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Making the Electoral Process as Easy as Possible: Elections New Zealand

ERIN THIESSEN

The public face of electoral administration in New Zealand is the entity known collectively as Elections New Zealand. The well-coordinated and seamless presentation is achieved through careful cooperation between the four agencies responsible for electoral administration in the country—the Electoral Enrolment Centre (EEC), the Chief Electoral Office (CEO), the Electoral Commission (EC) and the Representation Commission (RC).

The division of responsibilities into separate agencies occurred over time in response to a variety of changes in the electoral environment. The CEO, part of the ministry of Justice, was the sole electoral administration body until 1975, when it was decided to move the local work on electoral enrolment to the Post Office (now NZ Post). In 1980, the EEC was established as a division of the state-owned NZ Post, under contract to the Ministry of Justice, to undertake overall administration for the electoral registers as NZ Post's nationwide network of point-of-sale, address and change-of-address data provided a logical support system. The next major change was the establishment of the EC, in 1994, to administer the registration of political parties and provide public education following the adoption of a Mixed Member Proportional (MMP) electoral system in a 1993 referendum. The RC is responsible for the redrawing of electoral district boundaries (for both the general and the Maori electoral districts) every five years after the population census and Maori Electoral Option have been completed. The first three of these agencies (the EEC, the CEO and the EC) conduct public information campaigns, separately and in conjunction, directed at all New Zealand electors, at various times during the election cycle. Their individual efforts are presented here first, followed by their coordinated approach.

The Electoral Enrolment Centre

To fully grasp the importance of the EEC in New Zealand, it is important to know that, while voting is not compulsory, enrolling to vote is. Since 2002, New Zealand has maintained a system of continuous enrolment, meaning that the electoral rolls are updated on a daily basis. It is also a system of common enrolment, ensuring that each voter needs to register in only one

place for everything from local council to general elections. The EEC maintains several routes to achieve enrolment at any time as forms can be obtained or requested from the Elections New Zealand website (they can be downloaded or completed online), a toll-free 0800 number, PostShop locations, or Freetext messaging. It is the voter's responsibility to provide an update if he or she moves or if their details change.

The EEC maintains about 80 full-time staff as well as numerous casual staff. Up to 100 contractors are hired additionally at certain points in the three-year electoral cycle as larger enrolment update campaigns are held prior to major electoral events. At these times, the EEC undertakes exhaustive advertising and publicity campaigns that include everything from television/radio/press/online advertising to point-of-sale displays at PostShops to presentations and directed mailouts to billboard/bus shelter/train interior/street poster advertising to placing information in a virtual community (Smile City) to concerts and so on. The EEC contends that a mix of communication channels is necessary to appeal to individual preferences. Messages are deliberately kept simple, focusing on a single idea, and calling on voters to react and respond. The EEC further undertakes face-to-face and door-knocking encouragement to target groups that are traditionally difficult to enrol, particularly young people, Maori, and Pacific and other ethnic groups. It has found that the most successful approach in this regard has been to provide representatives of similar ethnicity and background to present their message and answer questions.

Campaigns are tested and evaluated carefully before production phase starts in order to ensure that communication is both effective and cost-efficient. On-air advertisements are monitored to ensure that the public response is as expected and independent research is conducted at various stages before and throughout the campaign to establish whether communication is having the desired effect. Campaigns are similar from one electoral event to the next, but each is refined drawing on the lessons of the past, and the EEC remains open to trying innovative technologies where appropriate.

The EEC is also responsible for the Maori Electoral Option, occurring every five years. This is the

only time when a Maori elector has the option to review and/or alter their decision whether to vote on the general electoral roll (voting for candidates in the general electoral districts) or on the Maori electoral roll (voting for representatives to the Maori electoral districts). The EEC runs another information campaign at this time.

With regard to young people, the EEC runs a programme of provisional enrolment of under-age voters. Enrolment facilities are provided on location during school presentations. Students of 16 years are asked for their details so that an enrolment form can be sent to them on their 17th birthday. At age 17, a New Zealand voter can be provisionally enrolled and their details automatically transferred to the electoral roll when they turn 18.

No one has ever been prosecuted for not enrolling as the EEC prefers instead to encourage voters to have their say and in turn works to make the enrolment process as easy as possible. Nonetheless, the EEC achieved an enrolment rate of 95.2 per cent in the 2005 general election, giving New Zealand one of the highest voter registration rates in the world.

The Chief Electoral Office

The primary responsibility of the CEO is to conduct general elections, by-elections and referendums, and, among its other tasks, to provide information to voters regarding who is eligible to vote, and when, how and where to cast a ballot. Consisting of a small core of 13 permanent staff at the National Office, the CEO's staff increases at various points in the electoral cycle to include five regional managers, whose purpose is to distribute information about voting at a community level, and 69 returning officers. Close to election times, returning officers also source staff for their headquarters, and polling place staff (15,000 for the 2005 general election) to work on election day. The permanent staff work continuously preparing for the next election: the previous campaign is reviewed and, based on this review, projects and improvements are set for the next electoral cycle. By the end of the second year of the cycle, all systems and processes have been built, tested and frozen, ready to be rolled out at any point during year three. The CEO runs only one information campaign per cycle and this is presented during the lead-up to an election.

In 2005, the CEO's information campaign employed television, radio, press and some online advertising to promote advance voting, the EasyVote Pack (see below), using the EasyVote card, and voting close to home. The same key messages were pre-

sented to all audiences, but were available in different languages where appropriate. Some advertising placements proved more effective than others and the CEO will build on this. Encouraging voters to use their EasyVote cards has proved quite successful, however, as market research shows that 84 per cent of voters used their cards on election day. The CEO commissioned market research from both the advertising agency it employs and an independent agency to ensure that the campaign achieved its goals.

The Electoral Commission

The EC is an independent Crown entity that has as one of its responsibilities encouraging and conducting public education on electoral matters. Particular attention is paid to ensuring that electors understand the workings of the MMP electoral system and the meaning of each of the two votes cast by every voter. With a small staff of only four full-time personnel, the EC focuses much of its between-election efforts on building linkages, capacity and interest with others who can spread their message more widely. This includes such people as teachers, journalists, academics, and those in political parties. The EC provides lectures and presentations, publications, teacher resources, and various awards for excellence in different areas of work relating to electoral matters.

At election time, the EC runs an information campaign targeted at all eligible electors. Campaigns include advertising on radio, on television, in the print media, in community newspapers and online. Groups known to have lower levels of understanding and/or participation, such as young people, Maori, and other ethnic minorities, are given additional focus. Surveys are conducted before and after the campaign to measure levels of understanding regarding the electoral system, intention to vote, political efficacy, information sources and so on, and to ensure that the necessary information is provided to make good any deficiencies. It has been found that public understanding of the MMP system tends to rise and fall during the electoral cycle. The EC is also currently commissioning research-based work on Maori voter participation, as little is available at present, in order to develop a more effective communication and education strategy.

Elections New Zealand

The responsibilities of all three electoral agencies are clearly laid out in the Electoral Act, and each administration body is solely accountable for making its own arrangements to meet its objectives. This said, the

campaigns for the EEC, the CEO and the EC are carefully crafted by the same advertising agency to make use of a common 'brand' for all electoral advertising: the orange Elector character was introduced in 2002, for example. Given the thorough testing campaigns undergo, they are often reused from one event to the next. This is part of the reason why Elections New Zealand has moved to animation that becomes dated less quickly and is gender-, ethnic- and age-neutral. Care is also taken to ensure that, despite the many messages Elections New Zealand has to put across, each point is kept clear and simple. The central advertising agency is also responsible for administering the schedules for each campaign to ensure that appropriate information is being broadcast at the right times, thus effectively increasing the coverage of electoral information and heightening the awareness factor. Elections New Zealand also carries out certain integrated communications activities, and the activities of the three agencies often leverage off each other to ensure that all necessary information is being provided to the public: for example, EEC officials are able to provide information about voting while undertaking their face-to-face campaigns to encourage enrolment.

The two main campaigns that are the direct product of cooperation between the EEC, the CEO and the EC are the EasyVote Pack and the Elections New Zealand website. The EasyVote Pack is a personalized voter information package outlining the elector's registration details and containing an EasyVote card (a one-time-use card that provides simple information to polling place staff regarding a voter's placement on the electoral rolls, which speeds up the process and allows voters more freedom as to their voting location), a list of nearby polling places, the names of the candidates, party lists, information on advance voting, contact details for the returning officer in the constituency, and a brochure on the MMP system and how voting works. So long as an elector is enrolled one month prior to the election, an EasyVote Pack is sent. Otherwise, voters miss being included on the printed rolls and need to cast a special declaration vote, which takes longer. The CEO is responsible for promoting the EasyVote Pack, while the EEC manages the printing and mailing out of the packs and encourages early enrolment to ensure that each voter will receive his or her pack. This programme was run in both the 2002 and the 2005 general elections.

The Elections New Zealand website presents perhaps the most integrated face of electoral administration, providing an abundance of information on all

aspects of elections in the country. Re-launched in April 2005, it was evaluated along with other sites in the New Zealand government sector, and achieved very high ratings. With the website providing such accessible and cost-effective information, a move has been made to emphasize online publication.

Through the website, voters can request information or forms; check their enrolment details; view sample ballot papers; access information on how the electoral system works; and view ongoing advertising campaigns. The website also lists past election results, governors general and prime ministers; rules for candidates, broadcasters, parties and scrutineers; guidelines for expenses; timetables; explanations as to how government operates; and resource materials. Thus, the Elections New Zealand website also acts as a valuable resource for the media, political party personnel and candidates, teachers and academics. Care has been taken to ensure that the website is as accessible as possible for all New Zealand voters, having features to assist those with disabilities (navigating without a mouse) and visual impairments. Information on various topics can further be requested in sign language, audio tracks, captions, Braille, audiocassette and large print, as well as in 14 different languages.

Website: <<http://www.elections.org.nz>>.

Educating the Voter about the Electoral Process: The Swedish Election Authority

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One of the most important objectives for EMBs is to make sure that the voting procedure is well known and understood by all eligible voters, as it is imperative to make sure that abstention is not due to a lack of knowledge.

In Sweden, the central Election Authority (Valmyndigheten) is responsible for many tasks, including informing voters about elections and about how, when and where to vote in general elections every four years. This EMB is an independent state authority, established in 2001, which reports to and receives its funds through the state budget as decided by Parliament. Employing no more than 13 full-time employees and nine consultants, the Election Authority centrally produces information campaigns, and works with other EMBs at the regional and local levels to ensure their distribution. Its information campaigns are becoming increasingly elaborate and include advertising through such media as television and radio spots, cinema spots, newspaper advertisements, the Internet, telephone and email services, films, brochures in different languages and events. Events in particular involve attempts to reach targeted groups at venues such as big concerts, market-places and transport hubs. This initiative has been specially developed to reach immigrant groups, but might well be used to reach young people as well.

Before launching any campaign, an information strategy is first established in order to provide a presentation of the planned campaigns, an explanation for the choices made, and a strategy to measure and evaluate their impact. Budgets are prepared and allocated to reflect the three phases of preparation, implementation and evaluation. The initial strategy further highlights which groups the Election Authority would like to target specifically during a particular campaign and why. For the September 2006 Swedish general election, the following were identified as special groups: immigrants (those who need information in other languages); young people (mainly first-time voters); persons with visual and hearing impairments; expatriates; and some small groups facing special circumstances (the homeless, sailors, etc.).

To improve the effectiveness of voter information for immigrants in Sweden, the Election Authority

conducted research in advance of the forthcoming general election to gather facts about specific target groups and useful channels of communication. To this end, it carried out a survey among five selected language groups to learn more about their knowledge of the Swedish voting procedure, their intention to vote, where they seek or want to find information, and whether or not translated products are desirable. The selected language groups were Persian, Turkish, Somali, Bosnian and Spanish (for migrants of Chilean origin). The survey results showed that a general lack of political engagement, and therefore a very low degree of interest in learning how to vote, were common to the members of all these language groups. Feelings of isolation and of not being heard seemed to be the foremost reasons cited by most members of these groups who chose not to vote, and these were followed closely by statements that there was a need for political party candidates with whom they could identify. It emerged from the Election Authority's inquiry that learning the procedure for voting was a very low priority and perceived as useless, since the people surveyed saw no clear reasons why their votes should matter or have any impact on the system. The Election Authority takes this finding extremely seriously, as it clearly shows the importance of creating the necessary incentives for people to vote. However, the survey results have also proved most useful in providing concrete information about media habits and activities that can be used to communicate better with each group, and have allowed the Election Authority to produce tailor-made information products to meet each group's needs better.

These 2006 results from the language group research reach a conclusion similar to that reached by more generally directed research done earlier—a survey regarding the general public's level of knowledge about the voting procedure, carried out in connection with the European Parliament elections in 2004. This survey consisted of telephone interviews prior to and following the campaign period in which 1,000 people were randomly selected and interviewed. The survey had two main purposes: to determine the level of knowledge about the voting procedure prior to the campaign and whether this level had increased

by the end of the campaign; and to try to pinpoint the specific campaigns/products that most effectively increased the level of knowledge.

The results showed that the level of knowledge clearly increased over the course of the campaign—a result that it was reasonable to expect—but it proved far more difficult to identify the specific products that would have caused this effect, as there were far too many sources of information available to voters. Most importantly, the survey indicated that abstention has other causes than lack of knowledge of voting procedure, as more than 95 per cent of the respondents reportedly knew how to cast a vote.

Thus, despite the Election Authority's best efforts to gauge the effectiveness of its campaigns, it is difficult to determine their impact in any concrete way. In any election period, information inevitably comes from a variety of sources. In order to gain a better understanding of where information comes from and to ensure its accuracy, the Election Authority realizes that it would be an advantage—with regard to both the quality of information being disseminated and cost-effectiveness—to work in cooperation with other actors in the electoral arena. It therefore sees closer cooperation with the Ministry of Justice, the political parties, the media and interest organizations as desirable: fostering partnership could improve strategies, further accentuate the specific messages, and help spread correct information vetted by the Election Authority in fulfilment of its mission.

The language group survey emphasized that there is a strong connection between learning the voting procedure and wanting to cast a ballot, and this has increased the realization in Sweden that technical information about the voting procedure and motivational information about why you should vote should be run in parallel where possible. The Election Authority itself has no responsibility to enhance turnout or to provide reasons why one should vote. This responsibility lies with the political parties and, to a certain extent, the Ministry of Justice. It is thus up to the political parties to create the necessary incentives for people to want to vote and to feel that they are making a difference. During several recent elections, therefore, the Election Authority has cooperated more directly with the Ministry of Justice, and where possible it has also participated in the ministry's projects for enhancing participation. The intention has been to present the Election Authority's information regarding the voting procedure to groups launching campaigns about the importance of electoral participation and thereby provide a wider

platform for voter information.

The Election Authority realizes that information campaigns surrounding specific electoral events do little to ensure that knowledge is maintained at a high level throughout the electoral cycle or that procedures are learnt properly. For this, more recurrent information campaigns are needed. Projects such as annual school elections that could make elections 'come alive' each year are being considered. If all students in, for example, the eighth grade and the second year of high school participated in a school election, the chances of their continuing to vote in 'real life' and to believe that voting is important might increase. Educational material, such as films, games and brochures, might also prove to be effective, as might information packages for immigrants.

In the Swedish electoral administration, voter information has traditionally been the same for all voters, and therefore produced and communicated centrally. The 2006 elections, however, witnessed a new approach with greater input by local authorities who have detailed knowledge about their inhabitants' needs. Given the time and resources required to maintain contacts with all the authorities concerned, the Election Authority decided to use central production of information products to be launched nationwide, while local authorities provided information adapted to local conditions and understanding. However, contact with the local authorities indicates that the level of voter information was likely to vary considerably, first and foremost depending on expected information demand, the number of inhabitants and the finances available.

The Election Authority additionally faces a final challenge in reaching and communicating with certain groups of eligible voters. The methods of finding target groups and communicating with them are not yet sophisticated enough to be satisfactory. Some target groups are reached through interest organizations, while others only want to communicate in person. It is time-consuming and requires expert knowledge—something that the Election Authority does not have itself but must contract out. As there are too few organizations or companies offering such expertise in Sweden, with very little competition and no possibilities to compare skills, it is difficult to judge what expertise the Election Authority is actually buying.

The Election Authority is working continuously towards solutions to these and other challenges. Like many other countries, Sweden suffers from declining voter turnout. If this trend continues, there will be

a fast-growing group of eligible voters who are not interested in voting, and in the long run the Election Authority will face the challenge of trying to teach the voting procedure to a growing number of people who have no experience at all in casting a ballot.

Website: <<http://www.val.se>>.

Making Democracy Accessible for Everyone: The National Office of Electoral Processes, Peru

Laura Chrabolowsky

The National Office of Electoral Processes (Oficina Nacional de Procesos Electorales, ONPE) of Peru is an autonomous government organization. It is in charge of the organization and conduct of all electoral processes including referendums and other types of popular consultation. Given that voting is compulsory in Peru, rather than increasing voting turnout in itself, the ONPE is responsible for improving the understanding and the awareness of all citizens, as well as ensuring respect for the popular will once the electoral event is over. However, it is important to note that, even though compulsory voting is in place, there are certain under-represented and marginal sectors of the population that do not participate in elections for reasons such as geographical isolation, language barriers, illiteracy, lack of documentation and so on.

In line with its mission, the ONPE promotes awareness and understanding of electoral processes, but also organizes and supports a series of campaigns to raise voter turnout for under-represented sections of the population, particularly of those in isolated rural areas. During the past decade, the rate of abstention has decreased from 26.5 per cent in the presidential elections of 1995 to 11.3 per cent in those of 2006. Additionally, the ONPE works with other national and international organizations (NGOs and intergovernmental organizations) in developing and implementing programmes directed towards students at the elementary and secondary levels and designed to teach the importance of electoral participation in developing responsible and active citizenship. Several examples of these varied projects and initiatives follow.

Women's Suffrage

In 2002, with the assistance of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), the ONPE introduced a project designed to increase women's non-participation in elections by integrating gender analysis in the work of the ONPE and its regional offices; providing training and capacity building for different women's organizations; producing educational materials (booklets, posters, etc.); and organizing mass media education campaigns (through newspapers, community radio, etc.).

In 2005, the ONPE developed a second ambitious project, with financial support from the European Union, with the goal to reduce women's non-participation in elections by 12 per cent in the 2006 general elections (as compared to the 2001 turnout results). The project involved the training of 2,000 female volunteers to educate and inform approximately 500,000 women in different regions of the country and to promote women's electoral participation. This initiative also involved workshops on gendered electoral education for 1,200 journalists, 4,000 members of political parties, and 480 municipal employees. Electoral education and advertising material was created and distributed during the seminars as well as in mass media campaigns throughout the country. Joint events with women's and electoral NGOs were also organized, and a final report and evaluation of the project is to be published. It was expected that by the end of the project at least 50 per cent of the undocumented women reached by the campaign would have the proper documentation needed to allow their electoral participation.

Persons with Disabilities

In 2002, USAID assisted the ONPE with a project to promote the participation of citizens with disabilities, successfully reaching 14 districts of the coastal, mountain and forest regions of Peru. The project aimed to introduce mechanisms that would make it physically easier for persons with disabilities to vote, as well as to build an extensive database for use in future electoral events. Even though this project was officially completed in December 2002, the ONPE continues to use this database, and has further developed special materials and procedures to reach persons with disabilities, making it easier for them to participate as well as providing specialized training for those responsible for organizing and conducting the electoral process. For example, during the 2006 elections, persons with disabilities could contact their respective ONPE regional offices to request that voting stations be situated in accessible places for those with reduced mobility.

Multilingual Information and Education for Rural Indigenous Populations

One of the most important factors regarding electoral exclusion in the Andean region is the diversity of indigenous languages and the lack of educational materials to address this diversity. The ONPE brings multilingual electoral material and workshops to indigenous populations through the work of its regional, decentralized offices.

For the 2006 presidential election, the Directorate of Electoral Training designed special programmes adapted to the local languages and community traditions of Peru. Drawing on extensive experience with adult education and literacy work, community leaders and educators delivered these workshops and organized outreach campaigns. Seminars were complemented by the mass distribution of posters and brochures, and community radio programmes provided more in-depth information to the population about the voting process. A preliminary analysis of the results shows that approximately 480,000 rural citizens were reached by the programme in the following native languages: Quechua, Aymara, Ashaninka, Notmashiguenga, Aguaruna, Jacaru and Machiguenga.

Electoral Information Kiosks

The main objectives of the ONPE's electoral kiosks are to advise, raise awareness, and encourage citizens to cast an informed vote when they go to the polls, thereby helping promote the development of a democratic voting culture. When used in the period August–December 2002, these electoral kiosks were able to reach more than 75,000 voters. The kiosks were strategically situated in places such as public squares, parks, sports fields, fairs and so on and were meant to reinforce the importance of voting by under-represented sectors of the population such as women in marginal urban zones and citizens with disabilities. The stands continue to be an important element in the dissemination of electoral information during election campaigns, and rely on highly trained ONPE personnel and volunteers to offer customized information to voters and distribute electoral materials.

Mock Election National Consultation: 'Say Yes For Children'

As a key part for the Global Movement for Children, run by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Say Yes For Children campaign invited people around the globe to sign a sample pledge form to show their support in offering a better world

for children. The Say Yes campaign in Peru was driven by 30 private and public institutions that formed a National Commission, which in turn integrated with 17 local commissions nationwide working for the rights of children and adolescents. Say Yes organizers, together with the ONPE and the Ministry of Education, organized a unique mini-election in connection with the campaign. On 25 August 2001, over 800,000 children in 18 of 24 provinces used specially prepared voting sheets and voter IDs to voice their concerns on issues affecting Peruvian children. A national team of educators and specialists explained the campaign and guided children through the voting process. Aiding in the implementation of the campaign, the ONPE signed a cooperation agreement with UNICEF to provide the following support:

- the design of an instructional manual on the voting procedures;
- the design of voting materials for each school, including a register of electors, voting certificates and voting sheets;
- the design and development of a facilitator's guide and other training materials;
- the printing of the electoral materials, including 800,000 voting certificates, 20,000 registration forms, 10,000 voting sheets, and 16,000 guides for facilitators;
- the organization of a one-day training workshop for 50 specialists;
- a training seminar for 30 child organizers (who would go on to train others);
- training of the personnel from the Ministry of Education; and
- the organization of press conferences.

Student Council Elections

The National Program of School Councils/Associations seeks to develop and institutionalize a model of 'Opinion, Participation and Organization' for children in primary and secondary schools. Students are encouraged to develop activities to benefit themselves, their schools and their communities. The programme is intended to provide a learning space for the development of citizenship and democratic values.

As part of this, Student Council elections are organized for each school every year in mid-November through the efforts of Action for the Children, an

NGO, and the Ministry of Education. The ONPE has supported this project since April 2000 by providing training, logistical support, and direction regarding election procedures. This includes training for representatives of the Electoral Committee; supplies of indelible ink, stamps, ballot boxes and voting certificates; records for electoral officials; and election observation and monitoring. Additionally, since 1999 workshops and seminars have been provided to more than 1,500 students between 11 and 18 years of age who were put in charge of the election process for approximately 1,000,000 student voters within schools across Peru.

Websites: <<http://www.onpe.gob.pe/>> and <<http://www.accionporlosninos.org.pe/index.htm>>.

Convincing Voters that Their Vote is Important: The Association Civisme et Démocratie (CIDEM) in France

DAVID McGRANE

The Civics and Democracy Association (Association Civisme et Démocratie (CIDEM)) was founded in 1984 by the League of Human Rights (Ligue des Droits de l'Homme) and the League of Teaching (Ligue de l'Enseignement), two well-established NGOs involved with popular education and the protection of human rights. Since then it has expanded to encompass 11 member associations, including the Scouts and several other French youth organizations. It boasts that its member associations have a total of more than 4 million members and 50,000 local groups. CIDEM itself has ten permanent staff including a director, administrative staff, and several *chargés de mission* who each look after one of CIDEM's main functions. It also hires people on short-term contracts for various tasks.

CIDEM is an independent, neutral and non-partisan organization that works by entering into partnerships with government and other civil society organizations at various levels. While it is an NGO, it does receive a significant amount of its funding for its media campaigns from government agencies such as the Ministry of the Interior, the European Parliament, and municipal governments, as well as low-cost air time from public and private broadcasters. It is the only organization in France that receives funding from the French Government for the purpose of running campaigns to encourage people to vote. This gives it a quasi-monopoly over initiatives to improve voter turnout in France. In addition, CIDEM receives some funding from private-sector foundations and charitable organizations, but tries to limit the financing it receives from large corporations in order to maintain its neutrality and independence.

In tandem with municipal, regional, European Parliament, presidential and parliamentary elections, as well as the recent referendum on the European Constitution, CIDEM runs television and radio advertisements encouraging French citizens to register and to vote. Its advertising campaigns have been extended to include spots in cinemas before films, visual advertising in underground stations and on buses, flyers placed on parked cars, and a caravan sent to community events around the country. CIDEM also tries to garner media attention to its activities by

sending out press releases and having its director take part in televised debates concerning declining voter turnout. It uses its network of member associations to distribute its materials. In an average campaign it will hire an additional 20 campaign organizers on short-term contracts. These people organize the volunteers of the member associations towards coherent action and ensure the proper diffusion of CIDEM's message.

CIDEM's advertisements are aimed primarily at voters between the ages of 18 and 34. The theme of the majority of its campaigns is that by not voting you let others make your decisions for you. For instance, during the 2002 presidential and parliamentary elections, CIDEM ran a commercial in which a young couple have just had a baby and the doctors, nurses and other patients decide what the baby's name is to be, much to the amazement of the new parents. The scene is followed by the tag line 'Ne laissez personne décider pour vous . . . votez!' (Don't let someone else decide for you . . . vote!). Another main theme of CIDEM's campaigns encourages citizens to use a proxy vote if they are planning to be away or on vacation on the day of the vote.

Before the European Parliament elections of June 2004, CIDEM ran over 500 radio advertisements on all national radio stations during the 12 days prior to the vote. It estimated that more than 17 million French citizens aged 20–49 heard these advertisements roughly five times. In addition, working together with the Ministry of the Interior and the Association of French Mayors, CIDEM provided 50,000 posters throughout the 36,000 municipalities in France. In collaboration with the Information Office for France of the European Parliament (Bureau d'Information pour la France du Parlement européen), CIDEM also ran an advertising campaign in 286 university restaurants encouraging students to vote in the European Parliament elections. The campaign consisted of distributing posters, brochures and napkins within the restaurants and setting up kiosks at the restaurant exits.

While CIDEM does not have a formal mechanism by which to evaluate the effectiveness of its campaigns, it does an informal evaluation in regard

to the increase/decrease in voter turnout, comments by its partners and association members, and the estimated number of people who saw its advertisements. Its two most recent campaigns coincided with the referendum on the European Constitution and the 2004 European Parliament election. The strong turnout of 70 per cent in the referendum may have been partly attributable to the activities of CIDEM. On the other hand, the European Parliament elections saw a 4 per cent drop in the French turnout, from 46.8 per cent to 42.8 per cent. CIDEM maintains that this decrease would have been worse if its campaign had not existed.

CIDEM has not considered activities outside its advertising campaigns in the effort to create higher voter turnout because advertising is the purpose for which it was set up and is the function for which it receives funding from the French Government. By mid-2006, CIDEM had not yet decided on the structure of its campaign for the presidential and parliamentary elections to be held in 2007. As with every election, it must first negotiate its contracts with the government and other partners to determine what form the 2007 campaign will take.

Website: <<http://www.cidem.org>>.

Making Politics Relevant: The Electoral Commission, United Kingdom

ERIN THIESSEN

The Electoral Commission (EC) in the United Kingdom (UK) is an independent body that was established by Parliament in 2000. Among other things, its functions include reporting on elections and referendums, reviewing and advising on electoral matters, and expressly promoting public education. It builds public participation in local, national, and European democratic processes by running public awareness campaigns. It also performs outreach work surrounding different electoral events in order to provide independent election information that is designed to increase public knowledge of how democracy works, and to motivate voters to participate actively by casting a ballot. The EC also provides grants to external projects doing similar work.

In order to fund its work, the commission receives an annual budget from the Speaker's Committee of Parliament. It employs approximately 140 staff. Three people are dedicated to the campaigns team specifically, although media work is supported by other internal departments (e.g. the press team, electoral administration) and external agencies. All of the EC's public awareness work is carefully researched in order to ensure effective messaging, taking into consideration public opinion about politics and voting, and reasons for non-participation. Efforts are also made to target specific groups, and work is often tailored to particular audiences. Since its founding, the EC has run media campaigns such as Don't Distance Yourself, Votes Are Power, Don't Know Doesn't Count and 'Don't Do Politics'. The EC's focus group research in 2003 had shown that people felt disconnected from the political process itself, and were therefore 'switching off' from that process. Politics was widely viewed as dull or irrelevant, and the term itself was viewed as a 'dirty word'; but, despite this widespread sentiment, people still felt passionately about political issues.

The 'Don't Do Politics' campaign was developed for the 2004 European Parliament, local and London elections as the EC's first fully UK-wide multimedia voter campaign, and was then expanded for the 2005 general election. Its main goal was to reframe politics as relevant and personal by presenting express linkages between politics and day-to-day issues that mat-

ter to ordinary people. The commission felt that if it were possible to show how politics impacted on daily life, where virtually every aspect is touched in some way by a political decision, it would challenge feelings of passivity and people would be more inclined to engage in the process.

The campaign involved television, radio and press advertising, outdoor (including big screens in commuter train stations to target those going to and from work) and online media, information leaflets distributed via a variety of outlets, a national outreach tour targeting young people, a national telephone helpline and a website (<<http://www.aboutmyvote.co.uk>>) for people to access with their questions. All elements of the campaign shared the same idea in order to maximize the impact of the EC's message, and the tag line ran, 'If you don't do politics, there's not much you do do'.

The television advertisements used two animated friends named Mike and Tom in various everyday scenarios. Mike repeatedly tries to engage Tom in discussion regarding things that matter to him, only to be put off by Tom's insistence that he 'doesn't do politics'. In the end, Tom raises an issue that he feels strongly about only to have Mike remind him that he cannot have an opinion on the matter as he doesn't 'do politics'. Similarly, the radio advertisements surrounded a fictional radio talk-show called Radio Chit-Chat wherein callers were forbidden to phone in on any topic that might have political ramifications—resulting in a complete lack of topics. The press advertisements covered the ways in which everyday things are affected by decisions of a political nature and were available in Bengali, Chinese, Gujarati, Punjabi and Urdu as well as English and Welsh. The commission also used its website to provide posters, press advertisements, press releases and templates to be used by local authorities in their own efforts to provide publicity materials to their areas.

The EC commissioned the survey firm Ipsos Mori to conduct face-to-face interviews with 830 people following the election. The results indicated that the campaign had been very well received by the public. A full 76 per cent of those surveyed were aware of at least one element of the campaign, and 79 per cent

of those aged 18–35 years recognized the television advertising in particular. The message that politics affects a person's everyday life resonated with 57 per cent of respondents, with 88 per cent reporting that the campaign made it obvious that voting was an important thing to do. The clearest impact of the campaign, though, may be that 36 per cent of respondents said that the campaign had prompted them to discuss politics with friends, family or colleagues, 37 per cent said that the campaign made them feel good about voting, and 43 per cent said that they had decided to vote as a result of seeing the advertising. Additionally, 20,000 people telephoned the helpline, the website registered 200,000 hits, and 46,000 electoral registration forms were downloaded.

Website: <<http://www.electoralcommission.org.uk/>>.

Identifying and Engaging the Under-represented: The Minnesota Participation Project in the USA

ERIN THIESSEN

The Minnesota Participation Project (MPP), an initiative of the Minnesota Council of Nonprofits, is a long-term voter mobilization project, established in 2004. As the US electoral calendar is always hectic and there is almost always an election in progress for some position or other, MPP targets elections from the level of school district to Congress, and places particular emphasis on state-level elections.

Run by three full-time paid staff, and funded through various foundational grants, MPP has filled an important niche in electoral mobilization in Minnesota. In its overall promotion of get-out-the-vote (GOTV) activities, MPP acts as an umbrella, information source, and facilitator for a growing statewide network of over 210 diverse non-profit organizations. MPP's stated goals are to facilitate cooperation between different voter mobilization organizations; to provide resources and technical support to active groups; to encourage the establishment of new mobilization groups and provide them with the necessary tools for their work; and to build the internal capacity of all groups to execute successful voter mobilization programmes.

Considered a pioneering enterprise in the USA, MPP is building on a state culture that has traditionally been politically engaged, and one that also has in place a healthy non-profit sector. The impetus for the establishment of MPP emerged with the realization that non-profit organizations could be the 'sleeping giants' of Minnesota politics. Uniquely positioned in having already established trusting relationships with the clients and communities they serve, non-profit organizations were an obvious vehicle for the message that voting is important, and that by voting issues can be addressed to produce better policy outcomes that improve life for everyone.

Recognizing that many chronically under-represented members of society are often working with non-profit organizations, MPP has seized the opportunity to bring the information voters need directly to those who are less likely to vote of their own inclination. Its network is made up of a wide variety of groups consisting of everything from social services (such as early childhood centres, battered women's shelters and shelters for the homeless) to community

groups (such as immigrant services, community centres and faith-based groups) to the more traditional voter mobilization groups trying to increase civic advancement and promote citizenship. MPP is continuously seeking to expand participation by bringing in as many different groups from as many different non-profit sectors as possible, and has been growing both by word of mouth and through an active campaign to reach out and engage new non-profits in voter mobilization work. For many of these groups, involvement in MPP represents a new foray into the political sphere. The overarching feature that all these groups share is their dedication to voter mobilization using non-partisan methods.

Just as its members are diverse, so are the techniques and approaches employed by MPP. Attempts are made to provide strategies, tools and support that complement each group's capacity and growth.

Information exchange works to identify existing voter mobilization efforts, and to connect groups where sensible. It also provides a forum to communicate news and volunteer opportunities throughout the non-profit community, and to allow groups to exchange ideas and methods.

Education and training methods incorporate the development and distribution of easy-to-understand materials and step-by-step guides ('toolboxes', available online) that can be used to expand existing mobilization efforts or even establish new campaigns. These guides provide information on how to undertake voter registration activities such as tabling, office registration, and door-to-door canvassing; voter education activities; and GOTV activities to remind people to vote and ensure that they get to the polls. MPP's materials were initially developed with the aid of a consulting firm, Grassroots Solutions, which has provided continued assistance as needed. As it has become more experienced, MPP has undertaken to do its own writing and develop its own training presentations. Seen as part of an ongoing learning process, its materials are constantly updated in response to the information needs of the member groups and the feedback MPP receives.

MPP also offers travelling clinics using a 'train-the-trainer' model whereby an MPP trainer provides

instruction at the request of member groups or other organizations on permissible non-partisan activities, including voter registration, voter education, and GOTV, so that they may then go on to train others. This gives MPP a more efficient means of spreading information, and helps build the capacity of other groups. To do this, MPP has a pool of 30–70 trainers available, and aims to provide an appropriate messenger to each group they encounter. Trainers are paid 125 USD for each session they lead. There is no fee for these training sessions as MPP is most interested in spreading its message as widely as possible.

Organizationally, MPP provides information, training, planning and publicity, and runs a Mini-Grant programme (up to 250 USD per event) to help groups organize candidate forums—events attended by candidates to meet the public and discuss election issues, both those of general importance and those specific to the work of the organizing non-profit group. MPP's involvement in these adds to the recognition factor for both candidates and voters, and its name is seen to lend legitimacy to the enterprise. MPP also provides groups with expanded capacity to organize support and volunteers at critical times (for GOTV activities, for example). Their own volunteer drives have involved anywhere from 50 to 700 people.

MPP's work also goes beyond the logistics of education and organization, as it participates in lobbying efforts to reduce systemic barriers in the voting process and deploys its own GOTV teams. It employs the same GOTV methods as it teaches—establish a clear plan, as the details in pursuing grass-roots activities (i.e. door-to-door canvassing or phone banks) can be overwhelming, and consider the capacity of the group. In the 2004 election cycle, MPP provided a unifying voter mobilization campaign lead in low-turnout neighbourhoods in the Minneapolis-St Paul area. With an initial goal to recruit 500 volunteer canvassers through its non-profit network, MPP was astonished to find such overwhelming support that it was able to establish three hubs with a total of 700 volunteers going from door to door. MPP events (training, clinics, meetings) during this election reached 2,988 people, and the GOTV push contacted 29,065 voters at their doors or by telephone on election day alone.

Door-knocking is an extremely people-intensive method, but MPP very much emphasizes the need for contact in person to achieve voter turnout results. MPP canvassers have employed both voter registration lists to focus their activities and cold-knocking

(without a list). Using a list allows MPP to track specific people and determine whether those contacted are more likely to vote, but aggregate analysis of particular neighbourhoods is also possible, comparing the number of votes cast to previous results from similar elections. In either case, MPP's focus is on all potential voters: the canvasser will talk to whoever is there and available.

At the door, its non-partisan approach allows MPP to discuss issues and policies rather than endorsing candidates and party platforms. It has found that emphasizing issues tends to garner the best response. It is also willing to discuss why voting matters, but finds that this often fails to get results as the message is one that voters have heard many times over. It therefore encourages potential voters to consider what is important to them and to determine how politics affects their own lives: if your vote is your voice, you need to educate yourself and vote.

MPP has found that the non-partisan approach is well received as many of those contacted are surprised that it is not attempting to sell a particular political position. Its GOTV work is made easier by the state laws that allow election-day voter registration, ensuring that citizens can vote even without being registered ahead of time.

MPP makes ongoing efforts to determine the effectiveness of its programmes. Its training clinic clients are always asked to provide qualitative and quantitative evaluation of presentations and materials. Newsletters are produced on a regular basis to keep member organizations engaged, and both positive and negative feedback from groups is used to constantly upgrade and produce new needed information materials. MPP also runs quantitative analyses of its GOTV efforts where it is possible to do so. For example, analysis of its 2004 GOTV efforts in Minneapolis-St Paul found that turnout in the targeted precincts improved by 33–59 per cent. MPP's projects are continuing to expand as it finds broadening support for its efforts, and are considered a sound investment by its foundational supporters.

Website: <<http://www.mncn.org/mpp/gotv.htm>>.

Teaching Citizens to Protect Their Democratic Rights: Pora in Ukraine and Similar Organizations in Central and Eastern Europe

SVITOZAR OMELKO

Pora (Ukraine)

Pora (the word means 'high time!') was a self-governing, all-Ukrainian, civic campaign, independent from all political structures, commercial entities and the state administration. Its aim was to ensure democratic elections and to promote increased popular participation in the political and electoral processes. Initiated in March 2004 by the leaders of the student movements of the early 1990s, the campaign was active in several political and electoral events throughout 2004. However, its main goals were the mobilization of voters for the presidential election in the autumn of 2004, and the prevention of electoral fraud in that contest. The Pora organization consisted of around 35,000 permanent members who participated exclusively on an unpaid, volunteer basis, and it also attracted supporters in numbers that far exceeded the official membership.

The centrepiece of Pora's work during the 2004 presidential election was a complex nationwide information and mobilization campaign. Pora's strategies and planning were inspired by the successful activities of volunteer networks in Serbia (Otpor!, 2000), the Slovak Republic (O.K. '98), and Georgia (Kmara, 2003). Under the conditions of far-reaching censorship, and given the absence of independent media that prevailed in Ukraine until late 2004, the main idea behind Pora was the creation of alternative 'mass media', in which volunteers would deliver election-related information from hand to hand and from door to door directly to citizens throughout Ukraine. During the 2004 presidential election campaign, Pora played a crucial role in mobilizing citizens to engage in civic action and to become actively involved in the political and electoral process.

Pora's activities were conducted in two stages. The first consisted of various information and education activities aimed at increasing voter turnout, counteracting censorship, and supplying voters with information about the election campaign, the platforms of individual candidates, voters' rights and the need to guard these rights in the event of electoral fraud. The second stage consisted of the dramatic staging of mass protests in response to the falsified election results. For the purposes of this book, only the first stage of the Pora campaign will be considered.

The main tasks of the campaign, as stated by Pora itself, were:

- to provide alternative mechanisms for delivering objective information about the course of the election campaign and the positions of individual contenders for the presidency directly to citizens in all regions of Ukraine;
- to increase voter turnout among those electoral groups supporting democratic development, national priorities, and Euro-Atlantic integration;
- to form a powerful network of volunteers to disseminate the campaign's ideas and to distribute information on a large scale and systematically;
- to attract politically neutral and insufficiently well-informed citizens to join the democratic forces; and
- to mobilize society to protect their democratic rights and freedoms should these be at risk through the falsification of election results or other illegitimate action by the authorities.

Pora's activities to educate and disseminate information took many forms. A key element of the overall campaign, however, was the use of a single style, established through the use of banners, tee-shirts, badges and printed products, and above all, famously, the use of the colour orange. Graffiti were also found to be an important tool to reach and actively involve young people, and this significantly popularized the Pora style. This style has become widely recognizable and is now commonly associated with Pora.

The acute problems with public access to information and 'freedom of speech' in Ukraine meant that the dissemination of clear and unbiased information directly to citizens was fundamental. This was delivered in the form of direct communication with voters, the distribution of printed products and visual information, and educational events. Examples included printed products (leaflets, brochures, stickers, small souvenirs), shows of different kinds, public activities and demonstrations, visual presentations (billboards, posters, graffiti), media presentations

(clips, interviews) and periodicals. To a great extent the information materials used within the framework of the campaign were designed by Pora's coordination centre or by partner NGOs. The official Pora website became one of the main channels for informing the public as well as an important vehicle for Pora activists to exchange information and sample documents, and coordinate activities.

Pora also actively used public intercity and suburban transport as a means to communicate its message and distribute information. As Ukrainians use public transport terminals on an average of 35 times per year (excluding municipal transport), Pora decided to take advantage of this and tailor its programmes accordingly.

It was also determined to ensure that the limited access of rural people, who make up approximately 35 per cent of the total population, to the mass media and relatively low levels of education did not result in their being manipulated by the pro-government forces. Pora targeted this segment of the population by establishing a vast network of volunteers to circulate information and to encourage popular participation. In larger cities, Pora's efforts were marked by mass actions, pickets and demonstrations, and the distribution of information in highly frequented public areas.

In order to attract young people, Pora organized dozens of concerts throughout the pre-election period in various parts of Ukraine, including Lviv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Poltava. Once mass protests had begun, it organized a rock marathon, 'Time for Freedom', which took place near the tent city on Kontraktova Ploshcha in Kyiv over several days. These concerts, as well as other forms of mass events, created occasions when the position and mottos of Pora could be publicized, new volunteers mobilized, and public support strengthened.

In developing all these techniques, Pora managed to respond successfully to the political environment of Ukraine in 2004/2005, and the scale of its work points to its popular appeal. In the course of its 2005 activities, Pora distributed 40 million copies of printed products; involved 35,000 permanent participants and an even larger number of supporters; conducted more than 750 regional pickets and public actions; organized 17 mass rallies with more than 3,000 participants; set up the tent camp in Kyiv's main street, Khreschatyk, with 1,546 tents and more than 15,000 residents; organized 12 other tent camps; created a website which rated fifth among all websites in Ukraine; and carried out the monitoring

of all national electoral registers.

The campaign's initial funding was supplied by Pora's founders. These funds were directed to organizing activities, information support, and the printing of materials. The training of activists was supported by small grants provided by the German Marshall Fund of the United States, Freedom House and the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) (to the overall sum of *c.* 130,000 USD). Entrepreneurs from across Ukraine provided the bulk of resources for Pora activities during the presidential election, mainly through in-kind support such as the free production of publications, communications and transport. It is estimated that the value of this in-kind support exceeded 5 million euros (EUR)—approximately 6 million USD at the exchange rate of the time. In cash terms, Pora spent 1.2 million EUR including the resources used at the regional level. It is also noteworthy that more than 60 per cent of these resources were spent during the Orange Revolution for the organizational needs of tent camps, transport, food and so on. Pora's coordination centre, a special monitoring unit, oversaw the usage of resources by individual parts of the campaign.

As Pora received only limited financial support from the international community, its activities were widely seen as legitimate by fellow Ukrainians. This was not the case with similar groups such as Otpor! in Serbia and Kmara in Georgia, which were largely funded from outside the respective countries' borders and whose activities were seen as highly controversial.

Pora's success was due to several factors. It was able to build on prior experience and knowledge from similar movements in other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, such as Slovakia and Serbia, as well as its own successful experiences with public activities. It was able to draw on experts and new technologies in the planning and management of the campaign, and made active use of modern communication systems. No local and international donors were able to exert political or financial dominance of the movement. Finally, Pora was able to coordinate and run its campaign with a high degree of efficiency.

The campaign ceased to exist in January 2005 upon the final resolution of the disputed election. Since then, it has become a political party which received an official registration certificate from the Ministry of Justice of Ukraine on 1 August 2005.

Website: <<http://www.pora.org.ua>>.

Mjaft! (Albania)

Unlike Pora and its counterparts in Georgia and Serbia, Mjaft! (the word means ‘enough!’) is not in declared opposition to the existing government. Instead, its main goals include increasing active citizenship, strengthening of the sense of community, the promotion of responsible governance, and the improvement of the image of Albania in the world. This last goal is to be achieved by encouraging the participation of citizens in decision making by influencing and monitoring policies at both local and national levels; promoting voluntary work and improving cooperation within communities; and regenerating the sense of protest.

Given the substantially different nature of the stated goals of the movement, the activities organized by Mjaft! are also significantly different from those of their counterparts discussed above. They include voter education campaigns, public debates, peaceful protests, direct action-organizing workshops, student orientations, lectures, issue-related concerts, countrywide bus tours, and petitions.

Educating Young People Through Participation in the Voting Process: Student Vote in Canada

ERIN THIESSEN

Founded in 2003, Student Vote is a parallel election programme designed for students from grade 4 through to the end of secondary school. Its mission is threefold:

- to give students a chance to participate in a non-partisan parallel election during an official provincial or federal election period;
- to promote citizenship and participation; and
- to work with other organizations to engage young people and bring them into civic and community life.

Student Vote builds on the premise that active citizenship is a habit that must be developed, and argues that, if young people are given an opportunity to demonstrate otherwise, the notion that young people are simply not interested in politics may be dispelled. While its initial concern was to address the problem of low voter turnout, Student Vote has since shifted its focus somewhat to concentrate on empowering and involving them in their communities, as well as to attack another common rationale for non-voting behaviour by attempting to instil the idea that every vote matters. Its aim is to accomplish all this in a practical, hands-on manner.

The idea of teaching children about voting in an applied fashion seemed an obvious way to help address Canada's falling voter turnout rates. For this to happen, however, funding partners were required in order to produce the necessary materials, as well as educational partners willing to promote and use the programme in the schools. Student Vote's initial trial programme was launched during the 2003 Ontario provincial election. The effort was a success, thus making it easier to get partners on board. With a staff of three or four full-time employees and up to eight part-time contractors at peak times, Student Vote has also run programmes during two provincial elections (in Alberta in 2004 and in British Columbia in 2005) and two federal elections (in 2004 and 2006).

The Student Vote programme itself consists of two main parts—the education portion, and the parallel election itself. Initially working with teachers and ed-

ucation experts in Ontario, a broad range of flexible activities were developed to complement the learning requirements of the social studies curriculum. Since then, this initial work has been used as a basis for ongoing updates and revisions. Some of the activities offered provide general introductory information on democracy and elections, while others follow or mirror the progress of the actual election campaign in progress, and all provide openings for discussion. Certain activities correspond more particularly to events during the election campaign, such as the televised debates between party leaders. Adaptable to age and language skills, the activities may be used independently of each other, allowing teachers to use as much or as little of the Student Vote programme in their classrooms as they desire. Participating teachers are not required to use the Student Vote materials when taking part in the parallel election, but those new to the subject often take the Student Vote package as a starting point. Student Vote also provides visual materials such as posters and maps of electoral districts.

In a deliberate effort to emphasize that informing yourself is part of responsible citizenship, Student Vote has chosen not to provide students and teachers with party platforms or campaign materials in the Student Vote package. Instead students are encouraged to glean news from a range of sources and to undertake the planning of various activities (e.g. hosting all-candidate meetings, to include candidates from every party vying for the electoral district, having guest speakers, class presentations outlining different parties' platforms, etc.) to educate themselves regarding the issues and personalities in the election.

The second component is 'election day' itself. If possible, it is encouraged that the entire school body participate, even if not all classes take part in the educational component described above. The physical handling of an actual ballot paper is felt to be a strong learning experience even if students are not as well informed as they could be. This parallel election is held a few days prior to the actual election, the results are tabulated according to actual electoral district boundaries, and the results are kept confidential. The Student Vote election results are then announced

at the same time as the official results and are covered by the media. Students are encouraged take on the roles of election officials (i.e. voting officers, voting clerks, and scrutineers or party representatives), and provincial and federal EMBs provide official ballot papers, ballot boxes, and voting screens to make the student experience as 'real' as possible.

Schools become involved by registering with Student Vote in order to receive a programme outline, free learning materials, and an election kit consisting of electoral district-specific ballot papers and an election operations manual. Student Vote promotes its programme directly through mailings, emails and faxes to educators, principals, teachers and students, and indirectly through media coverage and advertising.

Student Vote receives support for its work (monetary and in-kind) through a network of educational, community, government, media and financial partners with whom it communicates on a personal, face-to-face level whenever possible. The wide range of partners was established very deliberately in order to reinforce the non-partisan nature of the programme. Student Vote's relationships with the EMBs involved vary somewhat for each electoral event depending on the capabilities of different offices to provide support. At the federal level, the support of Elections Canada, the federal-level EMB, is key as it helps cover the cost of printing and shipping materials to schools throughout the country.

One of the programme's primary challenges is the difficulty of long-term planning, as Canada does not have set election dates and the timing of elections can come as a surprise.

Student Vote continually evaluates its programme, using survey data, telephone interviews and election results following each election. Participating students are asked to complete two surveys, one before beginning the programme and one after, to compare levels of knowledge, involvement and political interest. These surveys are formulated differently for elementary and secondary students based on their level of understanding. Teachers and educators are also asked to complete surveys and are given the opportunity to provide significant feedback as to how well the programme and the programme materials worked for them. Some teachers are contacted further as part of a telephone survey conducted after each election.

The results to date have been very encouraging. In the 2004 federal election programme, approximately 1,200 schools participated, representing 267 of Canada's 308 electoral districts, and over 265,000 stu-

dents voted. The 2006 federal election programme saw approximately 3,100 schools register, more than 2,500 schools participate on 'election day', and in excess of 450,000 students cast ballots, in all provinces and territories. The scale of the programme is considerably larger than anything of this nature yet attempted in Canada, and the 2006 federal election programme saw Student Vote's highest turnout yet.

Post-election surveys consistently report that 85–90 per cent of participants plan to vote in future after having participated in the programme. Furthermore, and just as significant, the figure for students who believe that voting is an important thing to do also falls in the 85–90 per cent range. Initial reports from the 2006 programme have included enthusiastic reviews from teachers across the country who felt that the most recent Student Vote educational materials have been the best to date. Feedback from political candidates, who are invited to student-run events as part of the programme, has also been positive as the programme can provide them with a neutral forum in which to present their platforms and an opportunity to connect better with young people.

In addition to providing a meaningful student experience, Student Vote's work may also affect voter turnout in the official election. First, in addition to providing a practice ballot, Student Vote works with secondary schools to encourage eligible student voters over the age of 18 to register and vote in the official election as well. Second, there seems to be some trickle-up effect as parents of participating students, by watching and talking with their children, also become more motivated to inform themselves and vote. Certainly some citizens have sent informal congratulations to Student Vote for its efforts after having seen an increase in Canada's official voter turnout in the last federal election. It is interesting to note that the Student Vote results and the official election results tend to be very similar.

Overall, the programme has been very non-controversial as the non-partisan model it builds on has succeeded in avoiding any bias in its presentation of information. The staff at Student Vote believe that they have worked towards and achieved a winning formula, which they are continuing to fine-tune with every electoral event. Breaking into the school systems tends to be the greatest challenge.

Website: <<http://www.studentvote.ca>>.

Informing Young People of the Need for Conscientious Voting: Eleitor do Futuro (Voter of the Future) in Brazil

SEAN W. BURGESS

The Eleitor do Futuro (Voter of the Future) programme was launched in 2002 to parallel that year's presidential election. With a primary target of adolescents between 10 and 15 years of age, the programme seeks to implant a sense of civic responsibility that will enhance electoral participation. In the Brazilian case, it is particularly important to address the issue at an early age because voting is optional for young people over 16 years of age and mandatory for all citizens over 18 years of age. Emphasis is thus placed on encouraging engagement with the political process and the teaching of the skills necessary to engage in electoral politics in an astute and informed manner.

During the 2002 parallel election held for young people under the programme, the Federal Electoral Court provided assistance and encouragement to the state electoral courts of Minas Gerais, Matto Grosso, Tocantins, Maranhão and São Paulo, even going so far as to allow use of the same electronic voting (e-voting) equipment as the formal vote. Approximately 20,000 students between 10 and 15 years of age participated in the exercise. At one point or another, all the states in the federation have pursued some form of programme affiliated with the national initiative, but pursuit of the programme appears to be patchy across the different jurisdictions and to be somewhat dependent upon the enthusiasm of the regional electoral court's presiding officers.

In response to the positive reaction that the 2002 mock vote received, and building on a concern that the overall sense of citizenship needed to be strengthened in a generation that had no memory of the military dictatorship that ended in 1985, the Electoral Judiciary School of the Federal Electoral Court took responsibility in 2003 for creating, in cooperation with the state electoral courts, a more detailed programme. The formal objective of the revised Eleitor do Futuro programme can be summarized as preparing Brazilian young people for the responsibility of voting and thereby determining the future of the country. The specifics of how this was to be achieved and exactly which demographic groups would be targeted were left to the discretion of individual state electoral courts. For example, the state of Tocantins focused on young people between 15 and 17 while

most of the other participating states concentrated on young people between 10 and 15.

More detailed descriptions of specific objectives were also left to individual state authorities, but in broad terms the four objectives listed by the state of Rondônia are applicable to the goals of each programme.

- The first was the goal of strengthening the sense of citizenship of children and adolescents between 10 and 14 years of age.
- A second goal was not only to motivate young people to actively engage in the electoral process by voting, but also to instil in the next generation of voters the capacity and desire to conscientiously exercise their right and responsibility to vote.
- An important part of this second goal was the third aim, namely to educate young people about good and bad electoral practices.
- Drawing on this was the fourth goal, which was to alert young people to the sorts of practices and attitudes that damage electoral processes with a view to encouraging an ethical approach to electoral politics.

A variety of methods are used to achieve these goals. As with most democratic processes, the highly visible and symbolic centrepiece is the holding of a free, fair and transparent mock vote that adheres to known and enforceable rules. In some instances the vote parallels municipal elections while at other times it parallels state or federal elections.

One problem that comes with mock ballots based on real-world political parties is a level of partisanship that can detract from the educational goals of the exercise. The Regional Electoral Court of the Federal District (Brasília and surrounding areas) recognized this pitfall and created a fictional electoral process based on a series of artificial parties focusing on specific issues of interest to young people such as health, liberty, sport and leisure, public security and education.

A notable characteristic of the mock ballots coordinated by the state electoral authorities is their for-

mality. The full formal mechanisms of the presiding judicial institutions are employed, including the need to complete specially generated candidate registration applications, with the local educational authorities filling the role of electoral registrar. Results are tabulated and released in much the same manner as they are in Brazil's local, state and federal elections by using the same e-voting machines that are deployed for formal elections. To this end, there is also a process of training school staff and students in the proper operation of polling booths and electoral policing. This last element has particular resonance in the more sparsely populated Brazilian states where there is a long tradition of vote-buying, partisan manipulation and disrespect of electoral laws. Seminars and lectures are held not only to explain the substance of the electoral laws and the necessity of those laws for the political process, but also to engage students in a discussion of the ethics of the political process. Here the ambition is to instil a sense of civic virtue that will undercut the residual aspects of *coronelismo*, or local political bosses controlling electoral outcomes through the application of patronage and particularistic power.

Although there is a larger public education and marketing aspect to the Eleitor do Futuro programme, the bulk of its activities and its substantive impact depend on cooperation with the school system. Under Brazilian law, education is compulsory up to the age of 16. Cooperation from local education authorities is thus crucial to the successful implementation of the programme. A major portion of the state electoral courts' efforts is directed towards the development of the civic education curriculum and materials that teachers can use in the classroom. Additional attention is being given to the provision of extra training for teaching staff, with some states offering distance education programmes to disseminate information and further advance the programme's aims and goals. Indeed, this wider aspect may prove crucial to the expansion of the federal initiative, which until now has only really been applied in larger urban areas. This directly limits the number of participants and neglects the more remote parts of the country that have experienced the worst electoral abuses. While there is widespread knowledge that the programme exists, actual exposure to and participation in it are not nearly on the same scale, measuring in the tens of thousands, which pales in comparison with the over 25 million Brazilian young people of eligible age to participate.

Finally, the sense that political participation is a

wider civic responsibility is bolstered by the approach that the electoral courts take in the design and implementation of Eleitor do Futuro. Unlike previous federal and state programmes that were handed down and imposed by the presiding institution, Eleitor do Futuro initiatives on the state level are explicitly inclusive, requiring the cooperation of, and input and active assistance from, not only educational authorities and individual schools but also a wide range of NGOs that work in areas ranging from democratic enhancement through youth education and capacity development to the more general enhancement of widespread citizenship and civic inclusiveness.

Teaching Political Participation Through Theatre: The Réseau de communication d'information et de formation des femmes dans les organisations non-gouvernementaux (RECIF/ONG) in Burkina Faso

DAVID McGRANE

The Network of Communication of Information and Training of Women in Non-governmental Organizations (Réseau de communication d'information et de formation des femmes dans les organisations non-gouvernementaux, RECIF/ONG) was set up in March 1992. It has now grown to include 50 member organizations with over 150,000 members. RECIF/ONG functions with nine permanent employees and numerous volunteers from its member organizations. It is an independent, non-partisan and neutral NGO that is not financed by either the government or private business.

The goal behind RECIF/ONG is to connect different women's organizations and to give women the resources they need to become a social force. Thus, it works to organize women and to reinforce the position and decision-making power of women within the NGOs of Burkina Faso. Its activities have thus included training sessions for women involved in NGOs, bulletins, documentation centres, radio and television programmes, and providing access for women to the Internet.

In November 2005, RECIF/ONG entered into partnership with a regional NGO dedicated to improving female literacy and education in the western part of the country, called the Association Munyu des Femmes de la Comoé. Together with this association, RECIF/ONG created a *théâtre-forum* (theatre forum) designed to encourage women to vote and participate in the political life of Burkina Faso. A famous Burkina Faso professional theatre company called Marbayassa, which is based in the city of Ouagadougou, presented the theatre forum.

Marbayassa has developed a three-part concept of the theatre forum. The first part entails presenting an 'anti-model' which is designed to shock the audience and provoke reflection. In this case, the first scene exposes common practices whereby men either order women not to vote or tell them who to vote for. The first scene also contains illustrations of the difficulties women face in attaining political office. The women in this first scene grudgingly and sadly accept the situation they find themselves in; this is designed to create indignation and the desire for change among those watching. In the second part, a character called

the 'joker' appears who asks the audience to judge both the positive and the negative aspects of the behaviour of the characters in the first scene. Finally, members of the audience are invited on stage to replay the first scene with the actors: members of the audience take over the parts of the women in the first scene to show how they would have behaved in that situation in an attempt to illustrate how to avoid the outcome that originally befell their characters. At the end of the presentation, the actors press the public further in their reflections by playing devil's advocate, countering the arguments the audience put forward concerning why women should vote and be involved in politics.

The financing for this project came from Oxfam and RECIF/ONG's own fund-raising activities. The eight actors for the project were paid, while the majority of the organizers and the people working behind the scenes were volunteers.

The motivation for doing a theatre forum was a desire to do something dramatic to awaken the consciousness of women regarding electoral politics. Evaluation forms were passed out at each performance and the response indicated that women were more likely to vote after having seen the play. Women attending were also encouraged to take what they had learned at the theatre forum and share it with women in their own communities.

The theatre forum toured several provinces in the western part of the country in the autumn of 2005. After the tour was finished, a video and a CD of the performances were produced which are now being distributed throughout the country. While there is no finalized plan to present the theatre forum again, RECIF/ONG has indicated that it will attempt to have another tour of the play in response to the positive feedback that it received.

Website: <<http://courantsdefemmes.free.fr/Assoces/Burkina/RECIF/recif.html>>.

Rock Volieb and the 1998 Parliamentary Elections in Slovakia: Rocking the Vote Slovak Style

JURAJ HOCMAN

In the mid-1990s, the credibility of the government of Slovakia, then led by Prime Minister Vladimír Mečiar, was suffering in the eyes of Slovakia's democratic partners in the West. The Movement for Democratic Slovakia party and its partners held all political state power, and there was widespread apathy and fear among the electorate prior to the 1998 parliamentary elections. Eventually it was the non-governmental sector that emerged as the most important vehicle of social mobilization against the prevailing mood of resignation. Slovak NGOs effectively demonstrated their capability to connect with and activate first-time, young and undecided voters who had not previously been stirred to electoral participation by party affiliation.

The idea of a civic election campaign arose in March 1998. The initiative, optimistically and metaphorically called the O.K. '98 Civic Campaign (Občianska kampaň), was officially established in the city of Zvolen in central Slovakia. Supported by the Mott Foundation and the Foundation for Civil Society (Nadácia občianskej spoločnosti, known as the Pontis Foundation since 1997), the goals of the campaign were to increase public participation and to ensure free and fair parliamentary elections. The Open Society Foundation, the United States Information Service (USIS) and the International Republican Institute (IRI), to name but a few, also provided some funding for specific elements within the campaign such as volunteer training. Within the O.K. '98 campaign alone, Slovak NGOs organized almost 60 projects. Young first-time voters were targeted as a group of specific importance, as they were generally viewed as widely apathetic (prior to the NGOs' efforts).

Rock Volieb, modelled on the US Rock the Vote programme, was one of the most successful projects focusing on young people, and specifically on first-time voters. Its centrepiece was a series of 13 concerts featuring popular rock bands and a voter awareness bus tour, which started in Eastern Slovakia and ended in the centre of the capital, Bratislava. The last concert was held two days before the election, and attracted a crowd of more than 15,000 young people who were enthusiastically expressing their determination to go to the polls and cast their ballots in the upcoming vote.

The campaign went beyond concerts, however. Rock Volieb distributed 20,000 motivational flyers, 70,000 how-to-vote-flyers, 70,000 why-to-vote flyers, 300,000 stickers, 15,000 pencils, and giveaways such as tee-shirts and hats with slogans such as 'Volím, teda som' ('I Vote, Therefore I Am') to encourage voter participation. Additionally, 40,000 free postcards with messages urging voters to the polls were distributed in 200 pubs and restaurants in various Slovak cities. The extensive dissemination of information and pamphlets was made possible by the assistance of other grass-roots organizations such as the Council of Youth (RMS), the Slovak Academic Information Agency (SAIA), the European Law Student Association (ELSA), and many others.

The campaign's web page won an award for best website from CentralEurope.com. Besides providing details about upcoming Rock Volieb events, this web page also provided information on voting procedures and encouraged voters to participate actively in the election.

Rock Volieb also produced a television and radio advertising campaign. MTV Europe came on-side, covering and broadcasting selected moments of the campaign. These featured musical clips, and the appearance of foreign and local musicians and celebrities who expressed their support for young people in Slovakia and encouraged them to vote. The Rock Volieb spots were also shown before every screening of *X-Files: The Movie*, and were thus seen by 80,000–100,000 cinema-goers. Similarly, eight radio spots featuring Slovak personalities encouraged young voter participation. Privately-owned Slovak radio stations, such as Fun Radio, Radio Ragtime and Radio Tatry, broadcast these advertisements regularly.

The Mečiar government controlled the state television and radio broadcasts, and was seen from abroad as being hostile to political and media pluralism. The Slovak NGOs faced a serious challenge in balancing the influence of the state-owned media on public opinion as the activists involved in the O.K. '98 campaign were generally presented as subversive enemies of the state. It therefore has to be stressed that the O.K. '98 campaign benefited not only from highly visible and attractive events such as rock concerts organized in big cities, but also from the work

of local organizers in various regions. The active presence, willingness and enthusiasm of hundreds of volunteers throughout the country were needed to secure a higher voter turnout. Organizers and supporters of the campaign were effective because their direct contact with voters and encouragement of an active, voting youth were accompanied by their commitment to remain non-partisan. Additionally, foreign know-how was indispensable to the success of the campaign.

Whereas forecasts in November 1997 indicated an expected turnout of first-time voters of around 50 per cent, in July/August 1998 it had risen to 54–57 per cent, and in the final three weeks of the September election campaign it reached 73 per cent. It eventually peaked with 80 per cent participation of first-time voters: this figure is only slightly below the overall turnout rate measured at 82.4 per cent.

This significant increase in expected participation appears to have been a direct consequence of the O.K. '98 campaign. After the election, the Institute for Public Affairs (Inštitút pre verejné otázky, IVO) ran a survey focusing on the effect of the NGO campaign on young voters. When asked 'Did the NGO campaign influence you in deciding whether to take part in the elections?', 46 per cent of respondents reported that they had at least noticed the campaign, while 54 per cent did not notice it at all. According to another IVO survey done in October of the same year, 11 per cent considered the involvement of NGOs and the campaign useless, and 30 per cent were not able to evaluate their place in the elections. However, a full 59 per cent of respondents were aware of the impact of the NGOs and the O.K. '98 campaign on the elections, with 38 per cent of respondents giving grades of 1 or 2 (on a scale of 1 to 5) for their work prior to and during the parliamentary elections, and an additional 13 per cent giving them a grade of 3.

The IVO concluded that the NGO campaigns were instrumental in raising the participation of first-time voters from approximately 60 per cent in 1994 to over 80 per cent in 1998. According to one of the authors of the survey, the campaign filled the empty space between the passive position of isolated individuals and the competing political parties. Overall, the response of Slovak society to the messages coming from the NGOs was significantly positive. The NGOs' ability to respect their lifestyles and reflect that fact in the election campaign was of particular importance in their communication with first-time voters.¹

Besides the youth vote, the other important segment of the electorate was the undecided voters. These were more likely to be found in urban areas, in regions with no strict party loyalty, and in varying proportions among the population as defined by educational background, age, social status, ethnicity, values and so on. Past elections had demonstrated that the electorate in Slovakia's urban areas tends to vote for change, whereas rural voters opt for maintaining the status quo. Furthermore, whereas the voters in rural areas and small communities are traditionally habitual voters, those in urban centres tend to neglect electoral events. In the case of the 1998 parliamentary elections, however, the effects of the civic campaign were clear as urban voters were gradually mobilized, and actively participated by voting.

Overall, the personal testimonies of participants in the NGO campaign coincide with the conclusions drawn by observers and analysts: the campaign, which was completely new in both form and content in this part of Europe, was significantly positive, and it demonstrated the capacity of NGOs to mobilize the electorate, specifically young people, to active participation.

Website: <<http://www.rockvolieb.sk>>, <<http://www.wmd.org/documents/RockVoliebGOTV.pdf>>.

Endnote

- 1 On the effectiveness of the campaign, see Bútora, Martin and Bútorová, Zora, 'Slovakia's Democratic Awakening', *Journal of Democracy*, 10/1 (1999); 'Rock Volieb '98 Campaign: Report on Activities and Results, 1998 Slovak Parliamentary Elections', <<http://www.wmd.org/documents/RockVoliebGOTV.pdf>>; and Bútora, Martin and Demeš, Pavol, 'Civil Society Organizations in the 1998 Elections'; Bútora, Martin, Mesežnikov, Grigorij and Bútorová, Zora, 'Overcoming Illiberalism: Slovakia's 1998 Elections'; Bútorová, Zora, 'Development of Public Opinion: From Discontent to the Support of Political Change'; and Gyárfášová, O., Kúška M. and Velšic, M., 'First-time Voters and the 1998 Elections', all in Bútora, Martin et al. (eds), *The 1998 Parliamentary Elections and Democratic Rebirth in Slovakia* (Bratislava: IVO [Institute for Public Affairs], 1999). See also Novotný, Peter, Forgács, Daniel and Velšic, Marián, 'Non-governmental Organizations and the 2002 Elections', in Grigorij Mesežnikov et al. (eds), *Slovak Elections 2002: Results, Implications, Context* (Bratislava: IVO [Institute for Public Affairs], 2003); and Velšic, Marián, 'Young Voters', in Grigorij Mesežnikov et al. (eds), *Slovak Elections 2002: Results, Implications, Context* (Bratislava: IVO [Institute for Public Affairs], 2003).

The 1995 Municipal Elections Lottery in Norway

MARIA GRATSCHEW

The municipality of Evenes, in the far north of Norway, tried an innovative lottery campaign for its municipal elections of 1995 in order to maximize turnout. It was the first time ever such an activity was attempted in Norway.

The idea of conducting a lottery came from the senior administrative management within the municipal administration who argued that a lottery would increase the voters' interest in participating in the election. The winner would receive travel vouchers to be used for a trip to the warm south with the only restriction being that the holiday must start from the local airport in Harstad-Narvik.

The municipal administration organized the lottery initiative, and the Electoral Council within the municipality was responsible for its administration and for selecting two winners among those who had voted. According to the legal framework and election practices in Norway, voters who participate in an election are marked in the electoral register at the polling stations, and it was therefore a simple matter for the senior management of the municipality to choose an elector from the register at random. The voter did not need to sign any document or get a lottery ticket at the polling station: from the viewpoint of the voter, he or she was automatically included in the lottery once they had voted.

The financial costs involved were quite small: administering the lottery did not require any further human resources from the municipality, and the cost of the travel vouchers made up almost all of the additional expense. The value of these came to about 10,000 Norwegian kronor (NOK) (c. 1,600 USD at the exchange rate of the time). The municipality did not actively advertise the lottery in advance of the election. Information regarding the initiative was mainly disseminated by the local newspapers and magazines which included articles on the subject. Some national newspapers also made mention of it in a short note, but the lottery did not receive much attention from the media or the general public overall.

Somewhat surprisingly, neither did the lottery trigger much controversy. There was very little public objection. Some politicians from the opposition

parties argued that voters should not be rewarded for doing their duty, but any other protests were not made public. Nonetheless, there have been no plans to hold another lottery. It was a one-time activity, and an experiment to determine whether such a venture would increase turnout.

The immediate outcome was that turnout did, in fact, increase for that specific election, but the results of this activity have not been evaluated in detail. Municipal elections take place every four years in Norway, with approximately 800 voters normally participating in Evenes municipality. The lottery elections of 1995 showed turnout increase by almost 10 per cent compared to the previous municipal elections in 1991. The 1999 municipal elections, however, saw turnout in Evenes fall by more than 7 per cent in comparison to the 1995 figures. As this evaluation takes so few elections into account, it is difficult to reach any firm conclusions regarding the actual long-term impact of the one-time lottery. In the most recent elections, in 2003, turnout in Evenes was a little above the national average.

Furthermore, the 1995 elections also saw a second new factor enter the electoral scene which makes the consequence of the lottery even more difficult to isolate and judge. At this time, the municipality introduced another new practice: voters were given the opportunity to directly elect the chairperson of the municipal council. This was the first time such an opportunity had arisen in Evenes, and some observers argue that this was another reason contributing to the higher turnout rates in 1995.

Website: <<http://www.evenes.kommune.no/>>.

The 2005 Parliamentary Election Lottery in Bulgaria

IVO BALINOV

Prior to the 2005 parliamentary elections in Bulgaria, the Council of Ministers decided to allocate 4 million Bulgarian leva (*c.* 2.05 million EUR) from the state budget for the organization of an election lottery with the intention of boosting voter turnout. Everyone who voted was given the right to enter the lottery: it was the voter's choice to register for the lottery or not. People were able to register for it on the Internet at <<http://www.bgizbori.com>>, by sending a text message to a specified number from a mobile phone, or by a regular land-line telephone call. Registration itself was free of charge but text messages and telephone calls were at the expense of those registering. The lottery itself took place on the day after the elections. Prizes included a car worth 15,000 EUR (*c.* 18,700 USD at the exchange rate prevailing at the time), computer equipment, electronic appliances and mobile phones.

The government contracted a private company, Advertisement Agency 2A, to organize and carry out the lottery. Three other companies were also involved: a computer company, E-Card, was engaged to manage the computer programs and databases used; registration by text message was administered by Globul, one of the three mobile phone operators in the country; and registration by phone was managed by the Bulgarian Telecommunications Company (the only company managing landlines in the country). Globul and the Bulgarian Telecommunications Company collected the fees charged for the text messages and phone calls used for registration.

The government stated that the lottery was targeted at young voters, so that some in the media, international organizations and many voters saw it as being focused on potential supporters of the ruling party, the National Movement Simeon II, who were expected to be more hesitant about voting in the elections than the supporters of its main political opponent, the leftist Bulgarian Socialist Party. The government's decision to hold the lottery drew sharp criticism from a number of opposition parties, the president of the country, a high proportion of the members of the Central Electoral Commission (which was not consulted in the decision-making process regarding the lottery and was not involved in carrying it out), and a number of international or-

ganizations. The lottery was seen as a deviation from best election practice.

A group of opposition parties (the left-wing Coalition for Bulgaria, the United Democratic Forces, the Democrats for a Strong Bulgaria and the Movement for National Unification and Social Justice) appealed against the government's decision before the Supreme Administrative Court. Lawyers for the applicants argued that the government's decision on the election budget (which included funds for the lottery among other activities) was in violation of the Parliamentary Elections Act. According to this act, the Council of Ministers is responsible only for technical and organizational preparations for the elections. The opposition also argued that taxpayers' money should not be used to finance the lottery and that the government should not have made the decision on the elections budget without consulting the Central Electoral Commission. The Supreme Administrative Court rejected the appeal, stating that the voter turnout campaign was not in breach of the law. According to the court, it was difficult to distinguish between the duties of the Central Electoral Commission to organize and conduct an information campaign, and the duty of the government to provide technical and organizational support for the elections. The court considered the voter turnout campaign to be an inseparable part of the organization of the elections, and that the Council of Ministers had therefore not violated the law.

The lottery was also criticized by the Council of Europe. 'There is a fine line between encouraging voters to participate in an election and what may be perceived as subtle electoral campaigning in favour of one party. This line must not be crossed, and it must be seen by all concerned to be respected', wrote Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, in a letter of 14 June 2005 addressed to the Bulgarian Minister of Foreign Affairs. A report by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, published after the elections, also stated that, while enhancing voter turnout is a worthwhile objective in itself, the introduction of such innovative measures should enjoy the consensus of all political forces concerned, be equally accessible to all voters, and be

organized by a neutral body such as the Central Electoral Commission.¹

Many of the voters themselves took a negative attitude towards the lottery, seeing it as an attempt to 'buy' their votes in favour of the ruling party. Only about 20 per cent of those who voted (about 730,000 people) entered it.

Overall, the election campaign failed to induce more people to vote. The lowest turnout for 16 years was registered. Only 55.7 per cent of 6.7 million eligible voters cast their ballots—a fall of close to 10 per cent from the previous election.

Endnote

- 1 Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly, 'Observation of the Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria: Joint Report by the Members of the Ad hoc Committee of the Bureau', 12 September 2005. See also Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR), 'Republic of Bulgaria Parliamentary Elections June 25, 2005: Elections Assessment Mission Report', Warsaw, OSCE/ODIHR, 2 November 2005; and Thorpe, Nick, 'Bulgaria's Election Lottery', BBC News, 25 June 2005, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/4618845.stm> <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/4618845.stm>.