

Glossary

Absentee voting – A mechanism by which voters are enabled to cast a vote which does not involve their attendance at a polling station on the day or days fixed for voting

Amalgamation of results – The incorporation of the votes into a unified result. Also known as *tabulation*

Announcement of results – See *Declaration of results*

Arbitrary dismissal – Removal from an official or staff position without due cause and due procedure

Audit trail – A sequence of verifiable records that are maintained to track activities, for example, movement and numbers of electoral materials, *tabulation* of electoral results, changes to computerized records, maintenance of financial records and determination of policies

Baseline budget – A budget formulation method in which the funding allocation by the financing authority for the previous funding period is taken and adjusted to give the estimate for the next period. Also called *incremental budget*

Boundary delimitation – The process for determining the way in which constituency or electoral area boundaries are drawn; it deals with the division of a country into electoral districts and the allocation of electors to electoral districts and polling sites. Sometimes called districting or boundary demarcation

Budget (electoral) – A document containing an itemized summary of proposed electoral incomes and expenditures in relation to specified activities by a specified organization or part of an organization, for a defined future period

By-election – An election to fill a vacant seat in an elected assembly held at any time other than at a general election

Calendar (electoral) – A document containing a sequence of tasks and the dates and deadlines for their performance during the planning, implementation and completion of an *electoral event*

Campaign (electoral) – Political activity, including meetings, rallies, speeches, parades, broadcasts, debates and other media events designed to inform the electorate of or gather support for the platform of a particular candidate or political party in an election or to promote a choice available to voters in a *direct democracy instrument*

Candidate – A person who is nominated to contest an election either as a political party representative or independent of any political party's support

Candidate nomination – The process by which political parties/organizations and/or individual candidates submit their intention to compete in an election, often subject to meeting qualification criteria set out in the law

Cascade training – A method of training in which a core central group of trainers are trained in both electoral technical matters and training techniques, who in turn train others 'face to face' at a lower level. The second level trains the third level and so on, until all targeted staff are trained

Centralized EMB – An organizational structure for an EMB, most often found in countries with unitary constitutions, in which the powers to conduct and implement all aspects of electoral processes at all levels are vested in the national-level EMB

Certification of results – The formal endorsement and confirmation of election results

Chair – The head of an independent EMB under the *Independent* or *Mixed Model of electoral management*. Formal titles may include *chief electoral commissioner* or *EMB President*

Chief electoral commissioner – See *Chair*

Chief electoral officer – A title that may be used for the head of an EMB *secretariat*. Other titles that may be used include chief executive officer, director of elections, *secretary-general* and EMB Secretary. Where the EMB is independent, the chief electoral officer can in some cases also be a member of the EMB

Citizens' initiative – A *direct democracy instrument* that allows a certain number of citizens to initiate a vote of the electorate on a proposal outlined by those citizens. The proposal may for example amend the constitution, or adopt, repeal or amend an existing law

Civic education – An information and/or educational programme which is designed to increase the comprehension and knowledge of citizens' rights and responsibilities

Civil registry – A centrally held master database containing information generated by the administrative infrastructure of a country involving the mandatory collection of information from many sources and containing information such as the name, gender, nationality, age, marital status and address of all citizens. *Electoral registers* and other documents may be drawn from it when required

Civil servant – An employee of a central or local government ministry or department, sometimes subject to a single common set of employment procedures, terms and conditions laid down by government

Claims (electoral) – Complaints presented by different electoral actors to dispute resolution procedures in the course of the *electoral process* regarding decisions, actions, or lack of action by electoral administrators or other participants in the *electoral process*. See also *electoral dispute resolution*

Closed list – A form of *List Proportional Representation* in which electors are restricted to voting only for a party or political grouping, and cannot express a preference for any candidate within the list presented by a party or grouping

Code of conduct – A set of general rules of behaviour, for example for members and/or staff of an EMB, or for political parties, with respect to participation in an *electoral process*

Combined EMB – An independent EMB under the *Independent* or *Mixed Model of electoral management* some of whose members are non-partisan experts and some of whose members represent political parties or interests. See *Expert-based EMB* and *Multiparty-based EMB*

Commissioner – A term used for a member of an *electoral commission*. Sometimes the term is limited to the EMB chair, and in rare cases the term is used inconsistently to refer to specific senior staff of the secretariat. See *Member* (of an EMB)

Consolidated electoral law – A single piece of legislation which gathers together all laws related to electoral processes in a country, some times referred to as the electoral code

Consolidated fund – The reserved revenue funds of a country which the national Treasury manages. Expenses that are charged directly to the Fund are not subject to change or ministerial delays

Constituency – A synonym for *electoral district* used predominantly in some Anglophone countries. See *Electoral district*

Constitutional Council – A term for the supreme body concerned with constitutional and other issues, which may be either part of the judicial branch or a separate body entrusted with adjudicating the constitutionality of laws and in some cases other tasks, including tasks related to electoral processes

Core costs – Those costs routinely associated with implementing an *electoral process* in a stable electoral environment. They include the basic costs of voter registration, *boundary delimitation*, voting operations, the counting and transmission of results, and *voter information*. Sometimes called ‘*direct costs*’

Decentralized EMB – A model of *electoral administration* in which the powers to conduct and implement different electoral processes and/or different aspects of electoral processes have been delegated by the EMB at national level to sub-national EMBs or sub-national branches of the national EMB

Declaration of results – Oral or written formal public communication of the result of an electoral event. This may consist of the number of votes received by each candidate or political party contesting an election, and of the candidate(s) and/or party(ies) entitled to sit as/seat an elected member(s) under the provisions of the electoral law; or of the number of votes recorded for each of two or more options presented in the use of a *direct democracy instrument*

Diffuse costs – Costs for electoral-related services that cannot be disentangled from the general budgets of agencies that assist with the implementation of an *electoral process*. Sometimes referred to as *indirect costs*

Direct costs – See *Core costs*

Direct democracy instrument – An instrument which gives citizens the right to be directly involved in the political decision-making process. It may take one of three forms: *referendum*; *citizens' initiative*; or a *recall vote*

District – Used in this Handbook to mean *Electoral district*

Domestic observer – An individual or representative of an organization who is authorized and accredited to observe and assess the performance of the election process in her/his own country

Donor – A country or intergovernmental or non-governmental organization which provides support in the form of money, in kind contribution and/or technical assistance to the *electoral process* in another country

Electoral activity – A portion of an election task that can be assigned to one or more persons. In some election operational plans, the term 'activity' is equated to or used interchangeably with the term 'task'

Electoral administration – The measures necessary for conducting or implementing any aspect of an *electoral process*

Electoral administrator – A person who directs, manages and/or implements any of the operations of an EMB on a day-to-day basis

Electoral commission – A title often given to an independent EMB under the *Independent Model* or to the component independent EMB under the *Mixed Model of electoral management*

Electoral court – Court of justice or other body before which an electoral actor may dispute the validity of an election, or challenge the conduct of candidates, political parties or the EMB. See also *electoral tribunal*

Electoral cycle – The full series of steps involved in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of an election or *direct democracy instrument*, viewed as one electoral event in a continuing series. In addition to the steps involved in a particular *electoral process*, it includes pre-electoral activities such as the review of relevant legal and procedural provisions and electoral registration, as well as post-electoral evaluation and/or audit, the maintenance of institutional memory, the process of consultation and the planning of the forthcoming *electoral process*

Electoral dispute resolution – The process of hearing and adjudication of any complaint, challenge, claim or contest relating to any stage of the *electoral process*

Electoral district – One of the geographic areas into which a country or region may be divided for electoral purposes. See also *constituency*

Electoral event – An election or *direct democracy instrument*

Electoral law – One or more pieces of legislation governing all aspects of the process for electing the political institutions defined in a country's constitution or institutional framework

Electoral management – The process of execution of the activities, tasks and functions of *electoral administration*

Electoral management body (EMB) – An EMB is an organization or body which has been founded for the sole purpose of, and is legally responsible for, managing some or all of the essential (or core) elements for the conduct of elections, and of *direct democracy instruments*. These essential (or core) elements include determining who is eligible to vote, receiving and validating the nominations of electoral participants (for elections, political parties and/or candidates), conducting balloting, counting votes, and *tabulation* of votes

Electoral network (international or regional) – A mechanism, which may be formal or informal, through which EMBs in different countries enable themselves to share knowledge, expertise and/or resources

Electoral observation – A process under which observers are accredited to access an *electoral process*, and may assess and report on the compliance of the *electoral process* with relevant legal instruments and international and regional standards

Electoral period – That central part of the electoral cycle containing a series of steps involved in the implementation of a particular *electoral process*, usually starting with the official announcement of polling day and ending with the announcement of final results

Electoral process – The series of steps involved in the preparation and carrying out of a specific election or *direct democracy instrument*. The *electoral process* usually includes the enactment of the electoral law, electoral registration, the nomination of candidates and/or political parties or the registration of proposals, the campaign, the voting, the counting and *tabulation* of votes, the resolution of electoral disputes and the announcement of results

Electoral register – The list of persons registered as qualified to vote. In some countries known as the *voters' list* or electoral roll

Electoral regulations – Rules subsidiary to legislation made, often by the *electoral management body* or the ministry within which an EMB is located, under powers contained in the *electoral law* which govern aspects of the organization and administration of an election

Electoral system – A set of rules and procedures which provides for the electorate to cast votes and which translates these votes into seats for parties and candidates in the legislature

Electoral tribunal – A judicial or other institution whose specific competence is to hear disputes on electoral matters. In Latin America, such a body is often also an EMB. See also *electoral court*

Electronic voting – Any method of voting using electronic means, including the use of electronic machines, the Internet, telephones, mobile phones or digital television. Often referred to as e-voting

EMB president – In some countries used as the official name of the EMB *chair*

Evaluation – An independent assessment of the relevance of an organization's strategic objectives to its *stakeholders'* needs, and the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which the organization and its legal framework have met those needs

Expert-based EMB – An independent EMB under the *Independent* or *Mixed Model of electoral management* all of whose members are chosen and appointed because of their expertise, reputation or standing in the community. Also referred to as *non-partisan EMB*

External accountability – The requirements and/or methods through which an EMB reports to external *stakeholders* or a constitutional authority

External audit – Audit of an organization's financial records or operational activities by an independent person or body who/which is outside the structure of the organization being audited

External voting – A mechanism by which voters who are permanently or temporarily absent from a country are enabled to cast a vote, also called out-of-country voting

Financial audit – An independent examination of an EMB's accounting records to determine if they are maintained accurately and in accordance with accepted accounting standards and legal and regulatory requirements

Financial regulations – Rules subsidiary to legislation often made by the *electoral management body* or the ministry responsible for public sector financial management, governing financial management issues

Full-time EMB – An EMB all or most of whose members serve on a full-time basis during their *term of office*

General election – An election at which all those seats in an elected assembly at the national level which are subject to an election are filled simultaneously

Government audit agency – A government body which conducts a process of *external audit* to examine the financial transactions and in some cases the operational activities of other public sector bodies

Governmental Model of electoral management – An electoral management model where elections are organized and managed by the executive branch of government through a ministry, such as the Ministry of the Interior, and/or through local authorities

Horizontal communication – The passage of information, communication or instructions between different parts of an organization which are at the same level in its hierarchy

Incremental budget – See *baseline budget*

Independent candidate – A candidate for an elected position who is not nominated by a political party

Independent Model of electoral management – An electoral management model where elections are organized and managed by an EMB which is institutionally independent and autonomous from the executive branch of government, and which has and manages its own budget

Indirect costs – See *Diffuse costs*

Institutional memory – The ability of an organization to retain understanding, expertise and physical records in order to be able to access and use these even after the passage of time or after a major or total change of personnel

Integrity costs – Those costs, over and above the *core costs*, that are necessary to provide safety, integrity, political neutrality and a level playing field for an *electoral process*. They are particularly relevant for electoral events in post-conflict societies or emerging democracies

Internal accountability – Mechanisms by which the lower-level structures within an organization account to higher structures on their performance

Internal audit – An audit conducted by or on behalf of an organization for internal control purposes. Also used to describe the unit within an organization responsible for internal audits

International observer – Representative of an international organization, association, government or professional body, who is authorized and accredited to observe and assess the preparation for or conduct of an *electoral process* in a foreign country

Jurisdiction – Refers to the competence and geographic scope of an organization's direction-making, decision-making and implementation powers

Legal framework – The collection of legal structural elements defining or influencing an *electoral process*, the major elements being constitutional provisions, electoral laws, other legislation impacting on electoral processes, such as political party laws and laws structuring legislative bodies, subsidiary electoral rules and *regulations*, and codes of conduct

Liaison ministry – For an independent EMB under the Independent or Mixed Model of electoral management, the government ministry through which the EMB can channel its views and representations to the government, and vice versa

List Proportional Representation – A system in which each participant party or grouping presents a list of candidates for an *electoral district*, voters vote for a party, and parties receive seats in proportion to their overall share of the vote. Winning candidates are taken from the lists. Often referred to as 'List PR'. Common variants include 'closed list PR', in which electors

are restricted to voting only for a party or grouping, and 'open list PR' where electors can express their preference for a party or grouping and for one, or sometimes more, candidates from that party or grouping

Local authority – A body established as the legislative and/or executive arm of government at any sub-national level lower than a province, region or equivalent

Lower-level EMB – An EMB formed at any sub-national level, for example a province, region, district or commune

Member (of an EMB) – A person appointed or elected to serve on the body or committee which directs the conduct of elections and the implementation of the powers and functions of the EMB

Mixed Model of electoral management – An electoral management model with a dual structure which has a policy, monitoring or supervisory EMB that is independent of the executive branch of government (like an EMB under the *Independent Model* or *Mixed Model of electoral management*) and an implementation EMB located within a department of state and/or local government (like an EMB under the *Governmental Model of electoral management*)

Multi-member district – An *electoral district* from which more than one representative is elected to a legislature or elected body

Multiparty-based EMB – An EMB all of whose members are nominated by political parties

National Election Commission – A common title for an independent EMB under the *Independent* or *Mixed Model of electoral management*, with competencies over the entire territory of a country

Needs assessment – A method to address institutional sustainability, by which an organization informs itself of its current management capabilities and the resources, financial, technological and human, necessary to organize and conduct its activities

Nominating authority – A body which puts forward a *candidate* or candidates for election, selection or appointment to another body or to a position

Non-partisan member – An EMB *member* who has been appointed to the EMB other than as a representative of a political party

Observer – A person accredited to witness and assess, but not intervene in, the proceedings of an *electoral process*. See *domestic observer* and *international observer*

Open list – A form of *List Proportional Representation* in which voters can express a preference both for a party or grouping and for one, or sometimes more, candidates within the list presented by that party or grouping

Operational plan – A plan that defines the responsibilities and time periods for all activities that need to be undertaken to meet an organization's strategic objectives

Oversight body – A body charged with the task of ensuring that an *electoral process* is correctly conducted in line with the provisions of the legal framework

Paper audit trail – An *audit trail* where records are kept in printed or written form and not solely in an electronic form

Part-time EMB – An EMB all or most of whose members serve on a part-time basis during their *term of office*

Party symbol – An identification figure or sign allotted to a candidate or a political party in accordance with the *electoral law*

Performance accountability – Methods by which an organization internally and externally accounts for its progress towards achieving its strategic objectives and meeting its *stakeholders'* needs

Performance audit – Retrospective assessment of the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of electoral procedures, operations and financing against an EMB's strategic objectives within its legal and regulatory framework

Performance evaluation – Objective assessment against expected benchmarks of the value added to an organization by an employee's efforts

Performance standard – A statement of benchmark criteria to be achieved, without specifying how they are to be achieved

Permanent EMB – An EMB which has a continuous existence throughout the whole *electoral cycle* and takes care of electoral matters both during and between *electoral periods*

Political party based EMB – See *Multiparty-based EMB*

Political party registration – Compiling of a list of political parties that meet defined legal or regulatory qualifications and may thus qualify for privileges such as proposing the nomination of candidates for election

Polling district – An area in which all electors are allocated to vote at a single *polling station*

Polling official – A member of staff who participates in the administration of a *polling station* on polling day. Polling officials may or may not be members of the staff of an EMB

Polling station – A venue established for the purpose of polling and controlled by *polling officials*

Postal voting – A mechanism for voting in which a voter completes his or her ballot paper and returns it by post to an official designated to conduct the election

Post-electoral evaluation – A retroactive *evaluation* of the conduct of an *electoral process*, or specified parts of that process, that is completed after the *electoral period*

Post-electoral period – One of three periods of the *electoral cycle*, during which audit and *evaluation* takes place and during which legislation, regulations and administration are reformed and developed

Post-transitional elections – Second and subsequent elections held in a country after an initial election – following a period of, for example, dictatorship or civil war – that marked the commencement (or re-commencement) of democratic competition in elections

Pre-electoral period – One of three periods of the *electoral cycle*, during which planning and preparation for the conduct of elections take place, and during which legal and procedural provisions are reviewed

Primary election – A public election through which a political party chooses its candidates for a forthcoming *electoral process*

Proportional representation (PR) – An *electoral system* family based on the principle of the conscious translation of the overall votes of a party or grouping into a corresponding proportion of seats in an elected body. See *List Proportional Representation*

Public servant – An employee of any organization whose core funding is provided by the Treasury of a country

Qualified majority – A majority requirement which demands that for a proposal to be passed, it must receive a proportion of the vote in excess of 50 per cent plus 1 – for example, 2/3 or 3/4

Recall – A *direct democracy instrument* that allows a specified number of citizens to demand a vote of the electorate on whether an elected holder of public office should be removed from that office before the end of his/her *term of office*

Referendum – A *direct democracy instrument* consisting of a vote of the electorate on an issue of public policy such as a constitutional amendment or a bill. The results of the vote may be either binding or consultative

Regional EMB – An *electoral management body* at a sub-national level

Registration of political parties and candidates – The act of accepting the applications to participate in an election of political parties and candidates that meet defined criteria

Registration of voters – The act of entering the names of eligible electors and other relevant information in a register or list of electors

Screening process – A process through which checks are made to verify that a candidate for appointment as a *member* of an EMB or to the staff of an EMB meets the required qualifications

Secondary legislation – See *Subsidiary regulations*

Secretariat – The structure below the policy-making EMB member level in the *Independent* and *Mixed Model of electoral management*, which comprises the officials in the EMB who are responsible for policy implementation. In the *Governmental Model of electoral management*, the secretariat is usually the sole component of the EMB, and may also have some policy-making functions

Secretary-general – A term often used for the head of an EMB *Secretariat*, who may or may not be a member of the EMB

Security of tenure – A legal measure to protect members and/or staff of an EMB from dismissal or adverse change to the terms and conditions of contract or employment without due cause and due process

Selection process – The mechanism, procedures and conditions for appointment and/or employment of members or secretariat staff of an EMB

Simple majority – A majority requirement which demands that the prevailing *candidate* in an election (or the prevailing option in a *direct democracy instrument*) obtains the highest number of valid cast votes

Single-member district – An *electoral district* from which only one member is elected to a legislature or elected body

Single-member EMB – An EMB where the powers and responsibilities for implementing the mandate of the EMB are vested by the legal framework in a single person

Special voting – Procedures and facilities for electors who are unable to implement the voting procedures or to access the *polling station* at which they are registered to vote

Staggered membership – A system under which members of an EMB are not all appointed at the same time and their terms of office do not end at the same time, usually used to ensure continuity in the work of an EMB

Stakeholders – Those individuals, groups and bodies which have an interest or ‘stake’ in the operations of an organization and/or which affect or are directly affected by the activities, policies and practices of the organization

Standing orders – A set of rules adopted by an organization to regulate its internal structures and procedures

State – In the context of a federal constitution, often refers to a sub-national unit of a country. In the context of supranational bodies or intergovernmental organizations, a member state refers to a country that has been accepted as a full member of that body or organization

Strategic plan – A document used by an organization to state the organizational vision, mission, values, priorities and objectives from which its structure and budget are derived

Subsidiary EMB – An EMB that is not the primary or principal entity responsible for the organization of elections within a country, and that assists the primary EMB and implements electoral tasks at local and regional levels

Subsidiary regulations – Rules consistent with, and made under powers granted by, a law, which provide details of the manner in which the law is to be implemented

Supranational body – An organization created by a number of countries by treaty where power is held by independent appointed officials or by representatives elected by the legislatures or people of the member states

Tabulation – The process of compiling the result of counting of votes cast in an *electoral process*. Also known as *amalgamation of results*

Task profiling – Analysis of the resources required to implement a specified task to meet specified parameters, such as time and quality

Temporary EMB – An EMB which exists only for a specified limited period, often for the *electoral period*

Term of office – The period of time for which a member of an organization serves following election or appointment

Transitional EMB – An EMB which is set up temporarily to facilitate transitional elections. It is normally set up under the auspices of the international community, such as the UN, and may consist of or include international experts as members

Trust fund – A mechanism for aggregating individual *donor* contributions into a single pool of funds, held in trust and administered by an external organization (e.g., the UNDP) for use in support of an *electoral process*

Vertical communication – The passage of information, communication or instructions through an organization upwards and downwards through two or more hierarchical levels

Voter – A person who casts a vote at an election or under a *direct democracy instrument*

Voter education – A process by which people are made aware of the *electoral process* and the particulars and procedures for voter registration, voting, and other elements of the *electoral process*

Voter information – A short-term programme focusing on specific electoral information, which aims to give relevant factual information about an *electoral process* to voters on a timely basis

Voter registration card – A card issued to identify a person registered as an elector in accordance with the provisions of the *electoral law*

Voters' list – See *Electoral register*

Zero base budget – A budget formulation method which treats each funding period for an organization as a clean slate, and estimates the funds required to achieve the planned outcomes for that period. See also *baseline budget*