

Report on the 2013 Digital Referendum Amending the ECPR Constitution

Introduction

Now that the ECPR General Conference has become an annual event, the annual meeting of the ECPR Council will be held during the General Conference instead of the Joint Sessions: it is easier to schedule a Council Meeting during the more flexible programme of the General Conference, and it is hoped that the higher number of participants will translate into a higher number of Official Representatives attending Council. However, Art 14a of the Constitution stipulates that election of members of the ECPR Executive Committee should take place 'approximately two weeks in advance of [Council's] regular meeting'. As the General Conference takes place at the end of Summer, this would mean that Executive Committee elections should take place during the holiday season. To allow for the elections to take place at the usual and more convenient time (January-February), the Executive Committee proposed a constitutional amendment to remove the requirement that the election takes place approximately two weeks before the Council meeting. This amendment was put on the agenda of the ECPR Council in Bordeaux (September 6, 2013). As Council lacked a quorum, the amendment could not be put to a vote

Under Art. 20b of the Constitution, the amendment was put to an electronic ballot in which the Official Representatives (ORs) of all full members were entitled to vote. This memorandum reports on the design and outcome of this referendum. It has been approved by the Speaker of Council acting as the ECPR Senior Returning Officer, Professor David Farrell.

Referendum design

The Constitution stipulates that an amendment needs to be approved by a two-thirds majority, and with a turnout of at least 40 percent. Other than that, the Constitution is silent on the design of the electronic ballot. In 2012, a regulatory framework was developed for that year's constitutional referendum, and the 2013 referendum was held according to these rules:

- a referendum will be organised through the ECPR website, in the myECPR area, accessible only to Official Representatives;
- amendments shall be voted on individually;

[In this particular case, there was only one amendment]

- Official Representatives can vote to accept or reject an amendment;
- the ballot itself will only contain a concise description of each amendment's content;
- links should be provided to relevant documents including the text of the current constitution;

- ORs shall receive an e-mail from the Chair of the Executive Committee alerting them to the referendum and inviting them to vote, indicating the time-frame during which voting is possible. ORs should also receive e-mail reminders;
- For this referendum the time frame for voting was set from October 14, 2013 to November 3, 2013.

Process

Voting in the referendum took place as planned. However, a few days before the voting period would be closed, it became clear that the quorum requirement would not be met. The Executive Committee then proposed an extension of the voting period until November 15, 2013. The Senior Returning Officer accepted this proposal on October 29, 2013. All Official Representatives were notified of this extension by Email.

Outcome

The final results of the referendum are as follows:

Amendment	# valid votes	Valid votes as % of all ORs	# Accept	# Reject	Accept as % of all valid votes
To remove from Art 14a the requirement that elections for the Executive Committee take place approximately two weeks in advance of the regular Council meeting of that year.	124	43.4	123	1	99.2

Conclusion

The amendment has met the constitutional requirement of 40 percent of all Official Representatives casting a vote. The amendments has been accepted by more than two-thirds of ORs who cast a vote. The amendment is therefore declared as duly accepted and the ECPR Constitution is changed accordingly.