



International Seminar on

ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION AND EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRACY

and the

7th GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE RECEF

JUNE 5 to 7, 2019
Sinaia, Romania

GENERAL
PROGRAM





Seminar overview - Election participation and education for democracy, engines of engaged citizenship

Since the early 1990s, decreasing participation in elections has become an issue in most democratic societies. This global decline has been observed despite an actual increase in the number of countries holding elections and the number of people having the right to vote.

The participation spectrum, however, encompasses other types of involvement, including running for political office, demonstrating to make one's voice heard, signing petitions, and being involved in civil society organizations, etc. So while the number of people voting is on the decline, we are witnessing an increase in other forms of citizen expression: anti-government demonstrations, such as the Arab spring, the international Occupy movement, and the yellow vest movement in France, as well as much greater use of social media as a way to express one's opinion on societal issues. Voting, therefore, is not seen as the only legitimate way to influence decision-making. Regardless of the growing popularity of all other forms of political and social engagement, the fact remains that the decline in the number of people voting may be detrimental to democracy and the legitimacy of elected representatives. In seeking to promote greater electoral participation, we must consider citizen participation from a broader perspective.

Democratic knowledge and political socialization allow citizens to be informed and engaged. In this light, some people may consider voting as an extension of citizenship and democratic duties. Education for democracy, then, constitutes more than ever an investment in the future of our democracies, because it has an effect on the determinants of electoral participation, such as taking an interest in politics and knowledge of the issues, and it aims to develop democratic values in citizens from an early age. Election participation and education for democracy, therefore, take on a symbiotic relation in the pursuit of the higher objective of democratic consolidation.

This seminar provides an in-depth look at these aspects and an opportunity for discussion, among Election Management Bodies (EMBs), with a view to exploring possible actions.



Tuesday, June 4

All day

7:00 p.m.

Arrival of the participants

Arrival of participants and transportation to Sinaia

Dinner at the hotel courtesy of the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania

Wednesday, June 5

9:00 a.m.

Election participation

Welcome coffee and greeting the participants

9:30 a.m.

Opening ceremony

Mr. Constantin-Florin Mituletu-Buica

President

Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania

Ms. Rennie Yotova

Director, Regional office for Central and Eastern European Countries

International Organization of La Francophonie

General Siaka Sangaré

General Delegate for elections in Mali

President, Réseau des compétences électorales francophones (RECEF)

10:15 a.m.

Group photograph

10:30 a.m.

Health break

10:45 a.m.

Introductory conference: Mobilized citizens for vibrant democracies

Catherine Lagacé

Secretary General, Élections Québec and the RECEF



Wednesday, June 5 Election participation

11:00 a.m.

Workshop 1: Election participation: a contemporary global issue

Following the transitions to democracy of the 1990s, the list of countries holding elections has become longer and more people than ever can exercise the right to vote. Some 30 years later, however, we are observing a worldwide decline in electoral participation. This phenomenon has been accompanied by the emergence of a number of alternative movements, through which citizens are able to make their voices heard in reaction to policies, governments and political leaders. The advent of social media as a means of self-expression is helping drive this social and political transformation. As a result, voting no longer seems to be the only legitimate vehicle for manifesting one's political convictions.

Election participation is a complex matter and is affected by numerous factors interacting in different ways from one State to another. Indeed, a combination of determining factors may have an impact on the level of election participation. These include institutional and political factors, socio-demographic factors (education, income and age), attitudinal factors (e.g., degree of interest in politics and individuals' perception of their ability to influence decision-making) and factors related to the mobilization of individuals or of a society (e.g., family and social networks). An abundance of literature offers theories to explain the interaction of these determinants and voter behaviour. Moreover, other operational factors may be conducive to higher levels of voter turnout. For example, offering alternative services to electors can improve voting access and may stimulate their participation in an election.

Objectives

- Explaining the decrease in election participation and presenting related theories and determining factors.
- Exploring reasons why citizens abstain from voting.

Moderator

Mr. Hery Rakotomanana

President, National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI) of Madagascar

Portrait of election participation around the world and in RECEF countries: the main determinants and theories of election participation

Ms. Therese Pearce-Laanela

Head of Electoral Processes, International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (IDEA)

The dynamics of election participation in Western Africa

Mr. Francis Oke

Head of Electoral Assistance, Economic Community of West African States

A view on political participation in the Eastern European countries

Ms. Camelia Runceanu

Advisor, Department of international cooperation and public affairs, PEA of Romania

Disinformation of the electorate – A factor in the decrease of voter turnout

Mr. Octavian Chesaru

Expert, Legislative Department, PEA of Romania



Wednesday, June 5 Election participation

12:45 p.m. Lunch courtesy of the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania

2:00 p.m. Workshop 2: Election participation and consolidation of a democratic culture

This workshop calls on the active participation of all seminar attendees. In response to the issues raised in workshop 1, the participants will be asked, first in small groups then in a plenary session, to discuss and reflect on the various solutions that they could implement to promote greater election participation and foster a democratic culture.

With a view to sharing best electoral practices and enrich the *Declaration of the RECEF in Sinaia* to be adopted at the end of the seminar, the participants will be asked to collectively present the most inspiring actions for facilitating access to voting as well as mobilizing the electorate and ensuring electors are well-informed. Participants can base their inspiration on the practices in their countries or observations in other countries.

Question

- What would be the most important actions to carry out in order to increase the voter turnout and the democratic culture of the citizens?

Moderators

Mr. Simon Mélançon

Advisor in International Cooperation, Élections Québec and the RECEF

Ms. Monica Rosales

Head of the Education for Democracy service, Élections Québec

Participatory workshop schedule

2:00 p.m.	Explanation of the activity by the moderators
2:10 p.m.	Discussion in smaller groups (each table constitutes a team)
2:40 p.m.	Presentation of ideas from each of the tables in the plenary session (one or two ideas per table)
3:00 p.m.	Discussion of proposals in the plenary session
3:30 p.m.	Voting on the ideas judged the most inspiring following the discussion
3:40 p.m.	Conclusion
3:45 p.m.	Health break



Wednesday, June 5 Election participation

4:00 p.m. Workshop 3: Stimulating electoral participation: powers and limits of EMBs

Electoral participation is influenced by a series of factors ranging from socio-economic situation to perception of politics. An electoral management body (EMB) does not possess all the levers needed to impact a number of these factors. Nevertheless, when its legal framework allows it, an EMB can influence electoral participation by facilitating access to voting during elections, by effectively informing electors, and by implementing various methods to bring the poll and electorate closer together (e.g., advertising campaign or signage providing practical information to make voting easier (registration, polling hours and location) or for convincing electors of the importance of voting). Electoral participation is a major issue for the majority of EMBs.

Objectives

- Reflecting on the role EMBs can play in encouraging citizens to vote, to help reverse the decline in voter turnout.
- Exploring the powers and limits of EMBs in stimulating electoral participation.

Videos on information and mobilization/presentation of the workshop

Moderator

Ms. Ingrid Bicu

Director of the Communication Department, Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania

More flexibility for voters: Advanced polling in Canada

Mr. Stéphane Roberge

Senior advisor in International Affairs, Elections Canada

Actions to inform electors and promote electoral participation in Burkina Faso

Mr. Ahmed Newton Barry

President, Independent National Electoral Commission, Burkina Faso

Methods of providing access to voting and information to electors during the 2019 presidential election

Mr. Tanor Thiendella Sidy Fall

Chief electoral officer, Sénégal

and

Mr. Issa Sall

Commissioner, Autonomous National Electoral Commission, Senegal

6:00 p.m. Free time

7:00 p.m. Dinner and cultural event courtesy of Mr. Mituletu- Buica, President of the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania



Thursday, June 6: Education for Democracy

9:00 a.m. Welcome coffee

9:30 a.m. Workshop 4: Education for Democracy: the foundation for an engaged citizenry

Electoral participation and education for democracy interact in a virtuous circle that nourishes an engaged citizenry. Education for democracy, for its part, can have an impact on some of the determining factors of electoral participation. In return, electoral participation can become an essential act by citizens that combines with and complements other forms of civic participation.

A number of our societies are faced with attitudes of disengagement and cynicism toward politics. These attitudes can be explained by a lack of knowledge and information, combined with a feeling of not having the civic skills needed to understand the issues and make an enlightened choice when it is time to cast a vote.

Education for democracy has the potential of reducing cynicism among the general public and to favouring more significant civic engagement between elections. Moreover, informed citizens who are familiar with the electoral system can play a constructive role in its evolution.

The purpose of this workshop is to examine education for democracy in an overall context of civic engagement. Various theories and approaches will initiate participants to this universe.

Workshop 4: Objective

- Discussing the objectives pursued as a result of citizen engagement and education for democracy.

Moderator

Ms. Myriam Paquette-Côté

Director, Research, Planning and International Cooperation Service, Élections Québec

The evolution of civic education in the digital age from a global perspective

Mr. Gio Kobakhidze

Deputy Country Director, International Foundation for Electoral Support (IFES), Ukraine

Global Technical Lead on Civic Education, IFES

Civic education in Africa for greater political participation

Ms. Eva Palmans

Head of Programmes and ECES Madagascar Representative

Mr. Fabio Bargiacchi

Executive Director, European Centre for Electoral Support (ECES)

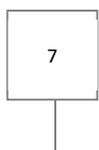
The democratic school climate: active citizenship in the classroom

Ms. Ellen Claes

Centre for Political Science Research, Leuven University, Belgium

11:15 a.m.

Health break





Thursday, June 6: Education for democracy

11:30 a.m. **Workshop 5: Building a democratic culture amongst citizens: the role of EMBs and the development of partnerships**

This second education for democracy workshop will allow participants to continue reflecting on this topic, while looking at the role of EMBs. If they have a role to play in stimulating electoral participation, do EMBs have a role to play in education for democracy? The budget, time and restrictions associated with their mission and responsibilities sometimes hinder the realization of these activities. In certain countries, the EMB teams up with partners to develop and implement such activities. In other countries, education for democracy activities are the purview of other actors.

Education for democracy can target different population groups including the general public, future electors, youth, women, minorities and newcomers. It all depends on the national context. According to the United Nations, young people age 15 to 25 make up one fifth of the world population: “while they are often involved in politically relevant informal processes including activism and civic engagement, they are not formally represented in national political institutions such as parliaments, and many of them do not take part in elections, resulting in a potential impact the quality of democratic governance”. Indeed, youth represent a positive force in the transition to and stability of democracies throughout the world. Accordingly, their participation in elections is of the utmost importance.

This workshop considers a variety of approaches with respect to education for democracy and the role of EMBs and their partners. Building an engaged citizenry starts at an early age and young people are the future of the world’s democracies.

Workshop 5: Objectives

- Discussing the role of EMBs in matters of education for democracy.
- Exploring the types of actions that could be implemented by EMBs and their partners.

Moderator

Ms. Geneviève Boko Nadjó

Vice-President, Autonomous National Electoral Commission (CENA), Benin

Education for democracy programs: summer schools in Cape Verde

Ms. Maria do Rosario Lopes Pereira Gonçalves

President, National Elections Commission, Cape Verde

Shape your future! Vote!

Mr. Dániel Listár

Head of Department of Communications and Foreign Affairs, National Election Commission, Hungary

Bringing democracy to life for youth: the cases of student councils and electoral simulations in Québec

Ms. Monica Rosales

Head of the Education for democracy Service, Élections Québec

13:15 a.m. **Lunch courtesy of the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania**



Thursday, June 6: Education for democracy

2:30 p.m.

Final Declaration of the RECEF in Sinaia

Participants will consult, then will improve and adopt the draft *Declaration of the RECEF in Sinaia*

3:30 p.m.

Health break

3:45 a.m.

Workshop 6: Education for democracy in action!

This interactive workshop looks at the education for democracy activities of election management bodies (EMB) and international organizations.

The workshop features a number of information booths. The moderators will ask participants to circulate in small groups in a structured manner from one information booth to another to observe the various activities and learn more about the range of approaches applicable to education for democracy. In the second part of the workshop, participants will be invited to visit freely the information booths as an opportunity for more discussion and exchange of ideas.

Moderators

Mr. Simon Mélançon

Advisor, International Cooperation, Élections Québec and RECEF

Mr. Marie-Christine Ross

Advisor, International Cooperation, Élections Québec and RECEF

Ms. Cristina Mares

Advisor, Communications and International Affairs, Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania

5:30 p.m.

Free time

7:00 p.m.

Dinner courtesy of the RECEF



Friday, June 7 **7th General Assembly of RECEF and cultural visit**

- | | |
|-------------------|--|
| 9:00 a.m. | Welcome coffee |
| 9:30 a.m. | 7th General meeting of the RECEF |
| 11:00 a.m. | Meeting of the Executive Committee
(free period for other participants) |
| 12:00 p.m. | Lunch courtesy of the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania |
| 2:00 p.m. | Visit to Peles Castle in Sinaia |
| 8:00 p.m. | Dinner at hotel courtesy of the Permanent Electoral Authority of Romania |

Saturday, June 8

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| All day | Departure of participants and transportation to Bucharest airport |
|----------------|--|