e-Democracy: who dares?

Forum for the Future of Democracy
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PREFACE

The Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy brings together all the actors in a genuine democratic society: parliaments, governments and local and regional authorities as well as civil society, the media and academia. The Forum aims to stimulate Europe with debates on how to promote democracy at all levels.

The Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Conference of International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) and the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) are all involved. The Forum also provides an opportunity for dialogue with international partners such as the OSCE and the European Union.

The Fourth Session of the Forum on the theme of "e-Democracy: who dares?" was held from 15 to 17 October 2008 in Madrid. It considered the impact of information and communication technologies (ICTs) on democracy. More than 400 participants discussed issues such as e-participation, ICTs in electoral processes, e-campaigning, e-inclusion and e-democracy from the grass roots.

The Forum concluded that e-democracy offers an additional channel for democratic practice and participation, and that it can improve the transparency, accountability and responsiveness of democratic institutions as well as increase the accessibility and inclusiveness of the democratic process. It presents a tremendous opportunity for citizens and public authorities alike, but there are also challenges and risks.

The Forum conclusions by the general rapporteurs are now being considered by the relevant institutions in the Council of Europe and its member states in order to translate the Forum's output into specific action. One of the first steps in this process has been the decision by the Committee of Ministers in February 2009 to adopt a recommendation

on electronic democracy and thus provide member states with some important guidelines and practical tools for the development of e-democracy. More will follow.

CONCLUSIONS BY THE GENERAL RAPPORTEURS

1.   The 2008 Session of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy, held in Madrid (Spain) from 15-17 October 2008 under the general theme "e-Democracy, who dares?", addressed the opportunities and challenges of the use of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in democratic life.

2.   The Forum reiterated that e-democracy, as an additional channel for democratic practice and participation, can significantly contribute to achieving more transparency, accountability and responsiveness of democratic institutions, to facilitating people's democratic engagement and deliberation, and to increasing the accessibility and inclusiveness of the democratic process. E-democracy therefore presents a tremendous opportunity for people and public authorities alike, it being understood that all stakeholders join together to harness its benefits and control its potential risks.

3.   The Forum considers that it is essential to build people's trust in e-democracy in order to achieve its full potential.

Principles of e-democracy

4.   E-democracy is about making use of the opportunities that ICTs offer in order to strengthen democracy, democratic institutions and the democratic process. Introducing and developing e-democracy to enable people to become more involved in the democratic process and democratic institutions requires a conscious effort by all stakeholders, and determined leadership.

5.   E-democracy is above all about democracy and not simply about technology. The evolution of e-democracy through the use of enhanced technologies should therefore rest upon and be pursued in accordance with the principles of democratic governance and practice.

6.   E-democracy also involves challenges and risks, not least of which the digital divide and "e-discrimination". These need to be addressed and overcome, including by political will, significant investment, solid risk-assessment, risk-management measures and mechanisms for ongoing monitoring and improvement.

7.   E-democracy presupposes the existence of a basic democratic environment, including free and fair elections, and the enjoyment of human rights by all, in particular freedom of expression, open and secure access of all people to the Internet, and the protection of their privacy and personal data. People will only trust e-democracy if they are confident that the information and data they disclose in the context of e-democracy processes are not being used or stored for any other purpose, let alone used against them.

8.   E-democracy can help to restore the declining interest in politics and the democratic process. It is an opportunity to reinvigorate representative democracy and to revisit its traditional concepts.

9.   E-democracy is not a new form of democracy. It is additional and complementary to, and interlinked with, traditional processes of democracy. It is a tool to widen the choices available to the public for engaging in the democratic process. Many of the traditional participatory processes undoubtedly benefit from, and can be implemented more effectively through, ICTs.

10. E-democracy provides new opportunities for people to become more involved in all stages of the democratic process. However, this presupposes that its design takes into account such requirements as accessibility, ease of use and inclusion. Furthermore, people need to be confident that their contributions to e-democracy processes are taken into account in decision making.

11. E-democracy creates new opportunities for civic initiatives from the bottom upwards. They should be encouraged and given specific support by public authorities and international organisations as a healthy manifestation of democratic participation.

12. Political will is required to involve everyone – institutions, interest groups and individuals – in the development of e-democracy from an early stage, thus avoiding the risk of fragmentation of society.

Recommendations to e-democracy stakeholders

13. The Forum calls on all actors in the democratic process to use the opportunities offered by e-democracy in their communication with the public. In particular, e-democracy provides elected representatives with new opportunities to engage in discussions with their constituency. It is imperative that e-democracy should be embraced by all politicians in order to increase their interaction with the people.

14. The Forum welcomes that, in several countries, different e-democracy initiatives are being developed, tested and implemented. The Forum calls upon all governments to commit themselves to developing and implementing substantially more initiatives within their own countries, at all levels, drawing on existing expertise and examples of good practice. The Council of Europe and other European and international institutions should promote such initiatives.

15. Recent developments in the field of e-voting have shown that increased attention should be paid to certification and observation to guarantee security and transparency and to build trust in the electoral process. The Forum therefore calls on national policy makers to include these important aspects in their work and to engage in dialogue, at all stages of the process, with both the supporters and critics of e-voting.

16. New media and service providers have made it possible for people to gain better access to information and thus to have a better basis for engaging in the democratic process. The Forum calls upon such services to fully exercise their ethical responsibilities, especially with regard to children and youth.

17. A right balance between empowerment and protection of the individual should be struck. It is important to keep options open for e-democracy initiatives from the grass roots to develop without being submitted to restrictions, other than those designed to protect the rights of the individual and the general regulations that protect against all forms of abuse on the Internet and other digital technologies.

Recommendations to particular e-democracy stakeholders

18. The Forum is confident that the draft recommendation on e-democracy, to be considered for adoption in the near future by the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers,[1] will offer all European governments substantial guidelines and principles when dealing with e-democracy. The recommendation will offer a number of practical tools to those who require hands-on information about combining modern information and communication tools and democratic requirements and practice.

19. The Forum welcomes the current work of the Parliamentary Assembly on e-democracy and calls on it to take further initiatives, in particular with regard to e-parliament. Indeed, e-parliament can help parliaments at all levels, as well as elected representatives, to better fulfil their role as representatives of the people.

20. The Forum commends the Council of Europe's Conference of INGOs on its current drafting of the code of good practice on civic participation, a proposal that originated in the Forum for the Future of Democracy, and notes with interest that the code will include a section on e-democracy.

21. The Forum calls on all stakeholders in local and regional governance to embrace the opportunities of e-democracy. It welcomes the work of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on e-democracy in local and regional planning and, in particular, on e-tools as a response to the needs of local authorities and on e-democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects.

22. As experience in several cities shows, participatory budgeting can be a way of empowering people. The Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Local and Regional Democracy (CDLR) is called upon to examine the potential of participatory budgeting and use of ICTs in this context.

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1. Recommendation CM/Rec(2009)1 on electronic democracy (e-democracy) was adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 18 February 2009 at the 1049th meeting of the Ministers' Deputies.

23. The implementation of the Council of Europe's draft convention on access to official documents, when adopted, should take into account the consequences of the widespread use of ICTs on the way in which public authorities and users of ICTs interact.

24. Special attention should be paid to those who need help in acquiring the skills required to become an active e-citizen. Information and Internet literacy should be promoted, as well as education for democratic citizenship and human rights education. The Forum calls on the different bodies of the Council of Europe to intensify their efforts in elaborating policy instruments and developing tools to this effect, building on earlier efforts in the field of democracy.

25. On the occasion of the Forum, representatives of the Council of Europe member states reviewed developments in the field of e-voting since the adoption, in 2004, of the recommendation of the Committee of Ministers on legal, operational and technical standards on e-voting. The Forum encourages the Council of Europe to maintain its prominent role in this important and complex field, thereby providing a platform for discussion and exchange of experience, and a standard-setting body.

26. The Council of Europe programme Building a Europe for and with children, in its work on participation of children and young people in political life, is invited to include aspects of ICT use in its work. The Forum welcomes the setting up, by the project, of a children's e-platform and the prospect of creating an e-forum within the pilot scheme on child participation. The programme should continue to promote measures to protect the dignity, security and privacy of children in cyberspace and generally empower children in the new information and communication environment.

27. Regulation in the field of e-democracy, as a means of building trust among the people, can take the form of public regulation, co-regulation and self-regulation, as well as international standard-setting. The Forum recognises that more consideration needs to be given to this issue and proposes that the Committee of Ministers initiate work in this field, and closely involve the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission).

28. Regulatory action may also be taken in respect of Internet governance. In this connection, the Forum has taken note with interest of the joint initiative at the Internet Governance Forum (IGF) on "Public Participation in Internet Governance" by the Council of Europe, the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and the Association for Progressive Communications (APC), and encourages the involved partners to pursue this initiative.

29. The Forum invites representative assemblies and governments, as custodians of the general public interest, to actively seek links with social networking activities concerned with political issues and to draw upon ideas and discussions held in these new democratic participatory and deliberative spaces.

30. Given the various approaches and views on e-democracy within academic circles and the necessity to harness quality expertise from many sectors, the Forum calls upon representative assemblies, governments and the business sector, as well as international institutions, to encourage and fund research on e-democracy. This should include issues such as improving democracy through ICTs, (re-)engaging people in democracy and the establishment of effective links between public authorities' activities and social networking (between bottom-up and top-down initiatives).

31. The Forum welcomes member states' engagement in the International Day for Democracy on 15 September, proclaimed by the United Nations, and in the European Local Democracy Week in mid-October, initiated by the Council of Europe. The Forum calls upon all stakeholders to include in these events a strong focus on e-democracy. Activities in member states should be closely linked with activities in other member states, thus building European momentum in the field of e-democracy. The Forum calls upon the Council of Europe to become actively involved in this initiative.

32. All stakeholders involved in the Forum are invited to combine their efforts to define the most efficient ways of translating the conclusions of this Forum's session into specific action.

33. The Forum expressed its appreciation and gratitude to the Spanish Government and the City of Madrid for the excellent organisation of the 2008 Session and for their hospitality.

34. The Forum welcomed the invitation by the Ukrainian authorities to hold the 2009 Session of the Forum in Kyiv, on the theme of "Electoral systems".

OBSERVATIONS BY THE GENERAL RAPPORTEURS

Tomás de la Quadra-Salcedo Fernández del Castillo
Professor in administrative law, Carlos III University,
Madrid, Spain. Former Minister of Justice of Spain

Allow me to begin by saying how pleased I am to have taken part in this forum. I have attended all of the sessions and feel that we have made what might be described as a "Kantian effort of rationalisation" with regard to new technologies and electronic democracy, by endeavouring to answer three questions: "What can we know?", "What can we expect?" and "What should we do?".

One way or another we have tried to answer all of these questions. Information technologies are now a reality that we cannot ignore. A reality that is in some ways paradoxical because information technologies are a human invention but are, on the other hand, in some respects like a natural phenomenon. They are human creations and as such the opposite of a natural phenomenon, but once established they take on their own logic and develop their own momentum and this raises questions and challenges to which we have sought to respond.

ICTs and the opportunities they offer for electronic democracy, with both their advantages and disadvantages, cannot be ignored. They offer advantages in that they open up a world of opportunities for spontaneous expression to individuals and society by providing them with a platform for making their opinions known; their personal opinions and those of any groups to which they may belong. They also afford the public authorities the opportunity to take account of such opinions, however disparate they may be. And they are probably unavoidably disparate in that they reflect, as I said earlier, spontaneous and diverse interests, which are not necessarily shaped by organisations, political parties or trade unions, for example, but are the product of individual reactions or of informal groups. But that is also why they have a

certain value that should not be ignored but taken into account by the public authorities. ICTs also offer citizens possibilities of exercising some control over public affairs, firstly because they provide access to information about what political representatives are doing and, secondly, because they give individuals and groups the opportunity to take part in the decision-making process.

These are undeniable advantages. However, there are also risks, which are not necessarily inevitable or intrinsic but only potential. One of the risks I would like to draw attention to is the possibility of a digital divide. This can be avoided by taking the appropriate political measures, including giving people training in these new technologies to ensure that being unfamiliar with ICTs does not prevent them from having access to the information society and its benefits. This quite apart from the need to ensure that people have access to ICTs, no matter where they live, so that the unavailability of technological means does not also result in a digital barrier or divide.

These are difficulties and risks, which, as I have already said, can be overcome. However, there is another risk which is probably just as important and that is the excess of information. In the information society with its new technologies there is sometimes too much information. What is needed, as we saw in some of the workshops, is probably some new intermediaries between this mass of information and the end users; intermediaries giving our citizens the confidence to organise such information, so that they can be selective and not be overwhelmed.

Google was of course mentioned but it is possible that other intermediaries will emerge. Intermediaries that every member of the public will have confidence in; they might be universities, journalists or blogs. We do not know what new intermediaries will help to organise this excessive build-up of information – which can be confusing when there is too much of it – into a form that is more accessible and easier to understand.

The public authorities need to make the most of these advantages and avoid the disadvantages. In order to do so, they must be conscious

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that electronic democracy is not a substitute for democracy, but that it is a tool for strengthening and enriching our democracy.

Indeed, representative democracy relies on citizens showing commitment to integrated projects, which, per se, involve a juggling act between means and ends – means that are always scarce and ends that are always diverse and sometimes contradictory or require too many resources. As a result we are obliged to prioritise and co-ordinate our activities so as to eliminate contradictions between our different objectives. This hierarchy of objectives reflects a hierarchy of values and this is a characteristic of representative democracy, which requires citizens to take a comprehensive view of all the problems and choose what can be done in keeping with the scarce resources available.

Their role is therefore irreplaceable but they sometimes come up against rigidity, bureaucracy, and such like and that is what recourse to electronic democracy and the use of information technology can help avoid, by offering ways of keeping the public better informed of what their elected representatives and governments are doing and making it possible for citizens to exercise greater control over the public authorities and also to take part in decision-making processes.

The public authorities must also take into account and attempt to ward off one of the risks that I mentioned – the excess of information and related problems – by providing citizens with public sector-related information in a structured and accessible form enabling them easily to exercise their power of supervision and their right to be informed of what their representatives are doing.

We are talking here about all aspects of digital democracy. I believe that there are many dimensions and levels to digital democracy. It is, of course, to be found in participation in the decision-making process, the highest level of which is the legislative level. But democracy is also applicable to the administration and the executive, namely, electronic governance in the strict sense of the term. It is important that the public participate through the use of information technologies at these levels where discretionary power is significant and where important political decisions are taken in the legislation implementation stage. This gives them the opportunity to ensure that both the government

and the administration comply with the golden rule that all public authorities and public services have to abide by the law, in other words, the principle of complying with the wishes of the majority, not only when legislation is being drafted, but also when the law is being applied on a day-to-day basis. And in this connection I would like to finish by mentioning that a law on electronic access to public services was enacted in Spain in June 2008. This was an important step in the right direction as it helped transform what might be seen as a form of enlightened despotism – namely, graciously giving the public electronic access to public services – into an approach which accepts that citizens have a right to electronic democracy. The aim is no longer to graciously give the public electronic access to public services, but to recognise that citizens have a right to communicate with the administration – and the government – by electronic means, thereby placing the administration and the government not in the position of enlightened despots but as having a duty to respect citizens' rights, wishes and aspirations, and I believe that it is in this way that we will progress towards electronic democracy.

These are the points I wished to make. I firmly believe that representative democracy and electronic democracy are fully complementary, the latter being a tool to achieve the former, and that the opportunities provided by the information society undeniably foster and strengthen electronic democracy.

Zoltán Szabó
Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

I have followed closely the deliberations over the last two days: on Wednesday in the plenary session and yesterday particularly in the workshop tracks on e-participation: ICTs for participatory democracy and opportunities and challenges to representative democracy.

I shared my impressions with the two other general rapporteurs and you will find them reflected in the General Conclusions. Allow me to make two more personal comments.

Firstly, I would like to express my satisfaction with, and appreciation of, the high quality of the discussions. They were very intensive and extremely interesting and concrete. They proved clearly that you do not have to be an expert on computers to discuss, in a professional way, the use of e-tools for democracy. They revealed great interest in such new technologies among various actors of the political process gathered here in Madrid: members of parliaments, representatives of governments, of local authorities, of civil society and academics.

Secondly, I would like to emphasise the importance of this event. The great value of the Fourth Session of the Forum is not only that it has served as a platform for an exchange of experience, the sharing of good practices, illustrating good and bad models and examples, but that it has also paved the way for systematic solutions and regulations. As it has brought together participants from so many different circles, the Forum has a good chance to succeed in passing its message on to those institutions that can assure follow-up: national parliaments, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and national authorities.

This session of the Forum has demonstrated that ICTs are used in many Council of Europe member states, sometimes very successfully and with spectacular results. I will only mention here one example of an e-initiative in Switzerland, where citizens can launch a proposal for a new law or for an amendment to an existing law or initiate a referendum on government policy.

We also heard of other examples of e-initiatives in Slovakia, the Czech Republic and in other countries. But there are also disconcerting

examples of websites being set up and opened for signatures and being subsequently abandoned as well as of petitions signed by thousands that have been given no follow-up whatsoever. This is not only a waste of public energy but also creates the risk of loss of confidence in e-tools.

I believe we should all acknowledge, and be aware of, this potential threat. I am very glad that there are so many representatives of the civil society with us here, who should be particularly responsible in this respect. Let us not rush into things blindly, let us advance in a fully responsible manner.

I trust that one of the far-reaching results of the Forum will be that it will inspire different circles of power to scrutinise the ways and means of systematising and harmonising standards and regulations relating to the use of e-tools in the political process.

We should acknowledge that this kind of activity requires financial resources, organisational capacity and know-how. Therefore, particularly in this case, the Council of Europe should use its resources with a view to creating better conditions for public initiative. These should include guidelines, assistance and the promotion of best practices.

Naturally, I am aware of the work already carried out by the Council of Europe in this respect, but there is still much more to be done. I am convinced that the Ad hoc Committee on e-democracy must intensify its work and examine the various issues raised during this session.

This work should go hand in hand with the work of other sectors of the Council of Europe, including the Parliamentary Assembly.

As already mentioned by President de Puig at the opening session on Wednesday, the Parliamentary Assembly will use the conclusions and ideas of this session of the Forum to enrich its own discussions on the subject. As Rapporteur of the Political Affairs Committee, tasked with drafting a report and recommendation which will be subsequently debated and adopted in the Assembly, I intend to complete and develop my report based on the memorandum that was made available to the participants and, once adopted by the Committee, to present it to the Assembly in January 2009.

I am convinced that the Parliamentary Assembly is well placed to promote further action at the pan-European level. As a strictly political body, it carries a particular responsibility to react speedily and in an adequate manner to the challenges and opportunities created by the use of new technologies in the democratic process.

Over the last two days much has been said about additional channels for democratic practice and participation, transparency, accountability and responsiveness of democratic institutions, promoting citizens' democratic engagement, empowerment and inclusiveness. We have all agreed that e-tools offer an enormous potential to improve the situation, to remedy some shortcomings in the functioning of democratic institutions and to overcome the decreasing confidence of citizens in the democratic process as a whole.

There is no doubt that e-tools can be highly instrumental in strengthening democracy. But in order to make them fully operational and effective, we also have to ensure that public initiatives produce tangible results. This requires revision of national legislation in almost all European countries (except perhaps in Switzerland). Constitutions should include provisions allowing for a public initiative to launch a new law, to amend the existing law or to initiate a referendum. Legislation should also foresee the possibility for voters to recall a member of parliament.

Of course these all require political courage and political vision, or at least political debate at a broad, pan-European level.

We, in the Parliamentary Assembly, enjoy good conditions for such a debate, which I hope to launch at the next meeting of the Political Affairs Committee and, later, at the plenary part-session of the Parliamentary Assembly, in January 2009. I am confident that my colleagues from other national parliaments will take this matter extremely seriously.

I am also confident that all participants, all of you, will react in a similar way within your own specific areas of responsibility: you will seek to convey the message, to identify those areas where you can contribute to implementing the good ideas launched here in Madrid and ensure follow-up.

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This is the essence of the concept of the Forum, which is an ongoing process in which the progress is evaluated systematically by all stakeholders and this is why I consider this session in Madrid to be so important and useful.

Alan Lloyd
Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
of the Council of Europe

This Forum reaffirmed once again that e-democracy is a tool not only to increase the democratic participation of our citizens, but to go beyond the consultation process in creating a "citizen culture" of informed involvement and virtual presence in the decision making, leading to a new environment – a "citizen environment".

The themes of this Forum – e-participation, including at local level, e-voting, e-inclusion and e-democracy from the grass roots – are of high relevance to the work of the Congress as it is at local and regional level where democracy and participation begin.

Ten years ago, the term e-democracy was not in our vocabulary. Today, it is a hot topic. I see two developments behind this interest. First, the continuing political disenchantment that is manifest through low voter turnout in national, regional and local elections and the disenchantment of citizens with public services and political actors. Second, the explosion and increasing uptake of new technologies like the Internet, mobile phones and digital TV.

Information and communication technologies and e-democracy are changing the relationships between elected representatives and their constituents, changing the relationships between governments and citizens, and creating new forms of participation for civil society in the decision-making and policy-shaping processes.

It is clear, that, for the citizen, for the woman and man in the street, the issues that grip them in their day-to-day lives are very often local ones: local services, transport, dustbins, feeling safe to walk out in the evening – these are issues that we all have something to say about.

No surprise then that, when we come to examine the exciting developments in political behaviour that technology is making possible, we discover that a large proportion of them are local initiatives. I am delighted that some excellent samples of these developments have been discussed at this Forum. I trust that this will stimulate our reflection and debate on the issues involved, to capitalise on the huge

potential of e-democracy for reinvigorating our political life at all levels.

E-participation initiatives can make representative democracy stronger by harnessing the power of new technology to encourage citizen participation, to deepen democratic interaction and to encourage transparent decision making.

Another term that we are hearing more and more is "e-engagement". E-engagement involves using ICTs for access to information, public consultation, or active participation. Information is a one-way relationship with local authorities producing information for use by citizens, enabling them to participate further in the democratic process. Consultation, on the other hand, is a two-way relationship: citizens take part in consultations initiated by the local authority, with the aim of enhancing the community involvement in democratic processes. Active participation is a relationship based on partnership with local authorities, in which citizens actively engage in the policy-making process. It acknowledges the role for citizens in shaping policy.

An important question for e-democracy projects is "what barriers are we most likely to meet?" There are at least four kinds of obstacles to the success of e-democracy. They may be political, participatory, organisational or technological.

Some barriers are institutional. Politicians and administrations can find e-democracy initiatives disruptive – there is a risk of e-participation working too well and of administrations not being able to cope with the increase in demand. There may also be a question of whether e-democracy policies have adequate political backing.

Other barriers relate to scepticism about the level of public demand for e-democracy and questions about trust, data protection and user authentication. There is also a question about the so-called "bottleneck of attention", how to win the battle for people's attention with an overload of available information and websites, and how to win "the rules of credibility", whereby people decide what information to trust.

Then there is the risk of e-participation initiatives being dominated by interest groups and failing to reflect the diversity of society. There

is the risk of creating barriers to digitally excluded groups, such as older people and people on low incomes.

Many people are also concerned about what we may call "pseudo-participation". People will only participate if they understand how they can contribute to the political process and believe that their contribution will be taken seriously. Elected representatives and democratic institutions can contribute to developing trust by using e-democracy initiatives only where participation is meaningful and can be shown to be so.

E-democracy projects often prove difficult to maintain as permanent democratic features. They may be under-resourced: there has been a tendency to develop pilot projects rather than sustainable strategies. We need to pay attention not only to the Internet but also to other technologies such as television, cable television, digital TV, mobile phones and wireless networks. Our e-democracy projects should be aiming at the integration of technologies through multiple platforms.

We need to identify what response is needed by policy makers, and locate the most useful initiatives in using new technologies in representative democracies. We need to look closely at how citizens use information and what they are looking for in e-democracy projects. We have to improve our understanding of what people want from e-democracy, e-administration and e-services. We need to understand how organisations are adapting to the new flows of information, for example conducting quantitative research on the quantity and nature of information that our elected representatives are receiving. We need better studies on website usability and on the accessibility and neutrality of online consultations and polls. Furthermore we need research on how to build tools designed for democratic purposes and research on low-cost technologies that could facilitate e-democracy.

A final question: do we need a "digital bill of rights", which would include, for example, the right for citizens to identify elected officials and contact them via e-mail, the right to watch council and legislative body meetings, the right to free software to help citizens organise and lobby on issues of importance and the right to access public information in a digital format?

In the Congress, we have been looking into the issues related to e-democracy and e-governance at local and regional level for several years. In 2006, the Congress adopted a resolution on new information and communication technologies as a new opportunity for local democracy, targeting in particular youth participation. At the plenary session in May 2008, the Congress adopted resolutions and recommendations on e-tools for local authorities, and on e-democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects.

It is clear that new technologies and a variety of e-tools offer increasing possibilities for interaction between citizens and their elected representatives. The changing face of politics and policy formation is a direct result of the development of the Internet and other communication technologies. The increasing potential of such technologies affords new methods for consulting voters on electoral issues, legislation, political decisions and policy implementation.

To make full use of this potential, the Congress calls on local authorities to use information and communication technologies (ICTs) to improve public participation in local life and enable greater dialogue on the future of their towns and cites and their environment, while using traditional forms of participation in parallel with online tools, and ensuring their compatibility, thus making sure that everyone has the opportunity to participate and that both individual and collective opinions can be heard.

In its 2006 Resolution on young people and new information and communication technologies: a new opportunity for local democracy, the Congress recommends that local authorities seek to bridge the digital divide by adapting technologies and providing infrastructures to make them accessible to all user groups, regardless of their social or cultural character or geographical location. We call for more efforts to be made by local politicians to promote youth participation in local life using ICTs, to narrow the gap and ensure that the economically underprivileged are not deprived of these new tools.

In its Resolution on e-democracy and deliberative consultations on urban projects, the Congress also recommends that local authorities undertake electronic deliberative consultation on urban development

which goes beyond the formal consultation required by existing legislation. We call on local authorities to encourage participatory initiatives started by other urban development stakeholders and take particular account of citizen-to-citizen initiatives.

Furthermore, the Congress calls on national governments to reinforce the legislative and regulatory framework for consultation and foster the renewal of decision-making processes, making it compulsory for all tiers of governance to involve the public in projects that affect them, in particular in terms of sustainable urban planning, spatial development and local infrastructure facilities.

Governments are also asked to conduct prior consultation processes at national level, concerning national infrastructure and spatial planning projects, which foster new, electronic public debate procedures, and to lead by example, create and regulate the conditions for the widespread use of the Internet and ICTs in public participation, and support local authorities in their e-participation trials and innovations.

In its Resolution on e-tools for local authorities, the Congress is calling on elected representatives and administrations to embrace e-tools as a means of improving local democracy, their engagement with citizens, and the feedback that they receive from citizens. Parallel traditional systems of consultation should be maintained, however, when introducing new methods of communication, so that people who are slower to take up new technologies are not excluded from the political process.

At the same time, the Congress is asking national governments to give logistical support to local government for improving local democracy by the use of e-tools, and to ensure that successful local authority initiatives are widely publicised and made available to other authorities.

This is an exciting period for democracy. There is a clear need to continue to review developments in this area, debate the issues and exchange good practice, and this Forum was another proof of it. The Congress has identified e-democracy as a priority area of its work for the next two years, and will be pursuing its action for creating the "citizen environment" at local and regional level, which I mentioned

at the outset – and which is part of the Congress' overall efforts to build an equal and cohesive environment within sustainable communities centred on the citizen.

Opening addresses

Fernando Puig de la Bellacasa Aguirre
State Secretary, Ministry of Public Administrations, Spain

It is an honour for Spain to host this Fourth Session of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy and I am proud to be taking part in the opening ceremony.

I wish to begin by extending a warm welcome to you and by thanking the City of Madrid, represented here today by its Deputy Mayor, Doña Ana Botella Serrano, for its invitation, its co-operation and the support it has given to this event.

Of all the international and European supranational organisations, the Council of Europe plays a key role in protecting and strengthening democracy, human rights and the rule of law. No other organisation has such an important goal as its specific objective.

In this context, the Forum for the Future of Democracy is an exemplary initiative designed to promote discussion and exchanges of ideas on issues relating to citizen participation in public decision making as they are perceived by governments, parliaments, international organisations, civil society or the academic world. It therefore deserves the fullest support from European governments.

As member countries of the Council of Europe, we are fully committed to democracy based on a system that fully guarantees citizens' rights, maintains a balance between branches of government and establishes controls to reinforce the rule of law.

This requires us to strengthen our democratic system, foster greater citizen participation in public affairs and endeavour to ensure that many citizens do not simply vote at general or local and regional elections but become more closely involved in matters of concern to them.

It is therefore, as I have already said, a privilege for me to open the Fourth Session of this Forum, the theme of which is "e-democracy", in other words the challenges raised by the new technologies related to the information society and the opportunities they provide to strengthen democracy.

This new form of interaction and access to information undeniably has a decisive effect on the relationship between the public authorities and the general public and therefore deserves our special attention. The development of the information society offers excellent opportunities in various spheres, as it gives fresh impetus to social participation, fosters social ties and facilitates the exchange of and access to information of general interest, by promoting transparency and accountability of the public authorities.

New technologies also raise challenges that must be addressed without delay. For example, we must ensure that the digital divide does not jeopardise the principle of equality, that new information systems are developed in a context of freedom of choice for the public and not imposed by the public authorities, and that special attention is given to the protection of individual rights, in particular the right to the protection of personal data. This is the only way to build the necessary confidence in the use of these new forms of participation.

You will be considering many issues in the course of this Forum, but, on account of their particular relevance to this ministry, I would like to draw special attention to the consequences of e-democracy for local governments, in view of their closeness to the grass roots, and to the opportunities that new technologies provide to change the traditional relationship between the public and the administration, and also because they help to guarantee principles such as efficiency, freedom of choice for the citizen and the accountability of public officials.

At local level, the development of technologies related to the information society is fostering new forms of interaction between municipalities and their inhabitants through various information systems, foremost among which are the new forms of participation in town planning or in the allocation of public funds, through so-called participatory budgeting.

In the course of this Forum, we will have the opportunity to pool our experiences. In the case of Spain we will analyse the participation policies established in such cities as Madrid, San Sebastian, Lleida and Malaga. I therefore wish to take this opportunity to thank the mayors of these cities for contributing to this Forum and the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces for the assistance it has given us in organising it.

The public now expect more personalised and more rapidly and readily accessible services and this calls for major changes in the organisational structure of the administration. It is therefore essential to continue modernising the administration, with citizens as the focal point in the provision of public and administrative services.

In Spain, new technologies have thus been instrumental in developing initiatives that are of huge significance for the general public, such as the plan for reducing administrative burdens on business enterprises, approved by the Council of Ministers in June 2008, the increasingly widespread use of electronic procedures and the one-stop-shop concept. The transposition of the Services Directive will also help remove administrative barriers and result in greater flexibility and transparency for people who wish to set up or provide a service.

It was in this context that the Spanish Parliament approved the law on citizens' electronic access to public services, which establishes electronic communication with public authorities as a right for citizens and as an obligation for the authorities themselves. It lays down the rules governing electronic communications both between citizens and public authorities and between public authorities themselves, thereby guaranteeing the interoperability of electronic information systems and co-operation between authorities. Most importantly it gives citizens the right to choose and places the authorities at their service. This right will become fully effective as from 31 December 2009.

This obligation poses a challenge to the authorities since by that date they will have to ensure electronic access to not only some but all public services.

We are therefore continuing to strengthen existing common facilities and services that can be used by all public authorities, while at the same time establishing new ones.

We are continuing to extend services for the validation of digital certificates, electronic signatures and information concerning identity and residence so that no citizen need be asked for information which the administration already possesses.

We are also reinforcing the 060 website with which many of you are already familiar. This service, which came into operation in late May 2006, provides access to 151 electronic services of the general state administration. The rise in the number of electronic services provided continued in 2008 and 813 services are now accessible via this website.

The same has happened with the 060 telephone line: since it came into operation, the number of calls has increased steadily from the approximately 8 000 calls per month handled by its predecessor to a monthly average of 50 000 in the first half of 2007 and to a current monthly average of 160 000 calls.

Likewise, the network of 060 offices is developing and expanding significantly. To date the co-operation agreement has been signed by 13 Autonomous Communities and 1 534 local councils, of which 1 521 have joined the 060 network as registration offices.

I trust that these and other experiences will contribute to the debates and serve as inspiration for promoting the underlying values and principles of the Council of Europe, on which our democratic political culture is based. I encourage you to take an active part in the discussions and wish you every success in your work. In this way you will help to secure improved access to information and knowledge for our citizens and thereby help to build a society of greater freedom, justice and well-being.

Without further ado, I declare open the Fourth Session of the Council of Europe Forum for the Future of Democracy.

Ana Botella Serrano
Deputy Mayor of Madrid, Spain

I would like to begin, on behalf of the Mayor and myself, by welcoming you all to the City of Madrid. We also wish to thank the Council of Europe and the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs for having chosen our city to host this Forum.

This meeting has brought together politicians and experts to discuss different aspects of the role of new technologies in the future of democracy, especially in the context of relations between the authorities and civil society. However, before listening to the detailed presentations of the experts taking part in this Forum, I would like in my opening address to make a few general remarks on how important and necessary it is for us throughout Europe to work on strengthening democracy through citizen participation.

Democracy is now more firmly established in all European countries. We have left behind us the authoritarian and totalitarian regimes under which we suffered throughout the 20th century. After various ups and downs, democracy has now spread to peoples and societies across the world in which, not so long ago, it was difficult to imagine a regime of freedom. Some sixty years ago few people believed in a democratic Japan and just twenty years ago few people would have thought that a regime of freedom was possible on the other side of the Iron Curtain. The historical trend is very clear and encouraging.

As the number of democracies on the world map increases, the freedom and well-being of millions of people across the world is also increasing. Democracy has, in short, proved to be a form of government that is superior to any other, as confirmed by societies with different cultural backgrounds, and the most desirable from the moral, social and economic standpoint; or as Churchill remarked, with characteristic irony: "Democracy is the worst form of government except for all the others that have been tried".

Today, democracy is the only future we can imagine. Indeed, for those countries that still suffer under various forms of tyranny, we can accept no other solution. However, this does not mean that there are not still many ways in which our democracies can and must improve. Every

European country is aware of the need to make further progress when faced with a high level of abstention at an election. Many of us are also concerned at the growing gap between citizens and the political institutions that represent them. We must therefore consider why this gap exists and seek ways of bridging it. I therefore believe that European cities and states must look back to the roots of European identity and the values on which it is based. As the French poet Valéry said "Europe is Athens, Rome and Jerusalem". In other words, we must recreate the feeling of freedom and democracy that flourished in Pericles' Athens.

Admittedly the size of modern European cities makes direct participation in public affairs more difficult. Nevertheless, we now have at our disposal a number of information and communication technologies that make it possible to increase the number of people involved in decisions and to overcome many of the limitations of space and time. The Internet now offers us the equivalent of the open space in which free men gathered in Ancient Athens to debate and decide on public affairs.

I am convinced that the development of new technologies in municipal politics may be very important for future democracies. New information and communication technologies not only afford opportunities for economic growth in an increasingly globalised world. They also provide the opportunity for social progress and personal development for every individual, especially those who suffer from a particular disadvantage or disability. New technologies are a useful set of tools for improving access to information, facilitating social contacts, sharing knowledge and overcoming all sorts of barriers. For all these reasons, I believe that the main duty of a democratic society is to ensure that lack of access to new technologies does not become a widespread cause of social inequalities or of marginalisation as illiteracy once was. Just as not knowing how to read meant not having access to the world of books, digital illiteracy now means not having access to new methods of communication, study and work or to citizen participation.

We have a clear responsibility to ensure that all citizens are fully part of the information society, in order to secure the future of new means

of participation and avoid a new type of exclusion, in other words digital exclusion. We must not only take action to ensure that there is no digital divide in our democratic societies; we must also ensure that citizens see participation in public affairs as a means of self-fulfilment, a way of making known their opinions and preferences with regard to the issues which concern them most. It is essential that voters continue to be involved in public affairs once an election is over by keeping informed, expressing their opinion, taking part in public debates, proposing initiatives and taking part in decisions. The greatest contribution we can make to the progress of society is to be committed to addressing the problems and challenges that affect us all as a community and few things undermine our institutions more than disinterest and apathy with regard to public affairs. That is how one of the great theorists of representative democracy, John Stuart Mill, understood participative democracy; he believed that democratic participation was a form of citizen education and that it improved the quality of public institutions and fostered social progress.

The local level therefore plays a special role. Local authorities are the closest to the grass roots. They deal with matters that affect us most in our daily lives and are also the political sphere in which the results of joint efforts are most clearly and directly perceived. In addition, it is local councils that citizens most closely associate with the concept of participation and it is therefore from them that they expect a more participatory style of governance. Particularly so now that we have a great opportunity to foster and encourage participation in public affairs through new information and communication technologies. All of this means that local authorities now have, and must accept, a special responsibility to foster participation.

And this is the approach that the Madrid City Council has taken. For some time now we have been firmly committed to citizen participation and new technologies and this is reflected in practical initiatives. One of the first steps taken by the Madrid City Council to counter the digital divide was to launch the Madrid Technology project, which involved the establishment of 26 digital education centres for the citizens of Madrid. These centres have provided over 20 000 hours of technological training to more than a million people over the past four

years and this has made a decisive contribution to making Madrid one of the cities with the largest proportion of Internet users (53.1%). The preparation of the citizens of Madrid in the use of new technologies is not only reflected in the way they interact with the authorities and complete administrative formalities online but also goes hand in hand with an innovatory spirit that has made Madrid one of the leading centres of citizen Internet activity and creativity. It is also reflected in citizen participation rates.

The City of Madrid has been a pioneer in the systematic consultation of its citizens in seeking to ascertain their opinions, using both traditional methods and new technologies. In this way we are establishing a direct channel of communication with our citizens, which serves to ascertain not only their opinion on municipal activities, but also their suggestions when it comes to identifying new activities. We have consulted the inhabitants of Madrid on specific themes of major importance for the quality of life in the city, for example, the Special Plans for Investment and Infrastructure in certain districts of Madrid, the "Agenda 21" consultation of the districts, the City of Madrid Cycling Mobility Plan and the round tables we have held to address matters such as dialogue and coexistence in the districts. This concerns not only people born in Madrid but also new citizens who have come from other countries to seek new opportunities in our country and now make up as much as 17% of the resident population.

We also consulted our citizens on Madrid City Council's flagship project of the past few years, Madrid Río, and on many other proposals. I will not bore you with the details. I would also like to point out that since 2004 various procedures have been introduced in which electronic voting has been used, for example in the "Hortaleza participates" or "Centre District participates" events. Finally, I should not forget to mention that Madrid City Council now has an excellent website that has received various awards such as the TAW (Web Accessibility Test) award.

Before I finish, I would like to reiterate my thanks to all of you who have come here today to Madrid, and I trust that the conclusions that you reach in this Forum will be of great use to everyone.

Terry Davis
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Let me begin by saying that I do not think that there is any such thing as electronic democracy, just as there is no such thing as paper democracy. There are democracies on paper, of course, but that is another matter entirely.

We may speak of e-voting, e-campaigning, e-administration and any other e-words that may come to your mind, but democracy is simply democracy.

Democracy means that people are freely electing their government. The emphasis is on the word "freely". There are several conditions that must be met to guarantee this freedom in practice, and these conditions are valid and invariable regardless of whether people vote with their hands, with ballot papers or through their computers and blackberries. Most, if not all, of these essential conditions for a genuine democracy are codified in the European Convention on Human Rights.

What technology has changed is the environment in which the democratic process takes place. The use of the Internet has had a dramatic influence on every aspect of our lives, and the political process is no exception.

In all these areas – and this is the lesson the Council of Europe has also learned through our campaigns against racism, trafficking in human beings, cybercrime and the sexual abuse of children – the new information technology brings both opportunities and risks.

In the case of the political process, technology can help people to have more and better information, and help them to make more informed choices. On the other hand, the abundance of information also leads to confusion. We can have so much information that we suffer from mental indigestion. It may be a paradox, but too much information can result in greater ignorance.

Similarly, technology may have a positive impact on the participation of people in the democratic process, and facilitate different stages in this process, including the actual vote itself. On the other hand, for

this to happen, we must secure an open, reliable and secure access to the Internet for everyone. A gap between electronic haves and electronic have-nots is a reality and a real threat to democracy.

Democracy also requires trust. In all our countries, we observe a tendency for governments to collect and store an increasing amount of data on people. There is a genuine and legitimate public concern about how this data is handled and how it is used. This concern in turn has an impact on the readiness of the people to use new information technology in the democratic process.

This will be one of the most important issues addressed during the European Dialogue on Internet Governance, which will be hosted by the Council of Europe next week. The dialogue will emphasise the specific European approach to the relationship between security, privacy, and openness. The idea is to go beyond the perception that these are conflicting concepts. Rather, we will look at them as principles that can be simultaneously promoted and can even reinforce each other.

The key is to strike the right balance between regulation and freedom. We need to regulate because of the risks, but excessive intervention restricts the openness and the freedom inherent in the new information technologies, and it diminishes the benefits that they may bring to the democratic process.

This balance is reflected in a draft recommendation on e-democracy, which the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe is expected to adopt in the near future.

New technologies are also at work at this conference. The cameras you see around belong to Catch 21, a London-based Internet television channel. Catch 21 is run by young people, for young people. They have produced a video, which will be shown later, about young people and their views about democracy in the electronic age. Catch 21 will also be filming this event and will produce a video, which will be put on YouTube.

In conclusion, I would say that new information technologies offer tremendous opportunities, but they are not, in themselves, a miracle cure for the democratic challenges we face in many of our countries,

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and which have been the subject of our discussions at previous meetings of this Forum. If people are so uninterested and so disillusioned about politics that they do not bother to turn up and vote, they are not going to change their views merely because they can vote with a click rather than a ballot paper.

The fact is that high tech is no antidote to low trust.

Lluís Maria de Puig
President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

May I first say how pleased I am that we are gathered together today in Madrid in order to hold the 2008 edition of the Forum for the Future of Democracy, which will be devoted to a new, almost experimental theme, electronic democracy or e-democracy. My satisfaction goes hand in hand with a feeling of responsibility, since this forum in Madrid follows on from the extremely well-organised 2007 version held in Stockholm, whose work and results were extraordinary and will be very difficult to better. We therefore sincerely congratulate our Swedish colleagues and are aware that it will be extremely hard to equal their performance.

Over the next two days we will be discussing a highly interesting subject, that of application of the new technologies to the democratic system's functioning, that is to say turning the advances in electronic communication techniques to advantage in the administrative, electoral and public information fields for the use of public authorities and elected representatives. These are relatively new tools, or at least not as well known as others that have long proved their usefulness to the functioning of our democracies,

We have already been asking ourselves for some time whether democracy can stand the test of technological change, and we are seriously considering whether democratic mechanisms and institutions will not have to be adapted to the developments and the possibilities of the new electronic world. At the same time, people also talk about the problem of the "democratic deficit", for which no lasting solution has been found, a lack of communication and transparency to the point where a large number of citizens say they feel unrepresented by politicians and politics. A pervasive complaint is that elected representatives are out of touch with their electorate, or do not maintain sufficient contact with it, and people are gradually becoming alienated from politics, as can be seen from the progressive decline in electoral participation.

In addition, citizens, or at least many of them, are tempted by forms of "direct democracy", and various initiatives along these lines have

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been tested so as to permit members of the public to communicate directly with political authorities and representatives. Certain countries have also held electronic votes. It is true that the information and communication technologies nowadays allow new forms of participation in politics that were inconceivable not so long ago.

Many of us believe that, to counter the nihilistic tendency and the disinterest in politics, today more than ever before the high-speed information and communication networks offer instruments that can constitute particularly valid means of promoting citizen participation in the political process. Some of them have already been adopted within public institutions and in political circles:

– petition mechanisms;

– regulated channels for submitting proposals;

– means of direct contact with the authorities;

– communication with the authorities by e-mail;

– web pages and news blogs;

– use in the voting process.

Moreover, there is every reason to think that we will inevitably continue to progress in this field.

E-democracy, about which we will have much to say over the next few days, is not an end in itself. The sole possible objective is and must be enhanced democracy, the improvement of our system of rights and freedoms. It is a tool at the service of democracy. Under no circumstances must technical progress entail a reduction in democracy; on the contrary, it must always be synonymous with an enhancement, an advance in what Churchill described as the worst form of government apart from all the others.

It follows that, whatever use is made of them, these electronic tools must come with appropriate legal safeguards. We are not talking about indiscriminate use of the Internet, nor are we talking about YouTube. We must be very careful and cautious in the use we make of electronic democracy. The growing use made of this solution must not call into question or weaken representative democracy or its legitimacy. In fact

what is being sought is an increase in the communication possibilities of public representatives and authorities at all levels, and an expansion of the possibilities for citizen participation. This is the underlying goal.

The widespread use of opinion polls, interactive forms, web pages, blogs, twitter messaging, Facebook, portals and pure and simple e-mail itself allows direct communication on a huge scale, frequently of a personalised nature, which can doubtless bring political authorities and representatives closer to the citizen, and vice versa.

It goes without saying that, in some cases, use of these tools can involve risks and disadvantages that we should know how to overcome. In connection with Internet voting, for example, we must first and foremost avoid the emergence of a "digital divide" between voters, since people are unequal in their access to IT for reasons of age, culture, habits and spending power. This would constitute an unacceptable discrimination if it led to a form of exclusion where people were unable to exercise their right to vote on account of the system utilised. This is a very serious issue, as are a cast-iron legal guarantee of preservation of the secrecy of the vote and appropriate safeguards to ensure that there can be no tampering by electronic means (fraud, vote buying, etc.). All of this must be given careful consideration before applying the new technologies to the political process. Furthermore, their application in a given country is naturally dependent on its legal traditions, legislation and constitutional provisions.

We must in fact consider the urn and the computer as mere instruments or tools – means of voting, with the attendant legal guarantees – which should not change even the slightest result. Their use should not lead to any form of political favouritism or impairment of fundamental rights. Of course, the number of votes cast should be the same, and should be distributed in the same way, whatever system we use. And in both cases it must be guaranteed that there is no possibility of tampering, falsification or fraud. This principle must strictly govern the use of the new electronic technologies.

Similarly, the meaning of representative democracy must be preserved. Everything that enables citizens to express their views is

positive, but there must be no underestimating the importance of representation or the role played by politicians, citizens' elected representatives, at local, national or international level, who represent not their own personal interests but those of the community. Into the bargain they have a specific responsibility, that of being answerable to public opinion for their actions.

It follows that "e-democracy" can in no way be an alternative to representative democracy. That much is clear. However, when it comes to boosting citizens' power to participate, it seems to be an obvious solution.

In the end, as we can see, the theme of this forum is the future of democracy as a whole, not just in the context of the possibility of using new technology in electoral and consultation processes. Direct democracy is one aspect of this, perhaps the most striking and the most tricky, but it is not the only one. Let us therefore focus our debate on all the possibilities offered by the new technologies, with a view to utilising these tools to enhance our democracies.

I wish you every success in your proceedings. Thank you for your attention.

Yavuz Mildon
President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
of the Council of Europe

In May 2005, the Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe in Warsaw reaffirmed that safeguarding democracy and ensuring its progress towards participatory democracy – a truly citizen-centred democracy – was the core objective of our Organisation. The heads of state and government particularly underlined the importance of local and regional government in this process, as the foundation of our democratic society.

This goes without saying, because the development of our towns and regions provides a basis for national development and because it is in our local and regional communities that citizen participation in democratic processes starts. Indeed, the principle of participation is even enshrined in the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which stipulates that "the right of citizens to participate in the conduct of public affairs is one of the democratic principles that are shared by all member States of the Council of Europe".

It is also true that local and regional development can no longer be "ordained" from above but must involve local and regional authorities, the elected representatives who defend the interests and concerns of the "men and women in the street". It is thanks to their hands-on experience and their capability for putting our theoretical proposals into practice that the discussions during this Forum can yield tangible results for our citizens.

That is why the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the representative body of over 200 000 such authorities on our continent, has been actively involved in the proceedings of the Forum for the Future of Democracy since it was first established back in 2005, pursuant to the decisions taken at the Warsaw Summit. That is also why the Congress, in its own work, attaches special importance to citizens' democratic participation in all fields, including through the use of modern communication technologies and e-tools, the theme of the current Forum here in Madrid.

We firmly believe that local and regional tiers of government are the natural areas for applying electronic democracy, testing new tools and above all analysing the public response, the "feedback". E-voting, for example, is already being used in a growing number of municipalities – a ready example are the municipal elections in Finland on 26 October, which will be observed by the Congress. Public debates at local level are increasingly being thrown open to public participation via the Internet, and access to cyberspace – indeed, the level of digitisation of towns and regions has become an important aspect of the implementation of the European Union's Lisbon Strategy and the Council of Europe's Strategy for Innovation and Good Governance at Local Level. Needless to say, computerised viewing facilities have a really revolutionary effect on, and are of enormous assistance to, urban and rural spatial development.

In 2005, the very year the Forum for the Future of Democracy was founded, the Congress gave voice to its thinking on e-democracy in the resolution and the recommendation on new information and communication technologies as a new opportunity for local democracy. In these texts, adopted in 2006 and aimed chiefly at young people's participation, the Congress called on local authorities to bridge the digital gap by providing access to modern technologies to all groups of users, irrespective of their social background or geographical location, and particularly to underprivileged groups.

These texts have just been supplemented by the recommendations and resolutions this year on e-tools as an answer to the needs of local authorities and on electronic democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects, adopted at the Congress plenary session in May. We reasserted our belief that new information technologies will change the face of local democracy and that e-democracy is an instrument that can be used to counter citizens' disengagement and disillusionment with regard to public affairs and to build dialogue and trust, which are essential to good governance.

Electronic tools also help improve working methods and modernise administrations and public services and, as such, they open up very broad perspectives for local and regional authorities and their elected members. By using them we will be able not only to carry out more

effective work and to organise it better but also to reach those who do not normally participate in political life.

The public authorities have a dual role to play in this process: firstly as decision makers and service providers and secondly as agents of society that inform, encourage and initiate change. Electronic participation helps to mobilise civil society as a whole and to strengthen ties between the different levels of governance; in fact it goes further than mere consultation on projects and creates a new citizen culture that increases citizens' commitment at local and regional level, by ensuring that people are properly informed.

Public authorities at all levels of governance now have to confront the political disengagement of the citizens and the lack of confidence in elected representatives and political institutions. These trends demand the regeneration of democratic practices, greater transparency and greater citizen participation in the decision-making processes.

E-democracy, the use of the new communication and information tools, gives us the opportunity to respond to these concerns by opening the doors to the creation of a new environment for consultation and participation, the "citizen environment". It helps us extend our efforts to remote areas and to reach out to and draw in the most disaffected citizens, by expounding complex issues with high-quality information that is readily understandable and by encouraging transparency and the expression of individual as well as collective opinions.

E-democracy nevertheless requires a learning process that brings about an indispensable change of attitude and behaviour on the part of the public authorities, the citizens, the associations and the economic players. Elected representatives themselves are trying out new ways of conducting dialogue with their fellow citizens, thereby enhancing their representativeness. That is why appropriate training for public authorities, elected representatives and citizens is crucial to the success of our efforts and should be encouraged at all levels – national, local or regional.

Another important component in the success of e-democracy is the legislative and legal framework, which also requires co-ordination of

the action of governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society.

Only by combining our energies, those of our citizens, in a participative environment can we ensure the ongoing sustainable development of our democratic society. Modern technologies have opened the door for us. It is time to cross the threshold.

Christer Hallerby
State Secretary, Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality,
Sweden, representing the chairmanship
of the Committee of Ministers and reporting on follow-up
to the 2007 Forum Session in Sweden

It is an honour for me to be here today, representing the present chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers. I am also representing the link between last year's Forum meeting in Stockholm/Sigtuna and this meeting here in Madrid.

The Forum for the Future of Democracy is, in my view, a very important process. It provides a platform for strengthening democracy and good governance. Its potential lies within its flexible working methods, the possibility to identify relevant themes and the broad participation from both within and outside the Council of Europe.

The Forum is an inclusive process. It associates all main stakeholders of a genuine democratic society. The Forum is a good example on how the institutions within the Council of Europe can give new energy to the work for making participatory and inclusive democracy even stronger. I am very much looking forward to this Forum session here in Madrid.

I am happy to say that the meeting in Stockholm, except for the weather, was a great success. I think we met high expectations with an interesting content, well-organised process and challenging conclusions. And this also means that we, in our turn, have expectations for the continuation of the Forum process. I am sure that the Spanish hosts are very well prepared to carry out this event to everyone's satisfaction.

The theme of the session in Sweden 2007 was "Power and empowerment – The interdependence of democracy and human rights".

Human rights define some of the basic parameters for democratic governance. There cannot be true democracy without human rights, and for democracy to develop – in its turn – it is necessary to protect and promote human rights.

The session addressed issues such as the role and responsibility of the opposition, representative democracy at local and regional level, empowerment of the individuals and non-discrimination, respect for freedom of expression and association for civil society, and how to foster democracy, human rights and social networks.

As mentioned in Sigtuna, national human rights action plans could be a tool for identifying problems and weak areas regarding human rights and democracy. I am happy to be able to share with you that there will be an international follow-up conference on systematic work with human rights in Stockholm, from 6 to 7 November.

It was also concluded that different actors, such as NGOs and national human rights institutions, should be involved in all such processes at an early stage and on a regular basis. This is of course also of significant importance in improving the processes of accountability in a country's democratic system, for example its electoral system.

The Forum in Sigtuna referred to issues concerning increased citizen participation in decision making. There were interesting discussions on how to involve people in decision making between elections, and how to involve and develop the civil society.

The follow-up process is extremely important. We would like to express our appreciation to Spain as the session here aims to develop further the process begun in Stockholm/Sigtuna last year.

As addressed at the Forum last year, information and communication technologies can be a powerful tool for the promotion and protection of human rights and democracy. They have the potential to create more transparent and responsive government and to facilitate a participatory democracy.

E-governance policies, embedded in an appropriate regulatory framework, should enhance democracy. Also the respect for human rights with a view to empowering all individuals, in particular those in vulnerable situations, need to be underlined.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that increased participation will not be brought about simply as a consequence of progress in information and communication technologies. If such technologies

are to facilitate the empowerment and participation of individuals, the growing feeling of political discontent and disaffection among people must be addressed.

Mr Chairman, I saw that the title of this event is "e-Democracy: who dares?", I think that we, when closing this session on Friday, will have to ask ourselves: "e-Democracy: who doesn't dare?".

"Opportunities and risks of e-democracy"

Lawrence Pratchett
*Head of the Department of Public Policy, Leicester Business
School, De Montfort University, United Kingdom*

I want to share with you something that I discovered that was very surprising for me on Monday. Monday last week I discovered for the first time that we are really and truly in the Internet age.

Now, I can see from the looks on your faces that you do not think that is anything very surprising, but for me it was a big surprise because I was teaching a group of students aged 19-20 and I did the usual thing I do with them and asked them "when did you first send an e-mail?, when did you first look at a website?" and so on. And none of them, not one of them could answer that question because they did not remember. For the first time my students have come right the way through school, their whole lives with the Internet as far as they are concerned. They do not remember it as a new technology. It is something that has always been there.

Now, this to me seems to be very, very important for understanding what democracy is about in the electronic age and what we can deliver with e-democracy. We are really in the Internet age. If we think about how we use technologies in our day-to-day lives, whether it is Skype or some other technology that we are using, they are very much fundamental to everything we do, they shape how we got here to this conference today, they shape how we are going to communicate with our families later on, how we will communicate with our organisations and so on. So they are fundamental to what we do.

I was also interested to note that the Internet has penetrated right across Europe. Some statistics I looked at the other day suggested

that 48% of households across Europe – that is greater Europe, the Europe that the Council of Europe is interested in – now have some form of Internet access available to them either via broadband or via mobile phone technology and so on.

This is a significant step but, having said that, there are also significant problems from the democratic point of view. We know that there is still a significant digital divide in relation to the Internet both within countries (some people have access and some people do not) and also between countries. In some countries the penetration is more or less at the full extent that it can be without really extending it beyond those people who have the capacity to use it and in other countries it is very limited still.

Well, I am also aware that there have been very many e-democracy initiatives led by both governments and citizens, some of which have been a success but more of which have been a failure, and Vasilis Koulolias and I will talk more about these in our keynote speeches.

There is also, and I think this is fundamental to this whole conference in the next few days, significant uncertainties about what technology should be doing for democracy. Should it be reinforcing existing institutions of democracy by supporting politicians and parliaments in their work and governments more generally by enhancing transparency for example? Should it be engaging citizens more directly in the policy process in decision making and so on? Should it be seeking to improve the quality of deliberation so that citizens have more information and more knowledge with which to understand the political process? Should it be about building communities – actually helping communities to develop the resources that they have?

I am not going to try and answer those questions for you because, in some respects, I think e-democracy can be about all of those things, but I think that it is important to understand that it can do lots of different things and not all of those are mutually reinforcing.

I am going to deal with three very brief questions in the few minutes that I have available. Like all good academics, I can of course expand

on this indefinitely if you really want me to talk forever but I am going to try and keep my comments fairly brief.

I am going to ask first of all: "where are we now in terms of e-democracy?", particularly focusing on what governments have done and where citizens think they are in relation to that. Secondly, I am going to give a very brief discussion of how we got to here – how did we get to where we are now? And, finally, I am going to talk about where we are going, particularly focusing on some of the opportunities that we have, coming out of this conference and out of the work that the Council of Europe more generally has been doing in the area of e-democracy. And I am going to talk also about some of the risks that we might face; we have already picked up on some of these, but I will try and pick up on some of the other risks that I think are there.

So, let me start with our first question: where are we now in relation to e-democracy? And I want us to think about governments versus citizens here. Governments I think are generally, in Europe, on the cusp of e-democracy. That is they are not quite there yet. The Council of Europe has done a lot of experimentation: its Ad hoc Committee on e-democracy (CAHDE) has spent the last two years among other things collecting information on what every country in Europe is doing in relation to e-democracy. And most countries, not all, but most countries can claim to be doing some things in relation to enhancing democracy using new technologies. There have been lots of experiments: for example, we can point to the e-voting experiments in Switzerland and Estonia, some would claim they are not experiments but real life, that is not the debate I want to get into, but they provide us with real-life examples of what is happening in relation to e-voting. In other countries developing e-parliament, solutions are becoming very important and I see that Gherardo Casini is here from the United Nations talking about the project that they have developed in relation to that later in the week. In other countries, there are whole systems of electronic petitioning taking place: in Scotland, in Germany, and Estonia as well has a version of this, and various other countries as well are doing e-petitioning. Governments are sponsoring a whole range of things that might take place to enhance democracy. There

has also been a big explosion in terms of e-consultation and e-forums in different countries.

Now, these are quite interesting, because they do not fit very closely with Johan Gorecki's findings. These are top-down initiatives that seem to recreate what we had off-line, in the online world. Governments are doing things that are about how governments want to work, how they want to engage with citizens in particular ways.

But let us think about how citizens are using this technology for a moment, this wonderful Internet technology that my students now have grown up with and see as fundamental to their lives. Well, the mainstreaming of the Internet in their lives means that they are using exactly the same type of technologies that Johan Gorecki discusses and we all are in some respects. I was struck by some figures on Facebook use that said that there were 132 million visitors to Facebook in June alone and 117 million visitors to MySpace in the same month, that is June 2008. In the UK, recent statistics demonstrate that the average Facebook user in the UK spends two and a half hours per month on Facebook. The average Second Life user spends five and a half hours of their life per month on Second Life. Now these are significantly huge amounts of time for people who are active doing other things but they show that they are quite fundamental to the way in which people are operating. Some of the quotes that were given at the start of this session, on the film that was shown, were doing the same sort of thing.

There has also been this big growth in citizen journalism blogging and so on – in which citizens are busy using the Internet in ways that are developing their own communities, having their own discussions, leading their own process through their political and social life. I think the thing for citizens that has always been true in the off-line world is that they rarely distinguish between what is their social life, what is their economic interest and what are their political interests, so in the online world the same is happening. Facebook does not have its own political corner; some of the communities may be inherently political but much of what happens on Facebook and elsewhere (I am using Facebook by the way as an example rather than as the only technology here) is a range of discussions, some of which may lead

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to political engagement, others of which will not; that is the same in the off-line world.

So what I see here, and this is my first real significant point beyond the fact that we live in the Internet age, what I see happening, is a disjuncture between what governments are doing, on the one hand, to try to encourage e-democracy and the way in which citizens are using the technology. They have a different repertoire of use and I think we need to think more carefully about that repertoire of use.

The second question that I was going to answer is "how do we get here?" I will do it very quickly; I will allow Vasilis to do the more detailed historical process, but I think the interesting point is that where governments have got to in relation to e-democracy has been achieved through e-government. They started first of all offering services to citizens online, providing websites, creating systems in which you could order, pay your taxes, buy products and so on from the government, replicating the business sector, the commercial sector in terms of that model and then they have added on e-democracy. So we see in many countries, and this is particularly true of my own country, the United Kingdom, that governments see e-democracy as another service that it might provide citizens with. It is starting to move away from that now but in the past it was actually described as a service: e-democracy. Citizens do not see e-democracy in that way, they see a whole range of different things that they are using online and they have come to the political process, where they have done so at all, through their social and economic activity on the Internet. Again they do not distinguish between what is a government website and what is a commercial website in terms of how they might use it. They might complain about the government website, which has a 101 different things that you can do on it, whereas if you go to your travel agent website, or if you go to a book website, wherever, you can only do one real thing on it, making it much easier to use. But they do not really distinguish between them in terms of how they would want to use these websites, how they would want to use these technologies. So, what we have is governments expecting citizens to use their technologies in a whole range of different ways that do not reflect the repertoires of action and the approach to using the technologies that

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citizens have. This is very much true of my students, but also true I think of the wider communities in which we live.

This really begs another question: "do we expect too much of citizens online?" Do we expect that if we provide them with a forum, if we provide them with an opportunity to participate, that they will participate? I think the answer to that is yes. Governments have to think much more carefully about how they engage citizens with these technologies. Now, that is very easy for me to say because of course I am an academic, not in government. I do not actually have to find a solution, but I think that is the next step.

This leads me to my third question, which is: "where are we going?" And, again, I am going to be fairly brief here so that there is time for questions, but the real thing about where are we going I think is this challenge: to create democratic institutions that people want to access and know how to access when they want to, without having to jump through lots of hoops. So when I want to buy a book, I do not have to go through lots of steps; I have got a preferred supplier that I use to buy a book. When I want to book an airline ticket, I go to a particular travel agent and do that. I do not have to do lots and lots of searching around websites trying to find it. Now, if I want to save lots of money I might do, but this is the sort of repertoire of actions that citizens have and we have to find ways of supporting citizens in that process.

I want to finish by talking therefore about both the potential and the risks of e-democracy. The potential for e-democracy is great. If we can seize this moment – and I think this is the moment; we have arrived at the Internet age at last – then we can actually make democracy more efficient in terms of how it works for citizens, more effective therefore in terms of the way in which it approaches citizens, and more effective in terms of the way in which it builds consensus, provides opportunities for transparency and, in short, makes democracy work better.

But there are significant risks for governments in going down this route. And I am going to finish on a negative note by just highlighting a few of the risks that I think governments face. One is the privacy

risk. That is that governments who use these technologies for a whole range of things, from countering terrorism through to promoting democracy, run the risk of undermining their good democratic works by using the technology in anti- or non-democratic ways in which citizens feel that they are being watched. And you are not going to participate in a potentially "dangerous" discussion if you feel the government is watching you and trying to catch you out. Although I think in certain established democracies this is less of a problem, in less established democracies the issue of privacy is a significant issue that governments need to tackle.

The second risk (and there are only four of these risks by the way, before you think I am going to list 101 different risks) is one of individuation, that is the idea that one of the dangers with technologies as we see them now is that instead of coming to public meetings, instead of shaking hands with politicians, instead of meeting in your community, these technologies encourage you to engage late at night in your bedroom in a one-to-one relationship. Not even in a one-to-one relationship: sometimes simply putting information out there that other people may or may not access creates the idea of an individual relationship with the state rather than a community relationship with the state. We need to guard against that process and my answer to that problem is that e-democracy should not be the only solution to offer engagement, but should be one of many ways in which we engage with citizens, so that we do not create this process of individuation.

The third risk is one that I call "confusion". In a way, Johan Gorecki refers to it almost as information overload. In other words, I do not think governments should be offering so many different ways of engaging with citizens that they do not know which one is going to have the most impact, how they are going to make it work, and so on. I think limited experiments are better than lots and lots of experiments and again talking about my own country, the UK, we have learned the hard way there that doing fewer things is probably better.

Finally, and I think this is a positive risk so I am going to end on a positive note, failure is inevitable if we go down the e-democracy route. If we are going to be bold, and take risks there will be failures, there have already been failures and there will be more but we can

learn from these failures and in that way e-democracy will build slowly into something that becomes part of the mainstream activity of those very young people that I was referring to at the start of my presentation.

Johan Gorecki
CEO and founder of Globe Forum Business Network,
and co-developer of Skype, Sweden

I am from Sweden and a co-founder of Skype. I will address how this project came about, what we are doing today and the impact of Internet developments on social communities and on how people communicate.

Skype shows how quickly things can change; when we started Skype no one believed that an operator without offices could develop that fast worldwide. Indeed, we are not really a telephone operator, but an IP peer-to-peer system. Nonetheless, we reached quite large volumes with very few people and with one office. I think this is very typical of what can happen on the Internet.

The Internet is very straightforward: if you create something good, people will pick it up, and it will spread very fast. Skype builds what we call a peer-to-peer network: this means that value is created through involving others. Skype started in 2003, quickly grew to around 95 million users and we thought that 100 million would be the maximum. But after two or three years we reached 246 million users. Today, Skype has around 12 million active users online at any one time and in 2005 was sold to Ebay.

When we launched Skype it was an IP operator, but it has also created opportunities for people around the world to communicate with each other, especially in a global market where, for example, people might leave isolated villages to work abroad and they cannot afford to communicate with their families. We have also seen that in crisis situations like the tsunami, when phone operators went down and it was impossible to communicate via telephones, Skype was one of the ways that people could communicate with their families.

Comparing the Internet at its outset with where it is today, it has become very smart. The Internet creates enormous opportunities for individuals to communicate and to gain and spread information through different channels. Today, the issues are about people, about how they create their platform and how they decide what they want to communicate.

Ten years ago companies and governments were working with the Internet; today people are communicating with colleagues in their department, their company, offices abroad, friends and family. Through the Internet we can communicate with an ever-growing number of people. For example, through Facebook I have started to communicate again with friends from school and old colleagues I had lost contact with. It is a lot of fun but it is also important for my work.

Also, I am currently doing my Ph.D. and it is interesting to see how the academic world is also changing. Historically, Ph.D. communities worked through the alumni networks, which created different kinds of clusters. I do not think the old communities have disappeared, but there are new ways to communicate and share science, research and keep up-to-date with university colleagues and these new channels are very effective and powerful.

Communities in general now cover most parts of the world. Different communities come from different geographical areas. With Facebook, Trumster and MySpace, for example, we are seeing people talk with each other and create new communities. Furthermore, GPS systems, linked up with Skype and other social communities, can use technology in remarkable ways. Let us say, for example, I play chess and I am looking for chess players; I can programme my profile and use my mobile as a navigator to contact people in my community who may be nearby and send them an SMS saying "you're quite close, are you free to play chess?".

Internet-based support to civil society organisations is developing rapidly. A well-known example is Mama Lumka's care for homeless children which has benefited from micro-finance partnerships organised via the Internet. There is also Kiva, initiated in the United States, which provides an Internet-based micro-financial tool to projects in Africa, Bangladesh and India. This means supporters are able to bypass the banking system and help those charities they wish to, without intermediaries.

Indeed, we are seeing tremendous developments when it comes to micro-financial solutions on the Internet. Another example might be pharmaceutical workers who would like to open up a pharmacy

somewhere and require support and finance. They can post the project on the Internet and other people interested could either invest or lend them money. I think these approaches will be used by the Western world not only to provide aid to developing countries, but also to create new standards and new ways of supporting innovators and entrepreneurs with their projects.

It is very interesting to use the Internet to bring different disciplines together and start to speak with each other about developing projects. My very first job was in the banking sector and during that time I was only mixing with other people in the financial sector. I would not say that this is dangerous, but it is not stimulating.

Online tools can increase the speed of innovative development. I am the founder and CEO of Globe Forum, an online community that offers a marketplace and a community for sustainable innovations. We have a community of focus groups on the Internet with 110 000 members working with projects. They identify networks and talented people in the network in order to further the advantages and opportunities created by the Internet. For the individual it can look quite confusing, but it is possible to see how people communicate with others and where the information comes from. This was not possible twenty years ago.

In many cases the academic world finds it difficult to commercially develop its innovations. Globe Forum serves to match-make innovators, entrepreneurs and investors. When it comes to clientele companies, we have identified that the most important stakeholders are cities, regions and industrial players.

Globe Forum has created the Facilitator programme for innovators, which aims to bring innovations to the market faster by improving contacts between businesses and investors. Because innovation companies often have limited funds we offer an option to buy a certain number of shares in the companies instead of upfront payment.

Globe Forum started to develop projects online but it also recognises the value of meeting people, so half our time is spent on the Internet and the other half involves meetings around the world with members of the community. Interestingly, around 1 500 to 2 000 people come

to every meeting in the different cities. Here we bring together the brains of the Globe Forum community and it becomes very interesting when this becomes standard practice.

Things are changing quickly and new possibilities are being created. Now people can talk with potential clients, with governments, politicians and academic groups at the same time and foster shared interests in different projects. For Globe Forum, our shared communities involve people, companies, countries and cities, as well as media.

Globe Forum is also working with big stakeholder groups such as Intel on new techniques to decrease CO_2 emissions and develop new energy efficient processes. Already the Internet is having an impact on decreasing CO_2 emissions as it offers new ways of communicating, which mean less travel; we no longer need to go to New York for meetings, we can use telephone conferences and community solutions to do that.

We know that there is going to be a very big increase in the world's population and that people need education. I do not think that we will be able to offer education to all people in the world physically, so we need to start with education programmes on the Internet. One example is MIT, which now offers full university programmes online.

We need to switch from teaching to learning from the world. We need to merge disciplines and use virtual organisations. Could we have imagined fifteen or twenty years ago that we would have access through the computer to 10 000 newspapers and 40 billion pages of information? This creates enormous opportunities, for example in Africa, as the world actually comes to the people. Furthermore, education is very important to avoid conflicts around the world.

Regarding research, the Internet creates transparency and helps avoid overlapping innovation. It brings researchers and innovators together and makes it easier for people in different parts of the world to avoid developing the same products. Companies today need to develop very fast and they need to implement more open and innovative approaches. They cannot continue to develop things in their own IT departments, they need to be able to scan the markets and work with the technology.

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However, the Internet also has downsides. It increases the problems of abuse. Also, we have seen a significant rise in extremist and terrorist groups with terrorists communicating through the Internet in ways that are hard to track.

There is too much information available. People are always connected and we see new types of disorders. They are not at ease knowing that they are always connected wherever they are: their telephone is ringing, their blackberry is vibrating, they have an e-mail message. It is very important to be able to turn off the electronic world. People need some quality time for themselves; time to think about what they are doing. Reading e-mails all the time and jogging with your phone on is not an efficient way of working.

There are also security and legal issues. One trend that I find quite scary is my final point: once published, always published. I know a lawyer in Sweden who was wrongly accused. Within a couple of minutes the hits on the Internet for that person increased from 3 to over 3 000. When the newspaper later apologised and admitted that the accusation was wrong, the issue did not really disappear from the Internet, it remains there and he will be judged. This is problematic.

On the other hand, I travel a lot and the most amazing thing is that I can still communicate with my daughter, who sent me a doll down my mobile phone this morning.

Vasilis Koulolias
Executive Director, Gov2u, Greece

It is very interesting for me as an Athenian to be here and to talk about democracy. I feel very privileged and also humble. To talk about e-democracy, though, I will not take you back 2 500 years.

So let us look at the e-democracy tree. What is e-democracy to the practitioners? Of course, at the base of the tree is the citizen. At the top of the tree sit the elected officials; somehow the citizen needs to reach the top to be able to communicate with someone. Of course, it is the institution that is supporting the elected official in the conduct of his business and work. The lobby is another branch of the tree that we should not neglect, as they represent a group that needs to be engaged throughout the debate process. Civil society is closer to the citizen. The media occupy another branch as they play a major role in getting information out and across. Of course, we have issues and different layers at the local, regional and national government levels. Education is there at the heart of the matter and right at the top, above everything else, is policy. The citizen, in a democratic process, is integral to, and needs to be engaged in, the formation of policy issues. This is what democracy means and this is what e-democracy should be all about.

Now let us look at some of the attempts that have been made over the years to get citizens involved. I will take you back to the 1980s and 1990s in the United States. These are some headlines that were seen in the local media: "Advancing democracy with a wireless LAN", "Technology launched in law-maker laps", "Legislators merging in the information superhighway. In Nevada, public to benefit from new computer access".

What the politicians actually did back in the early 1990s was to start putting proposals up on the Internet in bulletin boards, and citizens would just call up and state their views. How did it work? In Indiana, for example, they would publish legislation online while making it available offline. They would allocate an office where Senate employees could pick up the phone and listen to constituent concerns, in an online-offline type of approach. A constituent could call or e-mail a

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system called "LISTEN", which stands for Legislative Information Service Network. There would be six or seven employees sitting in front of their computers fielding phone calls. Via caller ID, the system would identify where the constituent was calling from and automatically select the appropriate elected official. Meanwhile, the Senate operator would write down the constituents' comments on the legislative bill and would forward it to the legislator and the staff.

Afterwards, the senator or his or her legislative staff would respond to the constituent. As a result, while the senator was in the chamber, he or she had a programme called "CHASY", which stands for CHamber Automation SYstem, operating through a touch-screen wireless laptop so that they could actually see a legislative bill with all related information. There was a button with each bill labelled "opinion". Pushing the button would display a pie chart showing how many of their constituents agreed with this bill and how many disagreed.

Regarding the telephone LISTEN activity, the Principal Secretary of the Indiana Senate informed us that in April 1995, 12 450 calls that were placed to the Senate, of which only 9 240 were answered and recorded. I suppose that this is one of the risks of using these types of technologies: not all of the calls could be answered or some of the callers hung up. A few cartoons in the papers touched on another risk – namely that some legislators would be playing games with their laptops.

Now let us look briefly at the dynamics of policy making and then we will move on to what is happening today and how we are moving forward.

So, first of all, as we saw, we have the elected official on the tree, we have the institution, we have the constituent, we have the lobby and civil society, which I would put all together. Then we have the media. The institution has a direct relationship with the elected official and the constituent via different methods and interactions. The lobby can actually give their views to their elected official and to the institution and they can also influence the media. Meanwhile, the media can influence all of them. Therefore, as we are looking at the decision-making

process within an e-democratic framework, we need to consider all of the players and dynamics. As Abraham Lincoln said, "it is the man who does not want to express an opinion whose opinion I want", and there are a lot of them out there. So a space for public debate actually needs to facilitate all possible players.

Since 2000, enabling Web and business process technologies have begun to extend the legislative environment and deliberation space between elected officials and their constituencies – technologies such as the ones developed for the EU-funded project called "e-representative", where an actual collaborative space was developed for elected officials for inter- and intra-parliamentary communication. In addition, we cannot neglect social networks that hold another key to the whole policy debate, where many of the stakeholders play a role, and constituents bring their collective voice to this space for public discourse. In this way, the distribution of opinions is ultimately much more equitable.

Integration and transparency/integrated voting and information system: here we are looking at an old desk of an elected official and then the same desk with modern technology, with touch-screen displays, from which they can actually interact with their constituency in the outside world, even if they are on the floor of the Senate, using fingerprint identification for security and so on. So this takes place right from the desk of the elected official.

Citizen information facilities provided by municipalities: in this project in Catalonia, there are close to a hundred municipalities that are working together. Developments are also under way in Aragon and Valencia, among others, to bring technologies forward to allow citizens to engage in the political debate. Other systems have been developed that integrate Google maps that visually represent proposed policies. For example, if there is a proposal for a natural gas pipeline in a municipality, a notification can be sent to all the citizens within the perimeter of that natural gas pipeline asking them to get involved.

Collaborative facilities between elected officials and constituents: here, on the left-hand side, we have offline and online collaboration with the water agencies in Catalonia where they are trying to promote

safer water and better rivers. They meet offline and online with citizens and educate them on the issues. The outcome of this interaction will be built into the policy in the Catalan Regional Parliament.

The other one is Demos@work, a project that includes the Parliaments of Lithuania and Catalonia as well as several MEPs from the European Parliament. The topic of discussion is smoking and public health. Personally, I do not like it – as I am a smoker – but anyway. Then there is the Voice project being implemented in the *Land* of Baden-Württemberg in Germany together with the European Parliament, where they discuss consumer affairs policies. This is quite interesting because they have attracted a lot of media attention. A number of people have gone to that region and have expressed their opinion and, speaking directly with their elected officials, they are able to visualise exactly where the proposal is and what their contribution means, as the proposal is coming under discussion.

Now let us look at how upcoming technologies will change the public sphere for policy debates. We will see overall improvement in one-to-one, many-to-many and many-to-one relationships. What that means for e-participation applications is:

–   targeted and specialised collaborative tools;

–   increased trust between elected officials and their respective constituency as it is very important to be able to know that the user is actually a constituent who belongs to the elected official's geographical area through eID interoperability;

–   geospatial representation through mapping and actually visualisation of the arguments, in addition to other policy performance measurement tools;

–   semantics technologies with specialised ontologies where you can actually process information, categorise it, and filter it so as to make the debate much easier for both constituents and elected officials.

The previously mentioned technologies will result in improved interactivity and a near-reality experience between elected officials and their constituents and vice versa.

The introduction of government assessment technologies and grass-roots measurement of government performance will allow a more inclusive and engaging policy-making process. There are projects like the MIT One laptop per child that started a domino effect affecting how hardware is manufactured. Now we see ASUS "EEE" has come out, and a number of other manufactures are getting computers out there at a very good price. Now let us see what it takes to make this happen? The first and most important requirement is political will and mandate; second, institutional adaptation; third, involvement of the media and civil society; fourth, marketing of e-participation; and, finally, politicians who are prepared to listen.

Steven Clift
Director of Publicus.Net, United States

Government 2.0 meets everyday citizens and democracy

I started "e-democracy.org", a citizen project whilst working in government, so my perspective was government "by day" and citizen "by night". This dual approach is also taken by this conference with the participation of grass-root citizen activities through the NGOs and with the participation of government representatives promoting democracy in public life.

I have had a lot of dreams about how e-tools can be used not only to give people a voice, but also to really solve problems in communities and to make democracies vastly more engaging. But then my wife and I had a second child and I now experience what most people experience: a humongous time crunch.

E-tools offer the possibility for people to participate from anywhere, at anytime, in a personalised manner. Most traditional political participation at local level is based in buildings and in meetings that take place at specific times. Our modern lives mean that people do not have the time, or maybe the transport, or even the interest, to be as engaged as was required in years past. E-democracy does not aim to replace the town hall meeting or opportunities to be involved in person; nothing beats the power of looking someone in the eye or shaking hands. But ultimately, if democracy is not available to people on their own terms, it will not exist in the long term.

After almost fifteen years involvement in e-democracy, I would conclude that representative democracy is not adapting. We have early adapters here and experimenters there, but this is a 5% crowd. The focus of our reflections should be on how to involve and include the other 95%.

One of the problems is that Facebook, MySpace and other social networks primarily serve to publicise private life. There is a big difference between publicising private life and having representative democracy online or creating public life amongst people who live near one another.

There are online newspapers and blogs and other information sites that are a form of political engagement. However, these sometimes bring out the worst in us and e-democracy is needed to counter the negative things that are happening on the Internet in the political sphere. E-campaigning, for example, is often about organising people to gain power, money and influence and it can be in conflict with other elements in society.

In the United States, there are a few things that we are good at on the Internet and in politics; we are good at making noise through online advocacy, raising money and e-campaigning. However, we have a lot to learn from Europe in terms of e-consultation and e-participation because we tend not to focus on this in between elections.

Ultimately, it is a negative approach to politics if citizens remain limited to the use of electronic tools to politically arm themselves and to fight for influence and power, or if they simply remain hidden behind a disempowering anonymous cloak with online news and blog comments.

Those of us who want to build democratic engagement need to create alternatives to this "default mode". It is not good enough to say that the Internet is going to be a democratising medium. We have to make things happen online in order to create a better democratic space. The challenge, as I suggested in my article, "Sidewalks for democracy online", is to build real public life online.

I would like to start from the premise that e-government to date is impoverishing democracy. When citizens go to a town hall, there is often a space at the entrance where people can gather or can talk to neighbours while waiting in line. There is perhaps a rack of news-papers, maybe a bulletin board and public meeting rooms. In contrast, when you are on an e-government website it is a singular experience: you cannot talk to the people next to you and say "this line is taking too long", "we need a new mayor" or "I agree, let's work together to improve our community".

In many cases, the number one interface for citizens with the govern-ment is now the Internet and I estimate that each day there are more citizens on the city's website than actually physically go to the town

hall. So where are the public spaces? Where are the online consultations? Where are the e-petitions? Where are these aspects of the interactive Web in the public authority context?

When I was responsible for the state government portal in Minnesota, I realised that e-government is being framed in terms of efficiency, security and transactions. All this is the opposite of democracy, which requires openness, transparency and risk-taking.

We need to communicate better with the people who build e-government. Our governments need to ensure that those people who are responsible for the democracy-building side of governance have access to the necessary online tools. E-democracy as a subset of e-government is having a very difficult time and we cannot wait for the e-government team to add those tools because their training and mindset is based on a very different framework.

In most cases, the blogosphere is merely democratising punditry. Previously there were 300 regular guests on 24-hour television news talk shows; today there are a further 3 000 bloggers who are essentially trying to get onto television news talk shows. When you bring that model to the local level, it is actually more divisive than the town hall meeting room and the face-to-face type of activity that it may be replacing. I think it is important to understand that what may be good at national level may not be the model we would like to promote in our local communities.

We need to make the Internet a democracy network "by nature". This is difficult to address because democracy is fundamentally based on geography unlike the Internet. We need content on the Internet to be more geographically-based or "tagged". Technically speaking there are a lot of so-called content management systems, namely people producing web pages, but there is no standard way to describe the place that such content is associated with.

In reality, governments, as well as many media sites and place-specific blogs, are generating geographically specific information. However, it is not easy to aggregate that "what's new" information and this is a crucial. If you are a local official and you have heard about these blogs, are you going to pay any attention to the public sphere online

if you have no idea whether they are your constituents or not? No. However, if content on the Internet becomes more geographically navigable, public officials will pay more attention to their citizens out there across the Web 2.0 environment.

It is important to think more about how governments and others invest in the online world and find ways to make geography a stronger factor. This will make our democracy-building that much easier further down the line. We need to make democratic building blocks an integral part of the Internet rather than something we add on later at a much greater cost. Ultimately, place matters.

Most people when they go online think about going out to the world. But those of us who are building e-democracy need to think in terms of coming home online. The time people spend going out to public meetings is decreasing and if most people's experience online only relates to going into the world or to private life activities, and not to public life activities, there will inevitably be a decline in democratic public life.

We also need to think about infrastructure, for example why are there are no white pages on the Internet. If my bicycle was stolen I would have previously had to go door to door to my neighbours to collect e-mail addresses to be able to send out a simple note saying "did anyone see anything?" Obviously, you do not want your e-mail address out there for everyone to access, but a site where the 25 closest neighbours could see each other's e-mail addresses would be good. There is the issue of identity and security, but perhaps there is a way to enable people who live with one another to opt into such communication. The fact that there are no white pages means that people have not been thinking about local community when it comes to Internet infrastructure.

It is important to make democracy more efficient for both decision makers and citizens. But we must not forget that e-democracy is not really about numbers or speed, but about making better decisions and building trust in different types of outcomes. Numbers and speed do not justify investing resources in e-democracy, there must also be more concrete outcomes.

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We need to look closer at the inconsistencies between public authorities who are trying to attract people to their websites for interaction, consultations and so on and what citizens are doing in the public sphere. It is important to take this a step further and think about how governments, particularly civil servants, could see reaching out to citizens as an integral part of their job. For example, on a health issue being discussed in a community, the health workers should be able to engage with people where they are online and correct erroneous online information about a flu bug spreading through the town, or provide a web-link to a health clinic. Waiting for people to come to a government website is outdated Government 1.0.

Moving on to regulatory issues and the rule of law, if we look back five years from now and ask for outcomes from this conference, I am going to be looking for digital democracy acts. A number of national parliamentarians and local authorities suggest that if they had the resources they would be able to act on this issue. Indeed, it might be that national authorities are keen to mandate local governments to do things they do not wish to do themselves. But as our representatives, members of parliament have a duty to think about the most important aspects of e-democracy and their universality.

As an example, many public authorities have open meeting regulations that require meetings to be announced in the press, or perhaps on a physical bulletin board outside the building. Regulations should be modified to require such meetings to also be posted on the Internet. This could increase the number of local authorities and national ministries announcing meetings on their websites from half of them to all of them.

Electronic access to information is sometimes seen as an old issue, but the reality today is that citizens want rapid access to information through news alerts and web feeds (for example, RSS). It is empowering if citizens can find out about a meeting or a news report or a new plan while there is still time to do something about it and react. Rapid information feeds are still very rare in government. If I would look for a quick fix or a quick investment that is technologically driven and does not require legislative change, I would suggest the creation of personalised e-mail notification tools combined with web feeds.

MySociety.Org, the UK-based e-democracy site, does what I call "scrape and innovate". What I mean by scrape is that they go to the parliament's website and take the data off, put it into a useful database format (for example, XML) and then do really interesting things with it: they create a highly interactive interface to the parliament. The parliament itself does not do this, and maybe never will or even never should. But, because the data is available, third parties can innovate with it.

Indeed, one can go beyond "scrape". In the USA there is a project led by the Sunlight Foundation called the Open house project. It encourages governments to put more decision-making information online in raw format so that other websites can take that information, organise it and add further interactive services. Such projects can make it easier for national and local media sites to be an access point into public meetings, public documents and decision-making processes. E-democracy should be everywhere, not just on government sites.

To judge the success of this conference, in five years let us measure how many public authorities have at least one staff person, or even a staff team, whose job it is be to help lead e-democracy in government and help the public interact with governance. Such online democracy representatives already exist in, for example, Estonia and Queensland, Australia. Lead civil servants and programme funding to help ministries and others move into the e-democracy process and involve civil society is required. How do you foster groups like "MySociety.Org"? How do you find the resources? How do you involve groups like "Catch 21", a non-partisan, impartial youth video project here at the conference?

As with television and radio fifty years ago, governments need to ask what the Internet can offer that the market itself will not provide. We need to know what to invest in. This will not always be on governments' terms because civil society activities, which may be more impartial than advocacy efforts, already have an incentive to use electronic tools but may also need support.

Regarding accountability and environmental monitoring, there is a growing trend by governments to put real-time data online, for

example about pollution. The District of Columbia has real-time feeds of data that they are making available online. The information might include the number of parking tickets issued that day, police issues and service-related information. It can offer a pulse on how well the locality is delivering services to its citizens and that means accountability: accountability for companies and accountability for public authorities.

It is very important for public authorities to address e-inclusion and reach out to the socially excluded. My non-profit "E-Democracy.Org" undertakes a lot of volunteer activities – but there is a limit to that capacity. We have found that real resources are necessary to launch an online community neighbourhood forum in a relatively deprived area. The challenge goes well beyond the capacities of volunteers. Hope does not pay the bills.

Finally, I would like to ask how we can restore community bonds. This is a much broader concept than making government more democratic; it is about creating a democratic and inclusive society. It is about making sure that people have real access to each other in public life online. It also relates to the implementation of government programmes not just input into policy making. Convening stakeholders online to help government implement their policy and mission – output – is a significant area of opportunity. Such interactivity could be used to help lower costs and engage stakeholders who are often already delivering public services in a different way.

I have addressed the role of civil society mentioning the example of "E-Democracy.Org" and what can happen if we really embrace the Web 2.0 environment. The focus needs to be on enabling public authorities and their decision-making information to enter the data stream and enter this network of networks. When this happens we have to accept and understand that people will misrepresent the information from time to time. But 95% of the time they will not and the fact that the information is reaching so many more people makes e-governance worthwhile.

Citizens do not have a choice for every decision. I cannot pay taxes to another state for services because they have a better website.

However, citizens are choosing everyday about how they use their online time. We are losing an access to people if they only go to the media and opinion sites because they think that there is nothing for them on a government or civil society website.

E-democracy in governance is not a choice, it is about the survival of the very democratic society we hold dear.

I would like to conclude with an invitation to continue this dialogue via a blog/e-newsletter I have been running since 1998 called "Democracies Online Newswire – DoWire.Org". It connects 2 500 members around the world interested in e-democracy, including a special online community of practice for Europe and other regions. For those in civil society who are interested in the "local up" approach, I also invite you to connect with lessons from E-Democracy.Org's growing neighbourhood Issues Forum network.

Sub-theme 1
Democratic governance

Workshop I: e-participation
Issues paper: "E-democracy relationships
and responsibilities"

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Democratic processes and relationships

This workshop asks how e-participation can enhance democratic processes. To fulfil this mandate, we should avoid interpreting democratic processes only as those managed by government or parliamentary bodies. Democracy resides in the many relationships among citizens and between citizens and government and we need to take an inclusive view of democratic processes to reflect this. The constitutional processes of representative government are one facet of democracy. If e-democracy is allied to a government-centric view of democracy, its strength and legitimacy will rise and fall with those of the current government, whereas the true motor for e-democracy is the participation of the people.

E-democracy literature habitually begins with a lament for the state of democracy and many e-participation initiatives are not clearly aligned to traditional processes. In some cases, initiatives seem to use information and communication technologies (ICTs), especially the Internet, to bypass traditional structures of representative democracy and open new channels directly between the citizens and executive bodies of government on specific topics. In other cases, e-participation initiatives enable citizens to monitor their representatives and government or deliberate policy issues amongst themselves. In many cases,

these initiatives are not identified as e-democracy, though they are vital forms of the online public sphere.

Democracy and technology in flux

E-participation is a field that is continually attempting to establish ground rules and concepts (Rose and Sanford, 2007), at the same time as its two major aspects, technology and democracy, are undergoing constant growth and change. Experiences of democracy and technology are changeable and subjective. Citizens have a variety of technical skills combined with a variety of social/political interests (Macintosh, 2006) – also true for representatives. Our discussion needs to be sensitive to this flux.

Democracy is a fluid term rather than a fixed part of a shared objective: "Democracy as an idea and as a political reality is fundamentally contested", according to Held (2006). The democratic system – processes, relationships and expectations – vary from one country to another and seem to be permanently changing. In Europe we have "new democracies"[2] emerging from authoritarian systems, undertaking the transformation to participatory democracies. We also have established democracies, struggling to establish fruitful relationships between citizens, representatives and government. Within both types of democracy, modes of governance and citizen participation vary according to issues, topics and responsibility. For example, an environmental question may concern action by a local authority, but be guided by EU legislation and citizens may use different methods to influence outcomes, according to topic (Anttiroiko, 2003). Governing bodies do not see their role as static, but devise initiatives to transform government,[3] including relationships with citizens: for example, UK Government proposals focus on constitutional renewal and investigate into ways to re-invigorate representative democracy, increase

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2. The term "new democracies" is taken from Coleman and Kaposi (2006). We recognise that these countries may have longer histories and traditions of citizen engagement than this term implies and that "recently interrupted" democracies may be more accurate.

3. In the UK, transformational government aims "to seize the opportunity provided by IT to transform the business of government", Chief Information Officer Council. www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/cio/transformational_government.aspx.

citizen engagement and make the political system more responsive to the public (Ministry of Justice, 2008).

Equally, access to and use of ICTs varies enormously, through both time and space. E-participation currently requires some confidence with technology (usually Internet-based tools). Skills, preferences and access vary widely between users and over time. For example, broadband use in the home increases the propensity to use the Internet every day for a wider variety of tasks, especially to create content (Horrigan and Rainer, 2002) and, specifically, to participate in e-democracy or digital citizenship (Mossberger, 2008). In newer democracies, access is changing rapidly as the telecommunications sector is opened up (European Commission, 2006). In established democracies, patterns of media use are changing, as broadband access in the home becomes the standard.[4]

Whilst diverse governments place ICTs prominently within their strategies for change, other organisations and groupings of people increasingly use the Internet for activism and debate. E-participation is an evolution of democracy that is not confined to government. However, e-participation could bring revolution to democratic structures: the structure in which elected representatives serve citizens based on their shared locale is rivalled by relationships directly between citizens and government, categorised by topic or theme. We need to look at where e-participation supports positive change and recognise that this is not always driven or managed by government. Below, we look at a few case studies, where e-participation is powered by different democratic actors. The case studies are taken from both newer and established democracies to illustrate the changes in roles and responsibilities, allied to the different contexts.

Politika.lv[5]

In Latvia, this well-respected portal dedicated to public policy serves as an independent arena for policy analysis. The editors, the non-profit

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4. For example, 56% of all UK households had a broadband connection in 2008, up from 51% in 2007. www.statistics.gov.uk/CCI/nugget.asp?ID=8&Pos=1&Col Rank=2&Rank=448.
5. www.politika.lv.

organisation Providus, invite experts to submit commentary or research reports on public policy issues. These are accompanied by interviews and round table discussions on pressing problems facing Latvian society. Politika.lv invites comments by citizens, using blogs, discussion and polling. The aim is to enable citizens to take an active and informed part in building a strong democracy. In this case study, we see an independent organisation supporting citizens' role in democracy – "to keep an eye on the actions and the resolve of Latvia's public servants" and promote informed, high quality public participation. This role is particularly useful where transparency and horizontal accountability are low and media quality or independence is questioned. Providus reminds us that responsibility for democracy does not reside within the government alone.

Digital Dialogues: David Miliband MP's blog

The UK's Digital Dialogues initiative is a three-year project investigating ways in which central government could use ICT to enable and enhance public engagement. It was commissioned by the Ministry of Justice (then Department for Constitutional Affairs) and carried out by the Hansard Society.[6] Trial projects piloted online engagement in different government departments, using different styles and formats in different policy contexts. Blogs were used in a number of these trials. David Miliband MP's ministerial blog[7] accompanied him through various positions and departments, first at the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) where, in 2005, it was the first UK ministerial blog. The aim was to establish a direct communication channel between the minister and the public. The blog transferred, with Miliband, to the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in 2006. Reviewed in this first phase of the Digital Dialogues project, the blog received criticism, but also positive feedback. "People welcomed the opportunity to scrutinise the minister directly without the intermediation of the media. They liked being able to get an alternative view on what a government minister was doing and thinking on a daily basis" (Ferguson, 2006). As a vehicle

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6. www.digitaldialogues.org.uk; www.justice.gov.uk; www.hansardsociety.org.uk.
7. www.digitaldialogues.org.uk/interimreport/parttwo/miliband.

for information provision and gathering feedback and input, the blog seemed to enable more modern relationships between government and citizens: casual, but transparent, as it came to "combine policy, positioning and consultation purposes". Miliband became Foreign Secretary and a suite of blogs[8] was set up in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) to "encourage a range of FCO personnel (from ministers to staff) to blog" and "to find ways of feeding issues raised during engagement (rather than consultation) into the policy cycle" (Miller and Williamson, 2008).

Media reaction to the initial ODPM blog focused on the technology – first ministerial blog, choice of proprietary software, etc. – whereas the place of the blog in evolving democracy may be more significant in the long run. This evolution is the direct and transparent interaction between a government department and the public, especially as this interaction is centred on shared interest in a topic. Miller and Williamson identify this topic-based interest as a feature not specifically of e-democracy, but of modern citizenship: "the kinds of single-issue politics that are becoming increasingly popular offline". This is a recognised challenge for democratic processes. As people's political interest and activity centres more on specific topics, while political parties become less distinct in their stance, democratic models centred on party loyalty and regular elections are parallel, at best, to citizen engagement.

Western Balkans Democratic Participation: WEB.DEP

My final study is a new initiative, with cross-border dimensions. The WEB.DEP[9] project has established an online initiative, consisting of national thematic portals, to enable sharing of news and public information. These portals contain community forums, integrated with the news system and designed to support e-participation. The portals are hosted and managed by national news agencies – Albanian Telegraphic Agency (ATA), Macedonian Information Agency (MIA) and National News Agency of the Republic of Serbia (Tanjug). There is also a

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8. http://blogs.fco.gov.uk.
9. Sponsored by the European Commission: FP6-045003-WEB-DEP. www.web-dep.eu.

central forum, in English, to facilitate regional interaction (Taylor-Smith and Buckner, forthcoming). This project reflects concerted efforts by the EU and the Western Balkan countries to establish strong new democracies, recognising that the media play a fundamental role in this aim (European Commission, 2006). Here, media organisations are in the centre of relationships between governing bodies and citizens, moderating discussions, pursuing feedback and publishing results. A project aim is to bolster media independence and invigorate the Balkan public sphere. This reflects a traditional democratic role for media, but one that e-democracy in northern Europe can seek to replace, as in the blogs described above. The switch in emphasis reflects the different democracies in their current, transient form. As the basis of democracy is shared, here between media, citizens, government and representatives, e-democracy is as likely to benefit these relationships as subvert them.

Conclusions

By looking at initiatives in very different democracies, the fluid nature of e-democracy is highlighted. E-participation initiatives need to be shaped to their context, not just of topic and policy stage, but the wider context of their democratic sphere and the technological preferences of relevant people. Current studies emphasise this: "What emerges from the three phases of Digital Dialogues is that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' solution to online engagement and there are no right answers – what works in one situation can prove very wrong in another" (Miller and Williamson, 2008). The body best placed to take responsibility for individual initiatives may not be the government.

One way for e-democracy to increase responsiveness to the democratic climate is to identify contexts in which many of its goals are being met and provide the missing pieces. These missing pieces are more likely to be connecting nodes, rather than stand-alone websites: e-democracy's constant is the network. Once we acknowledge that various people and organisations are producers, managers and instigators of democracy, we will recognise more online places where e-participation is thriving, though unlabelled. The challenge will be the best way to support these with good quality information and to

channel their expertise and outputs to policy makers. Elements of this challenge are described in the Power of Information Review (Mayo and Steinberg, 2007) and e-democracy theorists and practitioners in the UK are devising models and pilots to use these ideas to re-invigorate e-democracy.

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Report on Workshop I

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Introduction

The overall theme of Workshop 1 was "e-participation". The scope of the morning session was broad, with the theme "ICT for participatory democracy". In the afternoon, the focus moved towards e-parliament with the theme "Opportunities for and challenges to representative democracy". Throughout the day, 12 experienced and renowned speakers interacted with a lively and informed audience. E-democracy research, projects, ideas and recommendations were introduced and discussed from all angles – practical, theoretical and political, the emphasis on democracy, rather than technology. To provide a comprehensive account of the workshop is beyond the scope of this summary report. The aim is to identify common themes and salient points. To this end the report provides an outline of each speaker's presentation followed by the main themes that arose throughout the day, with speakers' and participants' input drawn together under these themes.[10]

1. ICT for participatory democracy

Mr Thomas Buchsbaum (Ministry of European and International Affairs, Austria,[11] and Chairperson of the Council of Europe's Ad hoc Committee on e-democracy – CAHDE) chaired the morning session. He began by noting that e-democracy was already with us and suggesting opportunities and risks, emphasising trust, inclusion and sensitivity to context.

Professor Ann Macintosh (Director of the Centre for Digital Citizenship,[12] University of Leeds, UK) presented an overview of the

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10. More information about the workshop, including some of the presentations, is available here: www.coe.int/t/e/integrated_projects/democracy/02_Activities/D_ Democracy_Forum_2008/Presentations_Madrid08.asp.
11. www.bmeia.gv.at/index.php?id=70339&L=0.
12. http://ics.leeds.ac.uk/.

current state of e-democracy in Europe, questioning its rhetorical claims and impact and identifying challenges, barriers and research priorities.

Mr Göran Lindblad (Chairperson of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe)[13] drew on his experiences as a member of the Swedish Parliament to talk about opportunities and limits of e-democracy, in the relationships between citizens, their representatives, parties and government.

Mr Csaba Madarasz (Council of Europe INGO Conference)[14] focused on the experience of citizens. He spoke about people's involvement in governance in everyday life, through "micro-democratic" environments, like NGOs or school boards and councils.

Professor Herbert Kubicek (Institute for Information Management, Bremen, Germany)[15] presented the results of a study of e-participation in Germany: current initiatives, citizens' perceptions, SWOT analysis and recommendations.[16]

Mr Gotzone Mora Temprano (Regional Vice-Minister of Immigration and Citizenship, Valencia)[17] was not able to attend in person, but distributed a presentation on CD that described the goals of the region of Valencia in the promotion of citizen participation and the e-democracy initiative, Citizen Mailbox.

The morning session concluded with a discussion of CAHDE's draft recommendation on e-democracy.[18] Various expert groups have been involved over two years in producing these recommendations. It is hoped that they will be finished by the end of this year and endorsed by the Committee of Ministers.[19] The Council of Europe is

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13. http://assembly.coe.int/.
14. www.coe.int/T/E/NGO/public.
15. www.ifib.de/home.html?area=2.
16. IFIB 2008, "eParticipation – Electronic participation of citizens and the business community in e-government study on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior", www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/study_e-participation_engl.pdf.
17. www.comunitatvalenciana.com.
18. http://groups.dowire.org/groups/europe/files/f/686-2008-10-17T132629Z/cahdedraftrecs-viii-08.pdf.
19. www.coe.int/democracy.

the first international body to draw up comprehensive guidelines on e-democracy and the extent of participation in the drafting processes is innovative.

2. Opportunities for and challenges to representative democracy

E-parliament was a major element of the afternoon session, which benefited from the partnership of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe. The session was chaired by Mr Juan Fernando López Aguilar, Chairman of the Ad hoc Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly on the Forum for the Future of Democracy.

Mr Andreas Gross (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe) spoke of e-democracy as an enabler for democratic methods, which could modernise the roles of representatives and citizens and support transnational democracy.

Mr Gherardo Casini (UNDESA,[20] Rome) introduced the Global Centre for ICT in Parliament and the World e-Parliament Report 2008.[21]

Mr Alessandro Villani (e-Government and Innovation, City of Florence, Italy,[22] and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe)[23] spoke about the Municipality of Florence's experience in using ICTs for both administration and engagement over the last twelve years.

Mr Bruno Kaufmann (Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe, Marburg, Germany)[24] spoke about the best use of elements of "modern direct democracy", such as referenda, to improve the quality of representative democracy and address transnational governance and increasingly globalised societies.

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20. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, www.un.org/esa/desa.
21. www.ictparliament.org and www.ictparliament.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=245.
22. www.comune.fi.it.
23. www.coe.int/t/congress.
24. www.iri-europe.org.

Mr Dick Toornstra (DG EXPO, European Parliament)[25] gave a practical view of e-parliament from the perceptions of a cross-border parliament. He outlined the aims and assumptions on which e-parliament policies are based and described specific projects both for the European Parliament and parliaments internationally.

Ms Joanne Caddy (Policy Analyst, OECD, Public Engagement)[26] presented the results of an investigation into citizen engagement in policy making,[27] outlining barriers to citizen participation, but also the advantages for everyone.

3. Themes and ideas

Reasons for promoting e-participation

We should promote activities that build a culture of citizen engagement and participation.

E-participation can increase the involvement of citizens in policy making. This has advantages in terms of improving policies: better outcomes at less cost, innovative solutions and policies responsive to greater diversity. Citizens are resources of expert knowledge. Participation increases people's investment in, and likely compliance with, government, advancing social cohesion.

Changes in our societies and developments in democracy, governance and globalisation have led to concern over the health of our democracies. The quality of democracy seems to be at a historic low at the same time as its acceptance (nominal use by states) is at a high. Whether this is a "crisis in democracy" or not, representative democracy is in need of improvement. Citizens' relations with their representative and governmental bodies need to be improved. Understanding of parliamentary democracy needs to be improved.

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25. Directorate-General for External Policies, www.europarl.europa.eu.
26. www.oecd.org/gov/publicengagement.
27. "Mind the gap: fostering open and inclusive policy making. An issues paper", www.olis.oecd.org/olis/2008doc.nsf/linkto/GOV-PGC-OPEN(2008)1.

Globalisation and transnational governance are having a big impact on the way power is shared and leaders interact. Global citizens have specific needs and need accessible types of representation.

ICTs have the potential to support a great variety of activities that could help to:

–   build stronger relationships between citizens, representatives and governments;

–   involve more people in agenda setting, policy making and decision making;

–   increase transparency and understanding of parliamentary and government processes;

–   enable forms of participation that can function on a large-scale or transnational level.

E-democracy is here already, with a wealth of initiatives in many countries and varieties of good practice and success. Society is increasingly using e-tools. Governments and politicians are behind the curve and need to join in and promote quality e-participation.

Citizens and trust

A change of culture is needed, among representatives and government, to enable more power sharing with citizens. Governments and representatives need to trust citizens as well as citizens trusting government. Equally, citizens need to take on responsibilities, if they are to be more involved in decision making, and our societies need to promote the necessary skills.

People and communities are experts, with specialist knowledge. In our educated and complex societies, the gap between representatives' and their constituents' knowledge and expertise has narrowed considerably. Our democratic processes need to reflect this change.

Participation needs to extend to agenda setting. People need to be persuaded that their input is valued and will be adequately considered. However, it will take more than technology to improve trust between people and representatives.

Democracy and public spheres

The online public sphere extends beyond government websites. Discussions on various social networking sites need to be considered as part of democratic culture and citizens need to see these discussions as valuable parts of active citizenship, rather than separate cells or fragments. E-participation strategies need to acknowledge the network structure and avoid atomisation and duplication. It would be a mistake to assume that people will move their input to government websites because space is supplied.

Guidelines on e-democracy need to recognise citizens' role in initiating e-democracy, not take an exclusively top-down perspective.

Many people's day-to-day experience of governance takes place in "micro-democratic" environments – school, student and work councils and associations and various non-governmental organisations (NGOs). NGOs benefit from increased use of e-tools to support governance. Further, e-democracy tools developed by governments could be used by NGOs and community groups who govern themselves. These experiences of e-governance contribute to society's democratic skills. Citizens become increasingly media-literate and empowered.

Equity, inclusion and social cohesion

E-participation has the potential to increase social cohesion, but, so far, certain groups have been more involved than others. We need to investigate digital and cultural divides more thoroughly and understand their impact on participation. The OECD "Mind the gap" report began to investigate why people are not participating, finding that while some people were willing but unable, others were able but unwilling.

We live in multicultural societies and need to understand how to develop e-tools and initiatives that can support the participation of all groups, equally if possible. There are extra benefits in including specific groups –for example, bringing migrants and young people into society to share its governance.

It is extremely important that e-participation does not create a two-tier society of people participating or not participating through ICTs.

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Young people, their skills and needs

Young people need to be seen as a specific, though diverse, stakeholder group. They have skills in terms of technology and media literacy. Many young people's groups already use e-democracy in governing themselves. There are also topics on which young people's specific involvement is necessary, such as environmental issues with long-term consequences. Young people could have been better represented at the Forum. The Council of Europe could make its work more accessible to young people by presenting it in more detail online and providing opportunities for online interaction.

Changing democracy and changing roles of representatives

The role and power of representatives within democracy is changing. Executive bodies can seem to extend their abilities to form policy and act, with decreasing scrutiny and deliberation from their legislative assemblies. Within countries, people lobby ministers and departments directly, rather than through representatives. Internationally, decisions are made by councils of leaders. Representatives are also affected by the decline of political parties and public alignment with "issue-based" politics. Modern media seems to encourage "sound-bite" politics that lacks depth, experience and long-term strategy. Within this climate, e-democracy has potential to strengthen the roles and status of representatives and parliaments. However, representatives' attitudes to e-democracy, particularly power-sharing, need to be acknowledged and understood. The role of parliaments needs to be strengthened and co-operation between national parliaments supported.

Transnational democracy and the EU

Internationalisation leads to people, services and data moving across borders. Global, and particularly displaced, citizens need tools and structures for participation.

The institutions of the European Union, particularly the European Parliament, need to increase citizen understanding of their work and participation in their processes. The Citizens' Initiative, described in

the Treaty of Lisbon,[28] gives specific power to one million citizens, from a number of member states, to call on the Commission to bring forward new policy proposals. This is an opportunity requiring ICTs. It also marks a new phase in large-scale and transnational democracy, giving citizens power to set the agenda, as well as for decision making.

Referenda

Managing the relations between national and EU democracy has led to a number of referenda in Europe, some better managed than others. Referenda are a way to increase citizens' power and reflect modern preferences by being focused on issues, rather than people and parties. ICTs can support successful implementation, if countries share their experiences, learn from each other and develop best practice.

E-parliament

Progress with e-parliament varied across the world, but was not necessarily correlated with economic status. The priority is a parliamentary information system, comprehensive and accessible to citizens, and integrated with the "back office" structure. This is essential in terms of transparency and in delivering e-participation effectively. Use of open standards and open source technology helps to support inter-parliamentary and third party initiatives.

Use of video can help to increase understanding of parliaments' work and make them more accessible. For example, VoxBox[29] is a studio, provided between the European Parliament plenary hall and offices. Members of the European Parliament can use the free facilities to record interviews, take part in panels and transfer footage to their websites. This improves members' control over their communications with media and constituents. It was also suggested that public organisations that filmed parliament could increase accessibility by making footage available to third parties, for example, for documentaries.

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28. http://europa.eu/lisbon_treaty/index_en.htm.
29. www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/freetext_page_/press/20080519FTX29200-1202/default_en.htm.

Processes for instituting e-democracy

Throughout the day, various recommendations were made about creating effective e-participation processes and also warnings about badly conceived initiatives:

– make objectives explicit and clearly communicate the purpose of participation;

– align the initiative to the context, in terms of cultural and political differences, as well as technology preferences;

– be in a position to let initiatives have real influence. Public authorities need to mainstream citizen engagement;

– record outcomes in a transparent and accessible manner: what happens with the result and the kind of response expected;

– e-democracy needs to be conceived as a whole process, with transparency at every stage. A well-run process gains the trust of more passive citizens and they increase their interaction;

– processes also need to be trusted by those not using them;

– systemic evaluation and longitudinal studies need to be supported, primarily for learning rather than audit. Research should support observation of the impact of e-democracy on our societies;

– need to budget for marketing of online initiatives;

– be careful with privacy, especially in terms of cross-border initiatives, cultural differences and outsourced systems;

– beware of overlapping initiatives between government departments;

– badly organised e-democracy or e-democracy with a malformed purpose (that is, marketing) will have a negative effect on later and similar initiatives.

The Council of Europe has been working with various bodies to draft guidelines and recommendations on e-democracy. These were appreciated as comprehensive and useful, and various improvements were suggested. Additionally, it was suggested that the Council of Europe should increase use of e-democracy in their processes; specifically,

that they should provide more comprehensive information about events like this Forum online.

Technologies and media

E-democracy needs to use a wide variety of technologies. We have not really exploited the potential of technology to meet democratic needs yet.

E-democracy needs to use a wide variety of media, including mobile technologies and TV. TV is the primary information medium for most people. Ignoring this will increase the information divide. We should also be aware of ways in which TV promotes imitations of democracy.

Governance of the Internet

The governance of the Internet is relevant to e-participation and on the political agenda: devising appropriate regulation, avoiding heavy-handed control and promoting digital rights and ethical codes.[30] We need to promote responsible activities in cyberspace and ethical values for Internet use, through investment in education and culture and promotion of media literacy and citizenship skills.

4. Conclusions

There was a consensus that all governing and parliamentary bodies should support e-participation, whether as providers, enablers or as a responsive audience. Participative governance is necessary for healthy societies and ICTs can be used to strengthen parliaments and involve citizens, as our democracies grow and change.

To sum up, a scenario collected by the OECD seemed to catch many people's imagination. This was Finland's vision for 2012:

"In 2012 the interplay between citizens and political and administrative actors consists of a continuous, natural and valued interaction to discuss societal issues and make decisions."

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30. See the Good governance in the information society project, www.coe.int/democracy.

Workshop II: e-participation at the local level
Issues paper: "E-participation at the local level"

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Our current, mainly representative, democratic institutions stem from times in which transportation and communications were difficult and time-consuming. Since then, politics have evolved little and politicians have developed a style in which, except at political campaigns, there is little feedback from citizens. This has entailed apathy and a feeling of alienation among citizens, leading to the so-called "democratic deficit", reflected, for example, in low participation rates in elections. One would expect that this might not happen at a local level, for its proximity. However, as an example, recent surveys show how Spaniards are especially frustrated with local politics.

Since the 1960s there has been a growing consensus reflecting the benefits of promoting participation including the key one of reducing the democratic deficit, but also those of promoting further acceptance of public policy decision making, transparency, etc. As a consequence, participatory instruments are flourishing all over the world, including referenda, town meetings, stakeholder workshops, decision conferences or citizen juries. Many of them essentially coincide; as an example, the above-mentioned citizen juries are essentially the same as those named consensus conferences, citizen panels or deliberative focus groups. Some of them are just meant to inform politicians; others allow for co-participation among citizens and politicians; finally, some do actually allow citizens to make the decisions. Many of them have been tested at the local level, a context in which it is specially appreciated that citizens may provide very useful local knowledge that would otherwise remain hidden.

In any case, a detailed analysis of such instruments shows that the following basic group decision-making tasks are used in the instruments analysed: sampling of participants; use of questionnaires; debating; voting (with various rules); negotiating (with various

schemes); arbitrating; information sharing; information displaying; preference modelling (in various ways); problem structuring; choosing representatives; document preparation; explaining (to citizens) and reporting.

The world of the 21st century will be electronic and mobile. The end of the last century clearly showed trends in this digitalisation of society. It is therefore not surprising that this digital trend is affecting many other facets of life and thus concepts of e-government, e-democracy, e-participation, etc., are being debated and implemented in various senses, there being an increasing demand for participation in the public decision process. Indeed, we could view the Internet as an opportunity to bridge the gap between governors and governees. In a sense, our institutions are out of date, not having been able to take advantage of novel technologies.

It is, however, surprising that only relatively unsophisticated tools have been deployed: e-participation is still in its infancy. True, the times in which websites in which political information was displayed and administrative transactions were a few years ago, but to be honest, most relevant tools refer only to e-debating and e-voting: in a sense, we have mainly focused on facilitating political modes of the 19th century with 21st-century technologies. In a time of Web 2.0, could we not benefit from conflict resolution and other group decision-making tools and technologies to radically transform and enhance democracy through technology? Indeed, we could claim that most of the technology required to support the functions included in participatory instruments is readily available. It is important, at this point, to stress that most of the significant experiences have taken place at local level.

The role of ICTs would be to stress the advantages that citizen participation brings in at the local level, namely: legitimisation; increased acceptance and transparency; public decisions made publicly; bring decisions closer to citizens; make use of very relevant local knowledge; educate politicians; educate citizens; enhance diversity.

However, there are some shortcomings to be faced. Some of them are more of a socioeconomic nature as is the case of the digital divide.

Broadband access is far from universal yet in many places and, as a consequence, display of e-participation tools could be viewed as unfair and inequitable. In the foreseeable future, however, we should expect traditional participatory instruments to coexist with new e-participatory tools. Some of the infrastructural deficiencies could be overcome through, for example, Internet public access points. But still we would face unskilled population groups as far as ICTs are concerned.

There are also socio-technological issues that need to be addressed, which mainly refer to trust and legitimacy. Would the public trust the e-participation tools deployed? Would they believe that all the inter-actions on a website are genuine? Would they accept the analyses on the website as reflecting a set of beliefs and preferences or would they perceive the system as distorting or oversimplifying their views? There is also a trust issue in the sense of trusting the system to implement algorithms correctly. Just think of the many debates that the relatively simple area of e-voting is generating. Politicians would have also to accept that such systems could lead to changes in political power structures. That may be a step too far for some. But like citizens, they also have to trust the processes and systems.

There is also the issue of legitimacy. Even if society trusts an e-participation process to reflect the deliberations of the participants, it does not necessarily follow that it will see it as a legitimate reflec-tion of the whole of society. They also impose costs such as the need to get time off work or travel costs. Any participatory process imposes costs and requires overcoming barriers. There are also issues relating to "fair" representation and the potential for a pressure group to hijack an e-participation process. Even if the e-participation is used to inform an agency's decision, rather than determine the decision itself, the agency must assess whether the deliberations reflect the views across society. If the agency gives incentives to promote active engagement will these further distort the representativeness of the participants?

Participatory budgeting (PB) somehow emerges as a paradigm for participation, especially at local level. PBs constitute an attempt to allow citizens to have a word on deciding and approving how part of a public budget, mainly in municipalities, is spent. They constitute a budget allocation approach based on dialogue and citizen participation,

which diverges from the current predominant representative model. In a sense, PBs are transforming the idea of a representative democracy, in which the citizens' preferences are considered just at the moment of elections, through voting, to move closer to a participatory democracy, based on direct participation and discussion of issues.

Though previous experiences are mentioned, the most known PBs come from Porto Alegre in Brazil. PBs are becoming increasingly popular in many other places, all around the world. Recent reports indicate that more than 50 municipalities, covering more than three million citizens are implementing these processes in Europe. The announcement of the UK Government in 2006 that all municipalities should implement PB experiences by 2012 is symptomatic in this respect. At this point, it is worth mentioning that PBs have been implemented by governing parties of all colours.

The constant growth of PB experiences across Europe must be related to their mentioned benefits: greater legitimation of investment decisions; an approximation of investment decision making to citizens; making public investment decisions publicly; and greater transparency in public expenditure. There are, however, several criticisms to be made, stemming from the experiences undertaken in such processes. From an ICT point of view, we appreciate that, except for a few experiences that use discussion fora to collect suggestions for project proposals and voting, there is little use of new technologies: processes are based on physical meetings, and preferences usually established through voting, very frequently just by raising hands. From the point of view of the little decision technology employed, no formal modelling of citizens' preferences is undertaken and no use of formal negotiation or group decision support tools is used. To sum up, little decision support methodology is used. This could be achieved by moving from participatory budgets to e-participatory budgets. We insist that only relatively unsophisticated ideas have been used in this field, with mainly discussion fora and e-voting systems. A general scheme and system could be devised with phases such as preliminary problem structuring; discussion and consolidation of problem structure; individual preference communication; negotiation; voting if unsuccessful negotiation; and post-settlement.

ICTs offer enormous potential benefits for democracy at local level, but the effort required should not be underestimated. Probably, if e-participation is to become widespread, local government is where it should be first implemented. Finally, note that as e-participation becomes relevant at local level there could be a demand for resources to be moved from central to local level, bringing power closer to the people.

Report on Workshop II

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Introduction

Workshop II focused on e-participation at local level. It was organised by the City of Madrid and aimed at emphasising the role of ICTs in promoting citizen participation through ICTs in local politics. The morning session was entitled "e-tools for citizen participation at local level" and reviewed several illuminating examples on the power of ICTs to promote citizen involvement in local politics, together with several conceptual discussions on transversal issues. The afternoon session focused on e-participatory budgets. Participatory budgets (PB) are emerging as a paradigm of citizen participation; although there was a clear slant towards the role of ICTs in facilitating participatory budget elaboration, conceptual discussions of fundamental issues regarding PBs emerged. The lively discussions around the talks pinpointed many of the challenges in this important field, but showed that ICTs may definitely promote the role of citizen at local level politics, facilitating his or her involvement in public policy decision making. To that end, we shall provide a concise summary of each of the talks identifying the common points.

E-tools for citizen participation at local level

Mr Alejandro Arranz (General Director for Innovation and Technology, City of Madrid, Spain) chaired the morning session. He began by noting the relevance of ICT tools in improving administration and citizen participation with a brief reference to the City of Madrid's achievements in this field.

Mr Jose Nuño (General Directorate of Quality Management and Citizen Relations, City of Madrid, Spain) described aspects of local government through the City of Madrid website. He placed the emphasis on the City Observatory as a multichannel system to collect

suggestions and claims from the citizens and as a way to track and inform about the evolution of the citizens' perception about the city.

Mr Fernando Rocafull (General Director of the Latin American Capital Cities Union) based his discussion on the study on digital government in cities around the world and the works around the Ibero-American Network of Local Governments and Connectivity. He stressed that most projects have addressed information and administration issues and provided many data supporting the relevance of the concept of digital divide, both because of lack of access and digital illiteracy.

Mr Helmut Himmelsbach (Mayor of the City of Heilbronn, Germany) provided advice on issues, opportunities and challenges in relation to strengthening democracy through the use of ICTs based on his experience as rapporteur of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on electronic democracy and deliberative consultation on urban projects. He mentioned, among many other things, that emphasis had been placed on informing citizens, that there was an initial move towards dialogue with citizens and some attempts on involving citizens in decision making. He described, as well, how different approaches should be undertaken, depending on whether we referred to national or local politics, which he described as the natural level to start with e-democracy projects.

Mr Rick Klooster (City of Apeldoorn, Netherlands) showed life demonstrations of VirtuoCity in several Dutch cities. They essentially consist of explorable 3D descriptions of urban plans with discussion fora and e-voting capabilities. Some of the experiences have been very successful involving more than 30 000 participants in binding e-vote sessions.

Mr Francesco Molinari (ALTEC SA, Thessaloniki, Greece) provided an overview of (good and bad) lessons learnt from his experience in applying ICTs for urban planning in the Italian city of Massa. He stressed the beneficial use of collective intelligence to produce better and more consensual decisions and the need for true and long-term commitment from policy makers to sustain the momentum of e-participation projects.

Dr Rui Lourenco (University of Coimbra, Portugal) emphasised the electronic support of citizen debates at community level. He suggested a model based on blogs to support the divergent phases of debates and wikis to support the convergent phase leading to a set of documents summarising the main views within a problem. With such a model we avoid time and space constraints typical of political debates and may possibly better influence professional politicians.

Ms Gun Eriksson (City of Sigtuna, Sweden) described the e-participation experiences at Sigtuna, the town which held the previous Forum meeting. She described how the town was worried about the declining participation rate in elections and decided to promote participation and e-participation projects to revive involvement among citizens. This included using the Web to inform about projects, to collect opinions and discuss about them and to allow for voting about them. Incidentally, these e-participation projects have had a clear positive impact on participation rates.

E-participatory budgets

Mr José Manuel Rodríguez Álvarez (Deputy Director of European Affairs, City of Madrid, Spain) moderated the session, starting by describing participatory budgets as a paradigm for citizen participation.

Professor Manuel Arenilla (Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain) provided a somewhat sceptical view of participation and participatory budgets, discussing whether their role was to reinforce democracy and/or to improve management. He noted that many participatory initiatives had focused on the local level. At the same time, however, the local level is financially regulated by upper level politics which, in turn, affects the competencies at the local level and the impact of participatory initiatives. He criticised the lack of a general methodology for participatory budgets, the effect that they are having of benefiting the more institutionalised groups of citizens, and the potential lack of transparency.

Dr Daniel Chávez (Transnational Institute, the Netherlands) assessed critically participatory budgets all over the world, emphasising the differences that this phenomenon faces in Latin America and Europe,

and how PBs are presented in various political fashions. He also described how this phenomenon is growing across Europe.

Mr Victor García Segador (General Director for Citizen Participation, City of Madrid, Spain) described the experiences of the City of Madrid in relation to participatory budgets and the role that ICTs have had on them. They are called special investment plans. ICTs have been used for information purposes and, more moderately, for consultation and decision support, mainly through experimental multichannel voting sessions.

Mr Julio Andrade (Citizen Participation Councillor, City of Malaga, Spain) described the relevance of citizen participation within Malaga, mainly as a way to increase co-responsibility in management, and why and how Malaga got involved in participatory budgeting. He described the pros and cons of their approach and presented the new web-based tool that will be used to support participatory budget elaboration.

Mr Simon James (Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe) described the experiences of Kingston Council (United Kingdom) in both e-government and e-participation, including budgets.

Mr Claudio Forgheri (Modena City Council, Italy) described technological and sociological aspects with regard to the e-participatory budget experiences in Modena. He stressed the need to place technology as a service to the citizen, and not vice versa.

Ms Sandra de Lorite (Councillor for Citizen Participation, City of Madrid, Spain) closed the session reviewing its key aspects.

Themes and ideas

The lively debates around the previously described talks may be globally summarised in several ideas:

–   there is a perception that citizens are becoming less interested in politics and democracy, because of a growing distance between politicians and citizens. This is reflected, for example, in decreasing voting rates in elections. This is happening in both national and local politics;

–   as a way to mitigate this, and to reinforce democracy, several participatory instruments have been devised, without reference to ICTs, including citizen juries, stakeholder workshops, participatory budgets or referendums. Many of them have been initially introduced at local level. Note that participatory democracy does not entail a return to a direct democracy system;

–   some versions of some of these instruments have been implemented already with the aid of ICTs. So far, however, only relatively simple tools have been implemented, mainly focusing on e-debating and e-voting. Such tools have been successful in the experiences so far held, and the experiences presented in the session constitute good practice examples;

–   there are many non-technical issues that need to be considered. One of them, of socioeconomic note, refers to the digital divide, both due to the lack of generalised access to the Internet and digital illiteracy. Time and appropriate policies may help to mitigate this. Until solved, a mixture of online and offline instruments should be considered;

–   another issue refers to how professional politicians will accept these changes. In particular, there were several references to the possible dilution of responsibility and the need for appropriate and sustained commitment by policy makers;

–   participatory budgets provide a paradigm for participatory instruments, because of the importance of the decisions made and their growing importance in Europe. E-participatory budgets, therefore, emerge as a paradigm for e-participatory instruments. However, the lack of a generalised methodology suggests that the field is still in its infancy;

–   for reasons of scale and because of the existing experience with physical participatory instruments, the local level is probably the natural starting ground for e-participation. Their eventual success might entail their later application at national level politics;

–   care should be taken to avoid that participatory processes get hijacked by pressure groups.

Workshop III: ICTs in electoral processes
Issues paper: "E-voting: future issues"

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2008 has been a difficult year for electronic voting: e-voting systems have been dropped in the Netherlands, the Walloon and Flemish communities in Belgium are sharply divided over automatic voting, there has been a scandal over the reliability of Premier Election Solutions machines in the USA and the scheduled introduction of Internet voting has been delayed in New Zealand; only Switzerland and Estonia are keeping up their e-voting trials and development with some success.

Whatever form it takes, voting is definitely a "total social fact" in the sense Marcel Mauss[31] assigned to the term: it is a personal experience set in a political context, the meaning of which can be understood only with reference to social anthropology. If changes in voting arrangements are such a problem for all the stakeholders involved (designer, technicians, lawyers, elected representatives, citizens and others), it is because a whole range of interlinked socio-technical factors are folded into voting systems and become second nature to people over time. Voting is a political behaviour pattern connecting the individual to the group, a set of ideological conceptions, technical devices and social practices that have crystallised into a socio-technical complex. This crystallisation process becomes strongly entrenched in a country's political culture, and the history of its voting systems reveals the country's political ups and downs, its issues and its view of the citizens' position in the decision-making process.

So the advent of e-voting, first with automated voting then with Internet voting, cannot on any account be regarded as a mere "replacement" operation, as many technical operators offering automated voting systems have had people believe. Since voting technology carries its own share of political culture, any structural changes or practical developments in the technology inevitably question or even

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31. Famous French anthropologist who coined the concept of "total social fact" in his major work, *The gift* (1923).

challenge the whole voting process itself. Owing to the central function of voting in modern democracies, any development in voting systems sparks fierce debates whose technical aspects all too often mask more fundamental political and social issues.

The purpose of this presentation is not to offer a summary of the international rules in force or of the massive amount of conflicting research on e-voting. However, after a decade of studies and disputes on automated and Internet voting, the stakeholders' and general public's thinking has evolved, leaving a number of unresolved issues that are nevertheless essential if we are to make progress with the upcoming transformation of voting systems. I do not claim to be exhaustive here, but I believe there are still several critical issues to be discussed.

The reliability of voting systems

Voting machines and all the software used to operate them are a flourishing industry on several continents,[32] offering commercial services and owned by large groups that sometimes have close ties to political parties.[33] Over the past ten years, instances of reliability faults (especially among Diebold and Nedap machines) have sparked reactions of rejection among those sections of the population that are nonetheless keenest on the development of information technologies: educated, well-off people, some of whom are even computer specialists. Distrust has also been fuelled by a sometimes extremely unfortunate communication policy: the machines' deficiencies have sometimes been denied, or admitted late in the day, as recently happened with Nedap and Premier.

The importance assumed by technology in the new voting systems compels democracies to address the sensitive issue of how to organise relations between private enterprise and the state in a new political and economic context. At the end of the day, what is involved here as in other areas is the recurring problem of how to strike a balance

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32. Examples include Nedap in the Netherlands; Indra in Spain; Premier Election Solutions (formerly Diebold Election Systems), Election Systems and Software (ES&S) and Unisys in the United States; CMC Limited, a subsidiary of Tata, in India; and Siemens, Telecom Italia and so on.
33. This was the case with Diebold and the Republican Party.

between the requirements of manufacturing secrecy and the transparency of public systems. The acrimonious debates between the advocates of open source and industry are simply one example of this in the broader context of reorganising the basics of capitalism in the digital era.

Compromise solutions allowing firms to secure a return on their research investment while ensuring transparency for the general public by publishing source codes and standardising the systems inevitably reflect broader social negotiations and shape different socio-economic models. What is at stake here, at a deeper level, is the choices to be made on the forms of liberalism and social democracy to which populations aspire. Certification and public supervision systems that go further than the ISO/IEC 9126-1:2001 "Software Engineering – Product Quality" standard will undoubtedly be necessary in order to achieve greater transparency and reliability.

The secrecy of the ballot

Over and above the specific security problems that might be caused by remote hacking into the machines, the question of the secrecy of the ballot (which arises only for Internet voting or for people with disabilities who need assistance) becomes acute, since secrecy cannot be guaranteed. The fear of social pressure is a cogent argument against remote e-voting that is regularly brought up. It can be viewed as an indicator of democracies' confidence in their own citizens and their judicial systems. Remote voting presupposes that democratic practices are considered to be sufficiently entrenched and protected, particularly by a body of legislation, for it to be introduced. It is significant that Switzerland is the most advanced country in this respect and that France is so little prepared for it and still refuses to introduce postal voting. Remote voting can also be a militant act and a democratic demand, as in Estonia. The technical solutions offered (such as the possibility of changing one's vote) in fact beg the more basic question that needs to be addressed: whereas the citizens have to rely sometimes blindly on voting devices and on the institutions supervising them, why do not democratic systems also have greater confidence in their citizens and in the fact that the latter have adapted to democratic

practices, and consequently introduce remote voting arrangements? Establishing mutual trust, with appropriate legislation, should be the subject of a public debate, which is still largely lacking.

Data protection

This is one of the blind spots in the debate on e-voting. The gradual introduction and the use of electronic identity cards for identification purposes under a wider e-government procedure (in other words, not only for voting) presupposes the existence of computer files providing central government authorities with an amount of information unparalleled in the history of societies. Yet in very many countries, legislation on the protection of personal data is still minimal and independent mediation bodies[34] are still in their infancy. Given the current context of security concerns, which inclines towards central government control over the circulation of personal data, and the unprecedented information technology resources now available, the Council of Europe as a whole would do well to embark on an in-depth discussion of the subject.

The prospect of setting up centralised registers of voters and votes, the fact that personal data circulates on networks and the growing number of computer files for judicial, military, school and health purposes should prompt democracies to reflect on the basic conditions governing the free exercise of that elementary right – the right to vote. Here again, in order to safeguard the anonymity of voting and protect members of the public when these computer files are compiled, rules must be established on ethics and transparency despite the possible reluctance of both governments and private firms.

Of course, the above remarks do not amount to a comprehensive discussion of the current issues; they focus on points that have been inadequately debated on the subject of e-voting. There is a great deal more to be said about making systems secure, about their accessibility and usability and, even more basically, about their relevance.

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34. In France, the data protection authority, Commission nationale informatique et liberté, helps to define the legal requirements to be met by e-voting systems in order to protect personal data, but it has a purely advisory function.

Changes in the forms of e-voting are closely linked to changes in democracies: altering the material arrangements for voting challenges our entire democratic culture. We have the technologies at our disposal, but what do we know of the model of democracy we want for the future? That is where the real issues lie.

Report on Workshop III

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E-voting in search of an audience

Workshop III hosted the 2008 biennial review meeting on Recommendation Rec(2004)11 of the Committee of Ministers on legal, operational and technical standards for e-voting. It was attended by several representatives of Council of Europe member states and enabled participants to take stock of the application of the recommendation, the difficulties encountered at the local level in some countries and the future challenges to the implementation of e-voting systems, particularly remote Internet services.

We might preface this report by stressing one further aspect of this encounter, which emerges both from close observation of the exchanges during the workshop and from the analysis of these exchanges since the drafting of the Council of Europe recommendation in 2004. It has struck the researcher observing the implementation of new electoral practices linked to the potential of ICTs that those involved have now acquired a degree of maturity vis-à-vis the innovation of electronic voting, particularly remote e-voting.[35] It emerges from discussions that the different stakeholders are more reticent about voting machines and remote voting systems than in the past. The highly mixed results of the experiments conducted since the early 2000s have led all those involved (especially the elected representatives) to consider innovative voting methods not as an end in themselves but as an integral part of broader policies geared to improving relations among citizens, the administration and the elected representatives. In the Swiss Canton of Neuchâtel, for example, remote e-voting forms an integral part of the e-government services available to citizens via a one-stop shop on the canton website portal, which

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35. E-voting: an e-election or e-referendum that involves the use of electronic means in at least the casting of the vote. Remote e-voting: e-voting where the casting of the vote is done by a device not controlled by an election official. (Definitions from Rec(2004)11.)

also offers a range of cantonal and municipal services for both enterprises and individuals.

Nowadays, the utopian view of e-voting as a miracle solution to the persistent crisis of representativity in democratic countries would no longer seem to be shared by the broad majority of participants in the Forum for the Future of Democracy (FFD). The technical drawbacks of e-voting (particularly in terms of robustness and security) and the lack of confidence in these mechanisms on the part of many citizens (we shall come back to this point) have brought those involved back down to earth. The prevalent analysis is that voting is a key moment in the democratic life of a country, and voting procedures must be primarily geared to remedying the limitations of traditional hard-copy voting. As Ms Gabriele Kucsko-Stadlmayer, the Venice Commission representative, pointed out, the main disadvantages of remote e-voting, particularly the shortcomings in terms of system security, are much less serious given that e-voting enables population groups previously excluded from the electoral process (for example, people with disabilities, soldiers and other citizens abroad) to exercise their voting rights. This points to a transition from a conception of e-voting as a symbol of democracies entering the digital era to a conception of e-voting as one of a number of tools for deepening democracy. This new angle on e-voting is reflected on the ground by the increased attention being paid to plural modes of exercising democracy and to all the forms that should be used in order to ensure greater inclusion of citizens in decision-making processes and improve the quality of the service provided.

This is probably the reason for the diversity of situations encountered *in situ* and for the practices used in the different countries. The approaches adopted can thus seem contradictory, or indeed diametrically opposed: while the Netherlands have decided to revert to traditional voting, abandoning voting machines, France has authorised the latter since 2003 but is refusing to implement e-voting in areas other than professional elections, which is also the case in Portugal; Austria is preparing for its first real remote e-voting election in 2009,[36]

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36. Elections to the National Students' Union.

Switzerland has confirmed its direction by legalising remote e-voting, while the United Kingdom, despite its very many "pilot runs" (150 since 2002), has suspended any further experimentation until 2010, officially for reasons of electoral timetables.[37] We can see that the multitude of different approaches to e-voting reveals the wide range of political cultures within which it must find its place.

How can we build up trust?

Nevertheless, beyond the heterogeneity of electoral practices observed, there are some obvious common concerns, all in some way connected with creating the conditions for appropriating remote voting systems by establishing a climate of trust between the citizens and the players involved.

The FFD participants were fairly unanimous on the conditions for implementing e-voting: system robustness and reliability, security, efficiency, transparency and accessibility, verifiability and, as additionally suggested by the Venice Commission, a possible alternative to e-voting. A combination of all these conditions would create a climate of trust around a system that the citizens regard as complex, impenetrable and highly (excessively?) technical, and over which all the players involved have the feeling of losing all control to private organisations. For instance, the survey presented by Prof. Alexander Trechsel on e-enabled elections in Estonia[38] shows that the main factor in using e-voting rather than traditional systems is how much trust the electorate places in the voting mechanism itself, and to a lesser extent how far they trust their own political elites. That being the case, expanding the use of the new voting systems necessitates rethinking the overall framework for its implementation. Rather than merely improving the technical information supplied to citizens in order to help them understand better and appropriate the functioning of the voting systems, the whole procedure must be reconfigured with an

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37. The UK authorities consider that the simultaneous holding of the European and general elections make experimentation difficult.
38. Available online from the CoE website (www.coe.int/t/e/integrated_projects/ democracy/02_Activities/D_Democracy_Forum_2008/Presentations_Madrid08. asp#TopOfPage).

eye to building up the tools for utilisation based on trust. This certainly involves improving the knowledge and functioning of remote voting. The aforementioned survey shows that a proper command of computing and some familiarity with the Internet play a positive role in the fact of opting for e-voting.[39] This is why young people are more open to these new facilities than their elders, who are in fact more in favour of continuing the traditional election rituals. The "trust" factor therefore more or less supplants all the traditional socioeconomic factors regarding gender, standard of education and level of income: this means that any expansion of e-voting will involve improving the prescriptive, technical and statutory organisation of electoral processes.

The speakers at the session proposed several different solutions, based on three main lines of work:

– firstly, developing mechanisms for certifying and accrediting the voting systems;

– secondly, defining standards to validate the quality of a voting system;

– thirdly, introducing mechanisms for observing and assessing the various stages of the voting procedure.

Certification mechanisms

While certification mechanisms are commonplace in enterprises, their implementation in elections is sporadic, obscure and unfocused on measures to promote the security and robustness of the technical systems, as Ms Melanie Volkamer (Passau University, Germany), Mr Jordi Barrat i Esteve (University of Alicante, Spain) and Mr Mats Lindberg (OSCE/ODIHR) pointed out. The serious consequences of system malfunctions, and particularly their potential invisibility,

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39. This statement must, however, be qualified. Other analyses reveal that persons with excellent knowledge of computing are less inclined to trust the voting system. Familiarity with ICTs is, however, a positive factor in recourse to e-voting in all surveys of electronic voting. See for instance Oostveen, A.-M., 2009 (not yet published), "Is this all? User's experiences of an e-voting system", which demonstrates that electors with solid knowledge of computing have more confidence in the remote voting system, whereas booth voters, who have less knowledge, express limited confidence in the system.

necessitate a new mode of certification specifically tailored to e-voting, according to Mr Barrat i Esteve. System certification plays a dual role: firstly, reassuring the commissioning party that the technical specifications of the machines correspond to the schedule of conditions assigned to it, in pursuance of the local regulations in force. The latter have often been discussed inside the specialist communities, often at the instigation of the political authorities that framed the said regulations, following manifold public debates involving the general public and voluntary associations. Compliance with the schedule of conditions therefore basically fits in with a prescriptive framework that is – in principle – based on democratic criteria, namely prior consultation and debate.

Moreover, provided it is made public, certification fulfils yet another role, namely that of giving all the players involved access to the voting by ensuring system conformity and security. It is therefore a major element in creating the climate of trust around the voting procedure. The fact is that many proprietary systems used by local authorities cannot be disseminated to the general public for reasons connected with patents. This is the case in France, where the results of the three expert analyses of certifications conducted on the machines used at the last presidential and general elections in 2007 have been kept confidential. This lack of transparency in certification makes the whole mechanism suspect right from the outset, even though it was actually designed to ensure that the system functioned properly. This is particularly unacceptable to the populations because the private enterprises that supply the machines have on several occasions been caught lying about the reliability of their products. In a democracy, involving private operators in the electoral process necessitates a special legal framework to guarantee that it will not be perverted by individual interests. A number of speakers consider that this new balance that must be struck between the legitimate concern for industrial secrecy and the transparency of voting operations involves using open source software.

The draft presented by Ms Volkamer goes even further in this direction, and proposes introducing a Protection Profile based on the rules and formats of the Common Criteria (CC) for all voting devices. The

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idea is to design a type of certification based on a system that corresponds to specific characteristics within a protection profile tailored to the specific private or political elections. This public technical profile, which is designed to ensure a high degree of trust among all the players, comprises evaluation modules for system functioning, supervision and monitoring. This would enable the authorities responsible for the election to base certification on a public grid common to all the players: subsequent evaluation of the system provides insurance against malfunctions.

Towards an EML standard?

The question of a single, open standard usable by all the different e-voting systems is a further possible solution to the distrust expressed by the various players in the electoral process. The proposal put forward by OASIS, which comprises government representatives, researchers, enterprises and electoral service providers, is to promote a standard facilitating data exchange between hardware, software and service providers. EML (Election Mark-up Language) is an attempt to take up this challenge by ensuring the harmonious, robust and reliable interoperability of all the systems involved in the electoral system. The standard, which is now at its version 5.0, was designed for use in either public or private elections, either comprehensively, covering the entire process, or selectively for the registration on electoral lists, the voting itself, vote counting or the communication of results. It is a case of providing common interfaces at "critical" stages in the voting procedure in order to certify the relevance, conformity and validity of the data exchanged. One of the advantages of using EML as a standard is that it gives users greater freedom to call on the services of more different hardware and software suppliers and thus escape the pressure to use one proprietary programme. The transparency requirement, particularly in respect of software used by voting system suppliers, which is specific to political elections, is more compatible with open source software than with proprietary systems. To that extent, recognising the EML as an ISO standard is one of the priority objectives of OASIS, which is actively working towards this goal, backed up by the many experiments of voting with EML that have

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been conducted since 2003 in the USA and Europe, particularly under the European e-Poll project.

The need for election observers

One last important point raised by the participants was the need for meticulous, in-depth observation of e-voting procedures. According to Mr Lindberg of OSCE/ODIHR, since it is more difficult to observe e-enabled elections than traditional ones, such observation requires intensive analytical evaluation throughout the election, namely from the decision to replace or complement traditional voting with an electronic system to the publication of the election results. E-voting modifies the whole electoral process far upstream of the voting itself, necessitating changes to the traditional modalities of observation in order to guarantee the transparency and democracy of the new procedures being implemented. The OSCE accordingly proposes paying specific attention to the following points in each case: the legal framework for e-voting, certification and testing of voting systems, voting secrecy, the security and functioning of the whole system, public access to the e-voting facility, citizens' standard of education and familiarity with the use of the technologies in question, training for public officials and other persons working in the polling stations, vote hard copies, vote counting, the transparency of the whole election and public confidence in the electoral process and, lastly, a means of establishing specific responsibilities for each person involved in the process in the event of any system malfunction.

Furthermore, many participants in the workshop stressed that in practice election observation often took the form of auditing, under the experiments conducted in the different countries. In fact, many of these audits focused more specifically on technical aspects where, as Mr Lindberg reminded us, a broader overview of the whole process is needed to create the requisite voter confidence in the electoral process.

Conclusion

Four specific points would seem to emerge from the highly productive discussions conducted at the workshop, reflecting the different players' concerns.

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Firstly, as in other fields, the development of digital technology is challenging the traditional relations between the public and private sectors and highlighting the need for a compromise between contradictory requirements (for example, transparency and respect for industrial ownership). In democracies, the citizens' attachment to the public nature of the electoral process is such that this problem must be solved in order to guarantee their confidence in electronic elections.

Secondly, new balances must be struck among different potentially contradictory rights: for example, how are we to reconcile the security requirement with voting anonymity, or even the straightforward exercise of voting rights? Technical constraints can lead to the exclusion of certain population groups that are unfamiliar with the technologies used.

Similarly, there is a potential risk of incompatibility, at the local level, between the legitimate demand for certification standards and standardisation of interoperability formats and certain legal, socio-cultural or political requirements. The Forum participants considered that intense work was needed on the local adaptability of standards.

Lastly, it is also vital, in modern democracies, to prevent the citizen from being excluded from elections because of their technical complexity. The implementation of new facilities must not end up giving voters the impression of losing control over one of the fundamental structural phenomena in democratic life. This point raises the broader question of the citizens' place in complex societies and their ability to exercise powers of monitoring and evaluating the major decisions that directly affect them.

Sub-theme 2
Empowerment

Workshop IV: e-inclusion
Issues paper: "E-inclusion"

Tomas Ohlin
Telo Konsult, Sweden

The problem

The concept of empowerment can be found at the roots of democracy. Power is to be shared, the citizen is to be empowered. How should this be done? A discussion on this topic stresses the roles of citizen education and information. Access to education about the nature of the democratic dialogue is essential in order to understand its possibilities for participators. It is important to understand what is to be shared, and what organisational possibilities that exist.

Interest is today directed towards new means to support dialogue and participation. The concept "participation" can be seen as central here. The word points at a situation where citizens are given access to "parts" of decision-making influence. It is worth discussing what parts this concerns. How much decision making can be shared, and what are the consequences concerning responsibility?

It is natural that these possibilities for participation concern all who have interest in taking part, not just a few. We find ourselves in front of a democratic problem. How can we ensure that there will not be groups that risk being marginalised, and somehow even may be left outside?

In order to be successfully present in these dialogues there is a need for knowledge about the concepts to be discussed, as well as about the language used, and about the method to reach a result. We can create forms for dialogues with influence for large groups of hungry participators, and we can communicate in languages that are natural and understandable to all members of these groups. But such power sharing is not always principally supported, and given access to adequate resources.

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The concept "inclusion" relates to participation for all. No one should be left outside. Today's technology is supportive here. Inclusion surely is relevant for rational use of e-government services, and even more, it is simply of fundamental concern for e-democracy. A decision-making situation where not all concerned have an adequate possibility to be present often turns out to be problematic. Resource-consuming conflicts and friction may then occur. An open and efficient democracy avoids this, and thus saves resources for society.

Access to the dialogue

The Internet has created new possibilities to participate. No longer do we need to rush to the Forum Romanum to take part in discussions about the creation of a new piece of Roman culture. We can do it at home or at the office. But – does this concern all of us? The answer is no, there are digital barriers that separate certain groups from others and from possibilities to take part. Not all of us have access to the knowledge and efficient technology that is needed for participation. When the issues to be discussed are of democratic importance, we here have a democratic problem.

Participators with different cultural backgrounds often express themselves differently. The ability and desire to listen also differs. A successful dialogue is built on tolerance and generosity between participators. Human rights in the large has counterparts in the small.

Digital barriers surely can be of a different nature. Dialogue asks for interactivity where, for instance, speed of communication is relevant. Naturally, availability of adequate broadband is helpful, even though narrowband still can transport parts of important democratic dialogue. As is widely observed by now, quantitative measures show that the availability of network capacity differs quite a bit between countries.

When democratic citizen participation supported by access to the Internet is considered important, it can be seen as a problem of political importance and magnitude to support connection of groups that still are outside and disconnected. Unfortunately, the "last" groups here tend to be the groups with specifically complicated resource demand.

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This resembles the situation for mail. For how long should we continue with last-century mailmen, when the use of paper-based mail decreases so rapidly?

The need for knowledge

Although we find ourselves in a European situation where increasing numbers of citizens are digitally connected, it will definitely take time for all to get there. Also, there may be new social groups today that face new communication borders. For quite some time there will still be groups who are left outside – even though modern network technology is made available. Political measures to qualitatively connect these groups are considered desirable by many. These measures relate to gender concern, they concern groups like the elderly, they concern people with low education or income, they concern people who live at a distance, and they concern people who are cultural newcomers to a country.

Common to several of these groups is a need for adequate knowledge that often is not mainly of a digital nature. Consider the situation for a person that has newly arrived in a country. For cultural reasons, she or he often is unable to participate fully and democratically in society. The problems concern unfamiliarity with the country's basic values, and with its language and social organisation.

It may be seen as democratically important to provide means for cultural citizen connection, as a basic platform for political participation. This often connects to a demand for continued education over time, as both technology and forms for democratic participation tend to be moving targets.

Organisation

Citizen participation in democratic processes has wide content. Different participants stress different types of participation. Early parts of concern contain the situation to be present and informed (physically or virtually), others include the possibility to be able to suggest initiatives and to take part in agenda setting, others still to take part in discussion, to be present at the decision-making moment, and also to share a certain responsibility for the decision taken.

Two mainly different levels of ambition can be noted here, one is to be informed, the second to be able to take part in deliberative processes. Different types of organisation are concerned for these.

Citizen panels or electronic town meetings can certainly be different in form and size. It is often a challenge to decide how these should be organised. Who should be invited to participate, how and for how long? Should a citizen panel somehow be structured? The concept "citizens" in fact most often is used for persons who are mainly characterised by the fact that they belong to a certain politically decided community. Virtual possibilities challenge several types of barriers. Problems concerning inclusion surely may occur here.

The needs for planning of mature citizen participation in a society's democratic processes tend to demand increasing concern. In this, we may note that the important support of e-democratic development concerns pure technological measures to a possibly decreasing extent. Access to the Internet is increasing. The last nine letters in the word "e-democracy" place themselves increasingly in focus.

With the use of generous participatory attitudes in society at large, today's perceived democratic deficit can be turned into its opposite.

Report on Workshop IV

Tomas Ohlin
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Introduction

The "E-inclusion" workshop was divided into two parts, the first on "Access", chaired by Christer Hallerby, State Secretary, Sweden, and the second on "Proficiency", chaired by Reinhild Otte, Chairperson of the Council of Europe's Ad hoc Advisory Group on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights.

The discussion spanned various viewpoints on the subject of e-inclusion and the role of technological means in the inclusion process. It was said that, when important subjects were discussed in the information society, every citizen should have an equal opportunity to take part, in so far as was possible, and to bring his or her influence to bear during decision-making processes of an appropriate nature. In such a situation, citizens were in a position that was stronger than it used to be. A number of contributors gave examples during the workshop of the strengthening of citizens' positions.

E-inclusion was shown to encompass concern for the positions of several different groups of participants. There were still social differences, of which some examples were given. The gaps between the haves and the have-nots were described.

The role of technology in citizen-oriented processes was noted by a number of contributors. During the workshop, in fact, discussions turned at times to the potential offered by interactive technology. The increasingly widespread availability of the Internet, the role played by blogs and wikis and the increased use of e-mail were mentioned, and it was noted that a significant democratic effect was achieved when these tools became available to an ever-larger number of citizens. However, as this process occurred, its inclusive effects – the focal point of this workshop – obviously needed to be observed. New kinds of technological facilities, including various interactive services that were becoming available in a democratic context, should be made available to the greatest possible numbers of people. It was felt that

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organising and financing such availability was not without complications. The relevant national policies adopted were of different kinds. Some encompassed positions based on a competitive market in which broadband and participation services were supplied to most citizens, while others emphasised the need for complementary political action with a view to reaching social groups with specific needs, or otherwise at risk of being left out.

Discussions at the workshop did not centre on the details of different kinds of technology. Instead, the focus was on social concerns and on making it possible for large groups to participate. Rather than being regarded as a driving force, it was felt that technology had the capacity to play an important supporting role. The emphasis was on the services made available. Internet access, while described as certainly relevant, was said to be only one component of the necessary technology.

One subject about which several workshop contributors spoke was the different kinds of citizen participation. Some citizens may of course find themselves in a position closer than others to the decision-making process. It was possible in this context to draw up guidelines, covering different degrees of closeness of citizens to decision-making positions. Under such guidelines, citizens may be in different situations: receivers of knowledge and information, takers of initiatives, or originators of e-petitions. Such guidelines could also cover opportunities for citizens to play a part in setting agendas, in deliberations at various stages of the final decision-making process, and in analysing the decisions actually made and judging their effects.

Access

The availability of both access and services was discussed at the workshop, starting from some examples of citizen consultation in Sweden, described by Anders Nordh and Hansi Carlsson, SALAR (Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions), and Ami Netzler and June-Ann Vincent, from Västerås (Sweden). Attention was drawn to SALAR's focus on dialogue with citizens, and the increased concern shown to involve citizens' panels was described. Examples were given of the ICT-based tools developed for participation, and the fact was mentioned that evaluation processes relating to

these tools had been initiated. One example that was given involved every citizen of the Swedish city of Västerås being invited to take part in an open discussion of what the city would be like in the year 2026. It was generally felt that the dialogue between citizens and elected politicians needed to be more mature than it was today – not all politicians had shown the same amount of interest as the citizens. A challenge was also presented by the wish to initiate dialogue with young people. Representatives of political parties were allowed to visit schools in Sweden, and the results often showed that youngsters did want to participate, but not always through conventional forms of participation. They preferred to devise their own.

The need for universal access to be truly universal and, to the maximum extent possible, to include absolutely everybody, was expressed by Antoni Bruel i Carreras, of the Spanish Red Cross. Examples were given of the use of technology to assist vulnerable persons, encompassing voluntary programmes relating to employment, lifelong education and various kinds of social provision. Mr Bruel i Carreras described a number of services: certain types of education, independent living assistance and social care, that were available to all. New projects relating to nutrition and measures against social violence were discussed. It was evident that many such steps in combination produced inclusive results. A discussion also took place about how to measure the results of projects of special interest, and how to identify people in real need.

A member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, Mr Kent Olsson, listed a number of forms of contact between citizens and parliamentarians, stressing the Web activities of political parties, as well as citizens' initiatives. Problems could, however, arise if there were too many initiatives, for every action needed a response, and it was not always made clear who was responsible for responding. The use of e-mail could become impersonal and standardised, and did not always equate to access for all. Inclusive educational measures might be needed. However, the use of blogs and wikis reflected a positive expansion of contacts.

The theme of "e-citizens" as the vital missing link within e-government services was taken up by Matt Poelmans, representing Burgerlink, of

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the Netherlands, who said that e-citizenship would prove satisfying and stimulating. Mr Poelmans listed 10 important requirements for citizen participation, constituting what he called a service code. He also said that an e-citizens' charter would be useful as a basis for evaluation and for classifying tools, and would also be able to reveal deficiencies. He also mentioned a survey of 100 examples of e-democracy and e-society. This was a matter of great interest to the audience, as so many different kinds of participation projects exist. Assessments of the extent to which politicians lived up to their promises were also noted, and consideration was given to how such information could be made generally available. Mr Poelmans mentioned the possibility of a national ombudsman to rule on citizen participation matters and to rate different applications. Also discussed were different types of citizen participation, a topic that has proved to be of interest in many countries. This was an area where guidelines could prove especially useful.

Professor Monique Leyenaar, from Radboud University Nijmegen, in the Netherlands, made a plea for citizen involvement, transparency and inclusive politics. No one should be left out. Local government could be responsible for keeping itself informed of which citizens are participating. Government ought to become more efficient overall if large numbers of citizens participate, leading to a higher citizen satisfaction rate and a lower rate of political alienation. Participation often proved important for new contributors, but they were unfortunately few and far between nowadays. It was a real challenge to find ways of encouraging people to start to participate. What moral restrictions were there on the offering of inducements?

Ms Leyenaar discussed the whole information/representation/participation spectrum, and noted that the turnout in referendums was often low. She also mentioned the Dutch Government's recent withdrawal of its e-voting system. Deliberative participation through dialogue was preferable, especially if random sampling could be used, avoiding undesirable bias. There was often a risk of bias inherent in the participants themselves, for it was mainly those with an interest who attended. New methods would be welcome in this context, making allowances for people who preferred to use the Internet.

Proficiency

With Dr Reinhild Otte in the chair, the afternoon of Workshop IV was devoted to topics under the general heading of "proficiency". Dr Otte made an introductory speech, noting that citizen empowerment clearly depended on education. People needed to be knowledgeable and aware of how they could get their voices heard. She suggested that the workshop address the different supporting roles that technology could play in this context. Every participating citizen of course needed relevant knowledge of the matters under discussion and those that required action, and education could provide different kinds of support in this field. These needed to be made generally available, so that no social groups were isolated and left out.

Mr Miguel González Sancho, from DG Information Society and Media, European Commission, began by discussing digital divides. He pointed to the fact that the influence of digital divides altered as social groups changed in size and form over a period of time. Digital divides were often particularly related to human and social capital. Among the groups in need of specific attention and resources and special policies, Mr González Sancho mentioned the elderly and persons with disabilities. Supporting instruments for such different groups of course differed in nature. Co-ordination between key players could, however, be valuable for the measurement of efficiency and analysis of impact.

He stressed that information technology was reshaping society as a whole, and that it was difficult to formulate national participation policies, as there were in many cases moving targets. It was mentioned as a central principle that Internet access in each of the environments concerned ought to be regarded as a human right.

Representing UK online centres in Sheffield, United Kingdom, Ms Anne Faulkner spoke of her e-inclusion experience. She preferred to regard inclusion as a social matter, rather than something to be dealt with through technological reform. She quoted as an example the fact that 75% of the UK's socially excluded citizens were also digitally excluded. Consequently, political measures to deal with digital divides ought to be connected with social policy.

Ms Faulkner also regarded proficiency as an intermediate step between access and motivation. She described projects deriving value from informal and voluntary ICT training, organised by online centres. A central digital inclusion plan for the UK was to be made public in the near future.

Ms Jutta Croll said that 9 000 access points had been arranged by her organisation, the Stiftung Digitale Chancen, in Bremen, Germany. These access points had proved to be useful means of improving people's proficiency to take part in the digital world. Campaigns had been organised to improve access for migrants in rural areas, for the elderly, for young people, and especially for women. There had been discussions about e-voting and about various aspects of participation through certain e-government services. Among the positive effects observed were increased coverage, time savings, decreased costs, increased safety and security, and assistance for persons with certain types of disabilities. Digital literacy could be increased through the provision of service content of a higher quality. However, there could be grounds for a redefinition of the concept of digital literacy.

According to Ms Croll, there was still a need for measures to increase the opportunities for participation, especially for marginalised social groups. If adequate social measures were taken, safer and more secure participatory services would be helpful for larger groups.

Children's access to participation was discussed by Professor Divina Frau-Meigs, Paris, France. She stated that "children know how to decode, but not how to recode", in a comment that she made about children's apparent ability to use new technology in their own ways. Young children did not participate in the ways in which their older sisters and brothers expected them to. She noted that current media education may show a tendency to disconnect from deeper concerns. There was scope for more to be done to ensure that education covered moral aspects and human rights. Taking the broader view, there was scope for changes in teacher training in order to get teachers to "come out of their bunkers".

Ms Frau-Meigs also discussed the advantages of participation, and noted industry's role and interest in this context. She expressed general

support for an increase in education for democratic citizenship, and suggested a European curriculum for educational inclusion.

Summary of the workshop

Workshop IV, on "e-inclusion", addressed the subject of increased citizen participation in democratic processes, and especially such participation as can be supported to some extent by technology that is available to greater or lesser numbers of people. Attention was obviously focused on the sensitive positions of certain groups of citizens, on the risk of being left out, and on the problems relating to digital divides. Measures in support of access for specific social groups were discussed, as were concerns relating to educational inclusion.

Both formal and non-formal learning were considered during the workshop, and an emphasis was also placed on the importance of lifelong learning processes as a basis for active democratic participation and for concern about human rights. These processes should start at an early stage of our lives.

Looking ahead, it was pointed out that we still found ourselves at the beginning of a development that would make access to knowledge and dialogue ever more vital. Such democratic access should be defined, and made as widely available as possible. Thus, the citizens' position would grow stronger. Participation for all was becoming increasingly important in the information society.

Workshop V: e-democracy from the grass roots
Issues paper: "E-democracy from the grass roots"

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The context: representative democracy in crisis

There is a range of evidence in most western democracies that their political systems are not functioning properly. This includes declining party and trade union membership, mistrust of elected members and officials, challenges to traditional intermediate bodies, particularly trade unions and the media, growing abstentionism in elections and, in certain countries, the emergence of populist or extremist movements.

All the same, surveys show that there is not a complete disenchantment with politics in Europe. It is not democracy as such that is in crisis but rather the representative model of democracy. Citizens no longer see politics as being confined purely to elections and the appointment of those "best fitted" to govern but rather as a continuous process in which there is always the opportunity to exert influence on government through lobbying or various forms of activism. Moreover, the very concept of political activism has changed (Ion et al., 2005). The permanent, self-sacrificing and ideological militancy that underlay the activities of the great mass parties from the end of the 19th century has been replaced by a preference for more flexible, contractual and pragmatic forms of commitment.

This aspiring after a new form of political action appeared well before the development of the Internet. However, the trend is now being supported and intensified by the net, which offers it new resources and access to a much wider audience.

1. Panel: e-activism/e-campaigning

The political potential of the Internet is now well documented (Ward and Vedel, 2006) and can be seen from four standpoints. Firstly, it improves the information available to the public because of the quantity of data and the range of sources it offers, as well as its interactive

facilities. Secondly, it makes it easier to mobilise by reducing the costs that traditionally were an impediment to political commitment. It also offers extensive scope for discussion and debate, which in turn can serve to give fresh impetus to the public domain. Finally, it offers citizens more opportunity to participate in the decision-making pro-cess, for example through electronic voting.

The political potential of the Internet: from Web 1.0 to Web 2.0

For political activists in the true sense, the Internet offers powerful and inexpensive tools that provide much more opportunity to get their points of view across, unite and exert pressure on those that govern.

Initially – that is from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s – online activism was often an electronic version of activism in its traditional forms. Political websites resembled militant newspapers, e-mails were used as an electronic equivalent of political tracts, online chats were organised as backroom or school yard meetings once were and e-petitions took the form of their traditional counterparts.

The Internet contribution was essentially instrumental, in that it reduced the material, temporal and spatial constraints on political action. This contribution took a particularly spectacular form in international operations, such as the one organised by opponents of the G8 summits.

At the same time, the Internet is not just a body of tools and resources that can be applied to political action. It has become a political arena in its own right. Firstly, the way the net functions, the information flows that circulate on it and how it is regulated have become the subject of political battles and have led to specific forms of activism, such as so-called "hacktivism".[40] Secondly, just as economic globalisation was increasing in pace, the Internet opened up a new policy forum that transcended national borders to become a sort of international public arena.

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40. Hacktivism (deriving from "hack" and "activism") is "the non-violent use of illegal or legally ambiguous digital tools in pursuit of political ends. These tools include web site defacements, redirects, denial-of-service attacks, information theft, web site parodies, virtual sit-ins, virtual sabotage, and software development." (Wikipedia, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hacktivism).

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During this initial period, the political uses of the Internet did not appear to have significantly changed the relationship between governors and governed, nor the action strategies of political organisations and associations, as the first online election campaigns show. Its main contribution was the modernisation of forms of political communication.

In recent years, the Internet's potential has expanded with the appearance of a range of technologies and applications, lumped together under the generic term Web 2.0. Web 2.0 has brought about two fundamental changes. It enables web browsers to have more control over their information sources to match their needs through, for example, the aggregation of information via RSS feeds, the automatic integration of data from multiple databases and co-operative applications for sharing knowledge and experience of the wiki-tags variety. This helps users to make contact with other users sharing the same interests and encourages the formation of social networks.

This marks a transition from a top-down schema in which Internet users were essentially receivers of information to a more horizontal one in which they generate their own information. Whereas Web 1.0 instrumentalised democracy, Web 2.0 could be the herald of a democratic renewal, by giving rise to a form of collective intelligence and the emergence of citizen power in its own right, sometimes referred to as the fifth estate to emphasise its independence of the traditional political powers and the media.

Challenges and problems of online activism

Adapting political organisations to a new environment

Political organisations, be they parties, associations, trade unions, interest groups or whatever, must now adapt to a new multipolar and changing environment, characterised by multiple channels and straddling action at local, national and international levels. They must not only incorporate the technological dimension into their action strategies, which calls for a considerable amount of training, but also revise their forms of organisation and operating methods, which date back more than a century to a time when political and media systems functioned very differently.

This adaptation requires a detailed understanding of the machinery for informing the public in a digital society. How to reach specific groups when individuals are submerged by data, images and sounds. How to master the dynamics of the different social networks, or exploit them, to publicise a message.

The adaptation process also has to take account of changes in citizens' values and behaviour. What does political commitment, and in particular online political commitment, mean today? We can now have hundreds of "friends" thanks to Facebook and with a simple click we can join any number of groups supporting this or that cause, but what is the value of relationships that are established through the Internet and to what extent are we really involved in them? In other words, the Internet facilitates political commitment, but there must be doubts about how consistent or lasting this commitment is.

Finally, the new information environment in which political organisations operate poses various problems of ethics and regulation. The Internet may encourage transparency but it can also be a worrying means of surveillance. Online political activism is often based on the use of personal data and files and there have to be clear rules on their use in order to protect individuals' privacy – and to protect this data from outside intrusions.

Fragmentation of the public domain

The development of the Internet is fragmenting the public domain in a number of ways. In many countries, there is already a digital divide between those who are and those who are not connected to the Internet, although the divide is being mitigated by the efforts of the authorities and telecommunications operators.

The Internet also often produces a civic divide between active and passive citizens. Only 15 to 20% at most of those who are online regularly engage in online political activities. Using the political resources that the Internet offers requires increasingly advanced cognitive skills, a mastery of information processing procedures and a considerable amount of time. We are a long way from developing Internet applications that make such a complex subject as politics accessible to the general public.

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Finally, although the Internet offers a multiplicity of forums for expression and discussion, these are generally characterised by the uniformity of their adherents. Discussions are conducted with people who resemble each other and share the same ideas. The Internet tends to disperse public debate and accentuate individuality, leading to a profusion of micro-communities of citizens, based on similar opinions and intellectual sympathy, who do not necessarily communicate with those outside. The Internet can even generate a sense of frustration in that it offers everyone the power of expressing their opinions but not that of being listened to. Democracy is not just a question of discussion. Decisions must be taken in which the community feels a share, which entails exposure to opposing viewpoints, from which a form of collective interest can then be established.

2. Panel: the role of media

The Internet is often seen as a means of bypassing the traditional media or even of doing without it completely. It should be possible to disseminate information or present views that do not appear in the written press and are not broadcast on radio and television. This would thus avoid the news selection process operated by the media, because of shortage of time or space, or for political reasons. This is what sociologists specialising in communication term the media's gate keeping role.[41]

Political bloggers: new journalists or new opinion leaders?

Many political bloggers see themselves as the pioneers of a new form of journalism "by the people and for the people" (Gillmor, 2004). As such they consider themselves the heirs of the citizen journalism movement of the 1980s, which sought to offer a more democratic choice of information, more in tune with citizens' real concerns because they themselves would have produced it. Because they form

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41. In this model, journalists are seen as gatekeepers who decide what, from the flow of daily news, will and will not be passed on to individual viewers or readers. The model was initially formulated by David M. White (White, 1950) and has since been refined and extended in numerous works. For a summary, see Shoemaker (1996).

part of the general population, bloggers should be capable of dealing with the news in a more authentic and independent fashion than professional journalists, who are prisoners of organisational or intellectual routines and subject to pressures from their sources.

In practice, although bloggers are well able to comment on the political scene, they rarely have the necessary time and resources to go into the field and undertake detailed investigations. On the other hand, when access to certain countries is forbidden or impossible because of military conflicts, climatic disasters or political crises, local bloggers may play an important role in supplementing press agency and foreign media reports with their own observations and eyewitness accounts. This was the case with the first days of the bombing of Iraq in 2003, the Indian Ocean Tsunami in 2004 or the coup d'état in Thailand in September 2006.

Apart from these cases, bloggers tend to practice a form of sitting-room journalism, sometimes mockingly referred to as pyjama journalism. They supply very little fresh and unpublished information and most of them draw on news already published or broadcast by the traditional media. They are not simply everyday citizens, nor out-and-out journalists. They resemble the opinion leaders described fifty years ago by Paul Lazarsfeld and Elihu Katz in their two-step flow model (Katz and Lazarsfeld, 1955). They are persons who are better informed than the average and who pass on information (which they generally do not produce themselves) to small communities of readers with whom they conduct conversations, via their comments.

Interdependence of and complementarity between the old and new media

Instead of posing a challenge to the traditional media, the political bloggers seem to have developed a form of interdependence with them, as illustrated in the accompanying table.

On the one hand, bloggers are dependent on the traditional media in at least three ways:

–   they mainly draw on material published by the latter for the purposes of commenting and, to a lesser extent, criticising or analysing.

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Many bloggers find their inspiration, and the facts that serve as the starting point for their discussions, in the traditional media, and their electronic versions. In other words, the bloggers' political agenda tends to reflect that of the traditional media;

–   the traditional media also provide bloggers with their editorial models. They adopt styles of writing similar to those practised in the written press. In the political domain, bloggers take as their reference the editorialists and reporters of the major dailies and news magazines. They have not really invented or experimented with new ways of presenting political information, except in the case of a few blogs that have tried to exploit their multimedia potential by combining written and sound or audiovisual material;

–   the traditional media also determine blogs' place and perceived role in the blogosphere hierarchy. Their visibility and popularity is very much a function of how frequently they are quoted or mentioned in the traditional media.

Table 1: Complementarity between blogs and the old media

Dependence of blogs on the traditional media	Dependence of the traditional media on blogs
Raw material: ideas and themes, basic information	Alternative means of tapping ordinary opinion
Editorial formats and styles of writing (editorial model)	Illustrative or narrative aspects (the Internet man in the street)
Visibility and audience	Attracting new or more loyal readership (establishing communities of readers)

On the other hand, blogs have become a resource, in terms of both content and form, for the traditional media. Numerous radio and television broadcasts and daily newspapers now have features or sections devoted to news on the Internet.

–   alongside journalists' normal sources or channels of information, such as field investigations, dispatches, interest groups and opinion surveys, blogs offer them an additional means of establishing what is happening in a country, what issues are worrying the public, and even new trends in society;

–   although they sometimes provide content, blogs are more often used by the traditional media to add to and legitimise the information they themselves present. Quoting blogs written by ordinary members of the public gives their information a sense of authenticity and shows that the journalists concerned take account of the man and woman in the street. Sometimes blogs simply serve as narrative or rhetorical devices to give added dimension or colour to reports in the same way as street interviews, boxes or illustrations, thus maintain or stimulating public interest;

–   finally, and this is probably the area where the most novel form of complementarity is emerging, blogs are helping to modernise the traditional media. Some of them have now included on their websites platforms on which their journalists, as well as their readers, listeners or viewers, can create personal blogs. These blogs are a sort of by-product that enables the media outlet concerned to add to or present the main content in a more lively fashion, and thus make it more attractive. Journalists can publish some of their notes, describe more anecdotal aspects of a news item or get a better idea of the impact of and reactions to a report.[42] Readers can add their own opinions, or even clarify or supplement existing information. By giving readers a sense of participating in the production of their own newspaper and by constituting communities of individuals for whom this is a shared source of identity such blogs can help to establish a closer relationship between the media and their respective audiences.

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42. However, they do not always play the game. Jane Singer has shown that they often reproduce online their old standards and routines in order to maintain their role as gatekeepers (Singer, 2005).

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Report on Workshop V

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The workshop was divided into two panels, the first on the role of the media in promoting democracy, the second on new forms of activism made possible by the Internet. However, the two panels often addressed common issues as it is clear that the growth of the Internet has an impact on the traditional media and that the entire information environment in which citizens operate is changing.

1. Summary of both panels' findings

From the traditional media to the new media

Professor Karol Jakubowicz, Poland, former Chairperson of the Steering Committee on the Media and New Communication Services (CDMC) of the Council of Europe, made a very full and detailed statement on the role and future of the public service media.

He pointed out that public service television companies were having to adapt both to technological change (increase in the number of digital terrestrial channels, satellites, the Internet) and to social and political change (growing individualism, disaffection with politics, proliferation of social networks). They had, in particular, to satisfy the needs of young people, who were a less captive, more demanding audience. However, at the same time, in many countries, the ageing of the population and the fact that older people had more time meant that it was the elderly who made up the largest share of the television audience.

In Karol Jakubowicz's view, public service television companies would have to become public service media organisations and this would require two major changes:

– a review of their goals so that, in addition to representing society on a social and political level, they could contribute to more interactive relations between citizens (participatory forums and public access to audiovisual production tools and facilities);

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–   more open management methods and greater public involvement in their operation.

Alongside the traditional media, new media were attempting to emerge, making use of the Internet. Francesco Piccinini described one of these, the Internet site Agoravox.it, which had been set up a few months previously on the same lines as Agoravox.fr with the aim of allowing citizens to make their voice heard and take part in the citizen journalism movement. It enabled Internet users to analyse the news through their contributions or comments. Readers were also invited to assess the interest and the quality of contributions, making it possible to highlight the most popular ones. This type of site enriched people's view of the world, stimulated debate between citizens and prompted them to adopt a more questioning attitude towards the news. However, it also raised a number of problems. Contributions frequently came from the same people all the time, particularly from those who had the requisite cognitive resources and time and those who were in information-related occupations (teachers and students, consultants, etc.). While this site did foster comment and discussion, it did not necessarily present any new or original information and some subjects (particularly those relating to international news or news from far away countries) were scarcely covered, if at all. Lastly, citizen journalists tended to model their practices on professional journalists and had not transformed journalistic writing as much as could have been expected.

Alex Sergent described the British channel, Catch 21, which defined itself as "UK's first Internet television channel – run by young people, for young people". Its aim was to promote more active political participation by young citizens and it made considerable use of video clips, which were a very successful means of reaching young people through the Internet. In other words, Catch 21 was intended to get young people more interested in politics, using the tools and media that they used and liked most. For this purpose, Catch 21 provided access to a whole range of programmes including reports on politics, discussion programmes (often in the form of "question times") and a blog.

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Changes in political communication

Thomas Noirfalisse described Oxfam International's e-campaigning methods. He began by going over some of the main advantages of the Internet for conducting campaigns, which included lower transaction costs, permanent availability of services and the possibility of conducting campaigns in several different countries. The point of campaigning was not just to get over a message but first to alert people to a problem, then to enlist their help. In this connection, Oxfam made intensive use of all the new resources offered by Web 2.0 in terms of social networks, which fostered greater involvement by individuals by making them feel that they belonged to a community.

Rachel Gibson of the University of Manchester had looked into the use of the new media by political parties and candidates during election campaigns. She began with an impressive historical overview of the development of electoral communication over the last century and a half. She showed that communication tools had changed a great deal, although political organisations often had problems adjusting initially to changes in technology or the media. The Internet was a further illustration of this type of problem. Initially, political parties had tended simply to replicate their traditional action strategies on the Internet. It was only over the last few years that they had really begun to utilise the Internet's full potential (Howard Dean's campaign in 2004 had probably been a major turning point in this respect). Web 2.0 should encourage this development, particularly with regard to the mobilisation of voters through social networks. The question, however, was whether the Internet resulted in larger turnouts at elections. Surveys on the subject had yielded contrasting results. The Internet certainly made it easier to engage young people, but those who responded were usually the ones already interested in politics.

Sonja Kubisch described Germany's National Network for Civil Society, which was a national online network designed to promote greater involvement by German civil society. Founded in 2002, it was made up of over 190 member associations or organisations and engaged in two main types of activity. Firstly, it helped citizens to get involved by providing them with information about civil society associations and encouraging them to join them. Secondly, it acted as

a resource centre through which information and documents that were useful for collective action could be made available on line.

Professor Alexander Trechsel of the European University Institute gave an introduction to the EU Profiler, which was a tool to help people decide who to vote for and would be used for the first time at the June 2009 European elections in the 27 member countries. Over recent decades, various indicators such as falling electoral turnout, declining confidence in elected representatives or parties and voter disaffection showed that the public were distancing themselves from politics. The political choices available seemed to them to be opaque, muddled and fragmented, whereas in fact their interest in public affairs had not necessarily declined. The EU Profiler was an online application that enabled voters to identify which parties or candidates were closest to their concerns or expectations. Having filled in a questionnaire on their preferences in nine spheres, voters were informed which parties' programmes most closely matched their own preferences. EU Profiler was not just a tool to help individuals make voting decisions. It would also provide valuable data on national variations in political preferences or the mechanisms of voter behaviour.

2. General discussion

The presentations and the ensuing discussions brought out a number of common issues.

The impact of technology

There was much talk in the workshop of a crisis of democracy and citizenship,[43] particularly the problem of how to get young citizens involved in politics. However, little mention was made of the impact of communication technologies themselves. An issue that will no doubt require further thought is the way in which technological systems offer new resources but also introduce new constraints and change or influence the practices of individuals or organisations.

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43. Which calls to mind the frequently heard observation that in e-democracy, the real challenge is not the "e" but the democracy.

Firstly, the mere fact of putting new services on the Internet does not by itself create new social dynamics. To take the example of Catch 21, it is not necessarily obvious what is radically new about the Internet's contribution. Catch 21 does use new technologies to broadcast its programmes, but its coverage of politics is still very conventional and centred on institutional issues. As Rachel Gibson pointed out, the Internet changes the form of communication between government and citizens but not necessarily its nature.

Secondly, choices regarding technical configurations are never neutral. They have an effect on the way in which information is presented[44] or raise privacy issues (for example, where personal data is used for online campaigns). There is often a tendency to project a very positive image of the Internet (perhaps because of the novelty factor and the allure of its applications), but it should not be forgotten that it can also be used, consciously or unconsciously, for applications or practices that pose a threat to democracy.

Intermediation

One of the great hopes to which the Internet has given rise is that it will radically alter the channels of communication between citizens and government and facilitate more direct exchanges between them. If traditional mediating organisations (political parties, trade unions, the mass media, etc.) are in crisis, it is no doubt because, among other things, they have not listened closely enough to citizens' concerns and have failed to involve citizens in their operation. However, it should be borne in mind that they also perform important functions (aggregating preferences, capitalising on expertise, continuity of action) which, as yet, have no equivalent on the Internet.

At the same time, questions must be asked about the new visible or invisible forms of mediation that are appearing on the Internet. Citizens often imagine that they can become the media themselves and produce the information that they need collectively. But in point

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44. For example, the systems used to assess messages posted on sites such as Agoravox might lead to marginal or dissenting views being rejected and produce political uniformity rather than foster real debate.

of fact, the number one media tool on the Internet is probably the Google search engine, which sorts, selects and arranges the presentation of the sites that it offers Internet users according to their requests. It serves as an intermediary between Internet users and the sources of information that are available on the Internet.

All processes of communication between individuals involve a form of intermediation, whether through language, organisations or technical devices.[45] But if intermediation is inevitable, we must ensure that it is organised in a transparent and open manner. In the same way as we analyse the operation of the media to try and understand the changes they bring to the circulation of information, we have to scrutinise the intermediation systems that are appearing on the Internet so as to identify any pernicious effects they may have.

Fragmentation

Many current communication strategies are based on the principle of targeting. Messages are tailored to target audiences and a careful choice is made among all the available channels to find the one that is most likely to reach the selected audience. The strategy adopted by Oxfam International, described by Thomas Noirfalisse, is exemplary in this respect as each Oxfam campaign has its own specific communication plan.

Targeted communication is not something new; marketing professionals have been using it for a long time. Thanks to the tools it makes available (mailing, social networks, RSS feeds, etc.), the Internet is amplifying this trend: it offers opportunities for niche communication and makes it possible to engage specific population groups.

However, this development also raises at least two major issues with regard to the quality of democracy in modern societies.

Targeting techniques based on personal data collection, which enable the population to be segmented according to various criteria (age, personal tastes, consumer habits, etc.), pose a potential threat to

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45. Example of a technical intermediation device: to make discussions clearer and more constructive, many online forums use voting systems that make it possible to highlight the most valued contributions.

democracy where data potentially raising privacy issues is collected, sometimes without people's consent or knowledge.[46] It is to be feared that some political players might be tempted, for the sake of effective communication, to disregard citizens' privacy and, in certain cases, there may be a need for the authorities to impose regulatory controls.

Targeted communication tends to fragment society by treating it not as a collective entity but as a patchwork of different sub-groups. Targeted communication exacerbates differences instead of promoting shared values and common reference points. It is important to remember that democracy is also about organising peaceful coexistence.

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46. For instance, people signing up to connect with friends on Facebook are asked for a great deal of information that reveals their personalities and certain private preferences.

Sub-theme 3
International and regulatory context

Workshop VI: international and regulatory context
Issues paper: "International and regulatory context"

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Workshop VI, "International and regulatory context", consists of two parts. The first part will discuss e-government and e-democracy from an international perspective. The second part will discuss regulatory issues related to e-democracy.

1. Session No. VI.1: e-government and e-democracy worldwide

The intention of this session is to discuss some important issues related to the further development of e-government and e-democracy.

Benchmarking of e-government and e-democracy

During the last decade, governments have invested in e-government and e-democracy. There have been some efforts to benchmark readiness, efforts and results. The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) started assessing e-government readiness among its member nations in 2002. The benchmarking considered infrastructure, human capital, and the availability and maturity of government services. Since 2003, UNDESA has included a separate e-participation index. Other benchmarking efforts have been made by consulting companies like Accenture and Cap-Gemini, and by universities, such as Brown University's annual survey.

Current benchmarking efforts are not perfect. The assessments are mainly targeting services at national level, not at local level where much of the service provision is done. Most results are based on observation of websites (the supply side) and not on citizen experiences (the demand side). E-democracy has so far played a minor role in these assessments.

Benchmarking is important, for two reasons: first, benchmarking motivates nations to improve. Second, benchmarking points to nations

using "best practices". It is necessary to discuss how assessments can be improved to provide a more reliable picture of the whole e-government and e-democracy sector.

The need for further research

E-government and e-democracy research is maturing. This summer researchers met at the 8th European Conference on e-Government (ECEG) and the 7th International e-Government Conference (EGOV/DEXA) to discuss recent findings and new research ideas. Even if the body of knowledge is expanding every year, it is necessary to focus on, and stimulate more research in the fields of e-government and e-democracy.

Collaboration and participation, Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is used to describe new web-based applications to enhance creativity, information sharing, and collaboration. Some of the Web 2.0 applications have been very successful (Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube). An important issue related to Web 2.0 is what e-government and e-democracy can learn from social networking applications. Can social networking applications be used to enhance e-government and e-democracy? How can governments tap into this new way of collaboration and sharing?

Wikipedia shows how citizens can collaborate on content production and share knowledge. Massive collaboration and "crowdsourcing" are new trends, and should be taken into consideration when planning new e-government and e-democracy applications. E-democracy is concerned with citizen influence and empowerment, but participation may also be seen as a service to the community, a way of improving human conditions.

Users and usage of e-government and e-democracy

The ambitions for e-government and e-democracy are high. In order to establish solutions, some preconditions must, however, be present: infrastructure must be in place, basic computer training must be available. Solutions must be accessible for citizens with physical or cognitive impairments. Intermediaries may play an important role; especially

in places with limited infrastructure and/or low degree of computer literacy.

A common observation is that e-government and e-democracy is not very popular among younger citizens. At the same time, young citizens are less concerned with traditional democracy, but often concerned with specific issues. The "e-" has a potential to make both government and democracy more accessible, but it is still unclear how e-democracy may involve and activate younger citizens.

Another observation is that e-government and e-democracy often have been driven by technology. The use of technology has been the focus, and not the actual use. We need to know more about the users and the non-users in order to improve e-government and e-democracy.

In order to use e-government and e-democracy, its existence must be known. Therefore, all plans for e-government and e-democracy projects should incorporate marketing plans.

Ethical issues

The growing implementation of e-government and e-democracy raises a number of ethical issues. Examples are: privacy and freedom of expression. Certain issues are particularly relevant in a worldwide perspective and are often related to Internet governance. Some governments have implemented policies for dealing with "unwanted" content (content blocking). Some governments log information about actual use, and may even keep records of data sent and received. It is important that democratic governments keep an eye on ethical issues when planning and implementing new e-government or e-democracy projects.

2. Session No. VI.2: regulatory aspects of e-democracy

The intention of this session is to provide input on regulatory aspects of e-democracy. This input will be used in formulating strategies for construction of regulatory frameworks.

A regulatory framework can help secure the rights of individuals when taking part in democratic processes facilitated by information and communication technologies. At the same time a regulatory framework

can be a barrier for use. It is therefore necessary to balance the government needs for authentication and control with the citizen's need for privacy and security.

To enable citizens to take part in the information society, there are some prerequisites that need to be fulfilled. These are also prerequisites for taking part in e-democracy. In addition, there are some specific prerequisites related to e-democracy. The following figure shows the relation between these prerequisites as an onion model.
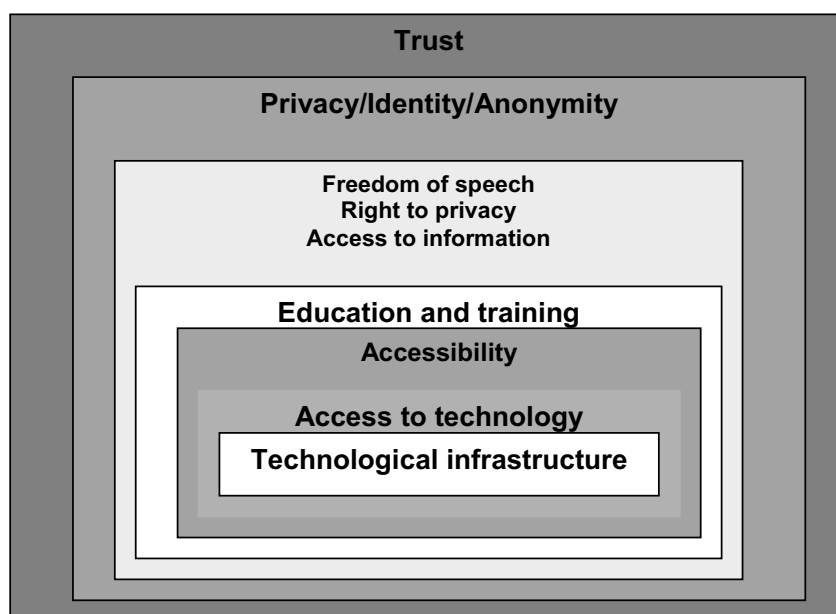
Prerequisites for e-democracy

To take part in the information society, citizens need access to technology built on an infrastructure. The technology itself should be accessible to all people regardless of physical or cognitive impairments. In order to utilise technology, relevant training should be available.

E-democracy builds on democratic rights such as freedom of speech, the right to privacy, and freedom of information. In many countries, these rights are even embedded in the constitution.

A legal framework must be specific on how to handle these rights in the context of the information society. This includes such issues as privacy, identity and anonymity.

Another important prerequisite for successful e-democracy is trust. Citizens must have the certainty that government does not misuse information obtained from citizens taking part in democratic processes. A legal framework should include a requirement for governments to publish legally binding privacy statements on how information can and will be used.

Trust is also a question of results. For e-democracy to be successful, it is also important that participation is valued. A legal framework should also require governments to publish information on how ideas and opinions are fed into the decision-making process. It is particularly important to establish feedback channels to show citizens what happened to their input.

E-democracy can be regulated in different ways. Regulation can happen through formal legislation, but can also be handled through agreements between stakeholders (soft law). It is necessary to analyse the feasibility of different alternatives before deciding what regulatory practice to use.

There is a growing concern of governance of the Internet itself. This is directly relevant for e-democracy, since such regulations include such things as blocking of content (freedom of speech), logging of traffic (privacy) and the requirement of users to identify themselves (identity).

When constructing a legal framework, it is also important to discuss the needs of the research community to collect and process information for research purposes.

Report on Workshop VI

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The workshop was organised as two half-day sessions. The aim of the first session was to update workshop participants on current developments within e-government and e-democracy. The second session took a closer look at one specific aspect of e-democracy evolution: the need for regulation of e-democracy.

This report summarises important issues raised by the speakers. Where appropriate, the discussion of regulatory aspects is included in the summary of each issue.

The future of e-government and e-democracy

Thanassis Chrissafis addressed the current challenges of e-democracy as seen from the European Commission: fighting the perceived democratic deficit, which requires a new relationship between politicians and citizens, and which is particularly challenging at EU level; reconnecting citizens with politics and policy making, for example, with a view to the next European elections and sustaining citizens' involvement beyond 2009; and reducing the complexity of decision making and legislation processes in an enlarged EU of 27 countries, in addition to the increasing number of cross-border issues.

Maria Wimmer presented two scenarios developed as part of an EC funded study on the future of e-government (www.egovrtd2020.org). In the first scenario, "ambient government", citizens have high confidence in the government to effectively and efficiently settle issues for the common good. Physical contact between government and citizens is limited since e-services are considered to be of high quality. Decision making is transparent, and local decision-making power is increased on behalf of centralised decision making.

The other scenario, "incident politics", gives a more pessimistic outlook. In this scenario, a two-class society emerges. Trust in government is limited because the government is not able to cope with expectations. The society becomes more individualistic, as young, well-educated citizens are mobile and able to adapt, while older

citizens with limited understanding of ICTs are left out. Due to a disruptive environment, citizens demand security before privacy, and ICTs are deployed for that purpose, as well as to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of government.

Most of the issues raised by the other speakers show this ambivalence. On one hand, e-government and e-democracy have great potential; on the other hand, there are possible negative outcomes.

The complexity of e-democracy

The following model presented by the rapporteur shows the complexity of e-government and e-democracy. In order to let citizens take active part in the information society, some basic requirements need to be in place:

First, the underlying infrastructure needs to be present. Next, citizens must have access to appropriate technology. If they do not have access to such technology at home, there must be other options, either by using publicly accessible terminals or through intermediaries. To include disadvantaged groups, e-services must be accessible. Accessibility is partly provided through technological solutions, but may also refer to specialised content, for example, translations of content into foreign languages. In order to facilitate the use of e-services, it is also necessary to provide relevant education and training.

E-inclusion is a term used to describe activities aimed at including disadvantaged groups in the information society, and is an important cornerstone for the adoption of e-government and e-democracy. E-inclusion encompasses access to technology, accessibility, as well as the provision of education and training.

Several speakers stressed the importance of e-inclusion. Peter Ferdinand warned that groups may be marginalised due to introduction of new technology: "So on one hand you have the possibility that e-democracy may facilitate the integration, the involvement of certain groups of the society, but at the same time, it may for practical reasons mean that other groups of the society now become less equal than before."

Jeremy Millard pointed out that there has been visible progress in this area. His research showed that in 2005 only 20% of 30 EU+ member

states had inclusive e-government policies, while in 2007 more than 80% of the states had adopted such policies. In 2005 only 10% of the states had policies for multichannel delivery. The 2007 survey showed an increase to 50%. He also pointed out the importance of intermediaries as facilitators of e-government and e-democracy.

The close connection between democracy and fundamental rights was emphasised by Evika Karamagioli. E-democracy rules and regulatory frameworks should guarantee the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of speech and the right to privacy.

Other speakers focused on access to information and transparency as significant prerequisites for a democratic society: Michael Stanley-Jones explained that the access to information and transparency is one of the cornerstones of the Aarhus convention. Sylvia Kierkegaard discussed the current state of freedom of information, and showed some of the complex issues that need to be addressed when discussing regulatory mechanisms. Blanca Rodríguez Antigüedad gave practical examples of the efforts by the Spanish Government to implement access to information in their legislation.

The issues of data protection and security were another key point frequently mentioned. Peter Ferdinand gave several examples of potential security pitfalls of e-democracy, including the possibility of foreign intervention in democratic processes in another country, and that information submitted by citizens may be misused by the authorities.

A common issue addressed by the speakers was the importance of trust. Trust is again closely connected to data protection and security. To build trust is possibly the most important task for securing continuing evolution of e-government and e-democracy.

Regulation is one approach to achieve trust. Regulations could include proactive disclosure of data held by authorities with the possibility for the individuals to correct and control their personal data. Regulations could also put clear constraints on the use of data collected through e-government and e-democracy applications, for example, by requiring government agencies to publish legal binding privacy statements on how information can and will be used.

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Web 2.0

Web 2.0 is used to describe a concept for new ways of utilising the Web for creativity, sharing and collaboration. Valerie Frissen pointed out that innovation in the public sector is often slow and problematic, and this is a striking discrepancy compared to the high deployment and innovative use of ICTs in civil society, most notably through Web 2.0 applications. She defined Web 2.0 in the following way: "An open web environment which activates users in social networks to produce value resulting in shifting user-producer relations." Traditional consumers suddenly find themselves as producers. Successful Web 2.0 applications (like Facebook, MySpace, Flickr, YouTube) are based on a bottom-up approach that is different from the traditional government initiated top-down approach. Such applications have so far shown an amazing degree of success, while the same does not hold for the top-down initiatives.

Governments should therefore learn from Web 2.0, both as an inspiration for creating new and innovative services, but also as a possible source for input into established democratic processes. One specific challenge is to unleash the potential created by user generated content.

Web 2.0 also introduces new challenges related to regulation. User generated content blurs the distinction between traditional mass media and citizen journalism. Social networks also challenge the right to privacy in new ways.

Kim Viborg Andersen pointed out that the lack of uptake of e-government and e-democracy services may partially be caused by lack of media interest. He argued that introducing services in highly visible areas like the health sector may cause more media interest and therefore attract more attention among citizens.

Research

Some speakers mentioned the need for further research. The fields of e-government and e-democracy are rapidly evolving, due to the speed of technological innovations combined with an eagerness to reform both government procedures and democracy. Thanassis Chrissafis gave an overview of current developments in e-participation research

within the EU, and announced that funding for e-participation research would be reintroduced in the 7th framework programme. All stakeholders should, however, be encouraged to initiate and fund research projects in these areas.

Regulation

There is an expressed need for regulation of e-democracy. As one of the workshop participants commented in the first session: "Without regulation authorities can do whatever they want."

The purpose of regulation is to protect the interests of the stakeholders, including empowerment of citizens and safeguarding democracy. Regulation should also include the protection of fundamental rights of citizens in the new setting represented by the information society.

It will always be a conflict between the need for anonymity and confidentiality, on one hand, and for identity and authentication, on the other hand. Regulation is one approach to balance these needs.

All points discussed earlier have regulatory aspects. Regulation is needed to secure e-inclusion and fundamental rights. Regulation is also needed for data protection and security, and is an important enabling factor for building trust.

Thomas Buchsbaum presented different ways in which e-democracy can be regulated: through legislation, through quasi-state regulation ("soft law"), through agreements between stakeholders, and behavioural norms. Regulation can be done within existing regulatory frameworks, but also by separate e-acts or rules. He also showed examples of different degrees of government involvement, including the recent Spanish Law on Electronic Access to Information, the Tuscany Regional Act 69/2007 on democratic participation, the ICELE Civic Leadership Blogging Guidebook (soft law), and the Dutch e-Charter (community-own rules).

The Internet is a good example of self-regulation. David Souter pointed out that the Internet has become an extremely important force in society without much government involvement at all.

Several speakers warned against over-regulation, and promoted the idea of self-regulation where appropriate. Regulation must promote, not be a barrier to grass-root initiatives. It is necessary to do thorough analysis of the feasibility of different approaches of regulation

Conclusions

All layers of the model introduced by the rapporteur are closely inter-related with regulatory aspects. Regulation should secure access to technology, provide for accessibility, ensure education and training, secure fundamental rights in the context of new technology, set requirements for technology to protect privacy, identity and anonymity, and build the necessary confidence that allows people to trust the new way of doing government business and enhance democracy.

Web 2.0 represents a major change in the use of ICT. Both e-government and e-democracy must learn from the success of Web 2.0 applications.

The Council of Europe should continue to work on the regulatory aspects based on its already strong commitment to human rights and justice.

CLOSING SESSION

Jean-Marie Heydt
Vice-President of the Council of Europe Conference of INGOs

On behalf of the Conference of INGOs of the Council of Europe, which I have the honour of representing, I should like to say how pleasantly surprised I have been by the progress of our discussions over these first two days – a point of view that I believe is shared widely by my colleagues from the Conference of INGOs.

As you are aware, the Conference of INGOs is one of the four pillars of the Council of Europe. As the representative of civil society, it brings together over 400 international federations of non-profit associations from throughout the Council of Europe's 47 member states.

When the theme of e-democracy was chosen, I naturally consulted my colleagues and I have to admit that they, like me, were caught somewhat off guard, although that was probably because most of us have only limited experience of the subject.

In the course of the preparations for this Forum, however, I discovered that, as part of our contribution to the development of democracy, some INGOs had developed various practical projects, the implementation of which we have been able to discuss here.

I will not go into the details – the rapporteurs and the general rapporteur will do that afterwards – but I would like to present some of the thinking that guided us during the preparations for the Forum.

First of all, we believe that we should not misunderstand the lack of voter participation in public affairs by reducing it solely to the time of elections. Likewise, we should not play down this electoral deficit by taking refuge or hiding behind technological innovations.

I believe that it is the arrangements for implementing democracy that need to be reconsidered, through the prism of a new world vision. In

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that connection e-tools not only represent a tremendous opportunity but are also a reality that the younger generations have already taken fully on board. We really are in a situation where the generations are divided between great enthusiasm for and great resistance to new technologies.

For the time being, though, the figures we have heard here do seem to suggest that the penetration of e-tools remains fairly limited. That is perhaps both an opportunity and a challenge: the opportunity is having the great advantage of being able to draw on existing trials to analyse the risks and benefits, while the challenge is to equip ourselves to address the issues without waiting for the development of the tools before taking action.

Managing change in a considered manner

The Council of Europe has the unique feature of being an organisation that offers a forum for "European thinking", where local and national politicians, committed individuals from the voluntary sector, scientific researchers and academics all come together. Other international organisations lack such a forum and all too often have to take decisions in haste. The Council of Europe has the wherewithal not only for reconsidering the ways democracy is implemented, monitoring the outcomes produced and correcting them if need be, but also for making public leaders aware of the necessary changes. And there is much work to do in that area!

As we know, democracy and technology do not somehow stand apart; the two are closely interrelated. Technology can be a great tool working for democracy. A tool that will help us to understand and follow the development of democracy more easily, but it is just a tool. And any tools, especially new ones, demand that we know how to use them and, consequently, anticipate the risks they might involve.

A new right: the right to overcome the digital divide

We have spoken about the digital divide, which is a key challenge. Under the pretext of moving forward and wanting to overcome the digital divide, however, we must not once again widen the "social

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divide" to the detriment, this time, of the elderly, the poor, the disabled or the illiterate, who would be left out against their will and would have no bridges for overcoming the divide. However, bridges or passageways are just what are needed so as to enable those concerned to make the choice of crossing the divide.

Other people definitely do not need such bridges, for the danger facing them is isolation. As it is an issue that is often raised, we are well aware within our INGOs that many people have "abandoned" social relations and withdrawn into a "cyberworld" in which computer screens have become their only window to the world, which sometimes even is a completely virtual one.

So bridges will have to be built for some people, while others will have no need for them whatsoever. At the same time, however, it will be necessary to take account of and respect a third category of individuals, who want to have the right not to use electronic technology. We cannot and must not aim at everyone overcoming the digital divide.

In this area, therefore, "new tools" must also mean "new rights" and, hence, new forms of protection. We must safeguard these rights in our various texts and propose an additional protocol both to the European Convention on Human Rights and to the European Social Charter.

This is all the more important since the current emphasis on security means that it is necessary to ensure the protection of the individual and, to this end, we must develop this new right, including an article on what some speakers called the right to be forgotten.

The need to build public confidence

There would be no point in offering a new tool if individuals were afraid to use it. As we are all aware, one of the difficulties facing our democracies is the loss of public confidence, with citizens feeling that they are no longer on the same wavelength as those who are supposed to represent them.

Nowadays, people expect to be able to take action not just at the time of elections but whenever an issue affects them in their daily lives.

However, it would be risky to use a tool that did not meet all the necessary requirements in terms of confidentiality and quality of procedure. The confidentiality and quality aspects are vital to building or maintaining public confidence.

Learning to use e-democracy and establishing an ethical framework

Confidence must go hand in hand with the ability to use the tool concerned. Just like democracy itself, e-democracy must enter into a learning process so as to avoid abuses and excesses of all kinds that would threaten users, especially children. The learning process would also enable those who did choose to overcome the divide to cross the bridge or passageway I mentioned before.

A legal framework, a climate of confidence and the provision of training provide a good foundation that must be supplemented by instilling responsible attitudes in all players.

It is against this background that I would remind you that the previous Forum asked the Conference of INGOs to draw up a code of good practice for civic participation. The code is under preparation. We are going to continue our work in Stockholm next week at the invitation of the Swedish Government with a view to producing an appropriate framework for responsible action by individuals. I will, of course, take particular care to make sure that the outcome of our discussions about e-democracy is fully reflected in the code. It will tie in perfectly with the activities for the 60th anniversary of the Council of Europe.

In conclusion, I would say that we are facing a real challenge here, which is why the INGOs must also incorporate the new technology concerned in their own methods of operation, in a manner that complements the way our democratic organisations function traditionally. That is a commitment that we must make so as to help the whole of civil society and – you may rest assured – it is one that we will indeed make.

Sandra de Lorite
City of Madrid Councillor on Citizen Participation, Spain

As Madrid City Councillor for Citizen Participation, I feel honoured
and gratified to have organised and participated actively in the Fourth
Forum for the Future of Democracy hosted by Madrid. Participation
is one of the pillars underpinning the idea of democracy and it is also
one of the criteria by which citizens judge the action of their govern-
ments. Participation promotes transparent public management and
government responsiveness because exchanges between citizens and
local authorities make it possible for public policies and services to
be tailored more closely to citizens' preferences. Participation has
even been described as a kind of school of democracy, for both citizens
and those who govern them.

No one today disputes that participatory democracy is a necessary
adjunct to our representative system. Participation makes it possible
for the different sector and area-based interest groups to contribute
to local policy making and allows agreement to be reached between
the parties within a system of mutual checks and balances. Participation
thus becomes an instrument for resolving the problems posed by
governance, facilitates decision making, encourages consensus and
averts conflict.

We in the Madrid City Council are certain that participation is an
indispensable component of our current model of democracy and we
are therefore working on a model of citizen participation based on a
set of guidelines. We are embarking on this course with high hopes,
and these hopes are bolstered by the certainty that we have chosen
the right path. The current model of citizen participation developed
and implemented by Madrid City Council over four years ago is based
on a set of guidelines.

First, in line with the recommendations of the European Union on
the promotion of citizen participation, the European Charter of Local
Self-Government and the Law on Measures for Modernising Local
Government, the City of Madrid Regulation on Citizen Participation
was drawn up and approved as the basic legal framework for guar-
anteeing the establishment of citizen participation structures and

processes. The second line of work was to set up stable participation bodies and bring them into operation. These bodies constitute permanent channels for area and sector-based participation and permit the development of deliberative processes involving individual citizens, representatives of associations and members appointed by the political groups represented on Madrid City Council.

In Madrid, special significance attaches to the participatory formulation and management of Special Investment Plans, a form of participatory budget that seeks to redress the city's geographical and social balance by setting in motion wide-ranging processes of participation and community consultation. This currently concerns the nine most disadvantaged of the city's 21 districts. The budget funds committed to these Special Investment Plans, the formulation and implementation of which increasingly involve e-participation mechanisms, already amount to 603 million euros and will be well in excess of 800 million euros on completion of the projects.

However, citizen participation cannot be confined to intensive processes involving the participation of a small number of residents. It is also necessary to provide channels enabling citizens to express their views individually on specific issues via processes of limited duration but involving a larger number of people.

If participation is to be effective, there must be an impetus from above opening up spaces so that participation takes place in a flexible manner and involves as many different players as possible. We politicians must also learn the new languages and forms of communication that are needed for this.

As you will all be aware, the holding of this Forum also coincides with European Local Democracy Week, an event promoted by the Council of Europe and celebrated by its member states with the aim of fostering knowledge of local democracy and promoting the idea of democratic participation at local level. Madrid City Council has therefore joined in the celebration of European Local Democracy Week by organising a series of events designed to enhance citizens' perception of local democracy as a common European value, inform citizens of the different opportunities to participate in and contribute

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to local democratic life, and establish relationships of proximity and trust with them. In short, to bring local government closer to the citizens.

The European Charter of Local Self-Government in fact sets forth the right of citizens to participate in the management of public affairs. This right forms part of the democratic principles shared by all the Council of Europe member states. It is our belief that this right can be exercised most directly at the local level and that the existence of local authorities vested with effective powers permits administration that is both effective and close to the citizen, and the strengthening of local self-government in the different countries therefore represents an essential contribution to the building of a Europe based on the principles of democracy and decentralisation. It has also been very important for our city to host this Council of Europe Forum, the main aim of which is to strengthen democracy, political freedoms and citizen participation by pooling ideas, information and examples of good practice while at the same time exploring and further developing the possibilities of e-democracy.

Both in the plenary sessions and in the workshops, political representatives, academic experts, civil society organisations and public officials have explored in-depth such interesting topics as the international and regulatory context of e-democracy, e-inclusion, ICTs in electoral processes, e-democracy from the grass roots, e-participation and the special features of e-participation at local level. Now that we have heard the conclusions of each of the workshops, it is clear that e-democracy not only offers great opportunities but also poses major challenges.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to say that the Madrid City Council has done its utmost over the past three days to ensure that this European event achieves the hoped-for success. On behalf of the Mayor of Madrid, I would like to thank the Council of Europe and the Spanish Government for holding this Forum in Madrid, and I would like to thank all of you for your presence and your participation. I wish you all a safe return to your countries.

Volodymyr Khandogìy
First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Ukraine

Let me start by expressing gratitude to the Spanish authorities for their hospitality and excellent organisation of the Forum.

I believe that Madrid's session, alongside the previous Forums, stands as evidence that the idea of inter-institutional dialogue on European democracy issues is vital and timely. We consider this dialogue as an appropriate platform for discussing challenges and opportunities facing democracy in the contemporary world.

I agree with many previous speakers that the subject of this Forum – "e-democracy" – is relevant with regard to practical support of democracy. Indeed, new information and communication technologies offer to states a wide range of means to make democratic institutions and democratic processes accessible both to public authorities at all levels and to citizens. On the one hand, they strengthen the effectiveness of democracy itself by establishing its more participatory model. On the other hand, they enable people to save their time and money in enjoying their rights.

In the meantime, at our Forum we were talking not only about the advantages of e-democracy; the issues of the risks and challenges of e-tools facing societies were also raised today. First, we cannot achieve immediate success in using e-tools in democratic processes, for example in elections, in all member states. In some countries, including Ukraine, the new e-technologies themselves are not accessible to all citizens.

Second, the protection of personal data and confidence are as yet unresolved issues.

Third, a great amount of information produced by e-technologies requires effective management and accordingly more technical and human resources.

All of these issues should be studied further by experts and politicians both at national and international level. I am confident that the outcome of Madrid's session of the Forum and good practices presented

here will be an appropriate basis for developing standards in the area of e-democracy.

It is a great honour for my country to host the Forum in 2009. In preparing this event we consider that the next Forum should focus on a subject of particular significance in the European legal and political context. That is why we propose "electoral systems" as the main theme of the agenda of the Fifth Session. We hope that the subject of Forum 2009 and its discussions will promote harmonisation of electoral systems in Europe on the basis of equality, the rule of law and democracy.

Allow me to invite all of you here to take an active part in next year's Forum in Ukraine. The Forum will take place in Kyiv in October, and the main theme, as I mentioned, will be "electoral systems".

Programme

Wednesday 15 October – Day One

2 p.m.   **Opening of the Forum for the Future of Democracy 2008 in Madrid, Spain**

Welcome by: Mr Fernando Puig de la Bellacasa Aguirre, State Secretary, Ministry of Public Administrations, Spain

Ms Ana Botella, Deputy Mayor of Madrid, Spain

Opening speeches:

Right Hon. Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe

Mr Lluís Maria de Puig, President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr Yavuz Mildon, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Mr Christer Hallerby, State Secretary, Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Sweden, representing the chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers and reporting on follow-up to the 2007 Forum Session in Sweden

6 p.m.   **First plenary session:** *Opportunities and risks of e-democracy*

Chairperson: **Mr Lluís Maria de Puig,** President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Panellists:

Professor Lawrence Pratchett, Head of the Department of Public Policy, Leicester Business School, De Montfort University, United Kingdom

Mr Johan Gorecki, CEO and founder, Globe Forum Business Network and co-developer of Skype, Sweden

Mr Vasilis Koulolias, Executive Director, Gov2u, Greece

9 p.m.   Welcome reception given by the City of Madrid at the Parque del Retiro for all participants in the Forum

Thursday 16 October – Day Two

9.30 a.m.   **Six parallel workshop tracks
9.30 a.m. to 1 p.m./3 p.m. to 5.30 p.m.**

Sub-theme 1: democratic governance

• **Workshop I: e-participation**

Rapporteur: **Ms Ella Taylor-Smith,** Napier University, United Kingdom

9.30 a.m.   ICTs for participatory democracy

Chairperson: **Mr Thomas Buchsbaum,** Ministry of European and International Affairs, Austria, Chairperson of CAHDE

Speakers:

Professor Ann Macintosh, University of Leeds, United Kingdom: "Success, failure and challenges of e-participation"

Mr Göran Lindblad, Chairperson of the Political Affairs Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: "ICTs for participatory democracy"

Mr Csaba Madarasz, Council of Europe Conference of INGOs: "Involving citizens in e-democracy"

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Professor Herbert Kubicek, Institute for Information Management, Bremen, Germany: "E-participation in Germany – An overview"

Ms Joanne Caddy, OECD: "From open to inclusive: building citizen centred policy and services"

3 p.m. Opportunities for and challenges to representative democracy

Chairperson: **Mr Juan Fernando López Aguilar,** Chairperson of the Ad hoc Committee of the Parliamentary Assembly on the Forum for the Future of Democracy

Speakers:

Mr Gherardo Casini, UNDESA, Rome, Italy: "ICTs in parliaments"

Mr Andreas Gross, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: "Democracy is the only tool we need"

Mr Alessandro Villani, Director for Co-ordination of Projects, E-government and Innovation, City of Florence, Italy, Council of Europe Congress: "E-tools: a response to the needs of local authorities"

Mr Bruno Kaufmann, Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe, Marburg, Germany: "Towards a transnational direct-democratic infrastructure"

Mr Dick Toornstra, DG EXPO, European Parliament: "Perceptions from a cross-border parliament"

•**Workshop II: e-participation at the local level**
This workshop track is organised by the City of Madrid

Rapporteur: **Professor David Ríos Insua,** Spanish Royal Academy of Sciences, Vice-Rector of International Relations and New Technologies, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Spain

9.30 a.m.   E-tools in citizen participation at local level

Chairperson: **Mr Alejandro Arranz,** Director General for Innovation and Technology, City of Madrid, Spain

Speakers:

Mr José Nuño, General Directorate of Quality Management and Citizen Relations, City of Madrid, Spain: "Interactive local government on the website of the City of Madrid"

Mr Fernando Rocafull, Director General of Latin American Capital Cities Union, General Secretariat (UCCI): "E-participation policies in Latin American municipalities"

Mr Helmut Himmelsbach, Mayor of the City of Heilbronn, Germany, Rapporteur of the Council of Europe Congress on Electronic Democracy and Deliberative Consultation on Urban Projects: "Using e-tools in urban/spatial planning"

Mr Rick Klooster, City of Apeldoorn, the Netherlands: "VirtuoCity – Urban planning through ICTs in Apeldoorn, Helmond and Tilburg"

Mr Francesco Molinari, ALTEC SA, Thessaloniki, Greece: "ICTs for urban planning in the City of Massa (Italy)"

Mr Rui Lourenco, Coimbra University/Portugal: "Developing electronic documentation for citizen debates at community level"

Ms Gun Eriksson, Sigtuna, host city to the 2007 Forum Session, Sweden: "E-participation in the Swedish town of Sigtuna"

3 p.m.   E-participatory budgets

Chairperson: **Ms Sandra de Lorite,** City of Madrid Councillor on Citizen Participation, Spain

Moderator: **Mr José Manuel Rodríguez Álvarez,** Deputy Director of European Affairs, City of Madrid, Spain

Speakers:

Mr Manuel Arenilla, Rey Juan Carlos University, Madrid, Spain: "Participatory budgets – A methodological approach"

Mr Victor García Segador, General Director for Citizen Participation, City of Madrid, Spain: "Participatory budgets – The experience in Madrid"

Mr Julio Andrade, Councillor Citizen Participation in Malaga, Spain: "E-participatory budgets in the City of Malaga"

Mr Simon James, member of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, United Kingdom: "Opening up the council – Participatory budgeting in Kingston"

Mr Claudio Forghieri, Modena City Council, Italy: "A multichannel approach to the e-participatory budget: the experience of the City of Modena"

Mr Daniel Chávez, Transnational Institute, the Netherlands: "Sociological aspects of participatory budgets"

• **Workshop III: ICTs in electoral processes**

9.30 a.m.   E-voting: recent developments and challenges Certification, auditing and observation of e-enabled elections
2008 biennial review meeting of Committee of Ministers Recommendation Rec(2004)11 on legal, operational and technical standards for e-voting, with special invitees from Council of Europe member states, open to all Forum participants

Rapporteur: **Professor Laurence Monnoyer-Smith,** Université de Technologie de Compiègne, France

Chairperson: **Mr Luc van den Brande,** Chairperson of the Council for Democratic Elections, member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

First Session: progress reports from Council of Europe member states

Speakers:

Mr Paul Docker, Ministry of Justice, United Kingdom: "E-voting – The UK perspective"

Ms Ardita Driza Maurer, Federal Chancellery, Switzerland: "Evolution of e-voting in Switzerland between 2006 and 2008 and outlook"

Mr Danilo Rota, Canton of Neuchâtel, Switzerland: "E-government and electronic voting"

Professor Alexander Trechsel, European University Institute, Florence, Italy: "An analysis of the e-enabled elections in Estonia in 2005 and 2007"

Mr Robert Krimmer, E-voting.cc, Austria: "E-voting in Austria, current developments and outlook"

Progress reports from other Council of Europe member states

3 p.m.   Second Session: activities and projects by international organisations and other stakeholders

Speakers:

Ms Melanie Volkamer, University of Passau, Germany: "The Common Criteria Protection Profile, 'basic set of security requirements for online voting products'"

Mr Mats Lindberg, OSCE/ODIHR: "Meaningful observation of electronic voting processes"

Mr Jordi Barrat i Esteve, University of Alicante, Spain: "Certification of e-voting systems: what about transparency?"

Mr John Borras, OASIS, United Kingdom: "Election Markup Language (EML) progress report"

Professor Gabriele Kucsko-Stadlmayer, member of the Venice Commission: "The work of the Venice Commission in the field of e-democracy, in particular e-voting"

Concluding session: looking ahead – Future prospects and challenges, and the role of the Council of Europe

Sub-theme 2: empowerment

• **Workshop IV: e-inclusion**

Rapporteur: **Mr Tomas Ohlin,** Telo Konsult, Sweden

9.30 a.m. Access
(partner country: Sweden)

Chairperson: **Mr Christer Hallerby,** State Secretary, Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, Sweden

Speakers:

Mr Anders Nordh and **Mr Hansi Carlsson,** IT Strategists, Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions (SALAR): "Citizen e-participation in local authorities and regions – A brief overview"

Ms Ami Netzler, Strategy Analyst, and **Ms June-Ann Vincent,** Project Manager for Västerås 2026, Municipality of Västerås, Sweden: "Young people's e-participation for future Västerås, Sweden's sixth largest city"

Mr Antoni Bruel i Carreras, General Co-ordinator, International Committee of the Red Cross: "ICT for vulnerable groups"

Mr Kent Olsson, Sweden (EPP/CD), member of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe: "How

to get young people more interested in politics by e-democracy"

Mr Matt Poelmans, Burgerlink, the Netherlands: "Using ICT for involving citizens in democratic processes"

Professor Monique Leyenaar, Radboud University Nijmegen, the Netherlands: "E-democracy: blessing or curse?"

3 p.m. Proficiency

Chairperson: **Ms Reinhild Otte,** Chairperson of the Council of Europe Advisory Group on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education

Speakers:

Mr Miguel González Sancho, Deputy Head of Unit H3: ICT for Inclusion, DG Information Society and Media, European Commission: "European Union policy on e-inclusion"

Ms Anne Faulkner, Head of Policy and Business Development, UK online centres, Sheffield, United Kingdom: "Fostering e-inclusion – The experience of the UK online centres"

Ms Jutta Croll, Foundation for Digital Opportunities (Stiftung Digitale Chancen), Bremen, Germany: "Ways of improving people's proficiency for engaging in the digital world"

Professor Divina Frau-Meigs, Paris 3 Sorbonne University, France: "How can formal education produce screen-smart and media and information literate children?"

• **Workshop V: e-democracy from the grass roots**

Rapporteur: **Mr Thierry Vedel,** Centre de recherches politiques de Sciences Po, Paris, France

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9.30 a.m.   The role of the media in promoting democratic participation using the possibilities of ICTs

(CoE partner: DG-HL/Media Division)

Chairperson: **Mr Patrick Segalla,** Federal Chancellery, Austria

Speakers:

Mr Karol Jakubowicz, Poland, former Chairperson of the Council of Europe's Steering Committee for Mass Media and New Communication Services (CDMC): "The role and future of public service media"

Mr Francesco Piccinini, Agoravox. Italy: "The experience and possibilities of new Internet-based media in promoting democratic participation"

Mr Alex Sergent, Catch 21 ("The UK's first Internet television channel – Run by young people, for young people"), United Kingdom: "What kind of e-participation do young people want and what role should the media play?"

3 p.m.   E-activism/e-campaigning

Chairperson: **Mr Zbiegniew Pisarski,** Casimir Pulaski Foundation, Poland

Speakers:

Ms Sonja Kubisch, National Network for Civil Society (Bundesnetzwerk Bürgerschaftliches Engagement), Germany: "The *Buergernetz*, an online network for civic engagement"

Mr Thomas Noirfalisse, Oxfam International: "Does e-campaigning really work? An overview of successes and failures"

Mr Emin Huseynzade, Transition Online, Azerbaijan: "The situation of citizen media in Azerbaijan"

Professor Alexander Trechsel, European University Institute, Florence, Italy: "Voting Advice Applications (VAAs)"

Professor Rachel Gibson, University of Manchester, United Kingdom: "The use of new media by political organisations and candidates in campaigns and elections"

Sub-theme 3: international and regulatory context

• Workshop VI: international and regulatory context

Rapporteur: **Mr Lasse Berntzen,** Vestfold University College, Norway: "E-government and e-democracy developments worldwide"

9.30 a.m.   E-government and e-democracy developments worldwide

Chairperson: **Professor Maria Wimmer,** University of Koblenz, Germany

Speakers:

Mr Peter Ferdinand, Director, Centre for Studies in Democratisation, University of Warwick, United Kingdom: "E-democracy and e-government"

Ms Valerie Frissen, the Netherlands Organisation for Applied Scientific Research (TNO): "The report 'Towards the user generated state: the impact of Web 2.0 on the government'"

Mr Kim Viborg Andersen, Centre for Applied ICT, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark: "Public sector process rebuilding"

Mr Jeremy Millard, Danish Technology Institute: "How different citizen groups use e-government services in Europe"

Mr Athanassios Chrissafis, Unit e-Government, DG INFSO, European Commission: "E-participation development in the EU"

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Mr Michael Stanley-Jones, Aarhus Convention Secretariat, UNECE Geneva: "Promoting e-democracy in support of environmentally sustainable development: the experience under the Aarhus Convention"

3 p.m. Regulatory aspects relevant to e-democracy

Chair: **Mr Cyril Ritchie,** Council of Europe Conference of INGOs

Speakers:

Mr Thomas Buchsbaum, Chairman of CAHDE: "Introduction"

Ms Sylvia Kierkegaard, IT lawyer, Denmark: "Access to public documents"

Mr David Souter, Visiting Senior Fellow, Department of Media and Communications, London School of Economics, United Kingdom: "Regulatory initiatives in the field of Internet governance, in particular with regard to e-governance"

Ms Evika Karamagioli, Gov2u, Greece: "Regulatory action in the field of e-democracy from an ethical perspective"

Professor Maria Wimmer, University of Koblenz, Germany: "A researcher's perspective of regulatory issues"

Ms Antonella Valmorbida, Director of the Association of the Local Democracy Agencies (ALDA): "Experiences of local and regional authorities"

Ms Blanca Rodríguez Antigüedad, Ministry of Public Administrations, Spain: "The Law on Electronic Access to Public Administration and its implications for citizen participation"

Friday 17 October – Day Three

10 a.m. Concluding plenary session

Chairperson: **Mr Lluís Maria de Puig,** President of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Contribution by **Mr Jean-Marie Heydt,** Vice-President of the Council of Europe Conference of INGOs

Reports from workshops by the workshop rapporteurs:

Ms Ella Taylor-Smith, Napier University, United Kingdom

Professor David Ríos Insua, Spanish Royal Academy of Sciences, Vice-Rector of International Relations and New Technologies, University Rey Juan Carlos, Madrid, Spain

Professor Laurence Monnoyer-Smith, Université de Technologie de Compiègne, France

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Results and conclusions of the Forum for the Future of Democracy 2008

The general rapporteurs:

Mr Tomás de la Quadra-Salcedo Fernández del Castillo, Professor in administrative law, Carlos III University, Madrid, former Minister of Justice of Spain

Mr Zoltán Szabó, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Mr Alan Lloyd, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Chairperson: **Ambassador Marta Vilardell Coma,** Permanent Representative of Spain to the Council of Europe

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Presentation of the Forum conclusions:

Mr Tomás de la Quadra-Salcedo Fernández del Castillo, Professor in administrative law, Carlos III University, Madrid, former Minister of Justice of Spain

Closing of the 2008 Session and invitation to the 2009 Session in Ukraine:

Mr Steven Clift, Publicus.Net, United States

Ms Sandra de Lorite, City of Madrid Councillor on Citizen Participation, Spain

Mr Volodymyr Khandogìy, First Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs of Ukraine