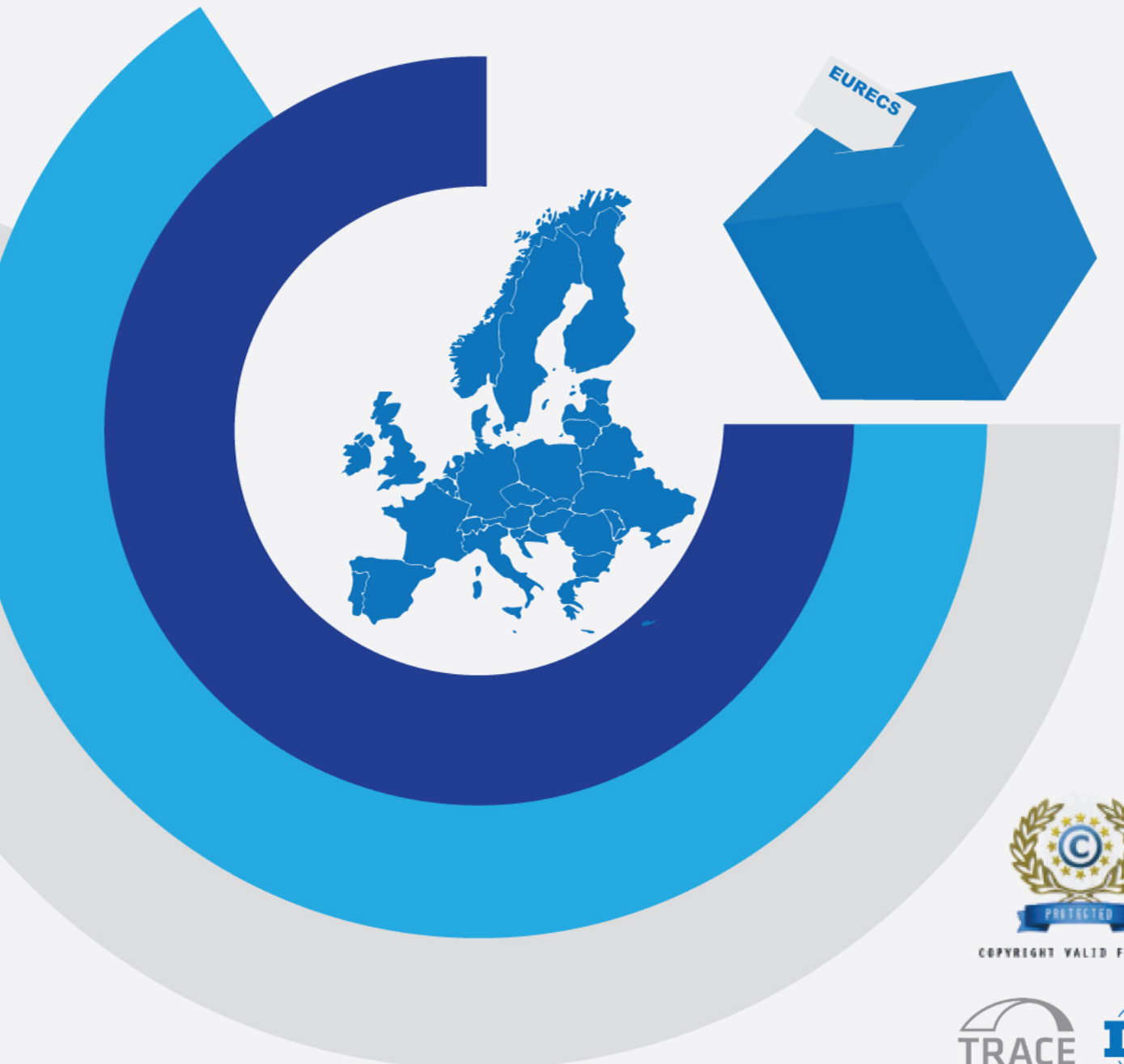


# EURECS

A EUROPEAN RESPONSE  
TO ELECTORAL CYCLE SUPPORT



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## ABBREVIATIONS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DCI	Development Cooperation Instrument
EC	European Commission
ECES	European Centre for Electoral Support
EDF	European Development Fund
EEAS	European External Action Service
EFI	External Financing Instrument
EIDHR	European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights
EMB	Electoral Management Body
ENI	European Neighbourhood Instrument
ODDS	Election Observation and Democracy Support
EPEA	Electoral Political Economy Analyses
ERMES	European Resource for Mediation Support
ESTA	Electoral Security Threat Assessment
EU	European Union
EU EAM	EU Election Assessment Mission
EU EAT	EU Election Assessment Team
EU EAT	EU Election Assessment Team
EU EEM	EU Election Expert Mission
EU EFM	EU Election Follow-up Mission
EU EOM	EU Election Observation Mission
EU ExM	EU Exploratory Mission
EURECS	European Response to Electoral Cycle Support
EuropeAid	EC Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
EUTF	European Union Trust Fund
FPI	Foreign Policy Instrument
FWC	Framework Contract
HQ	Headquarters
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
IFES	International Foundation for Electoral Systems
IFP	Instrument for Peace
International IDEA	International Institute on Democracy and Electoral Assistance
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession
IRI	International Republican Institute
ISO	International Organization for Standardization
LEAD	Leadership and Conflict Management Skills for Electoral Stakeholders
LEAD-Q	Leadership and Quality Management Skills for Electoral Administrators
MEPA	Master in Electoral Policy and Administration
NDI	National Democratic Institute
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PEV	Preventing Election-Related Conflict and Potential Violence
PRAG	Procedures and Practical Guide
QMS	Quality Management System
SOP	Standard Operating Procedures
SSSA	Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (Pisa, Italy)
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

**PREFACE BY THE FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Since the first edition of our European Response to Electoral Cycle Support (EURECS) in 2016, ECES grew exponentially. Not only have we evolved as an organisation, but electoral support is **adapting to new realities** that are partly, but not only, attributed to the covid pandemic. Electoral support has had to find innovative ways not to fail those that may need support more than ever.

Democracy is said to be on the decline, exacerbated by the covid pandemic. EU and EU Member States funded and supported electoral and democracy support has needed to adapt to other major global changes even before the pandemic.

Electoral support can play a crucial role in counter-balancing negative trends by **removing institutional obstacles** to organise credible, inclusive, and transparent electoral processes. In this

updated EURECS strategy, five years after it was first launched in 2016, we share our key lessons learned of what effective electoral assistance means in 2021.

Electoral support needs not only to be longer in time and larger in scope but its rightful place in oftentimes under the broader **stabilization and crises response** bracket. While elections are technical, administrative, and operational processes, they are still the culm of political competition thus also highly emotional and value laden. This makes electoral processes unpredictable and a **potential trigger for a set of greater conflicts**. Electoral processes are increasingly affected by shrinking space for civil society, climate change and environmental degradation, cyber security, and digitalization. These factors may compound existing weaknesses in the electoral framework.

Coinciding with the adoption of a new financial instrument, NDIC, we are seeing unprecedented needs for increased flexibility readiness for crises support. At the time of writing, many countries are undergoing military-civil transitions where electoral processes clearly have a central role. For electoral support to be effective, electoral practitioners must be brought in also to contribute to **creating the conditions for credible and transparent elections** as must they be part of what follows.

Sound electoral processes can only be achieved through cooperation and the involvement of all electoral stakeholders, which is why **dialogue is an innate part of electoral support**. ECES joined EPLO earlier in 2021. Partnering with this platform made up by peace building organisations was a natural step for ECES in our ambition to bring peace building and electoral support closer.

ECES work on the ground is process-led, just as we advocate for electoral support to be. Our lessons will factor in our changing world, and how we believe electoral support should change with it. We do see, and cease, our role as one of the largest specialised not for profit foundations in electoral support.

As Europeans, we have **our own experience to share** with regards to our path towards stability and peace. Our role to foster the same outside of our European borders is also enshrined in the Treaty on the European Union<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> The EU aims to “promote peace, its values and the well-being of its peoples” (TEU Art 3(1) as amended by the Lisbon Treaty) and to “preserve peace, prevent conflicts and strengthen international security” (Article 21(2)).

Only during the last year and a half, ECES was selected as one of 10 feature projects amongst over 800 applicants at the Paris Peace Forum 2020. This updated strategy will form part of our presentation of our achievements since then in the 2021 edition of the Forum. We were selected based on our work in Ethiopia where we implemented two projects simultaneously – the EURECS Ethiopia and PEV-Ethiopia and benefitted from the support of two senior advisors, Stefano Manservigi and Jean-Marie Guéhenno during the last year.

Other milestone achievements include having **signed a memorandum with the African Union** to support inclusive and peaceful electoral processes in the African continent, and a separate memorandum with the High National Election Commission of Libya.

As we are coming closer to a new year, from a most devastating time under the light of the pandemic forever engraved in our memory, we are left with many questions around temporary changes we made as a global society that will prove to be permanent. One such change is the **migration into the virtual space**. Electoral support will be required to double efforts to create a safe virtual environment marred by so many challenges around authenticity, transparency, access and fact-checking.

Innov-Elections is the concept drafted and copyrighted by ECES in response to the global coronavirus pandemic and it is ECES first entirely online project. In order to continue delivering electoral assistance activities based on the comparative experience of ECES experts and partners in the field, training programmes were packaged to access and speak to the local realities affected by the pandemic. It **capitalised on a moment of confinement** to engage constructively in discussions around elections amidst the pandemic and raised capacities around electoral matters. The Innov-Elections project, launched in December 2020, draws from this innovative approach through funding from the Directorate General for Global Affairs of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation. The project is part of a wider announcement by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation on its "Partnership with Africa" policy document. The Innov-Elections project was developed in collaboration with the Sant' Anna School of Advanced Studies of Pisa (SSSA) and implemented with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

**We are ECES and this is our implementing strategy EURECS.**



Fabio Bargiacchi  
ECES Founder and Executive Director



## WHAT IS THE EURECS STRATEGY?

EURECS is an innovative strategy that encompasses a practical implementation approach to electoral support. **EURECS gather 12 copyrighted methodologies** in three clusters:

- Operative and project management cycle tools
- Programmatic and capacity enhancing tools
- Analytical and knowledge management tools

EURECS employs a **long-term approach to elections** based on tailored support throughout all stages of the electoral cycle in view to detect and remedy inherited weaknesses, internal or external to the electoral framework. This is broader and integrated approach to stimulate ownership among political and electoral stakeholders and create opportunities for dialogue and collaborations. This in turn will generate more concrete and durable results.

The main aim of the EURECS is to offer the EU, its Member States, other European donors and beneficiary countries **an innovative delivery mechanism** for electoral and democracy assistance to implement projects and programmes that are consistent with European values and EU policies.

Secondly, inherent to EURECS is the ambition to **prevent, mitigate, and manage electoral related conflicts**. EURECS also seek to prove that electoral processes can be improved so to meet international standards, commitments, and obligations without replacing existing – and well-functioning – rules and norms.

Based on the idea that elections are long-term processes, EURECS is designed to include a wide range of actors from election management bodies, civil society, political parties, local authorities, parliament, security forces and media to ensure a truly comprehensive and more sustainable approach.

The EURECS embodies long-standing and comparative experience that include knowledge on how the framework for electoral support has evolved. As such, the EURECS is also somehow an advocacy tool that makes several **concrete recommendations of how the framework** around electoral support, notably electoral assistance, can improve further.

EU has now become one of the most important global players in the promotion of credible and transparent elections through its election observation and electoral assistance activities. These complementary and mutually reinforcing activities are often embedded in a broader support framework including institution-building. However, the objectives of the Communication of the Commission 191/2000 on Election Assistance and Observation, which opened the modern era of EU electoral support, have only been achieved partially.

While the election observation pillar has considerably evolved and become a key external policy instrument, the framework of the second pillar, electoral assistance, despite the political and monetary investment, has not evolved considerably.

EURECS harbour **tools for stock-taking, capacity enhancing and knowledge management tools**. It is also designed to assert EU and EU member state funded electoral support, not only by ways or delivering a certain *kind* of support, but also delivering in a certain way that reflect the EU project management cycle and all its phases.

Lastly, EURECS is well-placed to **stimulate a Team Europe-approach to electoral assistance** by offering concrete opportunities, an approach that has already yielded results and proven its worth in other fields not the least throughout the covid pandemic.

## EURECS RELEVANCE TO POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

Electoral support is a highly political activity with the possibility to **inform both policy and program**. While the framework around electoral assistance is still guided by the methodological guide from 2006, guidelines and concepts in key fields with relevance to EUs broader democracy support have evolved to capture recent developments and major global shifts. **Electoral assistance frameworks have stagnated** in comparison.

In this gap, the EURECS can play an important role. It is well-placed to inform the policy and programmatic framework around electoral support since it can **provide a 360-degree outlook on the field**, from origin to present day; it gathers practical tools and report on the achievements and challenges observed from employing them in vastly different contexts and feed lessons back into methodologies and tools.

Electoral support actors prescribe dialogue, cooperation and coordinating to local actors. The Team Europe approach has a large role to play in supporting electoral processes, since the sum of our joint efforts are more impactful. But the team Europe approach also signal a commitment to the cooperative and synergetic approach we ask of others.

### On policy, the EURECS can assist EU and EU member states to:

- Co-shape electoral support by taking stock of how guidelines, methodologies and frameworks are upheld in practice on the ground;
- Use EURECS as a knowledge management platform for exchange and critical reflection on best practices from a European perspective;
- Draw lessons and give concrete examples of contexts where electoral support is key in stabilisation efforts: placing electoral support under the broader stabilisation and crises response bracket when warranted can double efforts to support elections effectively;
- Lead on Peace Mediation in Electoral Processes: EURECS is a repository of knowledge from both fields that are largely kept apart.
- Underscore the need to work more preventatively on election conflict and violence as one of 15 EU peace mediation priorities in the updated 2020 concept;
- Offer complimentary analytical work based on qualitative methodologies to increase the accuracy, usefulness and efficacy of EUs early warning systems of election violence currently heavily reliant on quantitative indicators;
- Monitor progress of countries electoral frameworks in line with EU EOM recommendations.

### On programming, the EURECS can assist EU and EU member states to:

- Demonstrate that organisations live and breathe the same standards they hold their beneficiary against by ensuring that implementing partners are adopting, and support others to adopt, systems and method that improve project cycle management;
- Offer EU and EU member states concrete opportunities to embody the “Team Europe” approach in electoral support through basket fund managed by an European organisation: the sum of our combined actions leads to greater results (example EURECS Ethiopia, Burkina Faso);
- Guarantee EU and member state ownership of results; promote EU and member state visibility and branding; prioritize cost-effectiveness and value for money;
- Electoral cycle support adapted to new challenges through our toolbox of methodologies;
- Allow a quick and effective start of implementing programs and projects on the ground, enabled by a robust operational structure and the ability to advance funds;
- Support an updated EC methodological guidelines to effective electoral assistance and efforts to systematically evaluate electoral assistance work by sharing our documented lessons with broader relevance: both policy and program.

## ECES JOURNEY 2011 - 2021

### OUR HISTORY

ECES is an **association of experts that operate as a private not for profit foundation** registered under Belgian law in 2010. As the name implies, ECES was formed as a **European alternative** to implement EU and EU-member state funded and supported electoral assistance according to EU values, rules, and principles.

However, the idea of ECES emerged long before it was founded. The experiences that led to ECES as well as founding members **hail from the African continent**.

While ECES Executive Director and founder Fabio Bargiacchi worked as Election Specialist at EuropeAid, he was asked to coordinate and co-author the production of the EU Methodological Guide on Electoral Assistance (2006). In the absence of a European not-for-profit organisation specialising in electoral support, he facilitated the establishment of a partnership between UNDP and EU with the signature of the EC-UNDP Operational Guidelines for Electoral Assistance. Fabio later contributed to the establishment of the Joint EC-UNDP Task Force Electoral Assistance (JTF) and oversaw its activities for the identification, formulation and support for the implementation of all the UNDP electoral assistance projects funded by the EU.

This is when Fabio Bargiacchi met Abbot Apollinaire Muhulungu Malu Malu<sup>2</sup>. He shared a vision of establishing a **European centre dedicated to electoral support** as an alternative to the existing options that dominated at the time hailing mainly from North America. There was a need to see the **views and values of the EU and EU member states reflected** in electoral support as donors and at the same time create space for the partner country in the spirit of partnership and national ownership.

From there onwards, the European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES) matured, and ECES was launched in December 2010 when Abbot Apollinaire Mulhongo Malu Malu, the first President of ECES management board, was invited by the European Commission to attend the European Development Days. Fabio Bargiacchi began his tenure as ECES Executive Director in 2011. ECES has since **continued to grow and filled a gap** that prove its founding principles still relevant.

- Stimulate increased cooperation between EU and EU member states in electoral assistance (team Europe) and the partner-country;
- Considerable efforts to guarantee visibility, co-steering of projects for national ownership, flexibility and cost effectiveness, and;
- Earmark more funds to activities instead of administration and human resources costs.

In 2021, ECES is one of the **main implementing partners of the EU** in terms of electoral and democracy assistance having grown and strengthened its internal capacity, its position and outreach.

<sup>2</sup> Former president of the Electoral Commission of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2005-2006), president of the Network of Electoral Management Bodies of the Southern and Central African Regions (SADC ECF and RESEAC) and founding member of the Network of French speaking Electoral Management Bodies (RECEF).



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## ECES IN 2021

We have understood that to deliver on the ground, we need to **invest in our internal operations** that enable us to deliver effectively. ECES have made significant investments to establish systems and working methods that give us and our donor the reassurance that we **do ourselves what we expect of our project beneficiaries** in terms of sound and transparent management of people, assets, and funds.

Our **12 copyrighted methods to date** are in part targeting our beneficiaries and in part, our own internal functioning. These aspects of our work are inextricably linked and thus equally important.

ECES is TRACE certified for its **financial management transparency**. The TRACE certification process is based on internationally accepted standards of financial transparency and required ECES to complete global anti-bribery training, adopt a code of conduct and update due diligence information annually. As a TRACE certified organization, ECES is a pre-vetted partner for multinational companies and organisations seeking to carry out their activities with those who share their commitment to commercial and financial transparency.

ECES is also certified by ISO on its standard 9001:2015 meaning it has adopted a **Quality Management System** that aims to (i) demonstrate its ability to consistently provide services that meet donor/beneficiary and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements, and (ii) to enhance donor/beneficiary satisfaction through the effective application of the system, including processes for improvement of the system and the assurance of conformity to customer and applicable statutory and regulatory requirements.

In addition, ECES is a member of the Federation of European and International Association established in Belgium (FAIB) and is part of the EU Transparency Register and the Transnational Giving Europe Network.

In the coming months, aside from continuing the efficient implementation of all its projects and the pursue of the goals in its Strategic Plan 2020-2023, ECES has set other goals regarding its development. Amongst the most important, **ECES will aspire to be pillar assessed** by the EU<sup>3</sup>.

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## OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

- + 104 MILLION EUROS MOBILISED IN THE LAST 9 YEARS
- + 13 MILLION EUROS WORTH OF NEW CONTRACTS ALREADY SIGNED IN 2021
- + 10.3 MILLION EUROS FOR TURNOVER IN 2020
- + 797 000 PEOPLE REACHED THROUGH TRAININGS
- + 2000 PERSONNEL RECRUITED
- + 100 IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS WORLDWIDE
- + 60 NATIONALITIES CONTRIBUTED TO ECES PROJECTS
- + 50 COUNTRIES WHERE ECES IMPLEMENTED ACTIVITIES
- + 35 DONORS, MAINLY EU, GERMANY & OTHER EU MEMBER STATES

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<sup>3</sup> According to the guidance note of the Audit of External Operations of the EU “a pillar assessed organisation shall guarantee a level of protection of the financial interests of the EU equivalent to that required under the Financial Regulations of the EU, when they manage EU funds”.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### ORIGIN OF ELECTORAL SUPPORT

As the Cold War ended, the international community shifted the attention from the definition of international human rights norms and standards to a more active implementation of those standards and democratic principles.

Democracy support activities evolved subsequently in two strands, **electoral assistance and election observation**. While the former is intended to increase the quality of electoral processes by improving electoral laws, procedures and institutions, the latter aims at assessing elections, conferring legitimacy to electoral processes, and developing recommendations for further improvement of future elections, with an important emphasis in facilitating political dialogue.

The field of **electoral support has been growing steadily** since the early 1990s. The United Nations and the United States were the largest global players in the post-cold war era and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The **EU has steadily increased its moral and financial support** to, and political importance it places on electoral support. The EU and EU member states are now leading on efforts to improve the democratic architecture and delivery towards citizens as part of the EUs external actions and an integral part of this is through electoral support.

EU electoral support comprises election observation and electoral assistance. While election observation focuses on the process close to the electoral event, electoral assistance may be provided throughout the entire electoral cycle. Election observation is arguably the most developed sector in democracy support.<sup>4</sup> **Electoral assistance remains largely an ad-hoc activity without guiding framework** where EU Delegations are moderately guided by EU services at HQ level with regards to their options of implementing partners.

Both activities, when embedded in a broader institution-building and democracy support strategy, have a political finality. Election observation is the most visible action, with the presence of hundreds of observers deployed throughout a country around election day. However, its **longer-term impact depends on accompanying electoral assistance** to implement broader reforms which entail assistance to the entire political and electoral cycle. To foster real and durable change, such support activities should target a broad range of electoral stakeholders<sup>5</sup>, including but not limited to election management bodies (EMB).

The essential difference lies in the fact that while election observation is based on the principle of ensuring an independent and impartial assessment of an election process, electoral assistance focus on the process, directly supporting national authorities and other electoral stakeholders, while refraining from making public comments on the electoral process as such. The vital difference between these two strands of electoral support activities, and sensitivities around mixing the two, often result in election observation and electoral assistance activities (and the people implementing them) being **kept strictly apart on the ground**.

Support for elections is often embedded in a broader governance enhancement strategy which includes civil society support and institution-building activities, with the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law at the core of its objective. We would argue however that electoral support oftentimes has its **rightful place under the broader stabilization and crises response** bracket.

<sup>4</sup> Democracy Reporting International. Mapping of International Electoral Assistance. 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Civil society organizations, parliaments, political parties, justice sector institutions, media actors, security forces, local authorities, religious groups, etc.

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## POLICY FRAMEWORK

The legal and moral justification for periodic elections were laid in **article 21 of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights** (UDHR, 1948)<sup>6</sup> and subsequently in article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR, 1966).<sup>7</sup>

Before 1989, observers were dispatched occasionally to monitor elections, but most of the missions were small and usually arrived on election day, which led to unrealistic and scattered support. In fact, many internationally assisted elections adopting this **event-based approach** led to unsustainable processes and unachievable expectations.

After 1990, electoral observation and electoral assistance activities skyrocketed as many countries, in particular in Africa and post-communist Eastern Europe, held **multiparty elections for the first time**. Larger scale EU electoral assistance projects commenced in 1994 with the technical and financial support provided to the legislative and presidential elections in Mozambique, based on the European Initiative of Democracy and Human Rights created at the request of the European Parliament. It was followed, two years later, with support to the elections in the West Bank and Gaza.

In 2000, the European Commission adopted the Communication on EU Electoral Assistance and Observation, a key document that enables the EU to undertake impartial, independent and long-term assessments of an electoral process **in line with international standards** for democratic elections. Including a policy to deploy election observation missions to complement broader EU efforts in supporting democracy, human rights and post-conflict transitions.

The accumulation of electoral experience, as well as the consolidation of international and regional legal instruments and authoritative jurisprudence relevant to this sector, contributed to a **gradual shift** away from narrow, pinpointed electoral support activities, focused on election day, towards more long-term, cyclical and **process-oriented support**. To address criticism to the disproportionate attention given to the electoral event itself, the Electoral Cycle Approach emerged as an essential tool for the programming of elections and electoral support.

In 2009 the EU Council Conclusions laid out in the EU Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy, defined strategic orientations to further improve the **coherence and the effectiveness** of EU action.

In addition, in 2010 the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD<sup>8</sup>)-Development Assistance Committee' Governance Network invited a broad group of global stakeholders to the **1<sup>st</sup> Roundtable on International Support for Elections: Effective Strategies and Accountability Systems**.

The roundtable eventually led to a set of Draft Strategic Principles for International Support for Elections. The draft principles were discussed at the 5<sup>th</sup> Global Electoral Organization (GEO) meeting, held in March 2011 in Gaborone, Botswana. During that occasion, the GEO brought together over 300 participants from all over the world. The conclusions of these discussions ultimately resulted in the Gaborone Declaration, which emphasised the **universal value of**

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<sup>6</sup> Art 21: 1) Everyone has the right to take part in the government of his country, directly or through freely chosen representatives. 2) Everyone has the right to equal access to public service in his country. 3) The will of the people shall be the basis of the authority of government; this will shall be expressed in periodic and genuine elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret vote or by equivalent free voting procedures. UN DHR is available at [http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR\\_Translations/eng.pdf](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/UDHR/Documents/UDHR_Translations/eng.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Art. 25: Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity, without any of the distinctions mentioned in article 2 and without unreasonable restrictions: (a) To take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through freely chosen representatives; (b) To vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which shall be by universal and equal suffrage and shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors; (c) To have access, on general terms of equality, to public service in his country. The ICCPR is available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/ccpr.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> The 34 Member States of the OECD constitute the largest international donors to election support activities worldwide while the leading contributing partner are also EU member states.

**electoral processes** and their interdependence with an added focus on the damaging consequences of electoral mismanagement. It recommends a greater focus on strengthening and professionalising electoral institutions. The declaration also establishes that activities focusing on preventing **election-related violence** and on **promoting gender equality** (in political participation pertaining to electoral processes, especially regarding, but not only limited to voting) are equally important.

In June 2012, the EU Council's Strategic Framework and Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy<sup>9</sup> took a decisive step to **link electoral observation and electoral assistance from a policy perspective**. In that document, it was agreed to “systematize the use of EU EOM and their reports in support of the whole electoral cycle” to ensure coherent policy objectives in support of democracy. This idea of needed complementary, was also reiterated in the Commission's 2000 Communication on EU Election Assistance and Observation<sup>10</sup>, in the 2006 EC Methodological Guide on Electoral Assistance<sup>11</sup>, in the 2014 European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights Regulation<sup>12</sup> and, finally, in the European Court of Auditors on their 2017 report “Election Observation Missions – efforts made to follow up recommendations, but better monitoring needed”<sup>13</sup>. Technically speaking, “they are different activities, but essentially they should be considered and programmed in a complementary manner.”<sup>14</sup>

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## PROGRAMMATIC FRAMEWORK

The Electoral Cycle Approach became the methodology of reference in 2006. This approach was developed by electoral specialists as a collaborative effort to **bring theory closer to reality in electoral processes**. Drawing on extensive field experience from the European Commission and the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA), the electoral cycle approach was crafted<sup>15</sup> as a response to the **lack of a coherent methodology for electoral assistance** programming. All interventions to support the consolidation of democracies effectively take place during the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral phases in each country.

Furthermore, an electoral cycle perspective with specific attention to **the post or inter-election periods**, coupled with a careful assessment of local dynamics through electoral political analysis, allows for: 1) awareness of the multi-layered set of long-term interactions among national and local, governmental and non-governmental actors involved in electoral and political processes; 2) understanding all potential triggers as well as all potential dynamics for positive change and reform; 3) more targeted identification of needs, including more urgent short-term responses; 4) advance planning, to improve the overall coherence and complementarity of actions.

The importance of EU electoral support is its **unrivalled toolbox of foreign policy instruments** that provides the means for the promotion of democratic elections worldwide. However, it is not entirely clear how the previous or the current NDIC instrument provide a systematic framework for electoral assistance activities. There is also a need to evaluate and feed findings into current programming. Evaluating projects separately doesn't necessarily allow **for broader lessons to be drawn** to inform future programming, at the global level.

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<sup>9</sup> Section III, Item 6.

<sup>10</sup> 191 final, p. 5

<sup>11</sup> Preface and p. 13

<sup>12</sup> Objective 4 (Annex)

<sup>13</sup> Special Report 22

<sup>14</sup> COM (2000) 191 Final, p.5

<sup>15</sup> F. Bargiacchi, P. Guerin, D. Tuccinardi of the European Commission, A. Spinelli and T. Laanela of International IDEA. The Electoral Cycle approach was then explained in detail in October 2006 in the EC Methodological Guide on Electoral Assistance, in the IDEA Handbook on Electoral Management Design (December 2006) and later also in the UNDP Implementation Guide on Electoral Assistance (November 2007).



## FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS

Between 2014 and 2019, the EU and its Member States invested **some 280 million euros in electoral assistance** for more than 50 countries. This, in a context where, from 2008 to 2018, a total of 1.4 billion euros were invested in democracy aid in 128 countries.

With retroactivity from January 2021, the EU has **revised its financial instruments** resulting in the Global Europe financial instrument. Out of the seven broader budget headings comprised in the multiannual financial framework for 2021 – 2027, heading number 6 “Neighborhood and the world” is where EU is making long-term investments in its external actions.

The EU assert that it is the world’s **most generous donor of development support** and that the 2021-2027 budget will level up the effectiveness and visibility of the EU’s external policies, reinforce coordination with internal policies and offer more flexibility for crises response. The Global Europe: Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) will **gather most of EU’s external action funds** and has a budget of €79.5 billion. Through the NDICI tool, the EU aim to contribute to eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development, prosperity, peace and stability.

The EU is investing in **increased inter-service coordination** and to operate in a coherent, transparent and flexible way also reflected in how financing of the EU’s external action is shaped. The NDICI entail both geographically and thematically priorities. The funding under NDICI will focus on the European Neighbourhood, Africa and the Western Balkans, as well as countries that are most in need. It will cover security, migration, climate change and human rights. The lead services on the NDICI are INTPA, DG Enlargement, FPI and EEAS. The NDICI succeeds the Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI); European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI); Partnership Instrument; European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR); European Fund for Sustainable Development (EFSD); Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP).

With an ample budget of 79.5 billion euros, 60.38 billion is allocated to geographic programmes, 6.36 billion to thematic programmes, which will focus on Human Rights and Democracy; Civil Society Organisations; Peace, Stability and Conflict Prevention; and Global Challenges, and lastly 3.18 billion for rapid response actions.

## EVALUATING ELECTORAL SUPPORT

Since the implementation of EU-funded electoral technical assistance projects, based on the Electoral Cycle Approach, a set of evaluations, impact assessments, and lessons learned have been developed by key players in the field, namely the European Commission, International IDEA, Department for International Development-UK Aid and the UNDP.

The 2017 mid-term evaluation of EU’s instruments for financing external action, assessed the continuous relevance of the instruments to ensure the effective implementation of EU’s assistance. The evaluation assessed each instrument separately. In regard to the EIDHR, the evaluation found that **EOM reports provide an important baseline for political dialogue** around necessary reforms in countries where they are deployed. However, in some countries that do not fit regionally under other EFI, the implementation of the reforms identified in EOM reports may be difficult given the limited funds available under the EIDHR.<sup>16</sup> EOM account for 25% of the EIDHR budget, and it is unclear the percentage of the budget that goes to electoral support under this instrument.

<sup>16</sup> Mid-term review of the EIDHR, pg. 32



This is because some human rights related activities are intertwined with democracy activities. For electoral support activities in which the consent of government is needed, other EFI was used. Among the recommendations, the evaluation noted that the EIDHR should be used more effectively to support the follow-up of EOM and EEM recommendations while complementing existing instruments. For example, through mobilising the necessary technical expertise to engage in specific areas identified by an EOM or EEM.

Several evaluations have been carried regarding the **impact of electoral support** in the context of democracy assistance<sup>17</sup> and a study on the perception of EU-funded Electoral Assistance from African beneficiaries was developed. Additionally, tools to better assess performance of electoral assistance processes have also been developed, for example, by identifying indicators to measure progress.<sup>18</sup>

In 2017, the European Court of Auditors, on their report “Election Observation Missions – efforts made to follow up recommendations, **but better monitoring needed**”<sup>19</sup> conclude that “the European External Action Service and the European Commission had made reasonable efforts to support the implementation of the recommendations using the tools at their disposal. Nevertheless, more consultation is needed on the ground and follow-up missions could be deployed more often.”

Based on the extensive experience in electoral assistance accumulated over the years, the EU would greatly **benefit from updating the global evaluation** that was part of the 2006 EC Methodological Guide on Electoral Assistance. A first starting point would be to underline the considerable differences in the implementation of election observation and election assistance activities funded by the EU.

Secondly, evaluating cost effectiveness, sustainability and **EU political visibility for each delivery mechanism** should be a priority of the global evaluation. The goal being to make sure the EU and EU Member States are making the most out of future support projects given that there is no longer neither a de facto nor a de jure semi-monopoly to justify the implementation of EU-funded electoral and democracy assistance mainly through United Nations agencies, that also play an important role in the delivery of electoral assistance projects funded by the EU.

In September 2020, ECES was invited to meet relevant EU services (DEVCO B1, EEAS Democracy and Electoral Observation Global 3, FPI2) to discuss the **result of EUs annual survey on electoral assistance**. ECES was one out of three organisations, alongside International IDEA and the UNDP who got the opportunity to discuss the result of the survey.

The survey was conducted amongst EU Delegations to gather feedback on their experience of working with implementors of electoral support. The survey will be recurrent and feed into a guidance note that Delegations will receive from EU headquarters, laying out the various options for supporting elections according to what the EU perceive is best practice in the field. Delegation will continue to have certain autonomy in how they chose to support electoral processes also factoring in the guidance note. In short, the survey showed that ECES was particularly strong on operations, assuming a pro-active attitude and adapt quickly to emergency situations. ECES displayed diversity in recruitments and thematically, ECES was seen as **spearheading work on electoral conflict and violence prevention** and worked relentlessly to develop innovative tools with and for electoral stakeholders.

<sup>17</sup>Evaluation of UNDP contribution to strengthening electoral systems and processes: <https://erc.undp.org/evaluation/evaluations/detail/4788> and the External Evaluation of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (2014 – mid 2017): [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-european-instrument-democracy-and-human-rights-eidhr-2014-2020-draft-evaluation-report-1\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/evaluation-european-instrument-democracy-and-human-rights-eidhr-2014-2020-draft-evaluation-report-1_en)

<sup>18</sup> Macchiaverna, Maria and Varrenti, Mario Giuseppe. Study on Performance Indicators for Electoral Assistance projects developed within the context of the EC-UNDP Partnership on Electoral Assistance: [https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/study-performance-indicators-electoral-assistance-projects-developed-within-context-ec-undp\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/study-performance-indicators-electoral-assistance-projects-developed-within-context-ec-undp_en)

<sup>19</sup> Special Report 22

## THE FUTURE OF ELECTORAL SUPPORT?

While ECES welcome the opportunities to engage constructively in EUs stock-taking, guidance notes and appraisals of EU funded electoral support, there are a couple of key recommendations we wish to put forward. EURECS is our comprehensive response to how we concretely suggest improving the framework through which the EU and EU member states deliver electoral support. Our key recommendations are:

The EU would benefit from a comprehensive and systematic evaluation of electoral support activities with emphasise on how electoral assistance projects are awarded and budget allocated.

The EU may want to consider systematising how electoral assistance projects are awarded. The current ad-hoc model, while leaving much autonomy to Delegations, may possibly give too much room for local variations: knowledge of the ways to engage electoral assistance may be limited and thus benefit established mechanisms such as pillar assessed organisations or resorting to UN managed basket funds.

From a policy and programmatic level, the EU should view electoral assistance also under the broader stabilisation efforts and crises response bracket, alongside its current “thematical home” of democracy, human rights and good governance.

Based on the above, the EU should include in its guidance note to Delegations all possible avenues through which Delegations can engage electoral support implementors – and underscore crises contexts. Currently, the most common way that ECES is engaged by Delegations are through direct contracts i.e. derogation. This is currently omitted in the guidance note which may be misleading for some Delegations.

The EU should capitalise on the knowledge of electoral practitioners to constructively develop and upgrade their central repository of knowledge on best practices and lessons learnt. This require putting in place a regular mechanism to systematically gather information from the ground plugged into a centrally manage knowledge management hub.

The EU should consider updating the EC methodological guidelines as a result of the evaluation and factor in new contextual challenges in our evolving world.

## OUR EUROPEAN RESPONSE TO ELECTORAL CYCLE SUPPORT (EURECS)

As of October 2021, **ECES has already obtained 12 copyrights**, which include a wide range of tools and methodologies aimed at supporting the implementation of the European Response to Electoral Cycle Support (EURECS) strategy.

These innovative copyrights are a **testimony to the leading work of ECES** across the globe, and to its commitment to continuous improvement to further contribute to democratic and electoral processes worldwide.

## 1. EURECS - A European Response to Electoral Cycle Support

EURECS is an innovative and alternative delivery mechanism to implement electoral and democracy assistance activities that are consistent with European values and EU policies and targets the implementations of the recommendations of EU election observation missions and it is built to help prevent, mitigate and manage electoral related conflicts.

### Operative and project management cycle tools

### Programmatic and capacity enhancing tools

### Analytical and knowledge management tools

## 2. Implementing EURECS SOPs

The integrated Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) are used to implement ECES Quality Management System (QMS) and the EURECS strategy. The SOP encompass a practical implementation approach to electoral cycle support, informed by past experiences from ECES dating back to 2010. The SOP builds on the electoral cycle approach on the recommendations of EU Observation Missions (EUOM) and indications of EU Services and Institutions in Brussels.

## 3. The Roster database

The Roster and the related application were established considering the accumulation of 25 years of knowledge, experience and professional networks of the ECES' founder in different institutions and global/int. organisations implementing electoral assistance and election observation (EU, UN, OSCE) coupled with the 11 years of experience of promoting electoral and democratic strengthening. It includes over 1500 CVs.

## 4. Communication and Visibility Guidelines

The "ECES Communication and Visibility (C&V) Guidelines" are the final product of a lengthy and wide-ranging consultation drafted for our personnel but also to be shared with our donors, beneficiaries of our projects and other electoral stakeholders to indicate the importance ECES attach to this issue also to fully respect contractual conditions with our donors.

## 5. Preventing Election-Related Conflict and Potential Violence (PEV)

This methodology employs a two-pronged approach to prevent and manage election-related conflict and violence. The PEV approach is the broader framework of a number of activities tailored to address conflict and violence in electoral processes.

## 6. Leadership and Conflict Management Skills for Electoral Stakeholders (LEAD)

The LEAD curriculum integrates both the concepts of leadership and conflict management, providing a solid foundation for capacity-building among the different stakeholders engaged in the electoral process.

## 7. Leadership and Quality Management Skills for Electoral Administrators (LEAD-Q)

The LEAD-Q prescribes a set of rules, routines and procedures developed to address common weaknesses within electoral administrations targeting a quality management in their electoral processes.

## 8. INNOV-Elections

In May 2020, in light of the global coronavirus pandemic, ECES launched INNOV-ELECTIONS, a hybrid approach to training delivery based on the comparative experience of ECES experts and partners in the field, further enhancing the contextualisation of the training programmes to the local realities aiming to enhancing the potential of electoral stakeholders particularly young and women, during the COVID19 restrictions.

## 9. Peace Mediation in Electoral Processes methodology

The Peace Mediation for Electoral Processes methodology is the first practical contribution to guide mediation and electoral support actors on opportunities and risks to support-, fund-, or conduct peace mediation in electoral processes. It is based on concrete cases of peace mediation in electoral processes to draw lessons of common risks and windows of opportunities for conflict settlement around the electoral cycle.

## 10. Electoral Political Economy Analyses Methodology (EPEA)

The EPEA analysis uses the political economy analysis (PAE) methodology to recognises the complexity of electoral processes and the number of factors that influence it, which go beyond election administration, free and fair competition of candidates and observance of the right to vote.

## 11. Electoral Security Threat Assessment (ESTA)

The Electoral Security Threat Assessment (ESTA) is a specific methodology to conduct constant security and stakeholder mapping that seeks to engage on non-committal terms with the "supply side" of the security sector, including various institutional actors.

## 12. Electoral translator

The Electoral Translator is a tool that translates electoral terms in English, French, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish and Arabic ( and 6 Ethiopian official languages) enabling access to the language used in electoral processes.





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