



Press Release

Luxembourg, 13 December 2017

Election Observation Missions: efforts made to follow up recommendations but better monitoring needed, say EU Auditors

More work is needed to help countries implement recommendations made by EU election observers, according to a new report from the European Court of Auditors. The way the recommendations are presented has improved in recent years, say the auditors, but more consultation with local stakeholders on the ground is needed during their preparation.

Without interfering in the organisation of the election itself, EU election observers collect and analyse facts concerning the election process and provide an independent assessment. Two months after Election Day, they issue a comprehensive report with recommendations on how to improve the framework for future elections. The recommendations cover issues ranging from voter registration to electoral violence. They are presented to the host country authorities, which are not formally committed to implementing them.

The auditors assessed whether the European External Action Service (EEAS) and the European Commission had provided enough support for host countries to implement the recommendations made by observation missions in Ghana, Jordan, Nigeria and Sri Lanka. They focused on elections observed after 2010.

“It is essential to follow up these recommendations to maximise the impact of election observation,” said Ville Itälä, the Member of the European Court of Auditors responsible for the report. “If a host country does not address electoral shortcomings, there is a risk that weaknesses will remain and even increase ahead of future elections”.

The auditors found that the EEAS and the Commission had made reasonable efforts to support the implementation of the recommendations. Presentation of the recommendations has improved in recent years, but more consultation is needed on the ground. The EEAS and the Commission engaged in political dialogue and provided electoral assistance to support the implementation of the recommendations, but follow-up missions are not used as often as they could be. Lastly, say the auditors, there is no central overview of the recommendations; nor is there any systematic assessment of their implementation.

The cost of observation missions varies significantly depending on the circumstances. However, based on the latest figures available, the average cost is €3.5 million euro. The budget for election observation between 2015 and 2017 amounted to an average of around €44 million per

The purpose of this press release is to give the main messages of the special report by the European Court of Auditors.

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year.

The auditors recommend that the EEAS:

- ensure that recommendations follow the drafting guidelines and template;
- ensure that the mission team consults host-country stakeholders on the recommendations before the report is finalised;
- ensure that a stakeholder roundtable is not scheduled earlier than four working days after the report is released;
- when possible, send follow-up missions to countries that have hosted observation missions;
- set up a centralised depository for recommendations and track progress on implementing them.

Notes to Editors

Election observation is an important tool for promoting democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Well-managed elections can contribute to the peaceful transfer of political power. Since the election observation methodology was established in 2000, the EU has deployed 138 election observation missions to 66 countries in Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. Almost half of missions take place in Africa.

Observation missions are usually led by a Member of the European Parliament, who is appointed by the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and acts as Chief Observer for the mission. Observers are obliged to be strictly impartial and not show bias towards any side in an electoral process.

Special Report No 22/2017: “Election Observation Missions – efforts made to follow up recommendations but better monitoring needed” is available on the ECA website (eca.europa.eu) in 23 EU languages.