



IOM International Organization for Migration
OIM Organisation Internationale pour les Migrations
IOM Internationale Organisatie voor Migratie

IOM and EU Election Support Activities

Background

The strengthening of democratic institutions through the promotion of national and local elections is a fundamental component of democracy, human rights and conflict-prevention in third countries.

Over the years, IOM has been actively involved in supporting elections in countries in a process of political transition, or in post-conflict situations. The Organization's operations have taken the form of i) implementation of out-of-country registration and voting programmes for nationals residing outside their country of origin, and ii) support to EU Election Observation Missions (EU EOM) in third countries.

Such programmes can contribute to national reconstruction and reconciliation, stabilization and development in the countries concerned, in turn reducing the potential for large-scale population displacement and national and regional instability. Out-of-country voting exercises (OCV) can also reinforce the link between the diaspora and their home societies and act as an incentive for expatriate nationals wishing to return to their home countries.

IOM's support for the human rights of migrants, and democratization in third countries, has led to close cooperation with the European Union in recent years, building on the priority the EU places on promoting human rights and democratization issues in its relations with third countries. In particular, IOM provides assistance to EU election support activities. This assistance is coordinated by IOM Brussels, which has established an EU Election Programmes Unit to facilitate liaison with the European Commission (EC), European Parliament (EP), European Council and EU Member States on all policy and operational matters regarding elections in third countries which are being supported by the EU.

EU Support for Elections in Third Countries

EU election support activities have developed since the early 1990's, involving a broad range of activities such as civic education for voter registration, assistance to national electoral commissions, drafting of electoral laws, training of election officers and national observers, media support and monitoring and election observation.

Election Observation Missions (EOMs) are an increasingly important part of EU election and democracy support activities. With the aim of establishing a coherent strategy for handling election observation and assistance, the European Commission has set up a programme for implementing EU Election Observation Missions in third countries under the umbrella of the European Initiative for Democracy & Human Rights programme (EIDHR). Under this programme the EC sets aside a certain budget each year for carrying out a number of EU EOMs. EC decisions as to which elections it will monitor are made throughout the year, based on the elections scheduled in third countries in a specific year (elections timetable is available on the EC website). Before any final decision is taken by the EC to implement an EU EOM, the EC carries out an "exploratory mission" to the country concerned, on the basis of which it is decided whether or not to send an EU EOM to the country to monitor and observe the election. If it is decided to go ahead with the EU EOM, the EC commences the selection of election observers who will participate in the mission, and selects an Organization to provide logistical and administrative support to the EU EOM (the "Implementing Partner"). This selection process is done either by tender to a pre-selected number of organizations, or by direct agreement with one particular Organization.

IOM participation in EU Election Observation Missions

Since 2001 IOM has been actively involved in supporting numerous EU Election Observation Missions worldwide as Implementing Partner, for example: national elections in Nicaragua (2001), Sierra Leone and Pakistan (2002), Rwanda and Mozambique (2003), and for the 2004 elections in Indonesia and Afghanistan. In January 2005 IOM was asked to support the EU monitoring mission for the January 2005 elections in Iraq and was also asked to provide logistical and administrative support for the Presidential elections in the Palestinian Territories. In 2006 IOM has acted as implementing partner for a number of EU EOMs including the presidential elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo and EU EOMs to Venezuela, Mexico and Bolivia.

IOM's experience and expertise in logistical operations, often in high security situations, means that our Organization is well positioned to provide the EU EOM support services requested by the EC. Acknowledging IOM's operational strengths, and wide network of international offices, over the past year the EC has regularly contracted IOM by direct agreement to carry out logistical and administrative support services to EU EOMs being implemented both in regions with sensitive security situations (Afghanistan), or large-scale elections involving complex logistical arrangements (Indonesia). Typically, the services required of IOM, as Service Provider, are as follows:

Activities carried out by IOM (MRF Brussels) in Europe:

1. Ensuring permanent liaison and co-ordination with European Commission and European Parliament (EP) on the political and operational level.
2. Preparation and planning of the mission carried out in co-operation with the EC and EP and in co-ordination with IOM.
3. Establishing/maintaining contacts with the selected EU Election Observers, including the Core Team members, the Long Term Observers (LTO) and Short Term Observers (STO).
4. Dissemination of information material on the administrative and operational procedures applicable to the EU Election Observers.
5. Ensuring entry visas are obtained for all the members of the Mission prior to their departure.
6. Advising EU Observers on medical precautions, eg. vaccinations (the EC provides to all members of the Mission with a medical health insurance scheme).
7. Organization of travel arrangements for the EU Observers, to and from the country where the EU EOM is to be implemented (host country).
8. Organization of briefing and debriefing for the Core Team in Brussels, prior to departure and following implementation of the EU EOM.

Activities provided by IOM in the host country:

1. Identification, selection, recruitment and contracting of the local support staff to the EU EOM, in close co-ordination with the Core Team members upon their arrival.
2. Identification of local service providers and setting up of necessary arrangements in view of rent/purchase of necessary equipment and vehicles and preparation of the Observer's packs (including clothing for observers with EU logo, stationary, visibility materials for equipment, and medical kits).
3. Provision of support and advice on logistic and security issues to the Core team including elaboration of the Deployment Plan for Observers.
4. Setting up the EU EOM Office, including provision of office and communication equipment.
5. Provision of equipment to support the deployment of the Observers, including cars, lap top computers, satellite phones, mobile phones and observer packs.
6. Reception at the airport upon arrival and disembarkation assistance, as well as transportation assistance to hotel accommodation provided to all EU Mission members.
7. Organisation of briefing/training and debriefing sessions for the Long Term Observers, Short Term Observers and locally recruited Short Term Observers prior to and following their deployment.
8. Administrative support to the Core Team regarding the execution of the budget, including setting up a petty cash system.
9. Transportation to the airport and embarkation assistance provided to all EU Observers upon departure.

IOM Implementation Modalities for EU EOMs

IOM's assistance to EU EOMs is coordinated by IOM Brussels, which has established an EU Election Programmes Unit in order to maintain close contacts with the EC and the EP throughout an operation, and oversee and advise the IOM field office in the host country itself and/or IOM offices in the neighbouring region. The Brussels unit is headed by a Programme Coordinator who oversees all the missions being implemented by IOM and ensures liaison with the EU counterparts. For each individual EU EOM, the project management team at IOM Brussels consists of a Project Coordinator, supported by an administrative assistant, a financial assistant and an IT specialist. Under the coordination of IOM Brussels, IOM also provides a Project Coordinator in the host country, together with local staff providing administrative, financial and IT assistance.

In the event that European Parliament Elections Observers are deployed, IOM ensures the provision of logistical and administrative services to the EP Observers. EU Member States may also select a number of national observers to participate in the EU EOM, in which case IOM services are also provided to them. In the case of the Presidential Elections in the Palestinian Territories (January 2005), both the European Parliament, and numerous national parliaments of the EU Member States are planning to send observers to the Palestinian Territories, and in the event that these national delegations come under the overall management of the EC, IOM will also be involved in supporting these national election observers.

IOM Support for Out-of-Country Voting Operations

IOM has considerable institutional experience pertaining to out-of-country registration and voting programmes in countries in post-conflict situations. In the 1996 and 2000 General Elections in Bosnia-Herzegovina, IOM organised out-of-country voting on behalf of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), registering and organising the balloting for approximately one million Bosnian nationals residing in over 50 countries. In 1999, on the occasion of the Popular Consultation on the status of East Timor and at the request of the UN, IOM implemented the external voting process for eligible East Timorese living in designated areas outside East Timor (Indonesia, Portugal, Mozambique, Macau and the United States). In the context of municipal elections in Kosovo in 2000, IOM carried out the registration of the eligible population residing outside Kosovo, on behalf of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and OSCE Joint Task Force. The same mandate to organize the out-of-country registration and polling activities was given to IOM for the 2001 Kosovo Assembly Elections.

The task of conducting the largest ever Out-of-Country Registration and Voting (OCRV) programme was entrusted to IOM in the case of the October 2004 Presidential elections in Afghanistan. IOM implemented the OCRV in Pakistan and Iran, on behalf of the Afghan authorities and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). In total, 846,776 Afghan refugees residing in Pakistan and Iran voted in Afghanistan's first democratic direct Presidential election held on 9 October 2004.

IOM's expertise in managing large-scale logistical operations contributed to the successful implementation of these out-of-country voting programmes, in particular the Organization's valuable experience in running information campaigns and establishing and maintaining databases of third country nationals. With staff and offices located worldwide, and working relationships with diaspora networks across the globe, IOM has the expertise and the facilities necessary to efficiently and cost effectively coordinate extensive international operations such as out-of-country voting programmes, in close cooperation with other international organizations and governmental partners.

Most recently, IOM was requested to implement an Out-of-Country Voting Programme (OCV) for the Transitional National Assembly Elections in Iraq 2005. IOM signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to this effect with the Independent Electoral Commission of Iraq (IECI) on 11 November 2004. OCV took place in 14 countries, including several countries in the European Union (Denmark, France, Germany, Netherlands, Sweden, United Kingdom).

IOM Brussels has liaised closely with EU institutions and EU Member States regarding IOM's OCV operations, informing them of the Organization's specific activities, the general operational and

political framework in which the elections are being conducted, as well as the link between the promotion of democratization and stabilization in the country where elections are being held, reinforcing networks between the diaspora communities in Europe and their home countries, and the promotion of return migration from the EU.

The Role of IOM Brussels in Promoting Enhanced Migration Management through Assistance to EU Election Support Activities

The European Union's role in democracy and election support activities has been substantially enhanced since the commencement of the EU Election Observation Missions under the EIDHR programme. IOM has taken an active part in facilitating the successful operation of these EU EOMs and enhancing the visibility of the EU and its Member States in promoting democratization, peace-building and stabilization in third countries. Increasingly, the EU and EU Member States are undertaking election support operations in politically complex and high risk security situations (such as Afghanistan and Iraq), and IOM is being relied upon to provide support services for these operations.

Using its expertise in the field of migration management, its experience of working in emergency and high-risk situations and its policy of promoting human rights and democratization in third countries, and with the continuing support of EU institutions and EU Member States, IOM hopes to continue and enhance its good cooperation with and assistance to European Union initiatives to promote the holding of free and fair elections in these countries.

IOM believes that the promotion of fair elections and democratic institutions can play an important role in enhancing migration management in third countries, encouraging popular participation and engagement in a country's political future and social and economic development, stabilizing communities and reducing the potential for future large-scale population displacement and consequent instability. National reconstruction and reconciliation in countries in post-conflict situations can also encourage return migration from the EU of refugees and other migrants who have previously fled their home countries. Through their participation in elections in their countries of origin, diaspora communities can also promote the political and socio-economic development of their home countries, engaging in the potential creation of an environment in which they may wish to invest financially or professionally, and to which they may wish to return in the future.