs, the average number of observers increased from slightly more than 200 in 1996 to some 400 in 2010. However, there are at least some indications that the financial crisis has an impact on the EOM. In the recent Bulgarian Parliamentary elections, ODIHR asked for 22 LTO’s, but only received 12. More strikingly was the number of STOs: 230 regular observers were requested, and only 72 observers were sent by the member states. Luckily, the Parliamentary Assemblies from the OSCE participated with 54 observers, and consequently – together with some locally recruited observers from the various Embassies – a total of 71 observer teams were on the ground. This is still a low number, resulting in, 57 reports to assess the vote count.

What do we learn from the statistics? When it comes to the countries that supplied observers, based on 28 elections in the 2004-2011 time span, the following top-five ranking of the 57 OSCE member states...
Observers observing the counting process is negative in 21 percent on average. Similarly, the evaluation of the counting of 92 percent as ‘good’ or ‘very good’ overall, while the vast majority voting process is assessed as ‘bad’ or as ‘very bad’ overall, while the vast majority

problems during the count were witnessed. (10%), United Kingdom (8%), Russia (7%) and Poland (5%).

The size of the population explains already the variation in sending observers to a large extent. The GDP per capita is of minor importance, especially if we include a democracy-indicator, such as the Worldbank’s Rule of Law-index. Of course, we may argue that it is not of relevance from which countries the observers originate. They operate in teams of two and have to agree on each single question in the forms, including the overall assessment indicator: ‘The overall conduct of the [opening/ voting/counting] at this Polling Station was: Very Good / Good/ Bad / Very Bad?’. However, we have some evidence that observers in teams of “eastern countries” are more positive about elections than western observers. So, we have to be aware that this country-factor matters in analysing and assessing the elections.

What else can we learn from the statistics? We may have a look at the assessment of the voting in comparison with the vote count. Both assessments are strongly correlated (R-square = 0.47): if the observer teams concluded that in a very limited number of polling stations the process was bad or even very bad, they were also mild in their overall assessment of the counting process. However, there are some outliers in this pattern. Three elections in Belarus are characterised by a very negative count – which was mainly caused by a lack of transparency; observers were kept at a distance and had no clear view of the procedures – whereas the assessment of the voting procedures was not that negative. On the other hand, some elections, in particular the 2000 elections in Macedonia, were marred with many problems related to the voting procedures (in particular in the ethnic Albanian areas), whereas not many problems during the count were witnessed. The explained variance increases to 65% by excluding those 4 elections.

Based on the 85 elections, on average in 8 percent of all polling stations visited, the voting process is assessed as ‘bad’ or as ‘very bad’ overall, while the vast majority of 92 percent as ‘good’ or ‘very good’. Similarly, the evaluation of the counting stations is negative in 21 percent on average. Observers observing the counting process in Montenegro in 2009 were also very positive about the voting process (2 percent negative) and the vote count (1 percent negative). In the three EOMs in Belarus the counting

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quartile</th>
<th>Voting</th>
<th>Counting</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Best quartile</td>
<td>&lt; 3.0</td>
<td>&lt; 9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Above average</td>
<td>3.0 - 6.4</td>
<td>9.0 - 16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Below average</td>
<td>6.5 – 10</td>
<td>17.0 – 27.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Worst quartile</td>
<td>&gt;10</td>
<td>&gt; 27.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

process was rated negatively in many polling stations by the observer teams. This was particularly true for the elections in 2004: 62 percent of the observations were either rated as bad or very bad. This overview clearly shows that the overall assessment of the voting process is evidently more positive in comparison to the counting process. An explanation for this finding is that observer teams stay on average approximately 30 minutes in a polling station observing the voting process, whereas they stay from the beginning till the end in a polling station to observe the counting procedures. So they may notice more problems and irregularities during their stay of at least 2 to 3 hours observing the counting procedures than during their observation of the voting process.

A listing of all EOMs further reveals that in half of the EOMs a negative assessment (bad or very bad) for the voting procedures has been provided to less than 6.5 out of 100 polling stations observed (see table 1). In the other half of the EOMs more than 6.5 percent was assessed in negative terms. A further divide shows that the best quartile of the EOMs results in a group of elections up to 3 percent negative reports, and the worst quartile in more than 10 percent of the polling stations observed. Similarly, the four election groups are selected based on the overall assessments of vote count observations: the best group consists of elections in which less than 9 percent of the reports are negative, the next group falls in the range from 9 to 16.9 percent, the third group from 17.0 to 27.4 percent, and the worst part if more than 26.5 percent of the vote count observations are rated in negative terms.

The last example of what statistics tell us, is based on observers assessments in the 1996-2010 time span. It reveals that the voting process has been improved slightly, whereas the counting process has deteriorated. Along this line of reasoning, it might not be a surprise that OSCE/ODIHR often includes the sentence ...the process deteriorated during the count’ in their statements. Such an interpretation should take into account that in practically all EOMs the vote count is more negatively assessed than the voting process. Obviously, the deterioration in the 2011 and 2012 Russian elections are backed up with the empirical findings, as the voting process was assessed negatively in 6 and 8 percent, which contradicts sharply with the 31 and 33 bad to very bad vote count observations. Obviously, experiences based on previous EOMs, and consequently a comparison of the findings, is a necessary and vital condition for a sound interpretation of elections. And statistical figures are crucial to serve as a rough guideline in which OSCE regions international observers are needed most.

1. The views expressed in this paper are from the authors only and do not necessarily correspond with the views of any organization.
4. More information on the compiled database is available on request.
Ever since the fall of the Berlin wall in November 1989, countries in Eastern Europe have been through remarkable developments in the fields of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. They have joined the Council of Europe (CoE) and the Organisation of Organisation of Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE)(1), and they became members of the United Nations (UN). Through these memberships they have committed themselves to international standards in all kinds of areas including democracy and elections.

Elections are an essential part of democracy and the way a government organises an election shows whether it is capable of handling significant democratic processes.

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs)(2) are often involved in determining if free and fair elections have been conducted in their country by monitoring the electoral process. However, domestic organisations do not always receive full support from their own governments. Sometimes they are even opposed by the administration. So what role can NGOs play in and what valuable contribution can NGOs offer to the electoral process? In the next paragraphs we will discuss the work of several Eastern European NGOs that are involved in the monitoring of elections. Likewise some of the challenges NGOs face will be discussed.

Often NGOs focus on monitoring Election Day Observation, since this part of the electoral process is seen as the most significant. However, monitoring elections is not limited to Election Day observation; focus can also be on specific areas or topics such as voting in prisons or voting in minority regions. One of the main areas that NGOs are active in is the monitoring of the media, trying to establish if fair and balanced accounts of all options and political parties and candidates have been given.

One of the Eastern European NGOs which has been monitoring elections is Promo-LEX in Moldova. They use long term observers who provide thorough weekly standardized reports and event reports, which are compiled by a central analysis team into regular public reports. They use short term observers on Election Day to observe the conduct in the polling stations. Due to the good preparation of the monitoring of an election, Promo-LEX has not only gained a strong public reputation, but also the recognition of the Central Election Commission. At least 50 recommendations from Promo-LEX monitoring reports have been taken up by the Parliamentary Commission, electoral bodies and other public structures in charge of revising the electoral code in 2009 and 2010 and are now part of the election law and electoral procedures.

The rights of women and minorities are other important aspects which NGOs are focussing on. In many countries, women face difficulties and challenges in casting their vote or standing for election. The Armenian Association of Women with University Education (AAWUE) provides for many activities in this field such as the Women’s Leadership Academy, where women who would like to become active in politics receive training. They monitor the implementation of international gender related legislation, such as the Convention to Eliminate all Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), by analysing the participation of women based on indicators such as the number of female voters, the number and level of female election officials, and the number of female candidates. AAWUE has been acknowledged for its work by international organisations such as the CoE and the OSCE. However, its influence is far from apparent within the country.

In Georgia, Transparency International has investigated the misuse of administrative resources by comparing public spending on health care and social matters in an election year with budgets in non-election years as well as adopted budgets. They found that in an election year the budget either increased or that the whole yearly budget was spent before Election Day, leaving no budget for the rest of the year for the newly elected candidates. They also investigated the misuse of staff, since the Electoral Code of Georgia prohibits public officials from participating in a campaign while on duty. They checked how many civil servants took days off during the election period. They found that over 1,000 public officials took paid or unpaid leave during the 2010 campaign, predominantly in April and May and they found that a large portion of public officials were on paid leave for a far longer period than allowed by the law. Even though these civil servants took leave to avoid breaking the law, Transparency International also found that many civil servants were still using office resources while on leave and sometimes were even performing their official duties from the ruling party offices.

Domestic organisations nowadays use modern techniques to facilitate their work and also to get their message across. For example Text-Messaging Election Day Reports is a tool which has been developed by OPORA in the Ukraine. It is used to quickly assess the happenings and occurrences in polling stations around the country: throughout the day up-to-date press releases are being issued containing all the latest findings. Means such as Facebook, digital pictures and videos posted online are examples of modern society tools that have revealed acts of ballot box stuffing and carousel voting. Many videos show that voters, who are trying to exercise their voting right, have to condone being put under pressure. Unfortunately this is not limited to the voters themselves; videos have emerged of domestic observers being harassed in and outside of polling stations. The film “Election 2010, chronicle of the pressure foretold” which was made, with permission from the Central Election Commission of Georgia, by the NGO Free Journalists Union and students from the Ilia State University during the May 2010 local elections shows many of these incidents. Social media has ensured that these actions are now there for the world to see.
These examples show a growing involvement of NGOs in democratic processes in Eastern Europe. Unfortunately it depends on the government and the central electoral commissions whether or not these NGOs are taken seriously. The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders concluded in her report to the General Assembly of the UN on Armenia that “the Government seems not to consider NGOs as potential partners, nor are they perceived by society as representative. Awareness about the activities of civil society organisations is also very low”. It is not only the situation of not being taken seriously; there are other issues that endanger the work of NGOs in these countries. In many Eastern European countries GONGOs have been created, Government Organised NGOs. Governments use them to legitimise (mis)conduct, for example during elections. While NGOs might have found irregularities during the election such as problems with access to the poll or misuse of governmental resources, and thus will criticize the government about the way the elections were organised, GONGOs will most likely claim the opposite and will release statements that the elections were appropriately well organised. The government can consequently claim it has the civil support it needs to legalise an election.

Another worrying aspect is the misuse by governments of the rule of law. Preventing arbitrariness and promoting legal security and equality are the aims of constitutional rights of citizens. When national laws, which are supposed to protect citizens, are used by governments to, for example, strike down demonstrations or hassle political opponents, they ignore international commitments regarding freedom of expression and assembly. In the Russian Federation, national legislation is currently used to keep a tighter reign on domestic NGOs. A 2012 Russian Federation law shows us that NGOs which are financed by Western organisations need to register as a “foreign agent”. If they do not comply with the law, they risk a fine, a sanction, criminal prosecution or prison sentence for the members of the NGO. Amnesty International states on its website that since the entering into force of the foreign agents law “many independent civil society organisations across Russia have been subjected to pressure, intimidation, harassment and smear campaigns by the authorities”. The first fines have been issued and many NGOs have been visited by governmental agencies, including the Moscow office of Amnesty International, or have been to court and received judgements, such as Regional Public Organisation Golos which monitors elections. Golos has been suspended for six months due to failure to live up to the new rules.

Instead of actively using national legislation as a means to keep control of civil society, governments can also choose not to act at all when irregularities have been reported. Governments that fail to investigate allegations are in breach of respecting international commitments. Intimidation of political candidates, voters and domestic observers need to be looked into, complaints and appeals which have been filed as part of the electoral process need to be addressed professionally by the designated courts. NGOs that have witnessed ballot box stuffing, tampered election protocols or other electoral irregularities need to be heard by the respective authorities; it is part of a mature democratic process.

In order for governments in Eastern Europe to achieve a credible outcome of an election, they need not only to allow international observers to monitor elections; they should also involve domestic organisations because it serves to the enhance transparency of the process. NGOs are an essential part of democracy. They play an important and vital role, and should therefore be given the opportunity by governments to fulfil this role and they should not be thwarted in any way. Unfortunately domestic organisations are not always welcomed by their own governments, while, from the perspective of the international community, they fully deserve this. Contrary, obstruction by government on more than one front is not an exception to the rule. This leaves civil society in Eastern Europe still struggling to find its position since they are not always given a wide berth. It is the duty of the international community to ensure the involvement of NGOs in the electoral and democratic processes. Therefore it is imperative that international organisations such as UN, OSCE and CoE should intensify their explicit support for domestic organisations in Eastern Europe because these organisations are desperately needed.

1. apart from Belarus
2. The term NGO in used to describe national, independent non-governmental organisations as opposed to International NGOs.
3. Leave days of civil servants is public information in Georgia
5. The video can be found on the YouTube page of Transparency International

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The Experience of the Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO)

By Dr Franklin Oduro, Project Manager, and Theodore Dzeble, Communication Officer, CODEO

The Coalition of Domestic Election Observers (CODEO) was formed in the lead up to the 2000 presidential and parliamentary elections in Ghana. Established, under the auspices of Ghana Center for Democratic Development (CDD-Ghana), CODEO is currently the largest domestic election observer network in Ghana. It is made up of 40 secular, faith-based, not-for-profit, and professional organizations. CODEO emerged out of the need to mobilize Ghanaian citizens to participate in the electoral process as a confidence-building mechanism and to promote credible elections in Ghana. CODEO’s formation was also to complement the efforts of Ghana’s Electoral Commission in ensuring transparent, free, fair and peaceful elections in the country. Since 2000, CODEO has independently and impartially observed every general election in Ghana. The Coalition has also observed local government elections and political party primaries.

In carrying out its mandate, CODEO has set out the following set of objectives: promote free, fair and transparent elections; prevent electoral fraud; encourage citizens’ participation in elections; promote issue based electoral campaigns and; lend credibility to electoral outcomes. CODEO’s comprehensive election observation activity involves pre-election, election-day and post-election observation. CODEO uses three major methods in its election observation activities.

First, CODEO recruits and trains its election observers from its pool of membership for deployment during election years. These trained, dedicated non-partisan observers are deployed to a representative national sample of constituencies and polling stations to observe the electoral campaign processes, voting and counting as well as the general post-election reactions and activities of stakeholders.

Second, CODEO’s observation method is the collation, analyzing and dissemination of reports generated from field observations. For the pre-election exercise, CODEO observers submit weekly reports which are analyzed and key findings shared with election stakeholders and the public every month. On polling day, CODEO observers use the SMS method to collect information on the conduct of voting, counting and tabulation.

The third and final method is the use of Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) methodology. CODEO introduced Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT), also known as Quick Count, in its Election Observation beginning with the 2008 elections. Using statistical principles this methodology allows the deployment of observers to a statistical sample of often several thousands of polling stations who through SMS rapidly send in reports on the voting and counting process. Through this process of deployment, CODEO is able to verify the accuracy of the total valid vote count as may be declared by the Electoral Commission.

CODEO’s Structure and Management

CODEO has four principal institutional structures through which its election activities are implemented. These structures are: CODEO Advisory Board, CODEO General Assembly; CODEO Sub-committees; and the CODEO Secretariat.

The CODEO Advisory Board is the highest decision making body of CODEO. It is a fifteen member group chaired by two of the most respected public servants in Ghana in the persons of Justice V.C.R.A.C. Crabb, currently Statues Law Review Commissioner at the Attorney General’s Department and Professor Miranda Greenstreet, Member of the Governing Board of the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM) in Ghana.

CODEO General Assembly is made up of representatives from the 40-member organizations. Members of the general assembly attend meetings at regular intervals to discuss and review CODEO activities and make proposals for consideration by the Advisory Board.

CODEO has three main sub-committees: Drafting; Logistics and Procurement; and Recruitment, Training and Deployment. These sub-committees are activated during elections to help in the planning and preparations for CODEO election observation.

The CODEO Secretariat is responsible for the day to day planning and programming activities of CODEO. The Secretariat is headquartered at CDD-Ghana which provides institutional, technical, and human resource in the management of CODEO programmed activities.

CODEO and Ghana’s Election 2012

The Coalition’s most recent observation exercise was towards Ghana’s 2012 Presidential and parliamentary elections. As in this and the 2008 elections, the Coalition trained and deployed election observers drawn from its member organizations to observe the pre-election, Election Day and post-election events.

Ghana’s 2012 general elections were the sixth since the return to constitutional democratic governance. Undoubtedly, after five successful elections with two alternation of power between the two major political parties, the National Democratic Congress (NDC) and the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the 2012 polls served as another test for Ghana’s political and state institutions as well as a challenge to its democratic credentials.

Ghana’s 2008 general elections were touted as generally credible and peaceful by both local and international observers. The clean conduct of the polls, which was won by a razor-thin margin by the then opposition party (NDC) and the subsequent peaceful alternation of political power (for the second time) confirmed Ghana’s position as a beacon of hope for the development of democracy in the Sub Saharan Africa.

However, the conduct of the 2008 polls also highlighted significant political, institutional, and technical capacity gaps, which resulted in extreme political tensions, and in some cases, violence that nearly moved Ghana into the ranks of African nations afflicted by poll-related debacles.

Informed by these negative realities, CODEO mounted a comprehensive observation project which sought to
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mobilize citizens as poll watchers to ensure that the elections are peaceful, and generally credible. CODEO launched its election 2012 project under the theme: “Ghana Election 2012: Civil Society intervention Toward Peaceful and Credible Election” in March 2012. Under the project, three broad activities were implemented, spanning all the three phases of elections (before, during and after). The pre-election phase included the deployment of more 600 of its members to observe and report on the innovative Biometric Voter Registration (BVR) registration exercise conducted by the Electoral Commission (EC). In addition, CODEO deployed 50 long-term observers to observe the activities of election stakeholders in over 100 constituencies from the 275 constituencies for 6 months. These 50 observers submitted weekly reports which formed the basis of CODEO’s seven pre-election statements issued between 7th May and November 2012.

On Election Day CODEO deployed over 4,500 trained observers to observe voting, counting and results collation. Out of this number, 3,999 were stationed at sampled polling stations in all the 275 constituencies, and the remaining served as roaming observers. Following the polls, CODEO deploy 25 of its observers in 25 strategically selected constituencies throughout the country to undertake a post-election observation. By extending the observation process beyond the 7th December polls, CODEO was able to track the post-election environment, actions and inactions of political actors and public institutions in the manner aimed at maintaining political stability.

On election day on 7th December and for the extended voting on 8th December 2012, CODEO set up its Observation Center at the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Center (KAIPTC) in Accra where it received information by text messaging (SMS) from its observers. The data was captured by trained data staff into a database, and the data so generated was then analyzed by the team of analysts, and processed for the media and other stakeholders. The observation Center was opened to the media and the public throughout the election period. Based on this information, CODEO provided the public, political parties, the EC and other stakeholders with systematic nation-wide and accurate information on the conduct of polling. Between December 7th and 9th, CODEO issued five statements, covering midday situational, close of polls, extended voting, and preliminary statement on the conduct of polling and counting of votes.

In disseminating its election observation findings to reach wider and variety of audience, CODEO made use of social media platforms, mainly twitter and face book, in addition to other multiple sources of communication channels, such as the print and electronic media, domestic and international media, the CODEO website, as well as partnership with several social media organizations including GhanaDecides and GhanaWeb to reach a global audience.

For the second time in succession, CODEO employed a statistically-based Parallel Vote Tabulation (PVT) method of domestic election observation. This method helped CODEO to be able to assess the quality of voting and to independently verify the accuracy most especially of the presidential results, something CODEO did in 2008.

Based on a national PVT sample of 1500, CODEO was able to independently verify the 2012 Presidential elections. CODEO’s PVT presidential results estimates, accounting for margin of error, were consistent with the official results as declared by the Electoral Commission. In all 275 constituencies in Ghana, CODEO’s PVT estimates largely confirmed official results declared by Ghana’s Electoral Commission.

CODEO is respected for its non-partisanship and objectivity. The Coalition has a track record of credibility built around its work since establishment in 2000. This and the reputation of the Coalition’s Co-Chairs, spokespersons and the team of influential Advisory Board Members have given it legitimacy among Ghanaians.

CODEO provides regular briefings and updates on election activities to the civil society election sector group made up of donors, civil society organizations, public institutions and other election stakeholders, both domestic and international. The Coalition has also engaged political parties, and security agencies, among others on various election-related issues. Furthermore, although independent, CODEO has worked with Ghana’s Electoral Commission cordially since 2000. This has built a sense of collaboration which allowed the two bodies to share information on critical matters. The reward is mutual as they regard each other as partners of election administration in Ghana.
Do Politicians keep their Promises?

By Elin Naurin, currently visiting Professor at McGill University

Do you think politicians break their promises? Then you’re in good company. Surveys show that citizens in most countries distrust parties’ election promises. However, when scholars compare what parties pledge in election manifestos to what governments do, another picture appears. Political scientists argue that parties mostly keep their election promises. How are we to understand this pledge puzzle?

Election promises are one of representative democracy’s most natural, yet also most controversial, elements. On the one hand, politicians’ promises create hope and expectations. On the other hand, election promises are associated with feelings of disappointment and suspicion. The word ‘election promise’ is itself loaded with mistrust. In fact, it is difficult to find any context, or any group of people, where the positive reviews of campaign promises outweigh the negative. The International Social Survey Programme have let citizens of more than 20 countries react to the statement “People we elect as MPs try to keep the promises they have made during the election.” The question has been included in the 1996 and 2006 surveys. In a majority of the surveys (accept for Switzerland in 2006 and the Philippines in 1996), the net values are negative, which means that more people disagree with the statement than agree.

For example, only 23 per cent of the British respondents in the survey from 2006 answer that their MPs try to keep their election promises. In France and Spain, the same percentage is 14, in Norway and Australian 27 and in the U.S. 22. The Swedish National Election Study Programme, which is the world’s second oldest election study programme, has asked Swedes about their views on election promises since the 1950s. These studies show that citizens of the comparably stable and non-corrupt Sweden have held negative views of election promises at least since the 1950s. Taken together, these kinds of studies give the impression that voters do not regard election promises as the tool that democratic theories want election promises to be.

However, a completely different image of the role of election promises in representative democracy is given by scholars who systematically compare the promises parties make in election manifestos with governments’ actions. From such studies, we instead get the impression that parties take their election promises seriously. Studies of parties’ election pledges have been made in several different countries and during several different time periods. Even though they employ different specific definitions of the notion election promise, the general conclusion is the same: Parties take their election promises seriously when in government.

During periods of single-party majority governments in the U.K., Canada and New Zealand, government parties have been found to fulfil at least partially between 70 and 85 per cent of the promises they make in their election manifestos. Also other majority single-party governments (in Spain, Greece and Ireland) have been found to fulfil about the same percentage of the promises they give in election manifestos.

In the American system where the President, the House of Representative and the Senate have joint control over decision-making, the percentages are lower, between 60 and 70 per cent.

The lowest levels of fulfilment are found in systems with frequent coalition governments. Parties in coalition governments in the Netherlands and in Ireland have been found to fulfil at least partially between 50 and 60 per cent of the promises they make in election manifestos.

The probability for majority single-party cabinets to fulfil promises is thus higher than the probability that coalition governments fulfil theirs. These results hold also when scholars perform their calculations based on models where other factors are taken into consideration, such as the economic situation that faced the country at the time, if the parties pledge to keep status quo, review issues or cut down on state cost rather than make costly expansions of the state. In this way, results from research on election promises follows expectations that fewer so called veto points or constitutional constraints on decision making, leads to higher pledge fulfilment by parties in government.

A less intuitive result is that minority single-party cabinets are as efficient as majority single-party cabinets when it comes to fulfilling election promises. Studies from such different contexts as Sweden, Spain, Portugal and Ireland indicate that important decision-making can be made when a party governs in minority. These studies remind us that minority single-party governments, which comprise a considerable portion of for example European governments, deserve to be given attention as the specific constitutional situation it actually is, and not only be analysed together with majority single-party governments or coalition minority governments.

Taken together, we can say that institutional factors affect how many promises are fulfilled. It also seems like some promises are more often fulfilled than others. Promises to keep the status quo or to review issues are easier to fulfil than promises to change the current state of affairs. Promises where there is political coherence, i.e. where parties agree on what should be done, are more often fulfilled than promises that create political conflict. However, status quo promises and consensus promises are considerably less common as compared to promises that pledge change and promises that have no relation to other parties’ promises.

How do we explain the difference between citizens and scholars description of election promises?

The fact that parties fulfil a clear majority of the pledges they give in their election manifestos goes against the common perception of political promises. In my book Election promises, party behaviour and voter perceptions (Palgrave Macmillan 2011), I analyse how this “pledge puzzle” can be explained. Citizens’ ways of arguing are compared to the scholarly definitions of the notions election promise and fulfilled or broken election promises.

The conclusion is fairly simple: We talk about different things. Scholars’ strict focus on what is actually said, their interest in election campaigns and their focus on what the party as a whole agrees on, is a tight definition of election promise in the eyes of citizens. Citizens give interest also to what individual politicians promise and they take into account promises that are given also in between elections.

Furthermore, they listen to what other people think is promised and, even more
important, they sometimes create their perceptions based on what should have been promised. The reasoning can go something like this: “There should be no homeless people. Therefore, parties should have promised to put effort into helping those who are homeless. Still, everyday, I see homeless people on the streets. It is clear that promises must have been broken”.

“Election promise” is in these types of reasoning not viewed as a specific pledge written down in an election manifesto. Instead, the notion summarizes general expectations of what the political system should be able to achieve.

What is more, citizens seem to base their judgments about election promises not only on comparisons between what is (or should be) said and done by politicians. They are also affected by a narrative about the promise-breaking politician that is more or less independent of what politicians actually say and do. Illustratively in this sense, interviewees in the study have difficulties in coming up with examples of broken promises. The same, and strikingly old, examples come up in the interviews. It is also clear that the notion election promise has a negative intonation, contrary to the notion “promise” that is a positive notion. Respondents react instinctively negatively to the notion election promise, and the positive aspects of election promises in representative democracy are less often mentioned.

The idea that there is a narrative about the promise-breaking politician lies close to the field of research that claims that individuals use stories and narratives to create order among impressions of reality. The notion narrative, or “storytelling”, is used in psychology, anthropology, literature and law to describe the process where individuals create and sustain their cultural identities and understand “the self”. As humans, we are brought up with stories that help us understand our surroundings and ourselves.

The courtroom is sometimes taken as an example in research on narratives. Perpetrators, victims and witnesses give their differing views about the reasons for why they are in the courtroom. A story is created that helps lawyers, prosecutors and judges to create an understanding about what actually happened. Similar reasoning can be applied to how humans create political identities and understand accountability processes. We probably become the political species that we are by telling and retelling stories about how the political world functions. And one such story is likely the story about the promise-breaking politician.

Another explanation as to why citizens and scholars describe election promises in different ways is that the notion election promise is defined more widely among citizens. Citizens want to feel the effects of decisions, and scholars focus mainly on what decisions are taken in parliament and government. A promise about shorter queues to hospital treatments is not fulfilled until the individual herself gets the knee operation that she is waiting for. A promise about increasing the number of specialist teachers for children with reading problems is not fulfilled until my child has met one.

In normative analyses, this way of defining a promise as fulfilled or broken is not problematic. Scholars motivate their empirical focus on political action with practical rather than normative arguments. In a system where we value the principle “one person, one vote”, that person’s personal experience of the decision should obviously make its mark on how he or she evaluates the functioning of the system.

What is the lesson from this? Research shows that politicians try, and often succeed, to fulfil what they pledge in election campaigns. The harsh judgment that politicians do not even try to fulfil their promises is not fair. As voters, we do not have particularly many tools when we try to create an image of what will happen after an election. Clearly formulated election promises are one such tool that should not be thrown away.

However, we should be aware of the fact that it is not so simple that “a promise is a promise” in the relationship between voters and representatives. The difference between scholars’ and voters’ ways of arguing illustrates that notions like mandates and accountability can be different things in different situations. If we want to understand citizens’ distrust of election promises, this is important knowledge. Hopefully, it can contribute to clarify communication between voters and representatives when it comes to what promises are made and in what way these are fulfilled and broken.

Lastly, some words about the challenges of on-going and future research on election promises. Important comparative work is presently done within the research network Comparative Party Pledges Group, with the aim of using the exact same definition in different contexts. This research will help us understand what more specific mechanisms enhance parties’ pledge fulfilment and pledge breakage.

There is less research on how election manifestos are created. Since we know that election manifestos affect how parties act when in power, we want to know more about what (and who) decides what becomes an election promise in an election manifesto. Parties discuss many different policy proposals before elections. Some of those end up in election manifestos, others do not, and election pledge research gives us reason to believe that it matters which do.

We should also dedicate more efforts to analyse how the media report on election promises. Since the public rarely reads election manifestos, the media is an actor with power to interpret and chose which promises reach the electorate. We know too little about the arguments behind these choices of journalists.

To conclude, most research on how parties make and break election promises is done on national level arenas. The important representative democratic practices on local, regional and EU-level politics have so far been given only scarce attention.

Elin Naurin is currently visiting professor at McGill University, Montreal, but will be returning to the Department of Political Science, University of Gothenburg, in the summer of 2014. Naurin’s research centers on representative democracy, electoral politics and election promises. She is the author of Election promises, Party Behaviour and Voter Perceptions (2011, Palgrave Macmillan). Together with Robert Thomson, University of Strathclyde and Terry Royed, University of Alabama, Naurin has initiated and currently coordinate the international research network Comparative Party Pledge Group which presented it most recent results at the American Political Science Association Meeting in August 2013.
September 9th was a very special day in the history of electoral management. It probably even became a milestone. While the Norwegian e-voting trial at the national elections on that Monday were making most headlines, another much more wide-ranging and challenging process entered into a new phase, when the first ever European Citizens’ Initiative concluded its signature gathering efforts. Why is this so remarkable? What does it mean for the future of electoral management? And how can we best prepare to handle these new challenges? In answering these questions I will argue that 9/9/2013 is a potential game changer for the understanding of the work of Electoral Management Bodies (EMBs) in the 21st century.

Let’s jump straight into the practicalities! “Water and sanitation are a human right” argue the organisers behind the “Right2Water” Initiative, an alliance of civic groups from across Europe supported by the Public Services Trade Unions. Since December 2012 they gathered almost two million signatures for their European Citizens’ Initiative (ECI) – the first formal tool of direct democracy at the transnational level. The ECI was established as a constitutional principle in 2009 by the European Union’s most recent basic law, the Lisbon Treaty (Art. 11.4). Two years later, the EU institutions (Parliament, Council and Commission) agreed on an ECI Law (211/2011), which regulates the use of this truly new and innovative participatory tool. In brief, the ECI allows European Union citizens to exercise the same power to propose new EU laws to the EU Commission as the European Parliament and the European Council. It is an agenda-setting power, which in the event that an ECI is successful (i.e. has met all the criteria) obliges the Commission to consider legislative action. As there are no popular votes on substantive issues at the EU level (as yet), the ECI cannot be compared with the fully-fledged citizen-initiated referendums available in many countries, regions and municipalities across the globe.

While there are plenty of informal petition platforms and forums available on the internet (such as Avaaz.org and Change.org), the ECI is the very first element of superdemocracy, as the process is simultaneously direct, digital and transnational. This has huge consequences for the future work of EMBs, as we see from the example of the “Right2Water” ECI this autumn. Formally, the deadline for the one year signature gathering phase would have ended on November 1. But the “Right2Water” ECI had already fulfilled all the formal requirements for a valid initiative. Validation began with the registration of the proposal with the EU Commission. In order to clear this first hurdle – which eight of the 31 ECIs submitted since the launch failed to do – the proposed ECI must cover a policy that is within the EU competencies. The second set of hurdles includes the signature requirements set by the ECI Law – basically the need to gather the “statements of support” of at least one million registered EU citizens in sufficient numbers (prescribed minimum numbers calculated as the number of MEPs for each country x 750) in at least seven different EU countries. This territorial distribution scheme was introduced to safeguard the transnational character of a proposed issue. By closing the gathering the initiative had managed to clear this hurdle in at twelve member states. It is worth noting that all this work and activity has so far been handled by organisers, supporters, network partners and the EU Commission - bearing in mind that the EU does not have any electoral management institutions of its own. For this reason, the ECI Law tasks competent national authorities with two roles in the process: 1) to certify the Online Collection System of an initiative, and 2) to verify the statements of support from each authority’s ‘home’ country. In the case of the “Right2Water” initiative, the first task was carried out by a German authority, while very soon all the national EMBs will receive their first packages of both paper and electronic signatures which they must verify within three months.

Here we go! Many national EMBs in Europe have never before had such a role – to verify statements of support for a citizens’ initiative. In addition, no national EMB has ever been tasked with verifying electronic statements of support. On the other hand, in many countries where there are direct-democratic procedures, local and regional entities do often handle voters’ registers and signature verification. Making this challenge even tougher is the fact that not all countries and EMBs have a continuously updated register of voters which would ensure that all EU citizens are able to exercise their transnational constitutional right to influence EU policies. In this sense, the newly launched electoral management tasks for the first ECI offer interesting insights into how prepared EMBs across Europe are for the new times in the making. Trial and error is a well-known and often accepted method for handling novel tasks. However, when it comes to electoral management affairs, legitimacy and trust are such important elements that there should be little or no room for error.

This brings me to some concluding remarks and prospects. EMBs across Europe and the world are facing at least three key challenges: (1) the Direct Democracy Challenge; (2) the Digital Democracy Challenge; (3) the Public Relations Challenge. Together, they constitute a major game changer for the dynamics of EMB affairs as traditional, clearly delimited election periods using mostly analogue methods within specific national administrative cultures are being – if not entirely replaced – then at least supplemented by potentially continuous tasks involving novel electronic features within a transnational setting. While the options and limits for these “super-democratic” electoral dimensions may differ hugely from polity to polity, the global trend towards more direct, more digital and more transnational forms of electoral management is clear. This requires – as in the case of the EU and the ECI – not only new regulatory frameworks (constitutions, laws, and regulations), but also a host of new and strong competencies within EMBs at all levels in order to ensure free, fair and peaceful popular vote processes.

Electoral Management Bodies are critical parts of a supportive infrastructure for making democracies work, with each vote counted and every voice heard. For this reason we need to take the September 9th game changer seriously by preparing information materials, educational curriculums and training kits for all electoral stakeholders. This must include both internal (within the public services) and external (vis-a-vis the media) communicative capacities, which will play critical roles in contributing to a better informed debate, a comprehensive understanding and an appropriate handling of our new direct, digital and transnational voting processes.
Leave Election Integrity to Chance

By Philip B. Stark, Professor and chair of the department of statistics at the University of California, Berkeley

H ow do we know whether the reported winners of an election really won?

There’s no perfect way to count votes. To paraphrase Ulysses S. Grant and Richard M. Nixon, “Mistakes will be made.” Voters don’t always follow instructions. Voting systems can be mis-programmed, as they were last year in Palm Beach, Florida. Ballots can be misplaced, as they were last year in Palm Beach, Florida, and in Sacramento, California. And election fraud is not entirely unknown in the U.S.

Computers can increase the efficiency of elections and make voting easier for people who cannot read English or who have disabilities. But the more elections depend on technology, the more vulnerable they are to failures, bugs, and hacking. Foreign attacks on elections also may be a real threat.

Even if we count votes by hand, there will be mistakes. How can we have confidence in the results?

Audits

To check accuracy, there needs to be something to check against — an audit trail. Currently, the best audit trail is paper, either marked by the voter or printed by voting machines. If voters check that the paper records their choices correctly, auditors can use the paper to check election results. Unfortunately, roughly a quarter of U.S. voters use machines that don’t produce a paper trail. There’s no way to be sure their votes count.

A paper trail doesn’t help if it’s incomplete or corrupt; current curation procedures could be better. And paper doesn’t help if nobody looks at it.

That’s where chance comes in. Statistics means never having to say you’re certain, but it can justify confidence. Examining a small number of paper records, selected properly, can provide strong evidence.

You can tell if a pot of soup is too salty by tasting a tablespoon. You don’t have to drink the whole pot. Stirring is key. If you don’t stir the soup, all the salt could be at the bottom. Taking a tablespoon after stirring amounts to taking a random sample. Random is not the same as haphazard; stirring is not the same as sticking in the spoon without looking.

We can’t literally stir paper, but we can do something with the same effect. Imagine numbering the paper records. Select a number at random, for instance, by rolling fair 10-sided dice. Repeat. The random sample is every paper record whose number comes up.

Size Matters

Typical audit laws require hand-counting votes in a specified percentage of precincts, selected at random. This is odd to statisticians. It’s like saying you have to taste a specific percentage of a pot of soup when, in fact, you just need a tablespoon, no matter how big the pot. The size of the sample matters, a drop wouldn’t be enough, but the size as a percentage of the population doesn’t matter much. Moreover, the narrower the margin, the more a small problem might matter, so it makes sense to audit more when margins are slim.

If a large enough random sample of paper records shows a large enough margin for the reported winner, that’s strong statistical evidence that the reported winner really won. For instance, the chance that 100 ballots selected at random show 57 or more votes for a losing candidate is less than 10 percent. So, if 100 randomly selected ballots have 57 or more votes for the reported winner, there is 90 percent “confidence” in the outcome.

But what if the ballots show 48 votes for the reported winner and 52 for the runner-up? That would hardly be evidence that the outcome is right. It doesn’t seem satisfactory to stop the audit.

I had an “aha” moment in 2007. If the outcome is right, an audit should require as little work as possible. But if the outcome is wrong, no matter why, an audit should guarantee a large known chance of correcting the outcome.

An audit with that guarantee is called “risk-limiting.” The risk-limit is the largest chance a wrong outcome will slip through. Efficient risk-limiting audits are like incremental recounts that stop when there’s strong evidence that continuing is pointless. If the audit doesn’t find strong evidence, it leads to a full hand-count, correcting the outcome if it was wrong.

Risk-limiting audits are endorsed by the American Statistical Association, The League of Women Voters, Common Cause, Verified Voting and many other organizations concerned with election integrity. Colorado has a law requiring risk-limiting audits starting next year (implementation may be postponed). California passed a law to pilot risk-limiting audits in 2011 and 2012.

My collaborators and I have developed a variety of methods for risk-limiting audits. With the helpful co-operation of 10 jurisdictions, we’ve audited 16 elections in California. Others have done risk-limiting audits in Colorado and Ohio.

One of the simplest methods, ballot polling, could be used in any jurisdiction that has a paper trail and keeps good track of that paper. Ballot polling would let most states with paper trails confirm presidential elections at 10 percent risk by auditing a few hundred ballots, on average. For margins as small as 4 percent, at 10 percent risk, ballot-polling rarely requires looking at more than a few thousand ballots from the contest, if the outcome is right. For state-wide contests, that’s a tiny additional expense.

For smaller margins, ballot polling can require auditing many more ballots; however, there are more efficient risk-limiting methods. The most efficient method checks how the voting system interpreted individual ballots. It requires checking no more than a few thousand randomly selected ballots for margins down to two tenths of a percent, if the voting system did not make many errors. Such a method could reduce the need for expensive, contentious recounts.

Unfortunately, current federally certified voting systems don’t report how they interpret individual ballots. But Travis County, Texas, and Los Angeles County, California, are developing new voting systems designed for efficient risk-limiting audits. That will be a giant step forward for U.S. election integrity.

Elections are too important not to leave to chance. In (fair) dice we trust.

The risk-limit is the largest chance a wrong outcome will slip through. Efficient risk-limiting audits are like incremental recounts that stop when there’s strong evidence that continuing is pointless. If the audit doesn’t find strong evidence, it leads to a full hand-count, correcting the outcome if it was wrong.
New Media Technologies and Elections – an African Elections Project Perspective

By Jeremiah Sam, Projects Director, African Elections Project

Elections present exciting and challenging times for citizens, political parties, electoral management bodies, and media organizations in many African countries as they continue to play significant roles in ensuring that the process is successful on the African continent.

Media coverage of elections in Africa was traditionally limited to radio, television and newspapers. However, in the last decade, noticeable changes have been observed in the manner in which media organizations cover elections. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) have added a new dimension to the plethora of tools available for the reporting of elections.

Their growth partly reflects the proliferation of Internet access, cheap and affordable bandwidth, availability of innovative Internet tools and the repurposing of such tools for use on increasingly sophisticated mobile and handheld devices. The growing demand for “home news” by the African Diaspora is also driving the creation of content and a growth in the market for the consumption of online news as evidenced by the number of newspapers with online editions. African-based media have stepped up supply to meet this demand.

New media technology platforms allow people from all walks of life regardless of their level of education, gender or social standing to add their voices to various issues raised during the electoral process. Increasingly social media has provided a medium for citizens to be actively involved in the electoral process by engaging and questioning key actors such as politicians on what policy interventions they intend to deliver when elected. Before this intervention, it was almost impossible for citizens to directly engage with politicians or state officials on governance matters.

The continent has experienced increasing technological growth in recent times. 38% of the continent’s population uses a mobile phone with a projected rate of 41% expected to be reached soon. Over 65 per cent of the continent live under the footprint of a mobile network stimulating over US$56 billion in private-sector investments over a four-year period (2004 - 8). As of March 2011, Africa’s Internet penetration had reached 11.4 per cent and is set to grow further. In spite of these projections, the numbers are still small compared to global averages. In terms of Internet users, the continent contributed only 5.6 per cent of the global total in 2011, even though it accounts for over one billion of its population.

The average monthly Internet cost on the continent for approximately five hours of access is US$60, a high amount to pay in comparison to North America or Europe. However, the general quality of access (speed and reliability) has increased, and there is every indication that access costs will decrease in the coming years due to the rapid deployment of telecommunications infrastructure across the continent. Until then, comparatively exorbitant costs of communications will continue to pose a barrier that will lead to a slow uptake of online news media.

The growth in mobile and Internet use outlined above spills over into the political sector evidenced by politically oriented websites or sites maintained by electoral management institutions. The African Elections Project (www.africanelections.org) was established in 2008 with the ambition of enhancing the ability of journalists, citizen journalists and the news media to provide timely, relevant election information and knowledge, and to undertake the monitoring of specific and important aspects of governance as it relates to elected officials. The project uses mobile apps, social media tools and platforms to develop capacity and to monitor the governance process prior to, during and after elections. Moreover, it leverages the media’s role in democratic societies by providing free, fair and impartial reporting on elections that do not inflame the passions of the electorate.

Most online and traditional media institutions link to these sites as a convenient source of election information. Nearly all political parties have websites, though most of them were not regularly updated. Political actors, especially presidential candidates, create online presence using social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs to espouse their manifestos.

Citizen journalists make up another key component of the online electoral ecosystem by providing online content that may consist of independent news but also an aggregation of content from political parties, electoral management bodies and organisations with political affiliations. In some cases, these citizen journalists were the source of breaking news and they served as news leads for traditional media, providing user-generated content and amplifying (online) traditional media content.

New Media and the Changing Face of Elections in Africa (Real-Time Reporting)

Any social media tool increases in value as people congregate around it. The intrinsic value of Facebook, say, to the individual users, increases as its subscription numbers grow, which in turn is reflected in the stock or investment values of these companies. Similarly, traditional media are likely to benefit from this growth and increase in relevance as they open up to contributions by citizens through the use of social media.

Dumisani Moyo of media and elections in Africa, in his paper “The New Media as Monitors of Democracy: Mobile Phones and Zimbabwe's 2008 Election” argues that the advent of new communications technologies such as the Internet and mobile phones has ushered in a new era of political communication in Zimbabwe where citizens actively participate both in the election campaign and monitoring processes. He looks at these new innovations and their entry into the field of political communication, focusing particularly on the convergence of mobile phones (in particular the SMS or short message service), the Internet and clandestine radio during Zimbabwe’s contested 2008 election. He concludes that these new forms of communication are fast eroding the monopoly of incumbent governments over the communications landscape, therefore undercutting the liberation discourse that has had a stranglehold on election processes, and signaling the possibility of more open political spaces where divergent views can co-exist.

In the 12 African countries covered by the African Elections Project; Ghana (2008), Cote d’Ivoire, Mauritania, Botswana, Namibia, Togo, Malawi, Niger, Guinea, Mozambique, Liberia and Ghana (2012) all of the electoral management bodies maintained their own online presence. Most electoral management bodies, such as Ghana’s electoral commission, used their sites to provide up-to date information on their activities including the provision of...
tentative election results and actually posted the final results of the 2012 elections in Ghana on their facebook account.

Just as the Electoral Commission of Ghana (2012), Kenya’s Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) introduced a biometric system of voting, which specified that biometric information of voters be registered and verified before voting is allowed.

The IEBC, during the country’s March 4, 2013 elections employed the use of various technologies in carrying out its mandate. With help from Google, the commission launched an interactive map and SMS service for people to effortlessly find their voter registration stations, registration status, and polling station on Election Day. The IEBC established an electronic vote transmission system, which was to facilitate the counting of provisional results. The commission provided real-time results on its website, facebook and twitter pages.

More channels are opening up and more advanced uses such as videos have increased the quantity and also the quality of content that users generate. Commonly referred to as User Generated Content (UGC) or citizen journalism, such audience material has increasingly contributed to news narratives especially when traditional media are unable to bear witness to news events as they unfold. The accuracy of user generated content, although subjected to scrutiny by traditional media norms, may seem to be legitimated when multiple users cover the same subject by providing small pieces of the story that is in turn aggregated to form a reasonable whole.

One of the earliest examples in the African context of harnessing user-generated content in response to crisis situations was the Ushahidi mashup of the 2007 Kenyan election crisis. The project mapped real-time data from emails and text messages to populate online maps that indicated locations where post-election incidents and violence were taking place (Collender et al., 2009). In this case, mobile technology was used to provide content, knowledge and information on issues that required urgent attention.

These were positive outcomes of the use of mobile phones in generating real-time data. However, there were negative aspects too as they were used to spread hate messages during the same conflict. Zuckerman (2009) outlines the dual role of peacemaking and the propagation of violence which the technology played in the elections, stating that “One of the most dramatic lessons of the crisis is that technologies useful for reporting and peacemaking are also useful for rumor mongering and incitement to violence” (Zuckerman, 2009, pp. 1934).

While Oruame (2007) laments the huge amount of money spent on the 2007 Nigerian election to facilitate an error-free process, he argues that the benefits of mobile phone and SMS use during the elections brought about social awareness and greater participation among the people. In his words, “all these [uses of mobile and SMS technology] can go a long way in letting people be more informed on issues and ultimately getting them to make right choices in a democratic setting” (Oruame, 2007). Similarly, Nielsen (2009) suggests that the 2009 South African elections offered more extensive uses of social media, from the raising of campaign funds and donations to direct sending of messages to registered voters.

Challenges

Lack of access to real-time information, low access to Internet and appropriate bandwidth, lack of capacity for investigative journalism (especially during the elections process), inability to produce balanced reports and low-level user-generated content were some of the major challenges of the media organisations which undertook online news operations. These challenges weighed on the impact of the project in some of the project countries, particularly Mauritania, Guinea, Togo, Malawi and Mozambique.

Ghana’s 2012 elections, for the first time entered a second day of voting due to hitches with the Biometric Verification Devices. Kenya’s IEBC also faced similar difficulties where more than 75% of the Electronic Voter Identification Devices (EVID) failed to work in some urban polling stations forcing the IEBC officials to switch to the manual system.

Most newsrooms encountered by AEP were unable to invest in ICT tools required in the field and in the newsroom. Indeed it was normal to see journalists in the 12 countries we covered using public cyber cafes to file stories, since their newsrooms did not have the basic tools needed for online media (i.e. computers and a stable Internet connection). The lack of cost-effective tools and accessibility to ICTs in the field and the newsroom hampered online journalists from making the desired inroads into more specialized reporting on elections. Finally, online reporting is driven by the ability to provide timely news. Online audiences demand news anywhere, anytime within a 24-hour news cycle. Unfortunately the lack of fast access to the Internet and barriers such as unavailable electronic versions of articles lead to a low response rate for online content by the news team.

For example, most documents were submitted as hard copies (e.g. political party manifestos), which requires that portions of this information be retyped and processed before being fed into the production cycle.

The use of technology and social media to monitor elections and provide media coverage has become an integral part of the election process in Africa. Although online coverage is not as influential as radio, TV and print, it is assuming greater importance not only for domestic audiences, but also for citizens living abroad who have access to cheap and reliable Internet. The project has shown that there are a growing number of journalists with online reporting skills who can contribute to the growth of online elections reporting now and in the future.

Blogging culture is quite low in most of the countries covered, but the use of twitter and Facebook is recording significant growth and there is the need for a social media literacy drive to be undertaken to ensure greater participation by all citizens.

There is the need for project implementers and funders to mainstream social media in their project deployments since it will go a long way to ensure greater beneficial participation in project decision making and implementation.

Finally, appropriate technologies such as digital recorders, cameras, portable outside broadcasting units, high-speed mobile internet access and satellite connections are needed in the newsroom and on the field. These can all go a long way to speed up the uptake of online elections reporting on the continent.
When properly implemented, electronic election systems provide accurate vote counting, timely transmission of results, and secure electoral processes. Independent testing and certification by qualified testing laboratories offers election administrators, election stakeholders, and the public the assurance that e-voting systems are trustworthy. Testing is an essential tool to safeguard the integrity of e-voting systems.

1 Introduction

In 1892 the lever voting machine was used for the first time in Lockport, New York. The inventor, Jacob H. Myers said that his invention would "protect mechanically the voter from rascality, and make the process of casting the ballot perfectly plain, simple and secret" (1).

While most electoral democracies still rely on traditional paper ballots and ballot boxes for their elections, over the past 20 years many countries have turned to e-voting technologies. E-voting systems have been implemented with a range of technologies including direct recording devices, optical scanning systems, and a variety of internet-based systems, all of which capture, transmit, consolidate, count, and report election results. When implemented properly, e-voting can protect the rights of voters and safeguard electoral integrity.

Independent testing and certification of e-voting systems are essential tools that election management bodies (EMBs) should use to guarantee the performance of e-voting systems and to promote public confidence. Transparency in testing and certifying of e-voting systems also promotes credibility among election stakeholders such as political parties, the media, and civil society. This article will discuss the following aspects of testing and certification:

- Technology challenges faced by election administrators
- Need for international election testing standards
- Review of current e-voting hardware/software testing methodologies
- Case studies in election testing and certification
- Impact of independent testing and certification on electoral integrity

If e-voting systems including are in use, it is imperative to have internal and independent testing to ensure that they function correctly and accurately. The infamous "punch card voting machines" and "hanging chads" in Florida used in the cliffhanger U.S. presidential election in 2000 demonstrated that the lack of adequate testing and maintenance of voting equipment undermines the faith of the voters in the democratic process.

Election administrators who are considering implementing e-voting and internet voting should include adequate funding for independent testing and certification of voting systems. In 2010 in the Philippines, the Commission on Elections (COMELEC) held fully automated nationwide elections. Overall, the election was viewed as a success in the eyes of the voters who were pleased to know the winner of the presidential elections 48 hours after the closing of the polls. A key to the successful use of voting equipment was a robust independent testing and certification programme.

2 Technology challenges faced by election administrators

Despite the potential advantages of e-voting systems, many election officials are reluctant to embrace automation at the polls. This hesitance is fueled by increased opposition to new voting technologies. In countries where e-voting is in use or being considered, election administrators face resistance by opponents of all forms of e-voting technology. Many election technology foes strongly believe that legitimate elections can only be conducted with traditional paper ballots, ballot boxes, and tabulation of election results by hand.

In the U.S., opponents of direct recording electronic (DRE) machines have been successful in convincing officials at all levels of government of the unreliability of DREs and the need to add printing capabilities to existing machines to produce a paper trail of each recorded vote. This insistence on having a Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) has added major costs to state and local elections.

Since the passage of the Help America Vote Act in 2002, there have been a handful of lawmakers in the U.S. Congress who have introduced legislation that would mandate a return to the use of traditional paper ballots. In 2008, two U.S. Senators introduced legislation that would have completely banned the use of touch screen DRE machines for the U.S. presidential election in 2012. While none of these measures have passed in Congress, they help to undermine the credibility of e-voting as well as the election process.

In Europe, the anti-technology backlash has virtually halted the use of e-voting systems. Since the late 1960s the Dutch have been pioneers in the use of voting technology. A dramatic shift occurred in the Netherlands in 2008 when anti-technology activists forced the Dutch Government to scrap nationwide use of DRE machines in elections.

Over the past decade, the U.K. has experienced voting with e-voting technology for pilot elections and local and U.E. parliamentary elections. At the present time, however, it appears that there is little enthusiasm nationwide for embracing new voting technologies. The only bright spot for e-voting technology is in London, where an e-counting system was used for local elections in 2008 and was used again in 2012.

Belgium is one of the few exceptions in Europe and they decided to use a DRE voting system on a limited basis in municipal elections in 2012.

3 Need for international election testing standards

To reverse the anti-technology trend in elections, EMBs should rely on independent testing and certification of e-voting systems. Presently there are no internationally recognized standards that mandate the conduct of election technology testing and certification. There are initiatives, however, that are taking place in several countries.

The Council of Europe established a basic set of standards governing e-voting in 2004. These standards emphasize the need for reliable auditing of voting systems as well as certification. Yet there are no specific protocols or procedures governing independent testing and certification of e-voting systems. In 2010, the Council of Europe released an excellent publication, The E-Voting Handbook, which encourages independent testing and certification of e-voting systems.

In the U.S., extensive testing and certification of voting systems is in place for e-voting and internet voting. The U.S. Election Assistance Commission (EAC) oversees the testing of voting systems in cooperation with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and accredits Voting Systems Test Laboratories (VSTL). Generally, when states and municipalities use federal funds to buy voting equipment, the equipment is certified by accredited VSTLs. The EAC mandates that equipment testing be conducted with complete independence and without interference from vendors.

By Richard W. Soudriette, President, Center for Diplomacy and Democracy and Mark D. Phillips, President, SLI Global Solutions
Systems Safeguards Electoral Integrity

VSTLs test voting systems using a set of criteria developed by the EAC called the Voluntary Voting Systems Guidelines (VVSG). Most states follow the EAC guidelines and protocols. However, several states such as New York, California, and Ohio have either amended these requirements or have developed their own election testing standards and certification programmes. The New York State Board of Elections concluded an extensive election testing and certification programme in 2009 which helped to replace antiquated voting equipment across the state.

One way to expand the use of e-voting would be for international election experts and institutions to work together to develop a basic set of testing and certification standards. Some of the groups that might take the lead in such an effort include the United Nations Development Programme, Association of European Election Officials, E-Voting CC, Carter Center, International Foundation for Electoral Systems, Electoral Institute of Southern Africa, and the OSCE.

EMBs that are considering automating voting systems are advised to engage in sufficient analysis and planning prior to moving to the procurement phase. Poor implementation of e-voting systems can result in costly errors both in terms of public finances and public confidence.

The Republic of Ireland learned a tough lesson following the botched implementation of e-voting in 2004. The decision to replace traditional paper ballots with a DRE system ultimately cost Irish taxpayers approximately €55 million and a loss of electoral credibility. This ill-fated e-voting scheme was conceived by government bureaucrats with little public input from the election stakeholders. The DRE system was scrapped before it was ever used and this fiasco resulted in a major setback for e-voting across Europe.

In Ben Goldsmith’s recent book, Electronic Voting & Counting Technologies, he makes the case for having sufficient lead time and preparation when EMBs modernize voting systems. This includes feasibility studies and pilot elections prior to nationwide implementation. Goldsmith states that, “Once delivered, it is essential that an EMB ensure that an electronic voting or counting system not only meets the specifications developed for the system, but also meets the requirements of the electoral environment.”

The major e-voting tests currently used by independent laboratories include:

- Acceptance Testing – Testing the functionality of software used in e-voting systems
- Performance Testing – Testing of performance and speed of hardware and software
- Stress Testing – Testing for endurance of voting systems even under extreme conditions
- Security Testing – Testing for data protection and functionality of e-voting systems
- Usability Testing – Testing for voter friendly e-voting systems
- Trusted Build – E-voting systems are rebuilt under controlled conditions using the vendor specifications to ensure they function properly

Objective accreditation is vital for the testing, auditing, and certification of e-voting systems. The International Standards Organization (ISO) recognizes the effectiveness of testing facilities by awarding its coveted designation ISO: 9001:2008. Also, ISO uses the internationally recognized test standard known as ISO-17025 to gauge the capacity of testing labs to fully replicate and audit test results as an indicator of testing competence. In the U.S., the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Programme of the National Institute of Standards and Technology as well as the EAC, engage in accrediting election test laboratories. These types of accreditations are useful because they provide EMBs with confidence that the testing methodologies used by test labs are reliable, repeatable, and objectively verifiable.

Voting systems have unique demands. For example, optical scan counting systems must be able to accurately and reliably read the hand written marks of voters as they indicate their candidate preferences on paper ballots. If not properly designed and tested, the variability in handwriting of the voters can impact the performance of scanning systems and may even potentially impact the accuracy of the vote count. Most generalized software testing labs have experience in code and process review, but may lack specific methodology and techniques to ensure that electronic election systems operate as required. Test methods must be configured in a way to ensure the effective validation of voting systems that fully comply with the electoral law as well as the requirements of EMBs. Testing labs need to demonstrate that they stand behind their work and that they have extensive automated management, repository, and reporting tools that can provide assurance that e-voting systems will produce election results with transparency and accuracy.

Experience with a broad range of electronic election systems is important to design effective tests and provide accurate as well as timely test results. As voting systems, ballot designs, and election processes vary worldwide, it is crucial to understand how these differences can impact electronic voting. The variety of election management systems poses logistical challenges and may reveal vulnerabilities for e-voting systems. These potential weaknesses will certainly be exploited by anti-technology activists as they seek to derail the use of e-voting which is why independent testing is so essential. Direct experience with election testing can also help EMBs better understand the importance of the performance and speed of hardware and software.
of properly communicating test results with election stakeholders with divergent points of view such as political parties, civil society, and the media.

6 Case studies in election testing and certification

Since no international testing standards exist that govern independent testing and certification of e-voting systems, it is useful to consider how EMBs currently using e-voting systems are dealing with this issue.

E-voting in Brazil began in the late 1980s. By 1996, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Brazil introduced e-voting nationwide for federal elections. The tribunal has long understood the importance of adequate testing of voting machines in use. They have accomplished this through internal testing done by the staff of the tribunal and independent testing that has been undertaken by the Brazilian National Institute of Space Research. Several scientists from this agency were involved in the original design of the Brazilian DRE machine.

The U.K. has been reluctant to move forward with full implementation of e-voting and e-counting systems. From 2000 to 2007, the U.K. Government supported many pilot elections around the country using a wide variety of voting technologies. Under current U.K. law, e-voting can only be used for local and EU parliamentary elections. Only traditional paper ballots may be used for U.K. parliamentary elections. (3) Intense public pressure by anti-voting system activists forced the government and the U.K. Electoral Commission to temporarily suspend support for pilot schemes using e-voting technology. Using local financial resources, the one exception has been the Greater London Authority (GLA) which authorized and funded the use of an e-counting system for the municipal elections in London in 2008 and in 2012. For both elections, the GLA has included independent testing and certification components.

In 2004 the Electoral Commission of India (ECI) took a leading role in the use of e-voting technology. The ECI introduced the Electronic Voting Machine (EVM) which has been successfully used in nationwide parliamentary elections in 2004 and 2009. While testing does play a role in the work of the ECI, it is done internally by the Electoral Commission and by the EVM manufacturer. Due to increased concern by election stakeholders during the 2009 elections, the ECI invited critics to share specific information about perceived or actual vulnerabilities in the EVM system. For the most part, the 2009 parliamentary elections went smoothly, but recently the ECI has shown interest in independent testing for future elections.

One of the cornerstones of the plan to enhance democratic institutions in the Philippines was the introduction of electronic devices to count votes and transmit election results quickly and accurately. According to the former Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the Philippines, Reynato Puno, “full automation will not completely cleanse the dirt in our electoral system. But it is a big leap forward which can lead us to the gateway of real democracy where the vote of the people is sacred and supreme.” (4)

To accomplish this goal, COMELEC of the Philippines successfully implemented the use of 80,000 precinct count optical scan (PCOS) machines. Planning for implementation of the new automated voting system started in 2008; two years before the election. When COMELEC developed their automation plan they included independent testing and certification as major programme components. Because COMELEC was unable to find international voting systems guidelines, the decision was made to adapt portions of the Voluntary Voting Systems Guidelines of the EAC and then combine these specifications with additional Philippine statutory requirements.

COMELEC was especially determined that the 2010 elections be well received by the public, so they made certain that independent testing and certification were key components of their automation efforts. With the help of independent testing, COMELEC was able to resolve design problems and ensure that the vendor delivered the PCOS machines on schedule. The testing and certification also enabled COMELEC to promote confidence in the new system by the voters, political parties, civil society, and the media. Election administrators who are contemplating the use of e-voting should carefully study the case of the Philippines. (5)

The election testing and certification system in the U.S. has evolved over three decades. The U.S. Federal Election Commission (FEC) made initial efforts to establish early standards for e-voting systems in the U.S. Later, the National Association of State Election Directors launched a voluntary testing and certification programme for voting systems that has evolved into the current system overseen by EAC and NIST.

The passage of the Help America Vote Act in 2002 created the EAC. One of the mandates of the EAC was to assume oversight of voting systems standards and testing. Congress gave the EAC the authority to disburse nearly USD$3 billion in federal funds to state and local election officials to replace antiquated voting systems such as the punch card voting machines in states such as Florida, Illinois and Ohio. EAC funds have been used to purchase voting systems that were certified by the EAC accredited testing laboratories. Currently the terms of all of the EAC commissioners have expired and it is doubtful that any new commissioners will be named until 2013 at the earliest. Nevertheless, the testing programme, protocols, and procedures of the EAC continue to be in force.

A major issue faced by election administrators is the security of the source code for e-voting systems. This became the hot button issue in the Philippines prior to the 2010 elections. The review of source code is a critical element in the testing and certification process. Many opponents of the automated voting system in the Philippines were fearful that the source code would be manipulated to rig the election, or that corrupt elements would penetrate the security of the software for the purpose of corrupting the election results. Because of this concern the COMELEC, using its independent third party testing lab, conducted an extensive review of the source code for the PCOS machines and provided controlled access to political parties and NGOs to examine the results.

Other electoral management bodies such as the Supreme Electoral Tribunal of Brazil and the New York State Board of Elections have also made source code accessible to parties, civil society and the public. In offering this access it is vital that election officials safeguard the sanctity of e-voting systems by not actually allowing the source code to be downloaded for the purpose of conducting off site testing and review. EMBs must guard against tampering with the code in an uncontrolled environment. Another issue related to source code is that election management bodies may face difficulty getting full access from the equipment vendors to code due to intellectual property issues. When entering into vendor contracts, election administrators should ensure that the contract language allows EMBs full access to the source code. To protect intellectual property rights, the vendors may require election administrators to sign confidentiality agreements to eliminate the fear that corporate secrets will be tapped by competitors.
The use of internet voting is increasingly seen as an important tool by election administrators. For the elections in 2012 in Mexico City, the election authorities intended to use internet voting to permit out-of-country voting. In 2011, the Norwegian Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development conducted pilot local elections in 10 municipalities using internet voting. The OSCE/ODHIR election team that observed these pilot elections noted, that for the most part, the pilot elections were successful. More than 27,000 voters cast their ballots via the internet. The OSCE/ODHIR observer team stated in their report that some voters experienced difficulty using the internet voting system. The same report mentioned a lack of adequate auditing and certification of the internet voting system. (8)

7 Impact of independent testing and certification on electoral integrity

Often election administrators view e-voting systems as a panacea to resolve all election problems. E-voting is merely a tool, but no replacement for competent and professional election administration.

In the Republic of Georgia in 2004, some politicians viewed the Central Election Commission (CEC) with disdain and suspicion. A bill was introduced to replace the CEC with e-voting. That same year the International Foundation for Electoral System invited the Deputy Speaker of the Georgian Parliament and several of his colleagues to observe elections in the U.S. They visited many American polling stations using a variety of e-voting systems. Their overall observation was that the key to good elections lies not in the voting equipment but in the work of election administrators.

Automation of voting systems can represent a major investment of public funds. The budget for the development and operation of the automated voting system in the Philippines for the 2010 election was about USD$150 million. While this is a substantial investment, the e-counting system used in the Philippines accurately recorded, consolidated, and reported the votes of over 50 million Filipinos within hours of the close of the polls. The 2010 elections stood in contrast with the previous elections when voters had to wait for days, weeks, and months before election winners and losers were known. Additionally, the e-counting system has the potential of holding down costs if used for future elections.

On this issue of potential cost savings of e-voting systems, the experience of Mexico should be noted. Since 2008 the Electoral Institute for Citizen Participation – Instituto Electoral de Participación Ciudadana (IEPC) – of the State of Jalisco has systematically developed an e-voting system through phased implementation. IEPC has found that while initial development and deployment costs of e-voting systems are high, the long term use of e-voting systems is cost effective. (9)

Given the high initial cost of voting equipment, a number of steps should be taken before the green light is given to purchase e-voting equipment. These steps include feasibility studies, pilot elections, open procurement processes, independent testing and certification, and effective outreach to election stakeholders to inform them of every step in the process. Given the considerable opposition to e-voting technology worldwide, it is incumbent on election administrators to procure e-voting systems that are voter friendly, accurate and secure. An independent testing and certification programme should be an essential part of the selection and procurement process to ensure that the system operates as promised on Election Day.

In countries accustomed to contentious elections, the lack of adequate testing of e-voting systems can undermine democracy. Independent testing in 2010 helped COMELEC diffuse concerns about the potential for manipulation of the Philippine elections. By keeping election stakeholders informed about the testing and certification process, COMELEC was able to maintain public confidence in the new election system.

8 Conclusion

Election administrators face a small but vocal group of anti-election technology opponents. While some EMBs may not wish to automate their electoral processes, e-voting holds great potential as a valuable tool to advance democratic rights.

For successful implementation of e-voting, independent testing and certification programmes should be required. By embracing testing as an essential tool, election officials can ensure that e-voting systems they procure have the best possible chance of operating flawlessly on Election Day. Testing and certification also can reassure citizens, candidates and election stakeholders about the transparency and accuracy of e-voting.

The best assistance that the international election community can provide to expand the reach of e-voting is to work towards the development of international standards and protocols governing independent testing and certification of e-voting systems. Enlisting the support of international and regional election organizations in the development of international voluntary voting systems guidelines would also be a major advance in the field of election administration.

When properly implemented, electronic election systems count quickly and accurately. E-voting systems make the voting process more accessible and speed up the release of accurate election results. There are many examples worldwide where the slow release of election results can increase public anxiety and spark civil unrest. If voters have confidence in the credibility of e-voting machines, they will trust the results. Independent testing and certification of e-voting systems are vital tools to safeguard the sanctity of the ballot box and the integrity of the democratic election process.

1. This notation was cited in Dr. Douglas W. Jones’s book titled, A Brief Illustrated History of Voting, (University of Iowa 2001), Chapter 6.
6. See interview on GMA TV News broadcast interview on September 11, 2009 with former Chief Justice Reynato Puno of the Philippines.
8. OSCE/ODHIR election reports regarding Norway can be found at http://osce.org/odhir/elections/norway.
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- Solutions to optimise voters’ trust and satisfaction
- Constitutional reform and design,
- Optimisation of electoral procedures and technologies

About the International Centre for Electoral Psychology

The International Centre for Electoral Psychology is a research-oriented organisation, which focuses on the understanding of the psychology of voters and the optimisation of the ergonomy of electoral mechanisms to best fit the profiles of the voters of specific countries with the objective of making elections as effective, trusted, and democratically fulfilling for citizens as possible.

Our leading team of academics and practitioners have received numerous academic awards and acclaims, and provided bespoke studies and practical solutions to numerous Governments, Electoral Management Bodies and Commissions, and International Organisations.

ICEP key services and solutions are tailor-designed for each individual problem or situation, taking into account cultural, legal, and institutional specificities and include:

Bespoke solutions to understand voters’ psychology and optimise democratic legitimacy, participation, and satisfaction:
- Research, evaluation, and practical solutions in voters’ psychology, perceptions of democracy, trust enhancement, systems transparency
- Support for civic education and communication campaign
- Support for registration and electoral participation protocols

Support for constitutional and electoral reform:
- Legal and political audit of current systems and their shortcomings
- Studies of constitutional reform acceptability, and mapping of ranges of constitutional alternatives compatible with local citizens’ specific social, cultural, and psychological profile
- Optimisation of electoral systems
- Electoral simulation (projected consequences of system changes in terms of groups’ representation, etc.)

Evaluation and support for electoral procedures and technology choices:
- Audit and expertise of existing electoral procedures and/or technologies
- Advice and expertise on the choice, optimisation and tailoring of new electoral procedures and/or technologies
- Advice on the design of electoral procedures and/or technologies for specific target groups (young or elderly voters, illiterate voters, etc)
- Ergonomic and political psychological experiments

Ad hoc support and training of in house research teams:
- Support of institution for their in house research and evaluations (support for institutional research initiatives, surveys design and analysis, interviews, etc.)
- Training of election officials (voters’ psychology, in house research, electoral education and communication, etc)

Our team includes some of the most internationally recognised experts and practitioners with decades of expertise in the field of electioneering and have conducted consultancy work for multiple governments, electoral commissions and authorities, European and international organisations, etc.
Some findings from some of our team’s previous studies in:

Electoral psychology...
- 25% of Americans have already cried because of an election
- 52% of voters feel happy at the moment when they vote and 79% think that it is an important moment for them
- In most countries, 30-40% of voters have already changed their minds on the very day of an election.
- In every major election, 20-30% of voters make up or change their minds within the week of the vote. In low salience referenda, this can be up to 70%
- 53% of voters say that elections make them feel worried

Electoral ergonomy...
- In the UK 2010 General elections, young voters aged 18-25 who used postal voting were nearly twice more likely to vote for an extreme right party than those who went to a polling station
- In a comparative experiment of first time voters in six countries, we found that polling station voting led to a turnout of 36.9% while e-voting made this drop to 17.4%
- In the US, we found that advanced voting in polling stations makes voters more likely to feel important in their democracy and vote according to what they think is best for their country as compared to postal voting
- In an experiment where we filmed the shadow of voters in the polling booth, we found that voters only spend 20 seconds thinking about their vote using a traditional computer-based voting machine and up to 1 minutes using French-type ballots.

Some of our recent studies and projects included:
- Simulate the effect of three possible new electoral systems on voters’ psychology, acceptability, and long term representation of various groups for a national government;
- Propose and test concrete solutions to youth participation for an international organisation and looking at the possible effects of changing the voting age, organising specific youth elections, allowing e-voting, or changing civic education;
- Offer bespoke training to a national Election Management Body allowing them to professionally run voters’ surveys and interviews to better understand their perceptions;
- Provide advice on the specific needs of the local population in the context of the adoption of new electoral procedures and technology.
Since the 1970s, and especially since the early 1990s, Britain's two largest political parties, the Labour Party and the Conservatives, have been experiencing a decline in electoral support, a trend which political scientists refer to as ‘de-alignment’. This has had several consequences, the most important of which have been: an increase in electoral volatility, as more voters ‘switch’ parties more frequently; a decline in electoral turnout, as fewer people bother voting at all; an increase in support for ‘third’ parties.

However, to understand these developments, it is necessary to examine briefly how and why the Conservatives and the Labour Party have both been affected by de-alignment in recent decades. Table 1 provides a snapshot of the two parties’ share of the national vote in British general elections since 1979.

**Table 1: Changes in Conservative and Labour support in Britain since 1970 (%)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Conservative</th>
<th>Labour</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>81</td>
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<tr>
<td>1983</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>70</td>
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<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>73</td>
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<td>1992</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>77</td>
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<td>1997</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From 1970 until 1992, the Conservative Party’s share of the vote was in the 46-42% range, but from 1997 onwards, it has been 31-36%. Meanwhile, the Labour Party has experienced major fluctuations in its electoral support, from 43% in 1970 down to just 27% in 1983, then back up to 43% in 1997 before falling to 29% in 2010.

Also very noticeable is the overall decline in the two parties’ combined share of votes in general elections, for whereas the Labour Party and the Conservatives won 89% of all votes cast in 1970, their share had fallen 65% in 2010. This ‘de-alignment’ actually has two major aspects: class de-alignment and partisan de-alignment. Class de-alignment means that fewer people are voting for a political party on the basis of their social class (defined in terms of occupation or socio-economic rank); until the 1970s, most of the working class voted for the Labour Party and the majority of the middle class voted Conservative. This meant that Britain had, in effect, a two-party, class-based, political system – reinforced, of course, by the first-past-the-post electoral system which has often ‘under-represented’ other political parties in terms of seats in the House of Commons. However, the link between social class and support for a specific political party has declined considerably, to the extent that in 2010, only 33% of the working class voted Labour (58% had done so in 1970), and 39% of the middle class voted Conservative (in 1970, 64% had done so).

Along with the weakening link between social class and support for a particular political party, Britain has witnessed a process of ‘partisan de-alignment’, which means that fewer voters identify themselves with a specific political party. Although this is a partial consequence of class de-alignment, ‘partisan alignment’ is a more general trend, reflecting a declining allegiance and loyalty to a particular political party. In 1970, 40% of British voters identified ‘very strongly’ with either the Labour Party or the Conservatives; in the 2010 general election, only 11% did so.

There are several factors which have led to de-alignment among British voters during the last couple of decades or so:

- **A general loss of trust or faith in the ability of either the Labour Party or the Conservatives to solve Britain’s economic and social problems.** A growing number of voters seem to assume that regardless of which party is in government, things continue to get worse all the time; ‘the country has gone to the dogs... we’re going to hell in a hand-cart’. Whether or not this is true does not matter; it is a common perception, and one which therefore underpins a growing cynicism about the ability of Britain’s main political parties to govern Britain competently and effectively. This perception also fosters a view that most politicians ‘are all the same...they’re as bad each other’.

- **This loss of trust has been compounded in the last 3-4 years by the MPs’ expenses scandal, whereby several MPs were discovered to have dishonestly claimed money in connection with their political roles and responsibilities. Although only a small minority of MPs were found to have obtained expenses and reimbursement fraudulently, the high-profile and media coverage which such cases attracted served to reinforce growing public cynicism about the honesty and integrity of Britain’s politicians. For some voters, the MPs’ expenses scandal seemed to prove that many MPs are ‘only in it for themselves’ and as such, are corrupt, self-serving and venal.

- **Arguably, Britain has either a more ‘educated’ or a less deferential electorate. Either way, this is believed to encourage more ‘rational’ behaviour by citizens in elections. Instead of voting for a political party on the basis of one’s social class or sense of allegiance, an increasing number of voters now make a judgement about which party (if any) has the most attractive or credible set of policies, or is judged to be the most competent in terms of its record and performance in government. Many voters now ‘shop around’ like consumers, in search of the best package of policies, rather than showing ‘brand loyalty’.

- **New issues have emerged, and some traditional issues have become more important (‘salient’), to the extent that they transcend or weaken traditional loyalties to a specific political party. It might be that a particular issue cannot be seen simply as a working class or middle class concern. Similarly, an issue of public concern might not fit traditional ‘Left’ or ‘Right’ ideological views. In either case, the prominence of particular issues will reinforce the trend towards ‘consumer voting’, as voters make judgements about which of the parties has the best policies to deal with key issues, rather than simply voting for the same party all the time.**

**The Electoral Consequences of De-alignment**

De-alignment has had three particular consequences for electoral behaviour and voting patterns in Britain.

**Fewer people voting in elections**

As British voters have become less attached or loyal to what used to be ‘their’ political party, and more cynical about politicians generally, so the number of people voting in elections has steadily declined. Whereas in the 1950 general election, turn-out had been just over 83%, this figure fell to 76% in 1979. It fell further to 71% in 1997, before falling to just 59% in 2001, although it then recovered slightly to 65% in 2010. Even so, turnout in 2010 was still 18% less than it had been in 1950, and 11% down on 1979.

Similarly, there has been a clear decline in turnout in by-elections (elections in a constituency in between general elections, invariably caused by the death or resignation of the MP). Whereas in the 1983-87 period, average turnout in by-elections had been 63.5%, this...
and the Rise of Third Parties

fled to 57.4% between 1987 and 1992, and then to 52.7% in the 1992-1997 period. It has since continued to decline, to the extent that by 2001-2005, by-election turnout had fallen to 39.3%, although it recovered slightly by 2010, rising to 42.3%. This, though, was still very much lower than what it had been 25 years or so previously.

Greater volatility among those who do vote
While de-alignment has contributed enormously to diminishing turn-out in British elections, it has also promoted increased ‘volatility’ among those who do still vote. This means that more voters are now more likely to change the party they support from one election to another. In the era of alignment, most voters tended to vote for ‘their’ party in each election, and would not countenance voting for another party, and certainly not the main rival to ‘their’ party.

However, in the last two decades, an increasing number of British voters have ‘switched’ their support between different parties; they will vote for a particular party in one election, then vote for a different party in the next election. Fewer and fewer voters continue to vote habitually and loyally for the same party at each election.

Increased support for third parties
Probably the most obvious consequence of de-alignment, though, is the increasing support which ‘third’ parties have attracted in various elections, at the expense of the Labour Party and the Conservatives. Britain’s former two-party system has been characterised by increasing fragmentation as a range of ‘minor’ parties have recently attracted significantly more electoral support. Indeed, many of these so-called third parties have won seats in various elections in Britain.

Until the early 1990s, the most notable third party was the Liberal Democrats, who some voters considered as a genuine alternative to the two main parties, although some voters supported them occasionally merely as a ‘protest’ vote in between general elections. Since entering a coalition with the Conservatives in 2010, however, much of the Liberal Democrats’ erstwhile support has evaporated.

Meanwhile, since the late 1990s, other third parties have flourished electorally in Britain. In post-devolution Scotland and Wales, the Scottish National Party (SNP) and Plaid Cymru respectively have seen their support increase enormously. Indeed, the SNP is currently the largest party in the Scottish Parliament, while Plaid Cymru formed a coalition with Welsh Labour, following the 2007 elections to the Welsh Assembly.

In England, three particular ‘third’ parties have attracted increased support since the late 1990s, each of them reflecting growing electoral concern over specific issues, while also benefitting from increased disillusionment with the competence or trustworthiness of the mainstream parties and the political ‘establishment’. Growing concern about the environment and climate change has seen the Green Party attract electoral support, to the extent that they had their first ever MP elected in the 2010 general election. The Greens also won two seats in the 2009 European Parliament elections, and two seats in the 2012 election for the London Assembly. Most recently, following the May 2013 local government elections in England, the Greens now have 141 local councillors.

Another ‘third’ party which has attracted increased electoral support since the late 1990s especially has been the far-right British National Party (BNP). In the 2001 general election, for example, the BNP’s candidate came third in the Oldham West constituency, and thus pushed the Liberal Democrats into fourth place. Most of the BNP’s support seems to emanate from sections of the working class which used to vote Labour, but is now concerned about ‘excessive’ immigration – the BNP tends to blame many of Britain’s economic and social problems on immigrants and ethnic minorities. Some of these BNP supporters also viewed ‘New Labour’ as a middle class entity, leaving only the BNP as the apparently credible or authentic voice of the politically neglected urban working class.

However, the most successful ‘third’ party since the late 1990s has been the United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), which has achieved some notable electoral successes in the last few years. In 2009, for example, UKIP won 13 of Britain’s seats in the European Parliament, the same number as the Labour Party. More recently, it has performed remarkably well in several by-elections; in November 2012, there were four parliamentary by-elections in England, and in two of these, UKIP came second, ahead of the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats in the other two, UKP finished third, ahead of the Liberal Democrats.

UKIP also performed well in May 2013, when they both attained second place in another by-election, thereby pushing the Conservatives into third place, and also won more than 140 seats with 25% of votes cast in local government elections in England.

UKIP’s growing support can be attributed to three factors: total opposition to British membership of the European Union; its demands for much tougher curbs on immigration (much of which is blamed on the free movement of people within the EU, with many East Europeans especially accused of flocking to Britain and placing a massive strain on employment, housing and the welfare state); a more general cynicism and distrust towards Britain’s established political leaders and their parties.

Although UKIP leader Nigel Farage himself was educated at a public school before becoming a stock-broker, he has skillfully portrayed himself and his party as being ‘out there’ alongside ordinary hard-working, law-abiding, British people against the apparently corrupt, decadent and out-of-touch political establishment which comprises the three largest political parties. In this respect, UKIP is a classic populist party, articulating the anxieties and grievances of the ‘little man’ and ‘little woman’ who are apparently ignored or patronised by Britain’s political elites, and whose views are denigrated for not being ‘politically correct’. This imbues Farage with the image of a courageous outsider daring to speak truth unto power on behalf of the silent majority.

Conclusion
Electorally, Britain appears to have entered a new era. The days when the Labour Party and the Conservatives attracted more than 80% of the vote in general elections, and could alternate in Office as single-party governments without the need to form coalitions, appear to be over. The weakening link between social class and support for a particular political party, a more general decline in loyalty among voters to ‘their’ party and the consequent willingness to switch votes or abstain in elections, a growing distrust of mainstream political parties and their leaders and the emergence of new issues in British politics (most notably, the environment, the EU and immigration), have combined to enable ‘third’ parties to attract unprecedented electoral popularity.

Consequently, beyond the House of Commons itself, the Green Party, the BNP and UKIP have all won seats in various elections in the last 15 years or so, whilst in Scotland and Wales nationalist parties, namely the SNP and Plaid Cymru, have either been, or still are, in government.

Britain’s voters are now much more ‘volatile’ and British party politics is in an unprecedented state of flux. There has been a loss of faith and trust in established political leaders and their parties, and as a result, fewer people are bothering to vote, while those who do turn out to vote are increasingly supporting a wide range of ‘third’ parties. Previously, those voters who were dissatisfied with Labour and/or the Conservatives could vote for the Liberal Democrats, but they are now in government too. Hence disgruntled voters are casting their votes elsewhere, and in ways which would have been almost unimaginable just 15 or 20 years ago.
Blaming Europe? Responsibility without Accountability

By Dr James Tilley Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Oxford, and Professor Sara Hobolt, European Elections and Governance

Last November hundreds of thousands of people across Europe took to the streets. The protesters were, by and large, complaining about government policies that increased taxes and lowered government spending. This initially sounds like a familiar ‘dog bites man’ story given that tax increases and reduced public services rarely prove popular, but there is a twist to the tale. Many of the people protesting were not aiming their ire at the national governments making the cuts in spending, but rather at the European Union. In Portugal, people carried effigies of their prime minister on strings and claimed he was a ‘puppet of the EU’; in Greece, protesters burned the EU flag and shouted ‘EU out’; and in Italy people threw stones at the European Parliament offices. It was, at least for some people on the streets, not the incumbent national politicians in Lisbon, Athens, and Rome who were to blame for the problem of the day, but rather politicians and bureaucrats thousands of miles away in Brussels.

It matters what level of government people blame for deteriorating conditions, such as the current economic crisis. At the heart of the notion of democratic accountability lies the electoral process of sanctioning or rewarding an incumbent on the basis of past performance, which relies on the assumption that voters are able to correctly assign responsibility for outcomes. This is clearly complicated in the EU where citizens face the additional challenge of distinguishing between the powers of multiple levels of government. In our forthcoming book, Blaming Europe? Responsibility without Accountability in the European Union (Oxford University Press), we explain when and why people blame ‘Europe’ and what consequences this has for citizens’ choices in European Parliament elections and their opinions of EU institutions. In this short article we highlight some of our main findings and discuss their implications. In a broad sense, our findings can be divided into two sets of arguments concerning the causes and the consequences of blaming Europe.

We first look at how people form judgements about responsibility in the EU. A crucial question is whether citizens can make sense of who is responsible and assign responsibility accordingly. To understand that process, it is not sufficient to simply look at the formal divisions of institutional responsibility. We must also consider the type of information available about these institutions, as well as the pre-existing attitudes that citizens hold about the institutions. We thus distinguish three mechanisms of assigning responsibility: mechanisms that relate to institutions, mechanisms that relate to information and mechanisms that relate to individual biases. First, we find that people’s views are sensibly shaped by institutional divisions of power. Figure 1 shows how both political experts and the general public in countries inside and outside the Eurozone place responsibility for interest rates (on a 0-10 scale, where 0 implies the EU has no responsibility and 10 implies it has full responsibility). Clearly, experts and the public in Eurozone countries think the EU is more responsible for interest rates than experts and the public in countries with a floating currency like Britain. The differences between experts may be more pronounced, but they are similar in type to the differences between ordinary people.

Note: This figure displays mean scores on the 0-10 scale of EU responsibility for experts and the public, with all countries equally weighted within the currency groupings: Eurozone member, countries with their currency pegged to the euro and countries outside the Eurozone with a floating currency.

Data: European Election Study (EES) 2009 and political expert survey 2010.

Nonetheless for most policy areas, such as the economy, immigration or healthcare, judgements of responsibility across countries are actually very similar. We argue that this is partly because institutional responsibilities are inherently difficult to judge, but also because there is often little high quality information from politicians and the media about responsibility and the EU. Examining media coverage during the 2009 European Parliament election campaign in all EU countries, we find that while there is a great deal of coverage of the EU, most relates to the ‘horse-race’ of the elections and little relates to policy. In particular, EU responsibilities for specific policies are rarely mentioned. The figure below shows how little coverage of the economy involves mention of the EU in either newspapers or on television. Most broadcasts and articles that mention performance mention responsibility, but very few mention that the EU is responsible.

FIGURE 2: Responsibility for the economy in the media

Note: This figure displays the percentage of stories on the economy that assigned responsibility (mentioned the actor as handling, working on, or taking care of) to the national government, other national actors (political and non-political) and the EU. N = 4,822 stories

Data: EES Media Study 2009.

Given this lack of information, we find that many people rely heavily on biases to estimate where responsibility lies. Existing views about the EU colour people’s views of responsibility. When conditions are thought to be worsening, people who are sceptical about the EU tend to blame it. Figure 3 shows data from 2011. People across Europe were asked who was responsible for ‘current economic problems’. Those who dislike the EU project blame the EU, but EU enthusiasts tend to absolve the EU of blame. These are patterns we find repeatedly using multiple data sources in all EU countries. Judgements of responsibility are thus not

FIGURE 1: EU responsibility for interest rates – expert and public perceptions

Note: This figure displays mean scores on the 0-10 scale of EU responsibility for experts and the public, with all countries equally weighted within the currency groupings: Eurozone member, countries with their currency pegged to the euro and countries outside the Eurozone with a floating currency.

Data: European Election Study (EES) 2009 and political expert survey 2010.
just a product of institutional differences in responsibility, but importantly are also used to reconcile predispositions about the EU with information about changing policy performance.


Our second set of arguments concern the consequences of these responsibility judgements. A key component of democratic accountability is that voters hold politicians to account for the actions for which they are deemed to be responsible. This process generally functions well at the national level. National governments are punished for poor performance if they are held responsible, especially when a single party government is in place. But we find no evidence that performance and responsibility matter in a similar way for the dominant Europarty in the European Parliament. It seems that just as it is challenging for voters to hold large coalition governments in national parliaments to account, it is close to impossible for voters to identify which parties to reward and punish at European elections. Since citizens are unable to vote for or against a ‘government’ in the EU, when voters hold the EU responsible for poor performance they lose trust in the EU institutions instead. Indeed, since the onset of the economic crisis in 2008, public trust in EU institutions has declined 17 percentage points, according to the most recent Eurobarometer surveys.

These findings have implications for the future course of the European Union. First, people often do not accurately know which level of government is responsible. Second, even if they did have accurate knowledge of EU responsibilities, they cannot hold EU level political actors to account for performance. Are there any solutions to these problems? Unfortunately, there are no easy fixes. Improving institutional clarity, so people are able to more accurately identify responsibility within the EU, is difficult given that shared competence is the default position both formally and substantively in the EU. Moreover while increasing the amount, and quality, of the information about the EU might help, it is unrealistic to expect that efforts by the EU institutions to increase information will make much difference. Rather, it seems likely that high quality media coverage will only occur when the policy choices at the European level are more clearly defined; in other words, when there is greater politicization and contestation at the EU level.

That brings us to the second problem: the lack of government clarity at the EU level. Greater contestation at the EU level would also help here by enabling people to match performance to particular incumbent governing parties which could be rewarded and punished. Proposals to improve this have typically focused on either encouraging a more parliamentary form of government at the EU level, for example by making Europarties propose rival candidates for Commission president, or facilitating a more presidential form of government, by introducing a directly elected Commission president. Whichever reform path is favoured, the basic idea of increasing government clarity, by strengthening the link between individual voters and executive policies in the Union, remains the same. The practical problems underlying these changes are clearly large, and many remain sceptical that Europarties could truly resemble a national party system. Indeed, it seems to us that even if this vision of European political parties competing with each other for office at the European level did come to pass it would not by itself solve the fundamental problem of responsibility at the EU level without accountability. This is because it is unclear on what basis voters would evaluate any incumbent EU governing party. Are they concerned with the performance of the European Union as a whole, or do they focus on the outcomes at the national level? In a federal election in a federal state the expectation is that citizens will not primarily consider the performance of their own state, but rather the wider economy at the federal level. When somebody living in Kansas votes for or against the US President they are, in the main, considering unemployment in the US as a whole, and not merely unemployment in Kansas. When that same person votes for governor of their state they are more likely to consider unemployment in Kansas. Performance is relative.

The multi-nation European Union remains rather different. In the EU, citizens evaluate policymakers at all levels primarily on the basis of what they have done for their nation and not on the basis of what they have done for the prosperity of the Union as a whole. This may change in the long term, but since Europe still largely lacks the common identity and public sphere found in many federal states, it is unlikely to change radically in the foreseeable future. European citizens simply do not view events from a European vantage point; few voters care about performance at the European level. Until Greek voters care about unemployment across the whole of the EU, and not only in Greece, public evaluations will inevitably focus on performance at the national rather than at the European level. In that sense, unless people start to care not only about what the EU institutions can do for them and their nation, but also about what these institutions can do for Europe as a whole, there seems little prospect of democratic accountability becoming a reality at the European level. 

FIGURE 3: The selective attribution of responsibility for ‘current economic problems’ by EU opponents and EU supporters

Note: This figure displays the percentage of people who say the EU is first or second to blame for the country’s current economic problems (of those who said that the current economic situation was somewhat or very bad). EU supporters are people who had a very or somewhat favourable view of the EU. EU opponents are people who had a very or somewhat unfavourable view of the EU.

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At Smartmatic we salute the opportunity to join election commissions, experts and distinguished guests to learn about their most pressing concerns affecting election administration around the world.

As technology continues to offer better solutions to our day-to-day life problems, it becomes increasingly obvious that election administration needs to move deeper into the information age. At this point in time, election automation is an unavoidable reality for commissions who are searching for ways to ensure better-run elections.

At the 7th International Electoral Affairs Symposium 2013, on the theme of “electoral reform in the 21st century”, which is taking place in Malaysia in December, we are hoping to contribute to a fruitful debate. This is a unique opportunity to share our experience and expertise and to help clearing the barriers preventing millions from benefiting from automation.

Present and future of election automation

Nowadays, roughly 1/3 of the world’s voting population uses some form of technology to cast ballots. In parallel, different solutions are being developed in the market to help carry out the many complex processes that make possible legitimate elections.

In spite of the progress made in recent decades and the number of solutions available in the market today, this industry is still in its early days, and much still needs to be done. Millions of voters across the planet are still in need for more efficient tools to voice their opinions as electoral commissions around the world use rudimentary methods to serve their constituents.

We understand this existing urgency, and that’s why we are working alongside electoral authorities to help modernize the way they run elections. We are constantly striving to bring unique and innovative technologies into every stage of the electoral cycle for increased efficiency and transparency, with remarkable successes in our record.

Adopting electoral technology, real-life experiences

Before automation, the Philippines had been hindered by voting fraud and a high incidence of violence for as long as anyone can remember. The gears of automation were first set into motion in 1992 during the administration of President Fidel Ramos.

Around this time, the Filipino Commission on Elections (COMELEC) initiated efforts to find a flexible legal background for automation. In 2006 President Gloria-Macapagal Arroyo signed RA 9639, the Election Automation Law. With the legal framework in place, the Philippines had a clear pathway to automating their elections.

Despite many challenges and seemingly insurmountable odds, COMELEC and Smartmatic were able to deploy 82,200 PCOS machines in some 36,000 precincts, geared to Smartmatic’s advanced voting systems and organizational muscle. The election held on Monday, May 10, 2010 ran smoothly and more than 740,000,000 votes were cast. For the first time in the history of Philippine elections, results were known within hours after the polls closed. As an important consequence, there was significantly less incidence of election-related violence. Two years later, the successful 2013 mid-term elections held on 13th May were the confirmation that the Philippines is now a world reference in election automation.

The effort of going through the process of adapting a legal framework, and automating elections, has paid high dividends.

Since 1982 Brazil has been a pioneer in the adoption of electronic voting technology. Nowadays, it uses biometrics to identify voters in some municipalities, and voting machines in all precincts to capture the intent of the voters. Technology has been the cornerstone of the advanced results transmission, consolidation, awarding and publication process.

In 2012, Smartmatic entered Brazil providing maintenance for the more than 500,000 voting machines used during the 2012 municipal elections and offered data and voice communication for the 16 most isolated states of Brazil. We are proud to have been an active contributing factor in conducting the Brazilian election with the lowest cost per vote since 1996, as recognized by Cármen Lúcia Antunes Rocha, President of the Brazilian Electoral Tribunal. Once again, automation worked its magic to bring higher levels of transparency and efficiency to an election.

Experience conducting successful elections

In order to help nations conduct better elections we rely not only on the best technology we have developed, but also on the accumulated experience of successfully executed elections projects in five continents.

Our experience and fierce determination to improve election administration is the reason why we are recognized by pundits as the indisputable world leader in the industry. 2.2 billion votes captured and counted is our best letter of recommendation.

In September 2012, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Jimmy Carter, head of the Carter Center, concluded that Smartmatic’s verifiable elections technology is key to the best government elections process in the world. He stated “as a matter of fact, of the 92 elections that we’ve monitored, I would say the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world”. Smartmatic has automated every Venezuelan national election since 2004.

But our systems have been praised since our very beginnings “This system [from Smartmatic] is probably the most advanced system in the world to date”, stated the European Union Mission’s final report on the 2006 Venezuelan elections.

Our unique combination of advanced technology, services, and project management know-how have allowed us to improve elections in Belgium, the US, the Philippines, Brazil and Venezuela, among other countries.

How did we manage all of this?

Since day one, we set ourselves an objective, to create and develop technology that helps people make their governments become more efficient and more transparent. This mantra has kept us focused, and has made our success possible.

We’ve been building capacity and strengthening our global infrastructure, in order to be able to keep innovating and to be able to take full advantage of the clear global trend towards greater transparency. We are continuing to invest millions at our R&D centres in Taiwan, Panama and Venezuela. R&D is one of our core competences and the main reason we’ve set four "world firsts" in electoral best practices:


We certainly hope to have a chance to share all of our experiences with all participants. We are thrilled to be part of this wonderful initiative.

http://www.smartmatic.com/

The 7th International Electoral Affairs Symposium 2013 website is at http://asia.electoralforum.org/
ICPS and ICEP have established an award exclusively for electoral stakeholders, in recognition of their work and to acknowledge their significant contribution to the democratic process beyond the community of electoral professionals, practitioners and experts.

Around the globe, Electoral Commissions, International Institutions and Non-Governmental Organisations work relentlessly to guarantee that elections meet the crucial international standards and that every citizen’s vote is valued and accepted. For the most part, the efforts made by these institutions remain unseen and unheard. The ICPS International Electoral Awards will increase awareness of the work of the international electoral community by honouring their achievements, initiatives and dedication on an international level.

The **ICPS International Electoral Awards** will consist of multiple categories covering the broad range of sectors within the field of elections. The categories have been selected in order to consider all outstanding achievements made in elections. The award categories are:

- International Institutional Engagement Award
- Electoral Conflict Resolution Award
- Accessibility Award
- Equality Award
- Election Management Award
- Citizens’ Engagement Award
- First Time Voter Award
- Electoral Ergonomy Award
- Lifetime Achievement Award
- Electoral Commissioner of the Year
- Electoral Commission of the Year

Every electoral stakeholder is eligible to nominate candidates to be considered for an award. For further information about the nomination procedure, please visit the International Electoral Awards website: [www.awards.electoralnetwork.org](http://www.awards.electoralnetwork.org)

Nominations will be accepted until **Friday 13th September 2013**. After the nomination period the International Electoral Award Committee will create a shortlist for each award category which will be published on the Electoral Stakeholders Network website. Subsequently, the Committee will select a winner in each category, to be announced at the International Electoral Awards Ceremony taking place in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on the 4th December 2013.

For any additional inquiries regarding the International Electoral Awards, please contact:
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Forthcoming Presidential Elections in Georgia

By Simon Gillon, Managing Editor, Government Gazette

The next elections for the President of Georgia will be conducted on 27th October 2013. These will be the 6th Presidential elections in the country since independence after the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991. The most recent Presidential elections were held in 2008.

Georgia has a President, a Prime Minister and a Unicameral Parliament. After the elections in 2013, scheduled changes to the constitution will reduce the powers of the President in favour of those of the Prime Minister. The President is elected by absolute majority vote through a two-round system to serve a five-year term.

The result of this year’s Presidential elections is far more difficult to predict than the last Parliamentary elections, when predictions overtly tilted towards the Georgian Dream Party.

54 candidates are officially registered with the Georgian Central Election Commission to stand for President in October 2013. The former Chairman of the election commission, Zurab Kharatishvili, who stood down in August this year is one of the candidates running for President.

Kharatishvili was widely praised within Georgia for the Central Election Commission’s (CEC) management of the October 2012 parliamentary elections and for succeeding in establishing co-operation and constructive dialogue with all the political parties, overseeing a democratic election that paved the way for Georgia’s first-ever peaceful transition of power. He and the CEC were also commended by the OSCE for working “efficiently and transparently,” and for administering the elections “in a competent and professional manner.”

Under Kharatishvili’s leadership, The Central Election Commission of Georgia has been actively engaged in a wide variety of activities to improve both its own performance as an organisation, and to build strong relations with all interested stakeholders in Georgia.

The commission has engaged in extensive training of its staff and appraisal of its performance, so as to ensure free, fair and well managed elections in the country. Its staff are highly experienced professionals working in the field of electoral management and they have good systems and procedures in place to ensure the smooth running of the electoral process from end to end. They have undertaken training in Georgia, abroad (to analyse other countries’ best practice and electoral management procedures), and they have become a training hub for the Caucasus and Central Asian region in the field of electoral training.

The CEC has established the Centre of Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Training. The centre was created based on the amendments made to the Election Code of Georgia on 28th December 2009. The main goal of the centre is: to implement electoral reforms and monitoring process, to conduct training and capacity building in election related subjects so as to conduct free and fair elections in accordance with international standards. The centre’s Director Natia Zaaliashvili, a seasoned electoral professional, leads the Centre with the rare combination of creativity and pragmatism and has turned Centre into a world class centre of excellence which has clearly benefitted the CEC and the overall confidence in the electoral process in Georgia. Indeed, the work of the centre in preparing for the forthcoming elections has been commended by international observers.

The Centre of Electoral Systems Development, Reforms and Trainings has conducted training for the representatives of district and precinct election commissions. The centre also has the power to issue the grants for non-governmental organizations. The grants are given in four main fields: to promote the civil sector, to inform vulnerable groups about the elections, to launch information campaign for first time voters, to conduct a GOTV campaign.

Another aspect of this development of professional expertise, and communication with stakeholders working in the field of electoral affairs, has been the CEC’s international engagement and regularly organizes an annual regional conference in Georgia, which this year was attended by electoral commissioners and representatives from electoral management bodies from over 25 different countries in the region. The theme of this year’s event was “conflict management in electoral processes”, and the event was held in collaboration with the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies.

Engagement with outside stakeholders has also been well managed by the CEC. Electoral Observer Missions (EOMs) are an integral part of ensuring that elections have international credibility and that the country in which they are held can ensure that the electoral machinery of the democratic process is being externally verified. As such, they are a force for stability in any country where election results are likely to be close, or where there is a polarised electorate politically. The CEC has stated that “holding transparent, free and fair elections is of paramount importance not only for the election administration, but the whole country, to ensure the prevalence of democratic values.”

Transparency and openness, and effective communication procedures are an extremely important aspect of the work of electoral commissions from around the world. The CEC publishes regular (roughly monthly) information bulletins on its website (http://www.cec.gov.ge) to keep all interested parties up-to-date with the activities in which it has been engaged over the preceding few weeks.

The most recent bulletin highlights the preparation process for the forthcoming Presidential elections, details of meetings with the representatives of diplomatic missions and international organisations, CEC co-operation with stakeholders, and meetings with ethnic minority representatives.

The website is also an interesting source of information containing press releases, details of the candidates, announcements, a photo gallery and video clips.

On 11th September, the Central Election Commission announced that Ms Tamar Zhvania has been elected as the new Chairperson of the commission. Ms Zhvania is a known figure in the electoral field as she has managed the electoral affairs brief of UNDP in Georgia rather expertly. Her reputation in this field is quintessential, especially since she has come to the job so close to the next election.

She is known for her innovative approach and in fact, when she was at the UNDP, she was highly supportive of the CEC commissioning a study from the International Centre for Electoral Psychology (ICEP), in order to understand the psychology of voters better. The project is also studying how the experience of voters at the polling station may be interpreted, and the possible impact it may have on voting behaviour. This is indicative of the intellectual and practical level of engagement by the commission in its approach to electoral management.

Ms Zhvania has extensive experience in working on election-related issues. For the last five years she has been in charge of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) Georgia’s electoral assistance programme, and has supervised joint projects of the European Union and UNDP. She has worked on electoral issues abroad, including as international programme manager at the National Democratic Institute (NDI). She has been a representative of international observation in different countries as part of the missions of the OSCE/ODIHR, NDI and the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. She has also been an executive director of the International Society for Fair Elections and Democracy (ISFED).

There is no doubt that Ms Zhvania will be facing many challenges, however, international observers feel confident that with her experience coupled by the support of an extremely professional team, the 2013 Presidential elections will be conducted successfully.
Professional Certificate in Electoral Processes

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For more information, phone: +44 (0) 20 3137 8640, email: info@parlicentre.org or visit: http://training.electoralforum.org

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