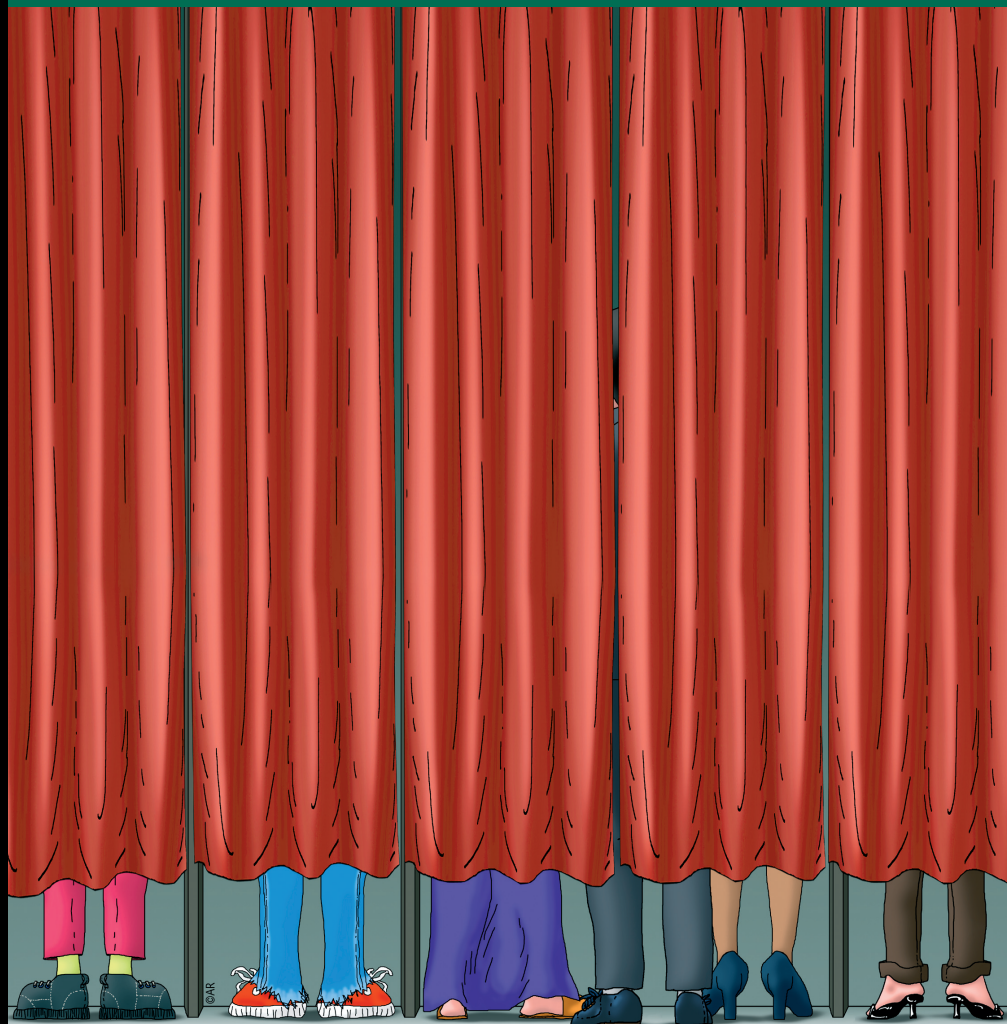


Women's individual voting rights a democratic requirement



Integrated projects



Council of Europe Publishing
Editions du Conseil de l'Europe

Women's individual voting rights – a democratic requirement

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe

Integrated project “Making democratic institutions work”

Council of Europe Publishing

French edition:

Le droit de vote individuel des femmes – une exigence démocratique

ISBN 92-871-5039-7

This text also exists in Albanian, Macedonian, Russian and Serbian.

The publication of this text was supported by the integrated project “Making democratic institutions work” (<http://www.coe.int/democracy>)

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic (CD-Rom, Internet, etc.) or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any information storage or retrieval system, without the prior permission in writing from the Publishing Division, Communication and Research Directorate.

Cover design: Graphic Design Workshop, Council of Europe

Council of Europe Publishing
F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

ISBN 92-871-5040-0

© Council of Europe, November 2002

Printed at the Council of Europe

In 1994, the Council of Europe set up the **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe** (CLRAE). It is composed of two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions, and has more than 300 elected members, representing the local and regional authorities from the Council of Europe's forty-four member states.¹

One of the most important tasks of the Congress is to help new member states with practical aspects of establishing effective local and regional self-government. This includes:

- providing a forum where local and regional representatives can express their views to governments;
- advising the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on all aspects of local and regional policy;
- organising hearings and conferences to reach a wider public whose involvement is essential to a working democracy;
- preparing country by country reports on the state of democracy in both member states and candidate countries;
- monitoring the implementation of the European Charter of Local and Self-Government.

Another objective of the Congress is to promote an exchange of good practice and local government responsibilities, and if possible, reach consensus.

1. Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
Foreword	
<i>Walter Schwimmer, Secretary General of the Council of Europe</i>	7
I. Women’s individual voting rights – a democratic requirement	9
II. Reported examples of family voting	25
Albania	25
Armenia	29
Azerbaijan	30
Bosnia and Herzegovina	31
Bulgaria	33
Croatia	34
Estonia	34
Georgia	34
Hungary	35
Latvia	36
Lithuania	37
Moldova	37
Poland	40
Romania	40
Russian Federation	40
Slovak Republic	42
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	42
Ukraine	46
Federal Republic of Yugoslavia	47
Appendix: Recommendation 111 (2002) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe on women’s individual voting rights – a democratic requirement	51
Bibliography	57

Foreword

“Family voting” is when a male family member votes with or for one or more women relatives or when family members vote together in the open, often facilitated by polling officials. This undermines the political rights of women and implies failure to comply with both international and national legal instruments. The Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights guarantees the right to free and secret suffrage, as do the constitutions of the states concerned by this practice. Failure to protect this right by allowing family voting to take place amounts to the disenfranchisement of women, a lack of respect for fair electoral proceedings, and leaves the door open to electoral fraud.

This behaviour stems from cultural attitudes and practices that fail to recognise women’s rights to full and equal citizenship with men. The free exercise of women’s voting rights is a step towards women’s increased participation in political and social decision-making, and makes a fuller and more balanced use of human resources.

This study from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe proposes a series of measures to combat family voting. It also puts family voting on the Council of Europe’s agenda for gender equality and, it is to be hoped, on equality agendas across Europe. The study brings together documented evidence of this practice and calls for strategies to eliminate it, addressing both electoral institutions and the population groups concerned.

Developing these strategies will require the resolute efforts of Council of Europe bodies, the OSCE, the Stability Pact Gender Task Force, national governments and our partners in civil society, such as gender-equality and democracy-building NGOs. The Council’s integrated project “Making democratic institutions work”, mandated to assist member states in setting up practical instruments to encourage the most active participation possible in the democratic processes for all of Europe’s citizens, has also included family voting on its agenda.

I am confident that this booklet will stimulate on-the-ground activities, which can be replicated in several countries, to ensure that the right to a secret, free and individual vote for women is respected.



Walter Schwimmer
Secretary General of the Council of Europe

I. WOMEN'S INDIVIDUAL VOTING RIGHTS – A DEMOCRATIC REQUIREMENT

Introduction¹

Family voting describes voting practices that disenfranchise women. It occurs in three ways: in group voting, where a male family member accompanies one or more women relatives into a polling booth; in open voting, when family groups vote together in the open; and in proxy voting, where a male family member collects ballot papers that rightfully belong to one or more women relatives and marks those papers as he sees fit.

Independent election observer reports from the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly and Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) along with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) identify family voting as occurring in Europe, most notably in former Soviet states (see part II). The practice was brought to the attention of the Council of Europe Bureau by the Congress delegation that observed the local elections in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" on 10 and 24 September 2000. Subsequently, the CLRAE's Committee on Social Cohesion, at its meeting on 23 March 2001, stressed the paramount importance in a democracy of a woman's right to an individual, free and secret vote and was of the opinion that the problem of family voting, observed in several countries throughout Europe, was unacceptable from the standpoint of women's fundamental rights.

The protection of individual voting rights is a fundamental basis for democracy and is provided for in the constitutions of member states of the Council of Europe. These constitutional provisions invariably provide for universal suffrage for all citizens over 18 years, direct and free elections to parliamentary and local assemblies, and a secret ballot. Many constitutions go further and protect women's equal political, civic, social, cultural and economic rights with men (Table 1). Electoral laws and regulations derive from these basic principles. In addition, the right of women to exercise their vote is protected by international law (Article 7, United Nations Convention on the

1. Yvonne Galligan (member of the Group of Specialists on Balanced Participation of Women and Men in Political and Public Decision-Making) contributed to the drafting of this report.

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women). All countries surveyed have at a minimum acceded to the convention and are legally bound to put its provisions into practice. This makes Article 7, guaranteeing women's political rights, enforceable in member states.

However, family voting, stemming from cultural practices that reflect the dominance of patriarchy over democracy in some member states, leads to women being disenfranchised. This problem is apparent in member states with relatively new democratic political structures, unlike in older democracies where the individual right to vote is well established. This transgression of international, constitutional and electoral law results in many female citizens being denied their right to vote. It confirms, in a very fundamental way, the observation of the Council of Europe's Group of Specialists on Equality and Democracy, that "the equal value and dignity of women and men, although already accounted for in the legislation of the majority of countries, has still not been entirely recognised *de facto*".¹ This results in a faulty functioning of democratic participation and undermines the legitimacy new pluralist democracies are striving to achieve. As the declaration adopted at the 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men observes:

The marginalisation of women in public life and democracy is a structural factor that is linked to the unequal distribution of economic and political power between women and men and to attitudinal stereotypes regarding the social roles of women and men. These stereotyped social roles limit the scope for both women and men to realise their potential.²

The extent of the problem

Family voting is a problem that to date has not been recognised in the documents of the Council of Europe on gender equality in political decision-making. The many papers dealing with this matter recognise that women had a long and difficult struggle in order to obtain the right to vote, but presume that once women gained this right, they were free to exercise their franchise. In these papers, then, discussions on gender equality focus on measures to eliminate the many other forms of discriminations against women.

1. Final report of the Group of Specialists on Equality and Democracy, EG (97) 1, p. 4.

2. Declaration on Equality between Women and Men as a Fundamental Criterion of Democracy (Istanbul 1997), MEG-4 (97) 18.

An assessment of election reports by independent observers from the Council of Europe and the OSCE reveals that between 1995 and 2001 family voting was identified as a recurring problem in several countries in Europe (see part II). The severity of the problem varied from one country to another and also from election to election: family voting was seldom observed in Poland and Bulgaria and was of minor significance in Hungary. Over time family voting appeared to decrease in Georgia, but it continued to be a widespread practice in other former Soviet states. Explanations for family voting provided to election observers focused on local attitudes and traditions, where it is deemed normal that men speak and act for women in public and political affairs. In some areas, the practice of family voting was associated with ethnically-based cultures. In other areas, the practice was identified as a post-communist phenomenon rather than an ethnic one. It appears from observer reports that the majority of observations of family voting occurred in rural communities. In many instances polling officials made little effort to stop the practice – even though it was in violation of electoral and constitutional laws. Some observers too, treated the practice of family voting as a matter of lesser importance than other infringements of the electoral process.

As a first step to addressing this problem, the constitutional position regarding the right to vote and equality between women and men in member states where this problem was noted was investigated, along with the extent of compliance with the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). A summary of the findings can be found in Table 1 below.

Given the constitutional provisions and commitment to CEDAW as summarised in Table 1, family voting has no legal basis for existence. Nonetheless, local attitudes, traditions and perceptions of women's civic roles facilitate the continued disenfranchisement of women in many post-communist countries.

The political and social explanations of the problem of family voting appear to be of some substance. In particular, there is some legitimacy in the “incomplete democracy” explanation that suggests that voting practices in new pluralist democracies are not as established as they are in consolidated democracies, and that therefore the fundamental principle of one person, one vote, based on a secret individual ballot, is not yet fully assimilated into electoral practices.

Table 1: Constitutional provisions for equality and the right to vote in certain member states of the Council of Europe, and implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)

Member state	Constitution	CEDAW
Albania	Art. 1: Free elections Art. 3: Protection of human rights Art. 18: Non-discrimination on named grounds (including gender) Art. 45: Right to vote, secret ballot	A. 11.5.94
Armenia	Art. 3: Elections, secret ballot Art. 4: Protection human rights Art. 16: Equality before the law (general)	A. 13.9.93
Azerbaijan	Art. 2: Elections, secret ballot Art. 25: Equality between women and men Art. 54: Right to participate in political life Art. 55: Right to participate in state governing Art. 56: Citizens right to vote	A. 10.7.95
Bosnia and Herzegovina	Art. 1: Free, democratic elections Art. 2: Human rights and non-discrimination on named grounds (incl. sex)	D. 1.9.1993
Bulgaria	Art. 6: Non-discrimination on named grounds (incl. sex) Art. 10: Elections, secret ballot Art. 42: Citizens right to vote	C. 8.2.82
Croatia	Art. 14: Equal rights (named groups) Art. 45: Right to vote, secret ballot	D. 9.9.92
Estonia	Art. 12: Non-discrimination on named grounds (incl. sex) Art. 56: Citizens right to vote Art. 57: Voting age Art. 60: Parliamentary elections, secret ballot Art. 156: Elections for local government, secret ballot	A. 21.10.91
Georgia	Art. 7: Protection human rights (general) Art. 14: Equality before the law, named grounds (incl. sex) Art. 28: Right to vote Art. 49: Parliamentary elections, secret ballot	A. 26.10.94
Hungary	Art. 8: Protection human rights (general) Art. 56: Equality between men and women Art. 66: Equality between women and men Art. 70: Elections, right to vote Art. 70A: Non-discrimination, named grounds (including gender); penalty for discrimination; fair opportunities Art. 71: Secret ballot	C. 22.12.80

Women's individual voting rights – a democratic requirement

Latvia	Art. 6: Parliamentary elections, secret ballot Art. 8: Voting age Arts. 89-91: Protection rights (general)	A. 14.4.92
Lithuania	Art. 29: Equality, named protections (incl. sex) Art. 34: Citizens right to vote Art. 55: Secret ballot for national parliament Art. 119: Secret ballot for local government	A. 18.1.94
Moldova	Art. 2: Popular sovereignty Art. 4: Protection human rights Art. 16: Equality before the law, named grounds (including sex) Art. 38: Secret ballot, right to vote	A. 1.7.94
Poland	Art. 32: Equality before the law (general) Art. 33: Equal rights of men and women; equal opportunities between men and women, including holding office Art. 62: Right to vote Art. 96: Secret ballot for parliamentary elections Art. 97: secret ballot for Senate elections Art. 169: Secret ballot for local elections	B. 30.7.80
Romania	Art. 4: Non-discrimination on named grounds (incl. sex) Art. 16: Equality before the law Art. 34: Right to vote Art. 59: Secret ballot Art. 120: local government elections	B. 7.1.82
Russian Federation	Art. 2: Protection of human rights Art. 19: Equality of rights, named grounds (incl. sex); equal rights and opportunities between women and men Art. 32: Right to elect and be elected to governance bodies Art. 81: Secret ballot for presidential elections Art. 96: Elections to the Duma	C. 23.1.81
Slovak Republic	Art. 11: International treaties on human rights paramount Art. 12: Equality; guarantee of rights of named categories (incl. sex) Art. 30: Secret ballot and equal right to vote	D. 28.5.93
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	Art. 8: Recognition of citizens' rights Art. 9: Equality before the law, named grounds (incl. sex) Art. 22: Right to vote; secret ballot	D. 18.1.94
Ukraine	Art. 3: Guarantee of human rights Art. 21: Equality (general) Art. 24: Non-discrimination, named grounds (incl. sex); equal opportunities between women and men Art. 70: Right to vote Art. 71: Secret ballot	C. 12.3.81

For CEDAW: A= Accession; B = Declarations/reservations; C= Reservations subsequently withdrawn; D= Succession.

Sources: www.psr.keele.ac.uk/const.htm, consulted on 2 December 2001; www.un.org/women-watch consulted on 4 Dec 2001.

The second explanation, offered in some cases, suggests that women are less literate than men, and therefore need to be assisted in casting their vote. This explanation belies a more fundamental perception of women's social role, namely that political and public activities are the preserve of men. To test this explanation fully would require a considerable amount of detailed country-specific data, disaggregated according to region and ethnic background, and is beyond the scope of this study. Nonetheless, an examination of macro-level gender-related indicators seems to suggest that overall, while women are less economically, politically and socially privileged than men, they are present in the workplace and in decision-making, and are, in general, as literate as men (Table 2). With the exception of Moldova, women gained the right to vote in the early or mid-20th century. Women are present in a decision-making capacity in politics and economic life, providing role models and claiming a public space. While women's earning power is only between one-half and two-thirds that of men, at least one-half of all women of working age participate in paid employment. In addition, with the exception of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and, to a lesser extent, Romania, women's literacy levels are quite similar to those of men.

Thus, the indicators in Table 2 reinforce the perception that family voting is a problem in specific areas and possibly among particular ethnic groups in Europe where the socio-economic profile of women may not be as advanced as that portrayed in the table. Therefore, any initiatives to tackle the problem must be based on country-specific research that identifies the root cause of family voting and the particular geographical and social locations in which it is a problem.

Addressing the problem

Family voting is a difficult and sensitive issue. It requires attention from a number of different sources including the Council of Europe, individual member states, democracy-building non-governmental organisations and election-training providers. An issue in the tackling of this problem is the difficulty in independent monitoring of elections in Council of Europe member states to ensure that this practice is on the decline. Equally problematic in some instances is bringing governments of member states around to recognising that the problem exists within their jurisdiction. This may in part be due to the reluctance of governing authorities to admit that women are victims of prejudices and stereotypes that restrict them to a subordinate citizenship,

Table 2: Political, educational and economic inequalities between women and men, 2000

Member state	Women's right to vote	Female legislators	Female legislators, senior officials and managers (% of total)	Female labour force in %	Female earned income as a percentage of male earned income	Adult illiteracy rate in %	
						Men	Women
Albania	1920	6	–	41	–	9	23
Armenia	1921	3	–	48	–	1	3
Azerbaijan	1921	11	–	43	–	–	–
Bosnia and Herzegovina	1949	7	–	38	–	2	12
Bulgaria	1944	26	–	48	–	1	2
Croatia	1945	21	26	44	55	1	3
Estonia	1918	18	35	49	63	–	–
Georgia	1918, 1921	7	–	47	–	–	–
Hungary	1918	8	34	45	57	1	1
Latvia	1918	17	39	50	65	0	0
Lithuania	1921	11	39	48	67	0	1
Moldova	1978, 1993	13	–	49	–	1	2
Poland	1918	20	34	46	61	0	0
Romania	1929, 1946	11	26	44	58	1	3
Russian Federation	1918	8	37	49	63	0	1
Slovak Republic	1920	13	32	48	65	–	–
“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”	1946	7	–	42	–	–	–
Ukraine	1919	8	38	49	54	0	1

Note: – means that the information was not available.

Source: UN Human Development Indicators in UN Human Development Report 2001 at www.undp.org/hdr2001, consulted 12 December 2001; Inter-Parliamentary Union database for women in parliament at www.ipu.org, consulted 12 December 2001; World Bank statistics at www.gendstats.worldbank.org.

with ready explanations of “cultural exceptions” hiding a serious manifestation of unfair treatment. However, women’s individual right to vote, freely and in secret, must be accepted in all democratic societies, and a failure to do so is a failure for democratic electoral practices and a diminution of a government’s (national, regional or local) democratic legitimacy. As the United Nations Beijing Platform for Action notes:¹

The empowerment and autonomy of women and the improvement of women’s social, economic and political status is essential for the achievement of both transparent and accountable government and administration and sustainable development in all areas of life ... without the active participation of women and the incorporation of women’s perspective at all levels of decision-making, the goals of equality, development and peace cannot be achieved.

In the light of the foregoing, the following recommendations for eliminating the practice of family voting are offered for consideration.

Council of Europe

The Council of Europe is in a strong position to advocate the upholding of the highest standards of democratic electoral practices in member states, and can do so by means of a range of initiatives designed to support institutional and individual democratic capacity, such as described in the following:

1. Working through its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, the Council of Europe can encourage the twinning of local and regional governments across member states as, *inter alia*, a means of supporting best democratic electoral practices. Twinning could also facilitate bringing together women from similar ethnic, religious or cultural backgrounds to share experiences of the electoral process and to engage in an informal process of awareness-raising on women’s rights as political citizens.
2. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe could draw attention to the inappropriateness of the practice of family voting in its ongoing work on the participation of women and men in politics and public life.
3. Working in co-operation with the Assembly and the Congress, the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) could bring forward a resolution to the Committee of Ministers seeking to uphold,

1. Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action adopted by the United Nations 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 4-15 September 1995), p. 109.

enforce and support best practices in voting behaviour and enforcement of electoral law in the democratic electoral process in member states.

4. Working in co-operation with the Assembly and CLRAE, the CDEG could commission research on best practice and effective strategies regarding awareness-raising programmes on women's rights as political citizens.

5. The CLRAE's Committee on Social Cohesion could alert the other relevant statutory committees of the Congress to this practice and develop with them a concerted programme of action for the elimination of family voting, involving election observers, democracy-building organisations and women's NGOs.

6. Through appropriate channels (such as the CLRAE), the Council of Europe could support the activities of democracy-building NGOs and women's organisations in awareness raising of women's rights as political citizens at local level, including their right to vote.

7. The significance of family voting as a disenfranchisement of women and a form of electoral fraud should be emphasised in election observer training and briefings carried out by the Council of Europe.

8. Giving effect to the declaration agreed at the 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men (Istanbul 1997), and especially to the commitment to "ensure that the realisation of equality between women and men is a part of the monitoring of member States' fulfilment of their democratic obligations."

9. Widespread dissemination of Council of Europe reports on good practices and strategies for achieving gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making. This could be accompanied by seminars on women's political rights organised in co-operation with local women's NGOs and democracy-building agencies.

10. Encourage national delegations to refer the problem of family voting to their parliamentary committees on women's rights and to their ministries with responsibility for electoral law and for women's rights.

11. Bring the problem of family voting to the attention of European review meetings of the UN Beijing Platform for Action.

1. See *Going for gender balance*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2002.

Member states

Member states are already constitutionally and legally committed to upholding democratic electoral practices, including the equal voting rights of women and men. Their attention now needs to be directed towards the implementation of the following commitments.

1. The electoral law to contain a clause holding election officials legally liable for failure to uphold democratic voting practices. Electoral commission officials should be aware of the risk of severe sanction if fraud is discovered in a polling station for which they are responsible. This sanction should be enforced for family voting as well as for other infringements of the electoral law.
2. Election officials should be fully trained in the conduct of a democratic poll, with the importance of individual voting and the secrecy of the ballot emphasised, and a zero tolerance of practices that diverge from these principles.
3. Election officials should have adequate infrastructural and personnel support to enable them carry out their duties in accordance with best democratic practices.
4. Electoral commission and election officials should rigorously enforce democratic procedures.
5. Consideration should be given to having non-locals officiate elections in regions where family voting is more likely to occur (for example rural areas).
6. Complaints procedures should be accessible, easily understood and swiftly addressed, incorporating an effective investigative procedure.
7. Public information campaigns should be conducted in advance of elections that emphasise the importance of the individual right to vote and family voting as an unacceptable and illegal practice. These could take the form of targeted women's rights education that includes voting rights as well as being part of more general public education programmes on democracy. Women occupying decision-making positions could be used as role models and as champions of women's right to vote and to participate in democratic decision-making.
8. Political parties should be obliged to develop democracy education programmes, incorporating gender equality modules, in order to qualify for state funding.

9. Women's groups in political parties should be encouraged and supported to address the problem of family voting.
10. General citizenship and equality education should be provided in schools, with an emphasis on women's equal rights with men in the political, civic, social and economic spheres. These programmes should seek to address local traditions and cultural practices and perceptions that consign women and girls to a subordinate citizenship.
11. Literacy education should be a basic right for all, with equal access for women and girls of all backgrounds and identities to full educational opportunities.
12. Local and regional governments should promote awareness of women's equal political and civic rights and promote best voting practices through print and broadcast media, seminars, public campaigns. These programmes to tackle sexist attitudes and language, and adopt as a model the media awareness campaigns devised by the Stability Pact Gender Task Force.
13. Democracy-building non-governmental organisations should be supported and facilitated in their work by national, local and regional governments. In particular, they should be assisted in educating and informing the population regarding individual voting rights.
14. Ballot papers should reflect voter needs – for example dual-language ballot papers, party symbols on ballot papers – to enable women voters make individual voting decisions without recourse to assistance from others.
15. National governments should table a political statement explaining that women have an equal right to vote with men, and forbidding the denial of women's right to cast their ballot.
16. National governments should promote research that investigates the causes and extent of family voting, and on the basis of findings draw up a national programme to eliminate this practice, with timetables, targets and monitoring mechanisms.
17. NGOs should develop their activities as pressure groups working for equality in the political process, with a special focus on women's equal right to vote.
18. NGOs should initiate and/or develop activities and training programmes aimed at informing women about their civil and political rights – programmes

such as “Developing active women’s citizenship” of the Gender Task Force of the Stability Pact could be used as models.

19. NGOs should monitor elections in their localities to assess the extent of women’s participation in voting and submit a report to the electoral commission regarding the pattern of women’s participation and the extent to which women were free to cast their ballot in private.

20. Women’s NGOs should be encouraged and supported by all appropriate means to network with democracy-building NGOs to pool experience, knowledge and strategies for supporting women’s right to vote.

21. Governments (national, regional, local) should support extending the “Women can do it” political awareness-raising and grass-roots women’s political empowerment programmes devised through the Gender Task Force to regions where family voting is an issue.

Empowering women as political citizens

This study of family voting clearly shows that women are not sufficiently empowered to exercise their political rights. This situation is brought about by a combination of direct denial of their rights as women voters and women’s own lack of awareness of their rights as political citizens. In this section, a number of innovative practices are described that have the potential to enhance women’s knowledge of their rights as political citizens and empower them to exercise their democratic choice at the ballot box. They are chosen to reflect a diverse range of imaginative ways of raising women’s political consciousness and nurturing confidence in exercising their rights, and should not be seen as the only activities of this kind.

“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” and Turkey: working with rural women

One of the problems of doing gender work in societies or ethnic groups that hold to traditional practices is that women are seldom allowed to assemble with “strangers” without the presence of their men folk. In the course of investigating the problem of family voting, it became clear that this was often a major impediment to grass-roots awareness-raising activities. One NGO activist working on development and human rights issues in the Albanian community in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” described her

strategy for gaining the ear of women while discouraging men from being present. She came to realise that there was one particular issue that the men would absent themselves from in a public forum, and that issue was women's health. She used this issue as a way of gathering women together and after the health concerns were discussed, the group would turn their attention to other policy matters of practical relevance to women's lives.

This strategy was similar to that used by a woman party activist in rural Turkey during an election campaign in the 1990s. The new, pro-religious Welfare Party (founded in 1983) sought to gain electoral support, and the head of the provincial branch of the party returned to her home village in western Turkey near the city of Bursa. There, she asked a relative to organise a women's meeting when the men had gone to the coffee shops. Women from neighbouring villages also came along to the meeting, at which she campaigned for votes for her party. When the votes were counted, the Welfare Party did exceptionally well in the village and surrounding area, much to the surprise of many!¹

These two examples illustrate that there is often a need for imaginative strategies for gaining access to rural women, particularly when they live in traditional communities. The effectiveness of these strategies of access depends on a number of important considerations, the first of which is trust and an understanding of confidentiality among the group and between the group and the activist. The second consideration is that the activist is known, or familiar to, the women. The third consideration to take into account is that this is but a first step in gaining access to women who by custom and practice lead very sheltered lives. It requires the activist/NGO to have a plan that progressively empowers women to assert their political rights.

Nonetheless, this strategy, if accompanied by a public campaign on voters' rights directed towards women and men, can be a useful tool in educating women as to their political entitlements.

Bosnia and Herzegovina: "Women voters can do it"

The concept of empowering women as voters is a familiar one in the context of South-East Europe, and many countries in this region have devised a range

1. Thanks to Professor Yesim Arat, member of the Group of Specialists on Balanced Participation of Women and Men in Political and Public Decision-Making, for this information.

of strategies around this theme. The Bosnia and Herzegovina project is an ambitious one, designed to increase the participation of rural women voters in the Bosnia and Herzegovina 2002 general elections, and is intended to run from March to December. In particular, it has three stated goals:

- to increase the turnout and decrease the number of spoiled ballots of rural women voters while also checking women's voter registration;
- to increase awareness in rural areas of the secrecy of the ballot, and diminish the problem of family voting;
- to increase understanding in rural areas of the new Election Law in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Designed by the Stability Pact Gender Task Force, the project addresses the serious reality of rural women's lack of awareness of the voting process and of their new role in democratic elections, hence the prevalence of family voting. This initiative is undertaken by the Gender Task Force and a coalition of women's politically aware NGOs and will empower local women from forty communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Fieldworkers will also research women's voter registration in villages while enabling voter awareness meetings to take place in these villages. Women will be informed of the new Election Law, and given basic information on where their polling station is located and on how to fill in a ballot paper. Where possible, local women municipal councillors will be invited to join and meet their women constituents, while rural women will get additional opportunities to meet and interact. This project calls for a high level of co-ordination. It will be directed by a national project board of twenty persons. The Gender Task Force Regional Centre in Zagreb will carry out overall supervision, monitoring and evaluation of the project. The Gender Task Force Bosnia and Herzegovina will carry out the implementation through local partners, under the direction of the project board.

The "Women can do it" technique, developed in Norway, is a large-scale training tool for women politicians but also works as a pre-electoral awareness-raising technique. In this approach, a few trainer/activists are educated for the work, and they train other trainers and activists to be aware of the potential of women in politics and to develop their skills. An unexpected side effect has been that many of the trainers have themselves become political candidates. The example of Croatia below illustrates the potential of this strategy.

Croatia: “Women can do it” initiatives

In 1997 five Croatian women did “Women can do it” training in Budapest and brought their ideas home to start training Croatian women. Each year since then more trainers have been trained and local training meetings have expanded, reaching small groups of women in many localities. Each trainer joins with another to agree to organise up to three local training events in their own region. In the lead into the 2001 local elections, some eighty separate local one-day training sessions gave women a basic knowledge about gender equality and the need for more women in politics. Many of the local training actions were supported by male politicians and mayors.

In addition to the “Women can do it” training, other activities were organised. Women’s groups such as “BaBe” (“Be activated, be emancipated”) and the Centre for Women’s Studies organised seminars and workshops to train women in debating techniques, public appearance and public speaking. These activities were supported by an advertising campaign encouraging voters to vote for women, and which used special shopping bags, badges, posters, leaflets and television spots. The gadgets were distributed through a bus tour in twenty-three cities in twelve days, accompanied by a band, which helped to increase media attention. The combined efforts worked: the local elections saw an increase in women at council level from 4% to 20%. A large proportion of the elected women had attended the “Women can do it” training sessions.

The advantage of a programme such as “Women can do it” is that it empowers women to become active political citizens – through encouraging them to support women candidates or providing them with the skills needed for representative office. It also raises general expectations among women that they have an equal right to partake in political life with men. This knowledge, in the longer term, can diminish the practice of family voting. In the meantime, other measures can be taken to encourage women to develop a sense of their political rights and entitlements.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia: “Go out and be active”

A wide variety of actions to foster awareness raising among women were engaged in to raise the participation of women as voters in 2000, leading up to the elections in September and December. “Go out and be active” (Goba) aimed to address women as a specific group and empower them to overcome

political apathy. It lasted five months and was implemented by a wide coalition of women's groups and other NGOs, independent of the political parties. The activities consisted mainly of advertising campaigns with billboards, stickers, leaflets, buttons, promotional materials such as hats, bags and t-shirts, radio jingles, press releases and a website. Direct actions, concentrated in cities, were highly imaginative and attracted considerable media attention. These included hanging a laundry-line across Belgrade's main square with posters and leaflets from all the participating women's groups. Happenings and performances were also organised in other cities and the campaign was among the first to get their posters up after the elections were announced. As a result of these efforts, the female turn-out increased to equal that of men.

II. REPORTED EXAMPLES OF FAMILY VOTING

The following are excerpts from reports on family voting practices as observed by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE), the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe.

Albania

Parliamentary elections, 24 June-19 August 2001
OSCE/ODIHR

The principle of equality between men and women is provided in Article 18 of the Albanian Constitution: “all are equal before the law”, and “no one may be discriminated against for reasons such as gender ...” According to a report on gender equality issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Albania’s legislation foresees the concept of equality between women and men, but not yet the concept of equal opportunities. The system does not take into account that if women are to achieve equal opportunities, they require special measures. As of yet, no affirmative action measure to accelerate equality has been introduced.

Although very active at the grass-roots level in Albanian politics, and guaranteed a percentage of prominent internal positions by some political parties, women generally face difficulties in being selected as candidates and reaching leading positions in political parties. Only 78 of the 1 114 candidates (7%) standing for election in the single-member zones and 120 of 823 candidates (15%) in the proportional lists were women, with even fewer in positions high enough on the list to stand a reasonable chance to be elected. Only the Liberal Alternate Party placed a woman at the top of its party list. Women were also underrepresented in the administrative structures for the elections. None of the full Central Electoral Commission (CEC) members are women and only 7% of Zone Electoral Commissions (ZEC) members and 8% of members of the Voting Centre Commissions (VCC) visited by international observers on 24 June were women. The electoral code does not provide for positive discrimination in favour of women.

However, nearly all political parties and coalitions included references to gender related concerns in their political programmes and several organised

election events targeted specifically at women voters. Some of these events were reported in national newspapers. The public broadcaster also targeted women voters with a number of special programmes featuring prominent women politicians.

The election results in the single-member zones showed that only seven women won seats. One additional seat was awarded to a woman when the “compensatory” mandates were allocated. The new parliament will therefore include eight women (5.71%), compared to eleven in the slightly larger parliament of 1997, a figure unrepresentative of their actual strength in Albanian society.

Recommendations – participation of women in the electoral process

1. Political parties should consider measures to encourage greater participation of women in elections. This should include greater transparency in candidate selection; specific measures to increase numbers of women candidates in higher positions on lists; and increasing numbers of women in central and local committees.
2. Training of Voting Centre Commission members should be undertaken to emphasize that group voting should not be permitted. Voter education programmes should explain to women the importance of making a personal choice when casting their vote.

Local government elections (1 and 15 November 2000)
OSCE/ODIHR

Generally most members of VCCs performed their tasks well and in a cooperative spirit, enabling voters to cast their ballots freely throughout the day. However, the lack of training received by VCCs as a result of their late establishment was clear on election day. Copies of the electoral code and training manual were delivered together with the electoral material, and VCC members had to learn on the spot how to run the voting centre. Observers reported that VCCs often did not properly follow the procedures for inking voters and allowed widespread family voting according to local tradition.

*Report on local government elections in Albania, 1 and 15 October 2000
CLRAE, CG/CP (7) 13 rev.*

First round

46. The following general irregularities were observed on election day:

- “Family voting” was noted in the majority of centres observed, contradicting the principle of secret vote. Voting Centre Commission chairs were often reluctant to intervene on this issue, referring to “cultural traditions”.

Second round

73. Another general issue of concern for the Congress delegation was the frequently observed “family voting” which consists of wife and husband or father and children going together into the voting booth and filling in the ballots jointly. This certainly is contrary to the idea of secrecy of vote and it furthermore hampers the individual voting right of many women and young people.

74. When asked about this, the voting centre committees frequently do not react because they feel it is a cultural tradition or they indicate that many of the wives or young people do not know how to read or write. The latter idea does not seem to be very credible and it should at any rate be noted in the minutes of the VCCs which is not the case. It would therefore be of particular importance to educate both VCCs and voters on this particular issue.

*Referendum on the Constitution (22 November 1998)
OSCE/ODIHR*

There was also evidence of heads of family signing for the whole family. Moreover, family or group voting is still common and occurred in almost 30% of polling stations observed. Proxy voting and open voting occurred in about 2% of polling stations observed.

*Report on observation of the early local by-elections in Albania (sixteen localities) 21 June 1998 and (2nd round) 28 June 1998
CLRAE, CG/BUR (5) 61*

Quite often, in a large number of polling stations, more than one person entered the booths at the same time: sometimes accompanied elderly people,

sometimes couples or fathers and daughters. Even if the issue of “culture” is to be taken into account, attempts should be made gradually to change mind-sets to ensure that each voter is truly entitled to individual secret vote.

Parliamentary election, 29 June-6 July 1997
OSCE/ODIHR

In areas where there were difficulties, the majority of the problems were unstamped or unsigned ballots, family voting and ballot-box seals not properly affixed. These cannot be considered as serious violations. It was only in a small percentage of cases that difficulties could be described as acute.

Information report on the parliamentary elections in Albania (29 June and 6 July 1997)
Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 7902, Addendum I, 8 September 1997

109. Particular guidance and encouragement must be given to the youth, education and culture. Women in Albania are faced with many problems and are particularly vulnerable to all kinds of exploitation.

Observations of the local elections in Albania, 20 and 27 October 1996
CLRAE, CG/BUR (3) 52 rev.

41. Other irregularities observed were on the whole of much less serious nature and have not had any significant consequences on the outcome. They involved ... husbands and wives voting together ... occurring mostly in small villages.

Parliamentary election, 26 May and 2 June 1996
OSCE/ODIHR

Several teams reported people voting with several ballot papers and in many cases family voting was a rule and not an exception. Family voting can to some extent be understood in countries with short voting traditions. It could under no circumstances be accepted when polling officials issue several ballot papers to one single voter, as observed frequently on election day.

Armenia

Parliamentary election, 30 May 1999
OSCE/ODIHR

Family/collective voting was reported in 17% of observations.

Progress Report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee – Information report on the presidential elections in Armenia (16 and 30 March 1998)

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8058 Addendum IV, 20 April 1998

21. The main irregularities witnessed were the following:

- it was observed and alleged that uniformed and plain-clothes secret police were present inside the polling stations, who were trying to indirectly influence voters, and whose presence was intimidating to them;
- countless cases of collective “family” voting, a common practice in the Soviet era and its vestige ...

Second round

32. Irregularities witnessed were, essentially, a repetition of flaws carried over from round one. Once again, there were numerous instances of family voting and, at times, overcrowding of some of the polling stations, which made controlling the ballot boxes a not-too-easy task. In addition, some polling stations were not properly marked (lack of national flags at the entrance), which, seemingly, had no effect on the local population who apparently knew well where the stations were located. The chair qualified these irregularities as minor and not capable of having an impact on the outcome of the vote.

Presidential election, 22 September 1996
OSCE/ODIHR

Observers were specifically asked to look out for any signs of multiple voting (family voting) at the polling stations. Although many observers reported that the PEC chairman had said that some voters had attempted to vote for other family members, in only 3% of polling stations visited was it actually witnessed. Very few polling stations (2.6%) allowed voters to vote without some form of recognised photo identification.

Azerbaijan

*Parliamentary elections, 5 November 2000 and 7 January 2001
OSCE/ODIHR*

Observers reported numerous instances of voting outside the voting booth and at times PEC members and other persons intruded on voter's privacy or otherwise attempted to see how voters had voted. A remarkably high number of report forms (12.3 %) indicated that some voters were showing pre-marked ballots to persons before depositing them in the ballot box. Men were frequently voting on behalf of their spouses and sometimes for the entire family. On other occasions, voters presented multiple passports and received multiple ballots.

*Report on local elections in Azerbaijan held on 12 December 1999
CLRAE, CG/Bur (6) 184*

[A] number of serious irregularities were observed:

- unauthorised persons were present in the polling stations and behaved obtrusively with the work of the election officials and voters;
- a mismatch between signatures registered on the voting list and votes found in the ballot box;
- ballot stuffing;
- attempts to “mobilise” voting by PEC chairmen who seemed to think that such action was commendable;
- unauthorised use of the mobile voting box;
- poor management of unused ballot papers;
- some local observers had their activities hampered;
- addition of extra voters on the official list during the day of the election;
- polling stations were often not opened in time;
- electoral propaganda was displayed inside the polling stations;
- ballot paper manipulations during the polling;
- difficulties in the counting procedures;
- family voting;
- uncontrolled voting boxes.

*Parliamentary election and constitutional referendum, 12 November 1995
OSCE/ODIHR*

Many heads of families, especially in the countryside, considered it their prerogative to vote for their wives and children, and, admittedly, family voting is a tradition in Azerbaijan.

Nevertheless, it is a violation of the electoral law, and in some instances, people voted for neighbours as well. In one case in the south of the country, an observer saw a man present twenty passports and receive as many ballots. Moreover, family voting is not merely a cultural phenomenon; it also has important political implications. The official acceptance of widespread multiple voting on election day starkly contrasted with the electoral authorities' strict adherence to the letter of the law during the election campaign, when they rejected signatures on the grounds that one person had signed for several family members. In sum, multiple voting justified the Central Electoral Commission's exclusion of candidates and parties, yet was exploited to ensure that the election met the turnout requirements to be valid.

Bosnia and Herzegovina

*Report on the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 11 November 2000
CLRAE, CG/BUR (5) 54 rev.*

[T]he CLRAE delegation observed some shortcomings, including confusions in the voters lists in difficulties for some voters to find the right polling station. The use of the ballot boxes was not uniform: in some polling stations the same box was used for the different types of ballots, whilst in others there were separate boxes. As in many other countries of the region, man and wife were often observed entering the voting booth together.

Observation of elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 12 and 13 September 1998

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8216, 2 October 1998

26. Apart from the family vote, seen above all in rural areas, all of the observers had witnessed problems caused by the absence of the electoral rolls in a great many polling stations when they opened. In certain polling stations it had not been possible to vote until late in the morning or even in the afternoon, and in some cases it was not even possible to vote at all on the first day. This was all the more deplorable in that these were mainly polling stations for

refugees, who had made considerable efforts to be able to vote. Furthermore, the same problems had already arisen in these same polling stations in the 1996 and 1997 elections. It should also be noted that many people were no longer on the electoral rolls of their constituencies even though they had not changed their addresses in the past two years. Some people claimed that although they had registered several times they still did not appear on the lists and for some the polling station to which they belonged had been changed since the previous elections. In some polling stations there were too many voters in comparison with others. The ODIHR accordingly changed the voters from one polling station to another at the last minute which caused great confusion. It was claimed that this was a computer problem. This does not give a good impression of the efficiency of the preparation of the elections.

Observation of regional and local elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina – 12 and 13 September 1998
CLRAE, CG/BUR (5) 54 rev.

There was a noticeable drop in cases where families entered the voting booths together.

National Assembly election in Republika Srpska, 22 and 23 November 1997
OSCE/ODIHR

Some 30% of observers noted one or more instances of family voting – more than one person in the booth at the same time – during the two days. Whilst this problem is mainly due to family members wishing to vote together, it is not satisfactory to dismiss this practice as a “local tradition”. Such a practice has been discouraged in other similar environments and could be here, as it does compromise the principle of a secret ballot and should not be permitted in the future.

Report on the observation of parliamentary elections in the Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina) 22 and 23 November 1999
CLRAE, CG/BUR (4) 147

The overall impression of the members of the CLRAE is that an election highlights a number of local attitudes and traditions.

The warmth of relations between the observers and supervisors, the celebratory aspect of this civic event and above all the tradition of voting as a family or as a couple should not be overlooked. As far as the last aspect is concerned,

the members of the delegation believe that it may be due to the rate of illiteracy and the concept of head of the family but that this tradition should in no way be considered to be family voting as prohibited by the Rules and Regulations.

Information report on the municipal elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina (13 and 14 September 1997)

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 7902 Addendum II, 22 September 1997

22. The specific conditions under which the elections took place resulted in an extremely complex voting procedure, particularly for the absentee and tendered ballot voting. Effective remedies to ensure simplification and greater transparency as well as allow for better planning and anticipation of difficulties should be found before the next elections take place. The secrecy of tendered ballots was a legitimate concern. Rules for family voting also need to be better defined.

Bulgaria

Parliamentary elections, 17 June 2001

OSCE/ODIHR

Group and proxy voting was very low, at 1.7% and 0.8%, respectively. In only four cases did international observers note voters not using the booth, or 0.6% of all observations. In the majority of cases, disabled voters were assisted according to the rules.

Ad hoc Committee for the Observation of the Parliamentary Elections in Bulgaria

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 9134, 25 June 2001

Despite the complex voting system in Bulgaria, where voters select from different colour coded ballots to cast their vote, relatively few invalid votes were cast, which underlines the level of voter education in Bulgaria. The committee members noted that the parties using similar names to the Coalition National Movement Simeon II, also used similar colour schemes on their ballots, potentially confusing voters. Only very few instances of family, group or proxy voting were recorded by the international observers.

Croatia

Local government elections, 20 May 2001

OSCE/ODIHR

Family/group voting was permitted in many areas, with 10.3% of reports noting at least one occurrence, and a further 10% of forms noting it had happened between two and twenty times. It is clear that this practice is common in many areas and voting commissions made little or no attempt to address it.

Ad hoc Committee to Observe the Parliamentary Elections in Croatia (3 January 2000)

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8624, 24 January 2000

12. A number of observers referred to the problem of the secret ballot and the minority vote. They noted that sometimes there were no voting booths or envelopes. The balloting was hardly secret, given the different colour of the ballot papers and the existence of separate voter registers for minorities. Family voting was occasionally observed. In the sensitive regions, serious – albeit isolated – incidents were reported, such as the intimidation of voters, fights in front of polling stations or, on rare occasions, a police presence within the polling station.

Estonia

Parliamentary elections, 7 March 1999

OSCE/ODIHR

Instances of group voting were mentioned by 28% of observers, and a further 9% indicated that they saw instances of open voting (for example not in the polling booth).

Georgia

Ad hoc Committee to Observe the Presidential Elections in Georgia (9 April 2000)

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8742, 16 May 2000

[Q]uite a few instances of violations of the electoral process and irregularities were reported and witnessed by members of the committee, family voting being the least of our concerns.

Parliamentary election, 31 October and 14 November 1999
OSCE/ODIHR

“Group” or “family” voting was reported in 21% of observations.

Ad hoc Committee to Observe the Parliamentary Elections in Georgia (31 October 1999)
Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8605, 22 December 1999

23. Family voting was one of the most common violations of the Electoral Law in some areas. At several polling stations the observers saw family members entering the booths together or one member of the family voting for another member. In some cases, the polling station officials allowed it, taking into account the age of the voter and physical difficulties to vote. This violation could be explained by the fact that in Soviet times people had been allowed to vote for members of their family who were ill or absent at the time of the elections.

It must be emphasised that some observers did not see any examples of this practice, and that many polling station officials and local observers were especially vigilant in this regard.

Hungary

Parliamentary election, 10 and 24 May 1998
OSCE/ODIHR

As stated above, the general voting process was administered in a very professional manner. However, there were three aspects of the process, two of which are highlighted in the table below, which do warrant comment.

	% total first round	% total of second round
Group voting	16.00%	17.60%
Open voting	15.00%	9.87%

Group voting: people being in the polling booth together

Open voting: people filling in their ballot papers in the open, not in a polling booth

Both these instances require some clarification. With regard to group voting, observers never felt that voters were under undue pressure. In most instances it was obvious that the voters were very comfortable being together, often they were a husband and wife, or elderly friends. In some instances it was clear that a person in fact required assistance but had been too embarrassed to state so to the Polling Station Committee. It was notable that this practice was more frequent in rural areas. However, such a practice is definitely against the Election Law, and can breach the secrecy of a person's vote.

Open voting, on the contrary, is not against the law in Hungary. Article 68.1, of Act 100 (1997), states: "Voters may not be obligated to use polling booths".

Municipal elections in Hungary, 30 September 1990
CLRAE, CPL/P (25) 18

The CLRAE delegation noticed a number of minor shortcomings, for example couples and occasionally whole families voting together in one booth, voting outside of the booth and too many people in the voting stations.

Latvia

Observation of parliamentary elections in Latvia (3 October 1998)
Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8255, 3 November 1998

41. Very few irregularities were noted by our observers. It should perhaps be mentioned that many of the voters did not go into the polling booths; it has to be said, though, that there were not enough of these in some of the polling stations where there was an unexpectedly large turnout, since numbers were difficult to foresee as voters could vote in any of the country's polling stations. There were also many cases of "family voting".

Report of the Council of Europe (CLRAE)
Observer delegation to the local (and regional) elections in Latvia – 29 May 1994
CLRAE, CG/BUR (1) 13

Voting booths happened to be too small in the majority of polling stations in Riga, owing to the very large size of the ballot paper. At some hours of peak attendance, voters filled in their ballot papers on tables outside the voting booths. This was always tolerated by the chairpersons of electoral commissions, as was the case of families entering the voting booth together.

Lithuania

*Parliamentary election, 20 October and 10 November 1996
OSCE/ODIHR*

The marking of ballots in the polling booths by several voters at the same time, generally family members, is another very common deviation from Article 65, section 1 of the Election Law. This was observed in 102 polling stations.

In this case, however, the current Election Law is not clear. In section 6 of Article 65, the official English translation states that “The voter who because of his physical disability is unable to mark the ballot himself, cast it in the ballot box, may invite another person (with the exception of the chairperson of the committee or its members, or an election observer) to carry out these actions in his place.”

The original Lithuanian text employs a wider term than “physical disability”, closer to “physical impairment”. Moreover, no provisions are made for the electoral committee to ask for any sort of proof of “physical impairment” from the voter, or even to have the right to grant permission to such a voter to enter the polling booth accompanied by another person.

As a result of this, the electoral committees did not wish to intervene for fear of confrontation with voters.

This vague and imprecise definition of “physical impairment” in the polling stations stands in stark contrast to the detailed provisions for home voting as a part of postal voting Article 66, section 7 which clearly demands written confirmation of disability from the town or regional social guardianship and care institutions for the voter to be allowed to vote at home.

Moldova

*Report by the CLRAE observation delegation of the local elections in the Taraclia Judet (Moldova) held on 23 January 2000
CLRAE, CG/BUR (6) 131 confidential*

Nevertheless, the CLARE delegation observes a number of irregularities. These were as follows:

- family voting;
- contradictory interpretations of electoral regulations in some polling stations;

- non-availability of ballot papers in the Moldavian language in some polling stations where Moldavian-speaking voters were registered;
- voting without identification papers by some old-aged persons, who were nonetheless recognised by the members of polling commissions;
- intrusive behaviour of domestic observers with the work of the precinct electoral commissions and the voters at some polling stations;
- agitation placards still on the walls in some places on polling day.

It should be pointed out that such irregularities as family voting or ballots handed over to some people without identification papers but known to the members of a polling commission were rather due to local cultural features and not aimed at influencing the vote. There was also a high proportion of people registered on supplementary lists which was in the main the result of high mobility of the population, in particularly the young.

Report of the mission of a CLRAE delegation to the Republic of Moldova to monitor the local and regional elections of 23 May 1999
CLRAE, CG/BUR (6) 16

Polling booths being used by more than one person at a time, particularly in rural areas.

Parliamentary election, 22 March 1998
OSCE/ODIHR

Family voting is still a common practise, in particular in the villages. In total more than 30% polling station observations included family voting and 5.5% indicated open voting. The arrangements for assisting voters that needed assistance was violated in a large number of cases observed.

Progress report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee – Information report on the parliamentary elections in Moldova (Chisinau, 19-24 March 1998)
Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8058, Addendum II

While the *ad hoc* committee observed that the elections had been organised in an entirely professional manner, it identified areas in which improvements could be made, such as:

- the form of the ballot papers;
- procedure in stamping ballot papers;

- intransigence of polling station officials in deciding whether a ballot was valid or not;
- training of observers at polling stations;
- presence of unauthorised people at the counting of votes;
- practice of family voting.

*Presidential election, 17 November and 1 December 1996
OSCE/ODIHR*

In the second round approximately 40% of the observer reports indicated instances of family voting. This high figure was recorded despite an effort by the Central Electoral Commission (CEC) to instruct the polling station commissions to reduce family voting.

*Report on the monitoring by a CLRAE delegation of the first local elections in the Republic of Moldova, held on 16 April 1995
CLRAE, CG/CP (2) 8*

On the other hand, the most significant weaknesses were: “... the inhabitants’ widespread practice of entering the polling booth in a group (family voting)”.

*Observation of the referendum in Moldova on the status of Gagauzia
CLRAE, CG/CP (1) 48, 21 March 1995*

67. Perhaps the most important irregularity was the habit of “family voting”. A widely established practice in Soviet times, family voting meant that one family member, usually the father, would present the passports of his wife and sometimes of other family members and cast the votes for them. This practice was expressly ruled out in point 22 of the Temporary Regulations – a provision, seen by the one town electoral commission chairman as specifically introduced to make the referendum more difficult for the Gagauz cause.

68. The observers found that whereas the electoral commissions, with few exceptions, resisted the habitual approach of family voting in some polling stations family signing was tolerated. On numerous occasions the observers witnessed a family approach the electoral commission, produce their passports, each member of the family receive her or his voting bulletin and then the father sign the electoral list for all family members. Votes were cast, however, personally by each individual family member. In one polling station a

sample check of the signatures showed that such family signing might amount to some 3% to 5% of all the signatures.

Poland

The municipal elections in Poland on 27 May 1990
CLRAE, CPL/P (25) 9

Certain technical points of detail were noted: the absence of accounting in connection with the number of ballot papers actually deposited in the ballot boxes, the utilisation of a voting booth by a whole family at the same time and the fact that certain electors did not use the voting booths for filling in their ballot papers.

Romania

Presidential and parliamentary election, 26 November 2000
OSCE/ODIHR

Family voting occurred in 28% of the cases and was more of a problem outside of Bucharest – in rural areas 47% and urban areas 18%. If a man and women entered the polling booth together, not only would the secrecy of the vote be compromised but one spouse could also influence the vote of the other.

Russian Federation

Presidential election, 26 March 2000
OSCE/ODIHR

Family voting, or voting together in groups, was noted in 82% of the polling stations, although observers rated these occurrences as “minor” violations in view of the fact that booths were provided and that often the voters themselves seemed not to be concerned about the secrecy of their votes. Proxy voting or voting on behalf of a person who is not present at the polling station was observed in 34% of the stations visited. Once again, observers rated these instances as “minor” violations in terms of the frequency with which they occurred at any one station during the time of visits.

Ad hoc Committee to Observe the Russian Presidential Election (26 March 2000)

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8693, 3 April 2000

Family voting is still common practice.

Ad hoc Committee to Observe the Parliamentary Elections in the Russian Federation (19 December 1999)

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8623, 24 January 2000

45. However, in the 100-odd polling stations which the members of the *ad hoc* committee visited on election day, they noted a number of irregularities which deserve due consideration by the authorities concerned:

- equipment of polling stations: many of them were too small and the number of booths was often insufficient, which entailed lack of privacy for voters in marking their ballot papers;
- family voting;
- party and candidate badges: they continue to be allowed to be displayed by observers within the polling stations;
- posters containing declared information on the assets, property and income of candidates are displayed in polling stations; this information should be private but the subject of declaration and registration in the event of election;
- mobile boxes: some of them were seen unsealed, in particular in Rostov. Furthermore the polling process with mobile boxes is far too long, due in particular to the complexity of ballot papers and the number of elections taking place at the same time (four different elections in Moscow, for instance).

Presidential election, 16 June and 3 July 1996
OSCE/ODIHR

The most substantial criticism related to the lack of secret voting and to the associated problem of “family” voting – that is one person, usually the husband, voting for another, usually the wife, or family groups voting together in the open. The key guard against intimidation of the secret ballot is clearly not understood in the Russian Federation and it is considered sufficient to have the choice whether or not to vote in secret. Observers drew attention to many examples of both practices and urged the CEC to take the lead in instructing

the local commissions to ensure secret and individual voting. In a number of polling stations voters were actively encouraged to vote outside the booths by the provision of tables and pens in the open area.

Slovak Republic

Parliamentary election, 25 and 26 September 1998
OSCE/ODIHR

Family or group voting that is more than one person in the booth at the same time, was observed in almost 20% of the polling stations. This is not in accordance with the law and representatives from the Ministry of Interior were quite surprised to hear about this relatively high number after the elections. It was said that this would be taken up when training the Polling Station Commission members for the local elections in November.

Observation of parliamentary elections in Slovakia (25 and 26 September 1998)
Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8254, 3 November 1998

32. There were, certainly, some irregularities, such as family voting and lack of clarity regarding the regulations covering the methods of applying seals to ballot boxes. However, against the general backdrop these should be considered as insignificant and having little or no impact on the result of the voting.

“The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

Report on the local elections observation mission in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”, 10 and 24 September 2000
CLRAE, CG/CP (7) 12 rev.

In certain areas of the country, the Congress delegation found a great many instances of family heads voting on behalf of all the members of the family, such as wife and children, which is clearly an infringement of individual voting rights. The delegation condemned numerous irregularities concerning multiple voting, at which certain polling station, and even electoral commission, officials connived. This finding was confirmed in the second round of voting.

While such a practice might be understandable in cases of need, such as sight or other disabilities, the delegation cannot accept that one person should determine how a whole family is to vote. Some observer teams also witnessed

ballot stuffing operations, when one person arrived with several voters' cards and lodged multiple votes. In these same polling stations, the delegation observed record turnouts (in the order of 95%) and a real plebiscite for one of the candidates.

*Presidential election, 31 October and 14 November 1999
OSCE/ODIHR*

Round 1

As in 1998, the most significant problems identified by observers were proxy voting in 9.41% of polling stations observed and group voting in 14.9%. Observers saw instances of one person arriving with multiple voter cards or the ballot box containing ballots folded together, which had clearly been inserted at the same time as a bundle.

Many instances of proxy voting in ethnic-Albanian areas represented the male head of household voting for the women members of the family. In some instances the women were present. Again, this was claimed to be “normal local practice”. Nonetheless, such practice is unacceptable as it disenfranchises the women concerned as well as opening the system to widespread abuse.

Round 2

The most significant problems observed were again voters not presenting a voter card and identification documents, and instances of proxy and family voting. The vast majority of negative observer reports were due to high instances of proxy and family voting. These negative reports were predominantly from ethnic-Albanian areas, such as Lipkovo (21), Cegrane (52), Kamenjane (55), Aracinovo (64) and Studenicani (66). The final results from these areas were also of grave concern.

An observer report from Studenicani is indicative of the type of problems experienced in these districts. The local head of the Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) visited polling stations in the area on election day, urging people to vote for the VMRO [political party] candidate. In polling station 66/2353, the DPA head shouted at the Polling Election Boards (PEB) chairman, accusing him of a low voter turnout, 20% at 4 p.m. Later, four VMRO members entered the same polling station and remained there to “supervise the voting”. As observers left, a large number of voters entered the polling station. In other polling stations in the area, widespread and repeated instances

of family and proxy voting were observed. Political party representatives on the PEBs sometimes appeared unsure of the party they were supposedly representing.

Ad hoc Committee to Observe the Presidential Elections in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (31 October and 14 November 1999) Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8604, 22 December 1999

Family voting was much less widespread than in 1998. In general terms, no tension was noted at the polling stations.

36. However, in order to ensure further improvements in the future electoral processes, the *ad hoc* committee calls on the Macedonian authorities:

- to take measures to avoid any controversies in appointing the members of the State Election Commission, as well as to adapt the modalities of appointing the members of district and polling stations election commissions to the real political situation in the moment of the elections;
- to elaborate more detailed laws governing media coverage of the elections and to grant legal status to the guidelines issued by the Broadcasting Council;
- to continue and strengthen citizens' information on electoral behaviour, putting an emphasis on the illegality of family voting;
- to carefully analyse all alleged irregularities reported and make public the results of these analyses.

*Parliamentary elections, 18 October and 1 November 1998
OSCE/ODIHR*

Round 1

Instances of group voting were reported on 382 forms out of 1 314 (29.07%). Seventy-eight out of 1 314 (5.92%) reported instances of proxy voting. One hundred and sixteen out of 1 314 (8.85%) reported instances of open voting. The main concerns of observers relate to the practices of proxy, open and particularly group voting. It was raised in the de-briefing by observers that the practice of group voting was particularly problematic, and represents a particular problem for women voters.

Observers reported that in some instances, particularly in rural areas in the west of the country, the male head of household would often vote on behalf of

female members, who were present but did not actively participate in the process. Some observers reported that proxy voting was often carried out by the male head of household without the female members being present.

Round 2

Observers were again very concerned about the high number of instances of group voting, particularly as this practice opens the door for a number of associated illegal procedures, including effective proxy voting and the virtual disenfranchisement of many women voters.

Proxy voting was also reported in District 66 in particular, where some persons were observed voting with multiple voter cards, and not “just” female family members. It was also observed that persons were collecting the voter cards of persons who had not used them thus far in the day and bringing the cards to the polling station and voting with them.

Observation of parliamentary elections in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia” (15-19 October 1998)

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8257, 3 November 1998

The observers did, however, note one or two irregularities, particularly with regard to the very widespread practice of family voting, especially in the west of the country, where the Albanian minority is dominant. In several constituencies in the Tetovo and Gostivar areas, as many as 80% to 90% of women did not vote in person, their votes being cast for them by a husband, father or brother.

Quite apart from possible cultural explanations, it should be pointed out that the ballot papers were in Macedonian (Cyrillic script) only, which is neither spoken nor read by many Macedonian Albanians. Many women are illiterate and speak only Albanian. It was thus impossible for them to exercise their voting rights properly.

Report on the mission to observe the local elections held on 17 November 1996 in “the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia”

CLRAE, CG/BUR (3) 62

All members of the polling station committees knew what they had to do, and the delegation did not note any confusion. As already mentioned, the polling booths proved to be small, and there were even too few of them, particularly

in polling stations Skopje. At peak voting times electors completed the ballot papers on tables set up outside the polling booths. The chairs of the polling station committees systematically allowed this and also permitted members of the same family to enter booths together.

Ukraine

Ad hoc Committee to Observe the Presidential Elections in Ukraine (31 October and 14 November 1999)
Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8603, 21 December 1999

There remain traditions of disregard for secrecy and of family voting. Casualness in treatment of ballot papers and ballot boxes caused many irregularities, but not on a scale to cause difficulties except in a small number of stations. It is wrong that militia personnel continue to have access to the interior of polling stations (first round).

The observation of the second round of these elections has revealed that voting day procedures according to the law were not followed as closely as they were in the first round. In the first round, observers were generally satisfied with the conduct of voting although some minor irregularities were seen. In the second round, observers saw instances of more serious violations. Observers in Lviv oblast in particular, saw voters given more than one ballot paper in a number of polling stations visited in rural areas. They also noted instances of family voting and breaches of the secrecy of the vote (second round).

Parliamentary election, 29 March 1998
OSCE/ODIHR

The observation mission is concerned over the high rate of family and open voting observed. In 59% of polling stations visited family voting was observed, and in 59% of polling stations open voting was observed. These levels are very high and all efforts should be made in future to ensure that such practices are curtailed. It is recognised that some of these instances, particularly in the larger cities, may have been due to the inadequate capacity of polling stations to deal with the number of voters assigned to them.

Progress Report of the Bureau of the Assembly and the Standing Committee – Information report on the parliamentary elections in Ukraine (29 March 1998)

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8058, Addendum III

13. The most peculiar aspects of these elections were the “family vote” (two or three people going into the cabin at the same time), which was more the rule than the exception, and the number of ballot papers available at polling stations generally exceeding that of registered voters. This practice was justified on the ground that each polling station was prepared to accommodate even those citizens who were not present in the official list.

Report of the CLRAE observation mission for the municipal and regional elections in Ukraine, 29 March 1998

CLRAE, CG/BUR (4) 132 rev.

The turnout of approximately 70% and voter affluence resulted in some delays and phenomena such as family voting and a degree of confusion, in often the restricted space of a number of polling stations and as a consequence of, what seemed in some places, to be a shortage of voting urns.

Report on the CLRAE mission to observe the municipal and regional elections in Ukraine (26 June 1994)

CLRAE, CG/BUR (1) 11

Members of the delegation saw husbands voting for their wives, and in some cases several signatures appeared beside a name on the voters list, indicating that he had received ballots for several people.

Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Report on the observation of the early parliamentary elections in Montenegro, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 22 April 2001

CLRAE, CG/CP (8) 5 Rev.

The practice of family voting was not observed to any significant extent, except in a few limited cases involving elderly persons votes.

Election to the National Assembly of the Republic of Serbia, 23 December 2000

OSCE/ODIHR

However, observers reported that some polling boards failed to check voters' ID documents consistently and the "secrecy" of the vote was imperfect. The quality of voting screens was variable with some positioned without consideration for privacy. Observers often noticed more than one person in voting booths simultaneously, mostly family members, thereby lessening the secrecy of the vote. These problems occurred mainly in rural areas.

Ad hoc Committee on the Observation of Elections to the National Assembly of Serbia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia

Parliamentary Assembly, Doc. 8934, 22 January 2001

14. In order to avoid double voting, voters had to agree to have one finger sprayed with a special ink and which could be detected by means of an ultra-violet lamp. This was the first time this system had been used and voters reacted differently to, and sometimes disputed, the test, which was used systematically, but which was perceived as being contrary to civic dignity. We also noted that family voting was a common practice, mainly for couples who, nevertheless, voted in separate booths.

Report on the elections in Serbia, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, 23 December 2000

CLRAE, CG/BUR (7) 85

Group or family voting was also noted in some cases, this being mainly limited to the vote of husband and wife.

Municipal elections in Kosovo – 28 October 2000

CLRAE, CG/BUR (7) 63

32. Family voting was observed, but was generally limited to two people. True, many people were presented as illiterate and therefore needing assistance. This was generally not noted in the reports, in spite of instructions to this effect. One case was observed, however, where the chair of the polling station remained behind the voting booth, with the authorisation of the international supervisor, to assist people purporting to be illiterate, although nobody was supposed to give such assistance to more than one person – and it was not supposed to be given by polling station staff.

*Report on the observation of local elections in Podgorica and Herceg Novi
(Montenegro, Federal Republic of Yugoslavia), 11 June 2000*

CLRAE, CG/Bur (7) 45

A few cases of family voting were observed, although this cannot be said to have influenced the election results. Election commission members were careful to limit this practice to cases where it seemed absolutely necessary (such as voters with visual impairments or disabilities).

*Parliamentary elections in the Republic of Montenegro, 31 May 1998
OSCE/ODIHR*

Did you observe instances of family voting?

Yes: 19.8%

No: 80.4%

Family voting is still a widespread practice.

*Presidential and Parliamentary election in the Republic of Serbia,
21 September and 5 October 1997*

OSCE/ODIHR

Other observations included open voting outside the polling booth (13%), more than one person in the booth (23%) and voting without appropriate ID (16%).

Appendix: Recommendation 111 (2002) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe on women’s individual voting rights – a democratic requirement¹

The Congress,

1. Recalling the declaration adopted at the 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between women and men (Istanbul 1997), and especially the commitment to “ensure that the realisation of equality between women and men is a part of the monitoring of member states’ fulfilment of their democratic obligations”;
2. Recalling the Council of Europe’s role in promoting and upholding the highest standards of democratic practice in the member states;
3. Noting that Council of Europe member states are constitutionally and legally committed to upholding democratic electoral practices, including the equal voting rights of women and men;
4. Drawing on the relevant international instruments, in particular the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1979) and the Declaration and Platform for Action adopted at the 4th World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995);
5. Recalling that the guarantee of a secret ballot, as set out in the Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Human Rights and the Copenhagen Document adopted in 1990 by the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) is an essential condition for ensuring the free expression of the opinion of the people in the choice of the legislature;
6. Having regard to the findings of the reports on election observation missions conducted by the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and the OSCE in recent years, which have highlighted the practice of family voting in some fifteen European countries;

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 6 June 2002, 3rd Sitting (see Doc. CG (9) 7, draft recommendation, presented by Mrs D. Bunyan, rapporteur).

7. Recalling the report by Mr Georges Clerfayt and Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1264 (2001) on the code of good practice in electoral matters;
8. Considering in this respect that women's individual voting rights are one of the principles of European electoral systems;
9. Affirming that the exercise of women's individual voting rights is a fundamental requirement for the functioning of democracy and should not be regarded as a secondary issue;
10. Considering that family voting is a practice which tends to deprive women, and sometimes young people, of their individual voting rights and as such amounts to a form of electoral fraud;
11. Aware that family voting is a difficult and sensitive issue for the states concerned;
12. Bearing in mind that socio-economic, cultural or local factors are sometimes used to justify the denial of individual voting rights;
13. Believing that eliminating the practice of family voting requires a concerted effort by various players – national, regional and local governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and judicial authorities;
14. Taking the view that the activities conducted by the Stability Pact Gender Task Force and the OSCE-backed activities in this area are useful in raising women's awareness of the role they can play in preventing conflict and creating stability in the region;
15. Welcoming furthermore the steps taken by the Council of Europe to encourage women's participation in public life, which necessarily includes the right to participate on an individual basis in decision-making, and first and foremost in elections;
16. Calls on the Council of Europe member states:
 - a. to strictly enforce electoral law as part of the democratic electoral process in member states and to ensure that the commitments entered into with regard to electoral rights are actually honoured;
 - b. to give particular attention, therefore, to the prevention of family voting when training electoral committees;

- c. to state publicly and make it widely known that women have the same right to vote as men and that, consequently, any denial of women's right to cast their ballot is prohibited;
- d. to conduct public information campaigns in advance of elections, emphasising the importance of the individual right to vote and the fact that family voting is an unacceptable and illegal practice. Such campaigns could take the form of targeted women's rights education, but could also be part of more general public education programmes on democracy, using women in decision-making posts as role models for participation in the democratic decision-making process;
- e. to encourage research into the causes and extent of family voting and, on the basis of the findings of this work, to draw up a national programme to eliminate such practices, with timetables, targets and monitoring mechanisms;
- f. to implement and support good practice with regard to electoral procedures;
- g. to invite the ministers responsible for electoral law and women's rights to take the appropriate measures to prevent family voting;
- h. to make the necessary arrangements to enable the following requirements to be met:
 - i. electoral legislation should contain a clause holding electoral commission officials liable for any failure to observe democratic voting practices and in particular the exercise of women's individual voting rights;
 - ii. electoral commission officials should be aware of the risk of severe sanctions if fraud is discovered in a polling station for which they are responsible. Such sanctions should be enforced for family voting as well as for other infringements of electoral law;
 - iii. electoral commission officials should be fully trained in the conduct of a democratic poll, with emphasis on the importance of individual voting and the secrecy of the ballot, and on the need for zero tolerance of practices that diverge from these principles;
 - iv. electoral commission officials should have adequate facilities and staff, to enable them to perform their duties in accordance with the best democratic practices;
 - v. electoral commissions should rigorously enforce democratic procedures;

- vi. ballot papers should be sensitive to voters' needs (for example dual-language ballot papers, party symbols on ballot papers) to enable any voter who is illiterate or insufficiently informed to have access to sufficient information to make an individual decision;
 - vii. complaints procedures need to be accessible, easily understood and swift, and should incorporate an effective investigative procedure;
 - viii. when appointing electoral commissions, consideration should be given to having non-locals officiate in regions where family voting is more likely to occur (for example rural areas);
 - i. to require political parties to develop democracy-education programmes incorporating gender equality modules in order to qualify for state funding;
 - j. to provide general citizenship and equality education in schools, with the emphasis on women's equal rights with men in the political, civic, social and economic spheres. Where appropriate, these programmes should seek to address local traditions and cultural practices and perceptions that consign women and girls to a subordinate role in society;
 - k. to recognise that literacy should be a basic right for all, with equal access for women and girls from all backgrounds to a full education;
 - l. to support and facilitate NGO activities which aim to:
 - i. promote women's education and the exercise of their fundamental rights, including individual voting rights; and
 - ii. raise men's awareness on the importance of women's participation in public life and their exercise of individual voting rights;
 - m. to encourage, by all appropriate means, women's NGOs to network with democracy-building NGOs, with a view to pooling experience, knowledge and strategies for supporting women's individual voting rights;
 - n. to support the extension of political awareness-raising schemes like the Women Can Do It campaign and the grassroots women's political empowerment programmes devised by the Stability Pact Gender Task Force in areas where family voting is an issue;
17. Calls on the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers:
- a. to develop a concerted programme of action to prevent family voting and to devise initiatives designed to help institutions and individuals to make use of democratic practices, in particular as part of the Council of Europe's integrated project Making Democratic Institutions Work;

- b.* to accordingly invite the Steering Committee for Equality between Women and Men (CDEG) to include this issue in the CDEG's work programme and in particular to:
 - i.* prepare and widely disseminate a compendium of good practices and strategies for achieving gender-balanced representation in political and social decision-making and to encourage practical preventive measures to eliminate family voting;
 - ii.* hold awareness-raising seminars on women's political rights and the exercise of their individual voting rights, in co-operation with local NGOs working for gender equality, democracy-building agencies and national, regional and local authorities. These activities could notably be conducted within the framework of the Stability Pact, the assistance programmes for Council of Europe member states and pre- or post-accession programmes for future or new member states;
 - iii.* hold regional multilateral seminars for the chairs of electoral commissions in order to promote the sharing of experience and good practice and thus encourage the introduction of training courses for trainers of national and local electoral commissions in the countries concerned;
- c.* to support the activities of NGOs specialising in democracy building and gender equality in order to improve awareness, at local level, of women's rights as active members of society, including their voting rights;
- d.* to support, in particular, local NGOs involved in election monitoring and to draw their attention to the issue of family voting;
- e.* to forward this recommendation to the 5th European Conference of Specialised Ministers to be held in Skopje on 21 and 22 June 2002 on democratisation, conflict prevention and peace-building: the perspectives and the roles of women;

18. Invites the Venice Commission to address the issue of women's individual voting rights when carrying out electoral assessments, and when drafting the code of good practice in electoral matters, in consultation with the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe;

19. Calls on the Parliamentary Assembly:

- a.* to draw attention to the inappropriateness of family voting in the work of its competent committees, in particular the Political Affairs Committee, the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights and the Committee on Equal Opportunities for Women and Men;
- b.* to hold a hearing on family voting and to commission research on best practice and effective strategies regarding awareness-raising programmes on women's rights which could be promoted within national parliaments;
- c.* to give particular attention to family voting during election observation missions and to emphasise that such practices are unacceptable in a democracy;
- d.* to bring the issue of family voting to the attention of parliamentary committees on women's rights in the Council of Europe member states concerned;

20. Calls on the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) to give particular attention to the issue of family voting when implementing its "democratisation" activities, and during its election observation missions in Europe.

Bibliography

Commission of the European Communities, “Report from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament and the Economic and Social Committee on the Implementation of Council Recommendation 96/694 of 2 Dec 1996 on the balanced participation of women and men in the decision-making process”, COM (2000) 120 final, Brussels, 3 July 2000

Council of Europe, *Group of Specialists on Equality and Democracy*, Council of Europe, Publishing, 1996

Council of Europe, 4th European Ministerial Conference on Equality between Women and Men (Istanbul, 13-14 November 1997), “Declaration on equality between women and men as a fundamental criterion of democracy”

Council of Europe, Parliamentary Assembly report on equal representation in political life, Doc. 8423, May 1999

Council of Europe, “Positive action in the field of equality between women and men”, ref. EG-S-PA (2000) 7, Directorate General of Human Rights (Division Equality between Women and Men)

Council of Europe, “Report on the local elections observation mission in ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’”, 10-24 September 2000, ref: CG/CP (7) 12 rev, Strasbourg, 13 November, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe

Council of Europe, “Situation of local democracy in ‘the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’”, ref: CPL (7) 8 Part II, Strasbourg 23-25 May 2000, Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe

Council of Europe, “Women in politics in the Council of Europe member states”, ref: EG (2000) 4, Directorate General of Human Rights (Division Equality between Women and Men)

Council of Europe, *Going for gender balance*, Council of Europe Publishing, 2002

Stability Pact Gender Task Force website, www.spgtf.org

United Nations, *Platform for Action and Beijing Declaration*, New York: United Nations, 1996

Women's individual voting rights – a democratic requirement

United Nations Economic Commission regional preparatory meeting on the 2000 Review of Implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action, 19-21 January 2000, Geneva, Agreed Conclusions

United Nations, *Human Development Report*, 2001, www.undp.org/hdr2001

Sales agents for publications of the Council of Europe Agents de vente des publications du Conseil de l'Europe

AUSTRALIA/AUSTRALIE

Hunter Publications, 58A, Gipps Street
AUS-3066 COLLINGWOOD, Victoria
Tel.: (61) 3 9417 5361
Fax: (61) 3 9419 7154
E-mail: Sales@hunter-pubs.com.au
<http://www.hunter-pubs.com.au>

BELGIUM/BELGIQUE

La Librairie européenne SA
50, avenue A. Jonnart
B-1200 BRUXELLES 20
Tel.: (32) 2 734 0281
Fax: (32) 2 735 0860
E-mail: info@libeurop.be
<http://www.libeurop.be>

Jean de Lanoy

202, avenue du Roi
B-1190 BRUXELLES
Tel.: (32) 2 538 4308
Fax: (32) 2 538 0841
E-mail: jean.de.lanoy@euronet.be
<http://www.jean-de-lanoy.be>

CANADA

Renouf Publishing Company Limited
5369 Chemin Canotek Road
CDN-OTTAWA, Ontario, K1J 9J3
Tel.: (1) 613 745 2665
Fax: (1) 613 745 7660
E-mail: order.dept@renoufbooks.com
<http://www.renoufbooks.com>

CZECH REPUBLIC/ RÉPUBLIQUE TCHÈQUE

Suweco Cz Dovož Tisku Praha
Ceskomoravska 21
CZ-18021 PRAHA 9
Tel.: (420) 2 660 35 364
Fax: (420) 2 683 30 42
E-mail: import@suweco.cz

DENMARK/DANEMARK

GAD Direct
Fiolstaede 31-33
DK-1171 COPENHAGEN K
Tel.: (45) 33 13 72 33
Fax: (45) 33 12 54 94
E-mail: info@gaddirect.dk

FINLAND/FINLANDE

Akateeminen Kirjakauppa
Keskuskatu 1, PO Box 218
FIN-00381 HELSINKI
Tel.: (358) 9 121 41
Fax: (358) 9 121 4450
E-mail: akatilaus@stockmann.fi
<http://www.akatilaus.akateeminen.com>

FRANCE

La Documentation française
(Diffusion/Vente France entière)
124, rue H. Barbusse
F-93308 AUBERVILLIERS Cedex
Tel.: (33) 01 40 15 70 00
Fax: (33) 01 40 15 68 00
E-mail: commandes.vel@ladocfrancaise.gouv.fr
<http://www.ladocfrancaise.gouv.fr>

Librairie Kléber (Vente Strasbourg)
Palais de l'Europe
F-67075 STRASBOURG Cedex
Fax: (33) 03 88 52 91 21
E-mail: librairie.kleber@coe.int

GERMANY/ALLEMAGNE

AUSTRIA/AUTRICHE
UNO Verlag
Am Hofgarten 10
D-53113 BONN
Tel.: (49) 2 28 94 90 20
Fax: (49) 2 28 94 90 222
E-mail: bestellung@uno-verlag.de
<http://www.uno-verlag.de>

GREECE/GRÈCE

Librairie Kauffmann
28, rue Stadiou
GR-ATHINAI 10564
Tel.: (30) 1 32 22 160
Fax: (30) 1 32 30 320
E-mail: ord@otenet.gr

HUNGARY/HONGRIE

Euro Info Service
Hungexpo Europa Kozpont ter 1
H-1101 BUDAPEST
Tel.: (361) 264 8270
Fax: (361) 264 8271
E-mail: euroinfo@euroinfo.hu
<http://www.euroinfo.hu>

ITALY/ITALIE

Libreria Commissionaria Sansoni
Via Duca di Calabria 1/1, CP 552
I-50125 FIRENZE
Tel.: (39) 556 4831
Fax: (39) 556 41257
E-mail: licosa@licosa.com
<http://www.licosa.com>

NETHERLANDS/PAYS-BAS

De Lindeboom Internationale Publikaties
PO Box 202, MA de Ruyterstraat 20 A
NL-7480 AE HAAKSBERGEN
Tel.: (31) 53 574 0004
Fax: (31) 53 572 9296
E-mail: lindeboo@worldonline.nl
<http://home-1-worldonline.nl/~lindeboo/>

NORWAY/NORVÈGE

Akademika, A/S Universitetsbokhandel
PO Box 84, Blindern
N-0314 OSLO
Tel.: (47) 22 85 30 30
Fax: (47) 23 12 24 20

POLAND/POLOGNE

Główna Księgarnia Naukowa
im. B. Prusa
Krakowskie Przedmiescie 7
PL-00-068 WARSZAWA
Tel.: (48) 29 22 66
Fax: (48) 22 26 64 49
E-mail: inter@internews.com.pl
<http://www.internews.com.pl>

PORTUGAL

Livraria Portugal
Rua do Carmo, 70
P-1200 LISBOA
Tel.: (351) 13 47 49 82
Fax: (351) 13 47 02 64
E-mail: liv.portugal@mail.telepac.pt

SPAIN/ESPAGNE

Mundi-Prensa Libros SA
Castelló 37
E-28001 MADRID
Tel.: (34) 914 36 37 00
Fax: (34) 915 75 39 98
E-mail: libreria@mundiprensa.es
<http://www.mundiprensa.com>

SWITZERLAND/SUISSE

BERSY
Route de Monteiller
CH-1965 SAVIESE
Tel.: (41) 27 395 53 33
Fax: (41) 27 395 53 34
E-mail: jprausis@netplus.ch

Adeco – Van Diermen
Chemin du Lacuez 41
CH-1807 BLONAY
Tel.: (41) 21 943 26 73
Fax: (41) 21 943 36 05
E-mail: info@adeco.org

UNITED KINGDOM/ROYAUME-UNI

TSO (formerly HMSO)
51 Nine Elms Lane
GB-LONDON SW8 5DR
Tel.: (44) 207 873 8372
Fax: (44) 207 873 8200
E-mail: customer.services@theso.co.uk
<http://www.the-stationery-office.co.uk>
<http://www.itsofficial.net>

UNITED STATES and CANADA/ ÉTATS-UNIS et CANADA

Manhattan Publishing Company
468 Albany Post Road, PO Box 850
CROTON-ON-HUDSON,
NY 10520, USA
Tel.: (1) 914 271 5194
Fax: (1) 914 271 5856
E-mail: Info@manhattanpublishing.com
<http://www.manhattanpublishing.com>

Council of Europe Publishing/Éditions du Conseil de l'Europe

F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex

Tel.: (33) 03 88 41 25 81 – Fax: (33) 03 88 41 39 10 – E-mail: publishing@coe.int – Website: <http://book.coe.int>

Identified as occurring in several of the new democracies in Europe during election observation missions carried out by the Council of Europe and the OSCE since 1995, family voting is a patriarchal custom that allows men to vote with or for women family members. Family voting deprives women of their right to a secret vote and contributes heavily to their marginalisation in political life.

Women's individual voting rights – a democratic requirement sheds light on family voting through a general report on this persistent practice, including recommendations to combat it; through a country by country report of examples observed by international organisations; and through Recommendation 111 (2002) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe on women's individual voting rights.

Family voting is an issue which needs to be explored and dealt with more fully by those involved in gender equality in political decision making and it is hoped that this booklet, among other things, will facilitate this process.

This text, prepared by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe, is published in the framework of the integrated project "Making democratic institutions work".



COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

The Council of Europe has forty-four member states, covering virtually the entire continent of Europe. It seeks to develop common democratic and legal principles based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals. Ever since it was founded in 1949, in the aftermath of the second world war, the Council of Europe has symbolised reconciliation.

ISBN 92-871-5040-0



€8/US\$12

<http://book.coe.int>

Council of Europe Publishing