

Preface

IDEA's vision is to play the role of a democracy-building catalyst, helping to increase the effectiveness of democracy assistance, and setting agendas that can influence policy makers, donor governments, the UN family, regional organizations, and peer organizations. In seeking to be a leader in influencing thinking and action in support of democracy, one of the three core elements of IDEA's strategy is to provide knowledge tools for home-grown democracy.

Electoral frameworks, including the choice of electoral system and the design of electoral administration, determine both the outcomes and the credibility of electoral processes and thereby trust in democracy. The development of professional electoral administration is not merely a technical and managerial issue, but a process that crucially engages political stakeholders who have their own interests and objectives. Much experience has now been gathered on the importance of electoral administration that is able to act in a fearlessly independent manner in practice and to manage electoral processes effectively and sustainably.

This Handbook brings together a core global comparative knowledge base on the design, establishment, financing, training and assessment of electoral management bodies. It will in itself be a valuable resource for everyone engaged in the process of building sustainable capacity to conduct successful electoral processes that are perceived as legitimate. Its full value, however, will be much wider. It will serve as the source for the development of cutting-edge electoral training materials. It will also be linked to the ACE Electoral Knowledge Network.

The Handbook is also the basis of a call to action. Electoral assistance providers have often groped in the dark as programmes have been written for support of new electoral institutions. The realization is growing that for electoral assistance to be effective it needs to be viewed through a long-term development perspective and not as an activity driven by an individual electoral event. The choices of donors, too, can now be made on the basis of a deeper understanding of the basic principles of election administration design and of the many options available.

The Handbook is a major new tool which will be used by all those involved or interested in the future strength and legitimacy of their electoral process.



Vidar Helgesen
Secretary-General
International IDEA