



Dutch Electoral Council 2016 Annual Report



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Foreword

Work in progress

On 6 April 2016, the first advisory referendum was held pursuant to the Advisory Referendum Act (Wet raadgevend referendum). The vote was about the Act Approving the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement (Wet tot goedkeuring van de Associatieovereenkomst tussen de Europese Unie en Oekraïne). The Electoral Council was charged with important duties in the referendum procedure, both during the preparatory phase and the ultimate determination of the result. Although the referendum procedure itself proceeded well, some serious points for improvement emerged. In its evaluation recommendation, the Electoral Council advised prioritizing the implementation of a number of improvements and not to wait the statutory evaluation time provided for in the Advisory Referendum Act, which is 1 July 2018. This includes matters such as the manner of filing referendum requests and regulations in respect of the turnout threshold. It is to be expected that more detailed decisions will be taken about the amendment of the Advisory Referendum Act, if any, in the context of the formation of a new government after the House of Representatives elections on 15 March 2017.

Partly due to the referendum, the election process received a lot of attention in 2016, both in politics and in the society. At the beginning of 2016, no fewer than seven legislative proposals were awaiting decision by Parliament; all of these intended to amend the election process that we have carefully established over a period of nearly 100 years. Two private member's bills were submitted by MP Klein: one to abolish electoral districts (which has meanwhile been rejected by the House of Representatives) and one to modernize/digitize the candidate nomination procedure (still before the House of Representatives). Another private member's bill was submitted by MP Taverne, which entailed re-introduction of electronic voting in our country. Meanwhile, this bill has also been rejected by the House of Representatives. Additionally, the government had introduced three legislative proposals: one to introduce a new type of ballot paper (which has also been rejected in the meantime), one to remove the option to form combined lists (currently before the Upper House) and the bill to introduce the option for permanent registration of Dutch voters abroad. Finally, the Elections Act (Kieswet) was amended, as a consequence of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, to the effect that all polling stations must henceforth be accessible to voters with a physical disability (as yet not into effect).

Outside the legislative process, a multitude of plans and ideas were introduced in the past year too. A group of experts, appointed by Minister Plasterk of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, presented technical specifications with respect to the new voting technique (voting printer and vote counter) introduced by the Van Beek Committee at the end of 2013. The proposal was made to opt for electronic counting of ballot papers and to refrain from electronic voting. The Minister announced a test of internet voting before the end of 2016. Some advocate amendment of the election process of members of the Senate. In order to give Dutch residents of Bonaire, Saba and St. Eustatius a vote in relation to the composition of the Senate, the new legal concept of the Electoral College was created. Furthermore, a plea was made for local democratic experiments, mainly by local administrations. Some proposed to abolish elections in and of themselves and to replace these by a type of drawing lots. The measures taken by the House of Representatives by now in the field of secession of political parties may also be listed in this respect. Finally, some parties submitted proposals to introduce an electoral threshold in our country dating from the end of 2016.

It may be clear that our electoral process is not set in stone; it is widely discussed and in a state of flux. To me, the new Chair of the Electoral Council as of 1 January 2017, this is a fascinating time to be a member.

In all of this, I consider it important to remember that the election process must meet some guarantees. The Korthals Altes Committee phrased these guarantees for our country as follows in 2007: ¹

- Eligibility to vote – only persons eligible to vote may participate in elections;
- Unicity – each person eligible to vote can cast one vote, to counted once too;
- Accessibility – persons that are eligible to vote must be allowed as much as possible to participate directly in the election process;
- Transparency – the election process must be clearly structured and set up;
- Verifiability – the election process must be objectively verifiable;
- Freedom to vote – every person eligible to vote must be able to decide on his or her vote in total freedom;
- Secrecy of the vote – the election process must be set up such that no direct connection can be made between the voter and the vote cast;
- Integrity – the election process must be executed correctly and reliably.

On 15 October 2007 the Electoral Council added a ninth guarantee to these eight guarantees in its reaction to the report ‘Stemmen met Vertrouwen’ from the Korthals Altes Committee, namely:

- Independence – essential decisions in the election process, such as decisions with regard to party appellations, assessment of lists of candidates and the determination of election results must be taken in independence.

We should keep these guarantees at the forefront of our minds during the debates we will no doubt have in 2017 about our election process, including referenda. All of this, naturally, in the knowledge that these are guarantees that do not represent absolute values by themselves, but must be considered in their interrelationship.

J.G.C. Wiebenga,
Chairman of the Electoral Council.

¹ Advice Committee on the Layout of the Electoral Process, ‘Stemmen met vertrouwen’, (Voting with Confidence), 27 September 2007.



1. 2016 in a nutshell

The House of Representatives elections to be held on 15 March 2017 began casting their shadow in 2016. This was expressed in the high volume of requests to register party appellations and logos. The total number, 81 registered appellations, was a record. Never before in the past decades had so many appellations been registered for the elections to the House of Representatives.

As of mid-November, the Electoral Council has reopened an Elections Information Centre (Informatiepunt Verkiezingen) in cooperation with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (hereinafter: BZK) for the benefit of municipalities, political parties and voters.

On 23 November 2016, the former municipalities of Schijndel, Sint-Oedenrode and Veghel held municipal redivision elections for council members of the new municipality of Meierijstad. Consequently, the number of municipalities in our country decreased to 388 on 1 January 2017.

Recommendations

The Electoral Council issued nine recommendations in 2016. One recommendation was given to the House of Representatives and pertained to a private member's bill on experiments with electronic tools. Another recommendation, on tightening criminal prosecution of terrorism, was made to the Minister of Security and Justice. The other recommendations were addressed to the Minister of BZK.

Advisory referendum

The Electoral Council's main focus in 2016 was the initial application of the Advisory Referendum Act (hereinafter: Wrr). This act that came into force on 1 July 2015 charges the Electoral Council with important duties. The Council has to provide for matters that include:

- publishing acts that qualify for a referendum (on the website: referendumovereenwet.nl);
- assessing whether a sufficient number of requests to organize a referendum (at least 10,000) have been filed during the so-called preliminary phase (four weeks);
- assessing whether a sufficient number of declarations of support (at least 300,000) have been filed during a so-called final phase (six weeks);
- determining referenda results.

In order to carry out the referendum duties, the budget of the Council has been increased and the headcount of the Secretariat has been expanded by two FTEs.

The introductory and final phase of the referendum about the Act approving the Association Agreement that was concluded in Brussels on 27 June 2014 between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and its Member States on the one hand, and Ukraine on the other hand, were finalized in 2015². The first advisory referendum based on the Wrr took place on 6 April 2016.

Evaluation of the referendum

The Electoral Council evaluated the advisory referendum as is common with respect to elections. On 24 May 2016, the Electoral Council sent the Minister of BZK its evaluation recommendation on the referendum that had been held.³ Further details are available in Chapter 3 of this annual report.

² Preliminary request admission dated 13 August 2015 (Government Gazette, 18 August 2015, no. 25882). Final request admission dated 14 October 2015 (Government Gazette, 15 October 2015, no. 35910).

³ <https://www.kiesraad.nl/adviezen-en-publicaties/adviezen/2016/05/24/advies-kiesraad-evaluatie-referendum>.

Modernization of the Elections Act

After the Electoral Council had advised on several occasions to review the entire Elections Act, Minister Plasterk promised the Senate and the House of Representatives in 2014 to consult the Electoral Council about parts of the Elections Act that urgently require modernization⁴. Administrative consultations were initiated on this basis.

At the end of 2016, three legislative proposals for partial amendment of the Elections Act went before Parliament:

- a private member's bill by MP Klein on abolishing electoral districts;
- a private member's bill by MP Klein on electronic filing of candidate lists and related documents;
- a legislative proposal on removing the option for political parties to form combined lists.

Electronic voting and counting

On 31 March 2016, the Experts Group on Electronic Voting and Counting in the Polling Station presented technical specifications to Minister Plasterk relating to the voting technique that had been introduced at the end of 2013 by the Van Beek Committee (voting printer and vote counter).⁵ The Experts Group advised the Minister to only introduce electronic vote counting. Subsequently, the Minister sent the findings of the Experts Group to the House of Representatives; announcing that he would consult the market for the possible development of electronic voting and counting techniques.⁶ The results of this market consultation are expected to be published in the short term.

Minister Plasterk's intention to perform a test of the internet voting services at the end of 2016 has been postponed until 2017.⁷

Modernization of the election results databank

2016 saw the start of the modernization of the election results databank. A European tender procedure is in progress. The objective is twofold: to create a databank with more data than the current one and to expand the user features.⁸

⁴ See parliamentary papers I 2013/14, 33 268, N and parliamentary papers II 2014/15, 33 268, no. 27.

⁵ Rapportage Commissie-Van Beek, December 2013, *Elke stem telt, Elektronisch stemmen en tellen*, (Report by Van Beek Committee: Every vote counts: electronic voting and counting) <https://www.kiesraad.nl/actueel/nieuws/2013/12/18/commissie-van-beek-adviseert-elektronisch-stemmen-en-tellen>. (news item: Van Beek Committee advises electronic voting and counting).

⁶ https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/brieven_regering/detail?id=2016Z08713&did=2016D17973.

⁷ Letter dated 1 December 2016, parliamentary papers II, 2016-2017, 33 929, no. 17.

⁸ <http://www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl>.



2. Organization

The Electoral Council has been charged with a number of statutory duties:

- the Council acts as a central electoral committee for the elections to the House of Representatives and Senate and the election of the (26) Dutch members of the European Parliament. More specifically this means:
 - the Council checks and registers the appellations and logos of political parties;
 - the Council decides on the validity of the candidate lists submitted and their numbering;
 - the Council determines official election results for these elections;
 - the Council appoints the newly elected members of the abovementioned bodies and provides for vacancies.
- the Council advises the government and Parliament on aspects of implementing electoral law and elections. This mainly concerns draft legislative proposals and post-election assessments.
- the Council acts as a central electoral committee for organizing referenda based on the Advisory Referendum Act. This implies that:
 - the Council provides forms for submitting requests to hold a referendum;
 - the Council investigates requests that have been filed during the preliminary and final phase;
 - the Council determines the number of requests filed;
 - the Council determines the results of a referendum.

Other duties of the Electoral Council

The Electoral Council acts as a knowledge and information centre for electoral law and elections for municipalities, provincial registries, political parties, voters and the media throughout the year. During elections, an Elections Information Centre is set up by the council and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. An Information Centre for the House of Representatives elections to be held 15 March 2017 'went live' by mid-November. It will be active until 1 April 2017.

In addition, the Electoral Council advises the Administrative Jurisdiction Division of the Council of State on electoral disputes in which the Electoral Council itself is not a party.

Non-departmental Public Bodies Framework Act and Advisory Boards Framework Act

The Electoral Council, in its capacity as central electoral committee, is governed by the Non-departmental Public Bodies Framework Act. Some portions of this act do not apply because of the necessarily independent position of the Electoral Council.⁹ Moreover, some parts of the Advisory Boards Framework Act apply¹⁰ to the Electoral Council, while others do not¹¹. These exceptions also relate to the Electoral Council's special position in our form of government.

Relationship with the Ministry of BZK

The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations supervises all independent bodies that perform a duty for which the Minister is politically responsible. The special position which the Electoral Council occupies in the Dutch form of government and the corresponding necessary independence affects this supervisory relationship. This relationship is expressed in the form of a 'Supervisory Arrangement' between the Electoral Council and the ministry. The aim is to further strengthen the Electoral Council's independence in the field of operations as of budget year 2018. The Electoral Council will become subject to the national budget chapter to which the High Institutions of State are also subject. A legislative proposal to this effect is currently before the Senate.

⁹ Non-departmental Public Bodies Framework Act, Sections 12, 21 and 22.

¹⁰ Non-departmental Public Bodies Framework Act, Sections 15, first, third, fourth and fifth subsection, and 16.

¹¹ Advisory Boards Framework Act, Sections 21 and 29.

Members of the Electoral Council

The Electoral Council consists of seven members who are appointed by Royal Decree for a four-year period, with an option to be re-appointed twice. They are appointed on the basis of their expertise in the areas of electoral law and elections and policy areas related or relevant to it. Social knowledge and experience also play a role in appointing members.



From left to right: Willem Stoker, Trudy Blokdijk, Remco Nehmelman, Henk Kummeling, Jan te Veldhuis, Monique Leyenaar and Peter Castenmiller.

In 2016, the council was comprised as follows:

Prof. H.R.B.M. Kummeling, LLM. Chairman. Appointed in 2005. Henk Kummeling is a Professor of Constitutional Law and Comparative Constitutional Law at Utrecht University. He is also a university professor at the same university.

G.M.M. Blokdijk, LLM. Vice-chairman. Appointed as a member in 2006. Trudy Blokdijk advises and evaluates supervisory boards and holds various supervisory and management positions. She is a lecturer at various institutions.

Prof. M.H. Leyenaar. Appointed as a member in 2005. Monique Leyenaar is a Professor of Comparative Political Science at Radboud University in Nijmegen.

A.J. te Veldhuis, LLM. Appointed as a member in 2005. Jan te Veldhuis was a member of the House of Representatives for the VVD from 1982 to 2003, and was, among other things, spokesman on constitutional matters.

W.M.B. Stoker. Appointed as a member in 2006. Willem Stoker worked for the Population Affairs Department of the municipality of Utrecht as a senior consultant and Head of Elections from 2000 to 2015.

Dr. P. Castenmiller. Appointed as a member in 2013. Peter Castenmiller is employed by PBLQ-Zenc, a consultancy for innovations in the public domain.

Prof. R. Nehmelman, LLM. Appointed as a member in 2015. Remco Nehmelman is a Professor of Public Institutional Law at Utrecht University.

On 1 January 2017, three vacancies occurred in the Electoral Council — after twelve years of membership — as the Chairman, Prof. H.R.B.M. Kummeling, LLM and the members Prof. M.H. Leyenaar and A.J. te Veldhuis, LLM, left. They bid an official farewell during a mini symposium on 21 December. The Electoral Council is very grateful to them for their commitment and expertise over the years.

By Royal Decree of 23 June 2016 these vacancies were filled by appointing the following persons as of 1 January 2017:

- J.G.C. Wiebenga, LLM, as chairman of the Electoral Council;
- Prof.dr. R.B. Andeweg as member of the Electoral Council and
- Prof. J.E. van den Brink, LLM, as member of the Electoral Council.

Electoral Council Secretariat

The Electoral Council is supported by a Secretariat in the performance of its duties. The secretary-director is the head of the Secretariat and is responsible for the day-to-day management.

The secretary-director and secretarial staff members are formally employed by the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. However, they are only accountable to the Electoral Council for their duties.

In its Resolution of 8 August 2016 the Chair of the Electoral Council determined the headcount of the Secretariat anew as of 1 September 2016.

On 4-9-2018 personal data were deleted from this page based on the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

There were two reasons for this new headcount. The primary reason concerned the extra duties that had been assigned to the Electoral Council based on the Advisory Referendum Act. The extra staff capacity required to execute this act is 1 FTE for administrative work and 1 FTE for legal work/functional management of the referendum application (RAPP) developed by commission of the Electoral Council. Furthermore, the headcount was expanded with the inclusion of the position of Senior ICT Policy Consultant. In order to execute its duties adequately, it is important for the Electoral Council to have ample in-house knowledge, expertise and experience to stay up to date on policy and general developments in this field. As such, the Electoral Council will be able to develop a consistent vision for the future on the application of technology in the electoral process and collection and accessibility of open data, such as election results (see also 'Modernization of the election results databank'). We should also point out in this respect additional general developments in the field of ICT policy, open source, open standards and EML use in the election process.



Bottom row of the picture, from left to right: Kees Uijl, Ronald Jansen, Ron de Jong, Ellen Voogd, Heleen Hörmann, Melle Bakker, Pamela Young, Wilko Saho and Edward Brüheim.

Top row from left to right: Daley Lupperts, Marjolein Walsmit-Brouwer, Jan-Jouke Vos, Karina de Klerk Wolters, Roderick AI, Maaïke van Hoboken, Henny Siero, Marco Segers and Batsheba White.

At the end of 2016, sixteen staff members were employed at the Secretariat in the following positions:

Melle Bakker, LLM, Secretary-director

Pamela Young, MSc., Deputy secretary-director, also cluster coordinator Legal affairs and IT

Heleen Hörmann, Bsc., Cluster coordinator Communication, Research and Support, also senior communications adviser

Edward Brüheim, LLM, senior legal adviser

Roderick AI, LLM, legal adviser

Marco Segers, LLM, legal adviser/RAPP application manager

Dr. Ron de Jong, Researcher

Kees Uijl, Senior adviser information policy

Ronald Jansen, Senior management adviser

Jan-Jouke Vos, LLM, IT consultant

Marjolein Walsmit-Brouwer, MSc., communications adviser

Henny Siero, Management adviser

Karina de Klerk Wolters, office manager

Patricia Chatrer-Mol, policy-supporting assistant

Maaïke van Hoboken, referenda administrative assistant

Ellen Voogd, referenda administrative assistant

As of mid-November 2016, the following staff members were employed at the Elections Information Centre: Wilko Saho, LLM and Batsheba White, LLM.

3. Elections and referenda

No national elections were held in 2016. Redivision elections were held in several municipalities in the province of Noord-Brabant. In addition, the first referendum pursuant to the Advisory Referendum Act (hereinafter: Wrr) was held.

Referendum

On 6 April 2016, the vote regarding the referendum on the Act Approving the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement was held.¹² The referendum was the first national referendum in ten years. Moreover, it was the first referendum held pursuant to the Wrr that had recently entered into force on 1 July 2015. In the autumn of 2015, the Electoral Council had already assessed that the required number of requests had been received to hold a referendum in respect of this act. The campaign of GeenPeil (a collaboration between Forum voor Democratie, GeenStijl and Burgercomité EU) was decisive in this respect.

The date of the referendum was determined by the Referendum Committee appointed by the government. Legally that date must be determined between 85 days and six months after the Electoral Council's decision that a sufficient number of requests has been filed.

Details prior to the vote

Number of polling stations

A matter that received a lot of attention in the run-up to the vote was the reduced number of polling stations available in many municipalities. During the election of the Dutch members of the European Parliament in 2014, there were a total of 9,361 polling stations open, whereas a total of 8,379 stations were available during the referendum, which was a reduction of just over 10%. The reduction was relatively small in a number of municipalities, but in other municipalities the reduction was substantial and, in one case, it even turned out to be over 50%. The reduction of the number of polling stations led to some legal proceedings against the relevant municipalities and the Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. In one case, the court ordered the relevant municipality to set up more polling stations. The Electoral Board advised the Minister in its evaluation recommendation after the Referendum to establish objective criteria for the number of polling stations to be set up.

Turnout percentages

Another special circumstance was the fact that some municipalities proceeded to announce turnout percentages during the day of the vote, whereas others refrained from doing so. Whether, and if so, to what extent, this has had an impact on the final turnout or even on the results, obviously cannot be determined. Primarily relating to the importance of the turnout percentage in respect of a referendum's validity, the Electoral Council advised the Minister in its evaluation recommendation to provide clarity on the admissibility of the intermediate publication of turnout percentages.

Ballot paper lay-out

Finally, the ballot paper also received a lot of attention. In the run-up to the referendum, apparently questions were raised about the lay-out with respect to the validity and invalidity of votes cast. The Electoral Council published an overview of examples of valid and invalid votes and abstentions. The overview prevented issues in this respect. With reference to this matter, the Electoral Council advocated in its evaluation recommendation to use a modified lay-out in a future referendum. The Council proposed that the ballot paper in referenda be adopted by an independent body in future.

¹² In full: the Act to Approve the Association Agreement that was concluded in Brussels on 27 June 2014 between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and its Member States on the one hand, and Ukraine on the other hand.

Electoral Council duties regarding the vote

Once the vote has taken place, the Electoral Council is charged with the duty to investigate the validity of the vote and to determine the results of the vote held at the polling stations and main polling stations.

A total number of 8,379 polling stations were set up for the referendum. The official reports of all these polling stations were taken from the twenty main polling stations to the Electoral Council. Besides this, the Electoral Council also received the municipal total counts and the official reports of said main polling stations. The Electoral Council assessed whether the result of the vote by the polling stations and the main polling stations had been determined correctly and if any special circumstances or irregularities had occurred that may have had an impact on the validity of the vote or accuracy of the results. In the process, remarks and objections were taken into account that had been expressed orally or filed in writing by voters at the polling stations, main polling stations and the Elections Information Centre.

Result

On 12 April, a public session that attracted considerable attention, the Electoral Council announced the result of the vote. The majority of the voters rejected the act:

- 61% against (2,509,395 voters)
- 38.21% in favour (1,571,874 voters)
- 0.79% abstentions (32,344 voters)

Pursuant to the Advisory Referendum Act, the result of an advisory referendum is valid when a minimum of 30% of the persons entitled to vote cast their vote. The turnout percentage at this referendum was 32.28%. This means that the turnout threshold of 30% had been achieved.

The session was seen by means of the Nieuwspoort live stream by 7,334 viewers. The Netherlands had the highest number of views, followed by Ukraine (407 views) and Russia (231 views).

Every citizen of the Netherlands who is eighteen years or older on the date of the vote and not disqualified from voting is eligible to cast a vote in referenda pursuant to the Advisory Referendum Act. On the day of the referendum, 12,862,658 people were eligible to vote in the Netherlands. The Electoral Council assessed that 4,151,613 persons entitled to vote cast their vote. 16,403 Dutch nationals who were abroad registered to vote in this referendum; 11,804 of these voted remotely by letter.

Of the total number of votes cast, 4,113,613 were valid and 38,000 were invalid. This represents 0.92% of the total number of votes cast. Abstentions are also valid and qualify for the turnout percentage. In total, there were 32,344 abstentions. This represents 0.79%. In the election of the Dutch members of the European Parliament in 2014, 0.35% were abstentions and 0.25% of the votes cast was invalid.

Since the percentage of votes against was higher in this referendum than the percentage of votes in favour, the Electoral Council established that this resulted in an advisory decision to reject the act. This means that the government must reconsider the act. The result of an advisory referendum is not binding.

Proxy

Persons entitled to vote, who are unable to cast their vote in person in the polling station on the day of the vote, may opt to authorize another person who is entitled to vote to vote on their behalf.

451,087 persons entitled to vote used this option on 6 April. This represents 10.87%. This number is in line with the number of proxy voters in earlier elections. It usually fluctuates between 10 to 11%.

Turnout

The highest turnout was in the municipality of Rozendaal (province of Gelderland) at 49.1% and the lowest was in Sint Eustatius at 2.6%. Most of the voters in favour resided — proportionally — in Wageningen, at 62.4% of votes cast validly and Urk had the lowest proportional number of voters in favour at 16.4%. Conversely, the highest proportional number of voters against resided in Urk, at 83.3% of votes cast validly and the lowest proportional number resided in Wageningen, at 36.0%.

Overall picture

The Electoral Council's assessment of the official reports showed that the vote proceeded properly in most cases. No one used the option to lodge an appeal against the determination of the result of the referendum with the Council of State.

Only one referendum was held in 2016. However, requests to hold a referendum were filed during the year with respect to eight other acts. None of these cases came even close to resulting in the minimum required number of 10,000 preliminary requests.

Evaluation

The Electoral Council sent an evaluation recommendation to the Minister of BZK after the result of the referendum. The recommendation evaluated the preliminary phases, voting and the determination of the result.

The first application of the Wrr allowed the Electoral Council to propose some improvements in a number of respects. One of the proposals by the Electoral Council in its recommendation was to facilitate electronic filing of requests to hold a referendum, preferably in combination with the use of DigiD. This will be more efficient, customer-friendly and in line with government policy to encourage digital communication with the authorities. However, the option to file paper requests must be continued. Furthermore, the Electoral Council held that the turnout threshold of 30% leads to the unintended and also undesired effect of confusion by those in favour of the act: whether or not to vote. This is why the Electoral Council advised to reconsider this regulation.

Minister Blok sent this evaluation and his own findings to the House of Representatives on 29 August. It appeared that the Minister is not in favour of amending the act. In this respect, he referred to the evaluation provided in the Wrr to take place 'timely before 2018'. During a General Consultation in the House of Representatives on 14 December 2016, it appeared that a majority of the House of Representatives did indeed criticize the act and the implementation thereof, but that the House followed the Minister's opinion about the time of evaluation. Consequently, an amendment of the act is not up for discussion as yet.

Municipal redivision elections

On 23 November 2016, a municipal election was held regarding the redivision of the municipalities of Schijndel, Sint-Oedenrode, and Veghel. These municipalities will merge into the municipality of Meierijstad by 1 January 2017. Turnout at these redivision elections came to 41.1%.

The formal role of the Electoral Council at the redivision elections is limited to publishing the appellations it has registered and the names of the authorized representatives in the Government Gazette. The Electoral Council does this in respect of the so-called 'direct effect'. Political parties that have registered with the Electoral Council for participation in the House of Representatives elections do not need to register separately for redivision elections. Their registration at the Electoral Council has a direct effect in the latter election.

The Electoral Council was also available to respond to questions of the relevant municipalities with regard to the electoral process and the Supporting Software for Elections (Ondersteunende Software Verkiezingen, OSV) that was provided by the Electoral Council and used by the municipalities. After the elections, the Electoral Council entered the results of the Provincial Council elections in the election results database (www.verkiezingsuitslagen.nl).

Supporting Software for Elections

Political parties, municipalities and main and central electoral committees can use Supporting Software for Elections (Ondersteunende Software Verkiezingen, OSV) in elections. Political parties used OSV to prepare list(s) of candidates in the redivision elections of the municipality Meierijstad in November 2016. In this election, OSV was also used to enter the votes that had been counted in the polling stations. In addition, OSV was used by municipalities and the Electoral Council in determining the result of the advisory referendum held on 6 April 2016.

In the last quarter of 2016, the Electoral Council provided municipalities and political parties with updated OSV election software for the House of Representatives elections of 15 March 2017. Instruction meetings were held in December for political parties on how to use OSV.



4. Recommendations

In 2016, the Electoral Council made the following recommendations:¹³

1. recommendation on the private member's bill of the Temporary Experiment Act on Electronic Provisions during Elections
2. recommendation on the evaluation of the advisory referendum on 6 April 2016
3. recommendation on the Bosma amendment (increased number of candidates on the candidate list)
4. recommendation on the statement of eligibility for Dutch citizens to stand for election in other EU countries
5. recommendation on models for 2017 House of Representatives elections
6. recommendation on the extension of the Temporary Ballot Papers and Central Counting Experiments Act
7. recommendation regarding the elaboration of permanent voter registration of non-residents
8. recommendation on tightening criminal prosecution of terrorism
9. recommendation on ballot paper for 2017 House of Representatives elections

Most of the recommendations were made by request of and to the Minister of BZK. The evaluation recommendation on the Advisory referendum on 6 April 2016 was made by the Electoral Council on its own initiative. One recommendation given to the House of Representatives pertained to the private member's bill on experiments with electronic tools. Another recommendation, on tightening criminal prosecution of terrorism, was made to the Minister of Security and Justice.

1. Recommendation on the private member's bill of the Temporary Experiment Act on Electronic Provisions during Elections (21 March 2016)

This private member's bill is the first step of a five-year period of experiments with electronic voting printers and/or vote counters during the vote and counting of the votes. The proposal of MP Taverne links up to the final report of the Van Beek Committee which describes the possible deployment of these electronic tools. The Electoral Council holds that opportunities to experiment in the election process are limited. Of course, new electronic methods must not pose a risk when determining the result. Therefore, the Electoral Council recommends to allow ample time to prepare experiments.

Follow-up on the recommendation

The private member's bill was rejected by the House of Representatives on 7 June 2016.

2. Recommendation on the evaluation of the advisory referendum on 6 April 2016 (24 May 2016)

The Advisory Referendum Act contains imperfections and flaws. This was concluded by the Electoral Council in its evaluation recommendation on the referendum of 6 April. Consequently, the Council advocates speedy amendment of the act. One of the proposals is to allow for electronic filing of referendum requests in future. The Electoral Council also commented on the 30% turnout threshold, publishing turnout percentages on voting day, and the lay-out of the ballot paper. It was recommended to provide municipalities with tools to determine how many polling stations to set up.

Follow-up on the recommendation

The Minister indicated that he intended to take the Electoral Council's recommendation into account when evaluating the Advisory Referendum Act. This evaluation will be sent to the House of Representatives no later than 1 July 2018.

¹³ All recommendations of the Electoral Council are available on www.kiesraad.nl/adviezen_en_publicaties.

3. Recommendation on the Bosma amendment (increased number of candidates on the candidate list) (13 June 2016)

Presently, the Electoral Council does not consider it advisable to amend the Elections Act in order to increase the number of candidates on a candidate list. This is included in its recommendation following an amendment by MP Bosma (PVV), which proposes to allow all parties in elections to present a maximum of eighty candidates on the list. The Electoral Council holds that the present Elections Act allows the parties ample options to present candidates in order to prevent exhaustion of the candidate list. The Electoral Council listed a number of practical objections to the proposed amendment of the act. The present ballot paper will probably become even larger, which will complicate finding the candidates on the ballot paper for the voters. Counting will also become more complicated if the number of candidates increases.

Follow-up on the recommendation

The Bosma amendment was submitted alongside a legislative proposal to experiment in a number of municipalities with another type of ballot paper which is smaller and more manageable. The amendment was rejected by the House of Representatives on 28 June 2016. However, the Electoral Council also pointed out the private member's bill of Mr. Klein in its recommendation. That private member's bill entails to render it impossible to file different candidate lists in various electoral districts. The Electoral Council holds it conceivable that this proposal may comprise an increase of the maximum allowed number of candidates on a candidate list. Consequently, the Bosma amendment was submitted anew on 28 September 2016 and is still before the House of Representatives.

4. Recommendation on statement of eligibility for Dutch citizens to stand for election in other EU countries (13 October 2016)

This recommendation pertains to the legislative proposal to explicitly include a maximum term of five days in the Elections Act, during which the Electoral Council can issue a statement on the eligibility of Dutch citizens who intend to stand for election for the European Parliament elections in another EU country. The Electoral Council can agree to this proposal. It is preferred to issue this statement in the official language of the requesting member state — or also in that language — and not exclusively in Dutch.

Follow-up on the recommendation

The recommendation is before the Minister. The Electoral Council awaits a response.

5. Recommendation on models for the 2017 House of Representatives elections (26 October 2016)

This recommendation pertains to the adoption of models (format for voting passes, written proxy, postal vote certificate and a ballot paper for voters outside the Netherlands) for the 2017 House of Representatives elections. In order to guarantee legibility of the voting pass, the Electoral Council recommends adopting a different model of a voting pass for persons entitled to vote in Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba than for persons entitled to vote in the European part of the Netherlands. The Electoral Council considers it positive that the voting pass states which polling station is close to the residential address of the person entitled to vote. This improves accessibility to the voting process. Furthermore, the Council requests that the Minister alert municipalities to the fact that it is in the interest of persons entitled to vote to be able to apply for a new voting pass in the town hall without making an appointment.

Follow-up on the recommendation

With an aim to address the Electoral Council's objection to the comprehensibility of the model, the Minister of BZK clarified the concept of 'public body' on the front side of the voting pass.

6. Recommendation on the extension of the Temporary Ballot Papers and Central Counting Experiments Act (14 November 2016)

In its recommendation, the Electoral Council shares the Minister's opinion that it is desirable to extend the option to experiment with a new model of the ballot paper for Dutch voters abroad. However, it is recommended to extend the regulation no longer than strictly required. With regard to the other experiment, central counting of the votes, it is recommended to clarify what the Minister's intentions are in this respect.

Follow-up on the recommendation

The recommendation is before the Minister. The Electoral Council awaits a response.

7. Recommendation on elaboration of permanent voter registration of non-residents (15 November 2016)

Dutch citizens that live abroad will be able enrol henceforth in the permanent register for elections of the House of Representatives, the European Parliament and referenda. They will no longer be required to register anew as a voter for each election. The Electoral Council issued a recommendation about the elaboration of this act in an Order in Council (Algemene Maatregel van Bestuur, AMvB). The recommendation advocates for allowing all requests for permanent registration to be submitted electronically. The Electoral Council recommends to substantiate why it is necessary to register the citizen service number Dutch abbreviation: BSN) of Dutch voters abroad.

Follow-up on the recommendation

The recommendation is before the Minister. The Electoral Council awaits a response.

8. Recommendation on tightening criminal prosecution of terrorism (21 November 2016)

Courts will have an option to exclude persons from the right to vote and/or to stand for election as an additional measure for those that are convicted of any type of terrorist offence whatsoever. Currently, disenfranchisement is only possible for some terrorist offences. The Electoral Council recommends in favour of the Minister of Security and Justice's intention to achieve more consistency in legislation in this respect. However, the Electoral Council requests to also provide this option upon conviction of offences as referred to in Sections 121a, 123a, and 124a of the Dutch Criminal Code (Wetboek van Strafrecht). These sections refer to those that disperse a meeting of a committee of the Senate or the House of Representatives, the Provincial Executive or the Municipal Council by means of violence or threat, or force the meeting to take a decision or refrain from doing so, or remove a member from such meetings or hamper attendance thereof.

Follow-up on the recommendation

The recommendation is before the Minister. The Electoral Council awaits a response.

9. Recommendation on the ballot paper for 2017 House of Representatives elections (29 December 2016)

If 32 parties take part in the House of Representatives elections on 15 March 2017, the standard format for the ballot paper will not suffice. This is why the Minister of BZK asked the Electoral Council to make a recommendation on the lay-out of the ballot paper in that situation. Based on a number of options, the Council expressed a preference for a ballot paper sized 70x100 (width by height) (option 1). The decisive reason for this preference is that all candidate lists will be printed on one side.

Follow-up on the recommendation

The Minister followed up the recommendation of the Electoral Council.



5. Appellations and appointments

The Electoral Council registers the names (appellations) and logos of political parties that wish to take part in the elections to the House of Representatives, the Senate and the European Parliament. Besides, the Electoral Council appoints, in its capacity as central electoral committee, substitutes in the vacancies that occur in the House of Representatives, the Senate and the European Parliament.

Applications for registration

In 2016, the Electoral Council received thirty requests from political parties to register their name (appellation) in the register for the election of the members of the House of Representatives. Furthermore, two appellations in this register were changed upon request. Additionally, the Electoral Council received another fifteen requests based on a temporary regulation¹⁴ to register a logo in the register for the election of the members of the House of Representatives and one request to change a logo that was registered for the election of the European Parliament members.

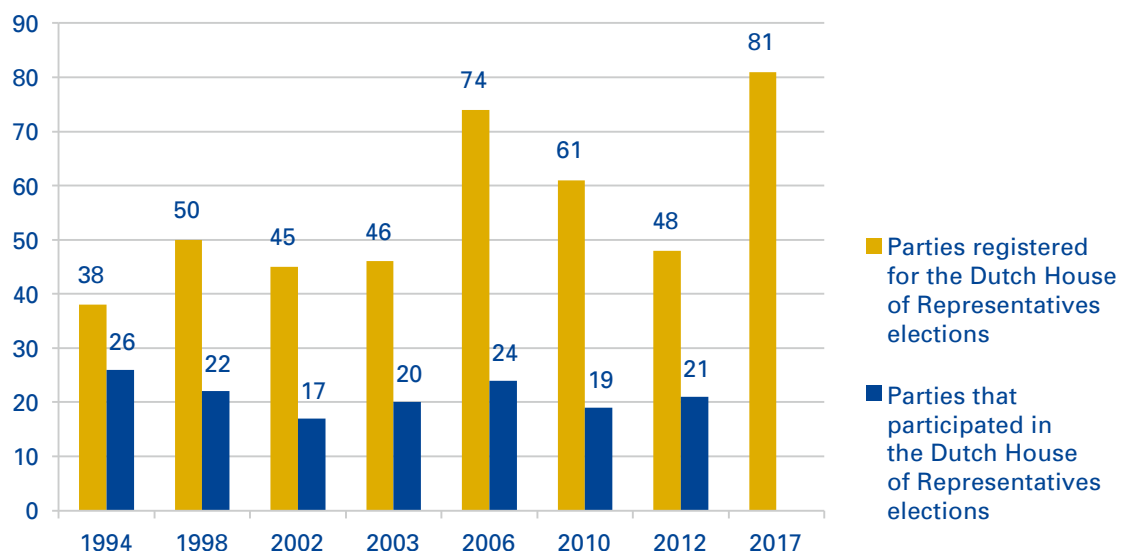
Register for the Senate

In 2016, the Electoral Council did not register new appellations in the register for the election of the members of the Senate. No appellations were removed from the register, so the register consisted of one appellation at the end of 2016. Registered appellations for the election of the members of the House of Representatives have a direct effect on the elections for the Senate. This means that no separate registration of the appellation is required with the Electoral Council in the register for the election of the members of the Senate in these cases.

Register for the House of Representatives

With the House of Representatives elections in the offing, the Electoral Council received a large number of registration requests in 2016. Whereas the register comprised 53 appellations at the beginning of the year, it had increased up to 81 by the end of December. Never before in the past decades had so many appellations been registered for the House of Representatives elections.

Historic overview of registrations and parties that participate in the House of Representatives elections in the period 1994-2017



¹⁴ The logos have been registered based on the Temporary Ballot Papers and Central Counting Experiments Act, and these will be placed on the ballot paper used by Dutch voters abroad.

Besides twenty-eight new registrations, the Electoral Council also rejected two requests for registration in 2016. These were the requests to register the appellations Leefbaar Nederland and Leefbaar NL. In both cases, the Electoral Council held that these appellations were not sufficiently distinctive from the appellation LEEFBAAR NEDERLAND, which has since been removed, and that this could confuse voters. Out of 81 organizations that registered an appellation, twenty-one also registered a logo.

Register for the European Parliament

The Electoral Council did not receive any requests to register an appellation in the register for the European Parliament elections. However, one request to change a registered logo was received. The register for the European Parliament elections comprised a total of nineteen appellations at the end of 2016. In addition, fourteen parties had registered a logo.

Appointments

The Electoral Council appoints new members to fill vacancies in the House of Representatives, Senate and the European Parliament. Thirteen members were appointed to the House of Representatives in 2016, five of whom to fill temporary vacancies. Four members were appointed to the Senate, one of these to fill a temporary vacancy. No vacancies occurred in the European Parliament.

Number of members appointed to fill vacancies in the period 2008-2016

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
House of Representatives	8	8	19	8	18	15	12	15	13
Senate	0	4	3	0	3	4	3	2	4
European Parliament	1	1	2	1	1	0	1	2	0



6. Lawsuits

In 2016, two appeals were lodged against decisions made by the Electoral Council in its capacity as a central electoral committee. The council acted as a respondent in these lawsuits. It also acted as an expert in two other lawsuits. The council provided information at the request of the Administrative Jurisdiction Department of the Council of State (hereinafter: the Department).

The Electoral Council acting as a respondent

PSP'92

The last annual report listed an appeal that was still pending by PSP'92 against the Electoral Council's decision to remove its appellation from the register of the Senate elections. The Electoral Council removed the appellation because this political party did not submit a valid candidate list to the Senate for the 2015 elections. The Department declared the appeal inadmissible, since PSP'92 did not pay the required court fee. The party held that the required court fee was not proportional to the costs that would be incurred in case of new registration of its appellation at the Electoral Council. As it was declared inadmissible, the Department did not reach a decision on the substance of the dispute.¹⁵

Vrijzinnige Partij

The Vrijzinnige Partij lodged an appeal against the Electoral Council's decision to register the appellation 'Vrouwen Partij (VP)' in the appellations register for the election of the members of the House of Representatives. The party fears confusion may occur if the Vrouwen Partij were to use the abbreviation VP, since this will also be used in the media when people refer to the Vrijzinnige Partij. The Administrative Jurisdiction Department of the Council of State is expected to reach its decision early in 2017.

The Electoral Council in an advisory capacity

Partij Vrij Enschede (PVE)

Local political parties may register their appellation at the local central electoral committee. National political parties can use the appellation they have registered with the Electoral Council in municipal council elections. A candidate list with the appellation 'OPA' in the heading was awarded a seat in the elections of members of the municipal council of Enschede in 2014. The appellation 'OPA' is a national registration. The group OPA decided to use a different name in the municipal council in 2016, namely: Partij Vrij Enschede (PVE). It assumed that it had to file a request to change its appellation with the municipal central electoral committee in order to achieve this. However, the municipal committee rejected the request, upon which OPA appealed to the Department. The Department requested the Electoral Council's opinion. The Electoral Council stressed in its findings the distinction between changing an application — which can only be effected at the Electoral Council in case of a national registration — and changing the name of a group. In this case, it appeared that the party intended to aim for the latter and had, consequently, incorrectly filed a request to change its appellation. Soon afterwards, OPA withdrew the appeal.¹⁶

Arubans' eligibility to vote in the House of Representatives Elections

The Minister of the Interior and Kingdom Relations refused to register a Dutch citizen who lives in Aruba as a person eligible to vote in the election of members of the House of Representatives on 15 March 2017, since he is not eligible to vote pursuant to Section B 5 of the Elections Act. The relevant person appealed against this decision. He held that the conditions that currently apply to Aruban Dutch citizens to qualify for participation in the election of the members of the House of Representatives — having ever lived at least ten years in the Netherlands — is contrary to international law and therefore must be disregarded. Also, changing relations with the Kingdom — increased involvement from the Netherlands in the countries — entail that Aruban Dutch citizens should be granted eligibility to vote in the House of Representatives elections. The Minister does not share this point of view. In his opinion, Section B 5 of the Elections Act remains in full force. The opinion of the Electoral Council was requested by the Department and the Council endorsed the Minister's point of view. The Department is expected to reach its decision by early 2017.

¹⁵ ABRvS 3 February 2016 ECLI:NL:RVS:2016:243.

¹⁶ Letter of the Department of 29 February 2016. Case no. 201 600795/1 /A2.

7. Expertise and communication

In view of the upcoming House of Representatives elections to be held in March 2017, the Elections Information Centre was set up by mid-November 2016. This Information Centre will be active until April 2017. In the first period, up to January 2017, 376 questions were submitted to the Information Centre, with a peak load of 239 questions in December. Most of the questions were submitted by political parties (117 questions/31.1%). In addition, citizens asked questions (114 questions/30.3%) and municipalities as well (108 questions/28.7%%).

Website

By mid-2016, the redesigned website of the Electoral Council had gone live. This is a so-called platform website, based on a Platform Rijksoverheid Online template. Hosting is also provided. This step increased the website's legibility on various devices (responsive design) and guaranteed an optimal level of web guidelines.

A total of 276,359 visitors accessed the website in 2016. Throughout 2015, 393,803 visitors consulted the website (the peak day being 18-03-2016 with 58,264 visitors). In 2014, the total number of visitors was 308,516.

The number of visitors to the web page 'Kieswet Toegelicht' (Elections Act explained), with an accessible version of the Elections Act, was 6,333 in 2016. This part was developed in 2015 upon the request of Minister Plasterk.

The number of news items in 2016 was 57. This is considerably lower than the 93 news items in 2015.

Press

In 2016, the press contacted the Electoral Council approximately 150 times in relation to questions. The lion's share (84) pertained to the Advisory Referendum on Ukraine and — later on — the recommendations of the Electoral Council with respect to the evaluation of the referendum. In autumn, more press questions were gradually filed in connection with the House of Representatives elections in 2017 (46).

Twelve requests for an interview were granted in 2016. Half of these took place on television, on two Russian channels, a broadcast by Medialogica, Nieuwsuur (on the referendum), NOS and RTL Nieuws (on the number of registrations for the House of Representatives elections). The other interviews were given to radio (BNR 2x, Omroep MAX, and Radio 1) and to newspapers (Algemeen Dagblad and Volkskrant).

Social media

During the year, the Electoral Council posted 49 tweets; in 2015 ninety tweets were posted. The number of followers of the Electoral Council on Twitter increased from over 900 to 1053. Tweets are mainly used to generate attention for news items. In case of requests for information, people are referred to the Information Centre or their tweets are responded to, usually by directing tweeters to content on the website. The number of tweets to and about the Electoral Council increased in the run-up to the referendum on the Association Agreement with the Ukraine. The peak was around March/April 2016. Many responses were sent concerning the results of the referendum, and incidents around the day of the vote were reported.

Election results databank

The database contains election results starting from the year 1848. No new results were added to the databank in anticipation of the development of a new databank that will go live in 2017. The results of recent elections (referendum 2016 and redivision election Meierijstad 2016) are available in EML format at www.data.overheid.nl.

Publications and studies

In 2016, a publication was issued on the 100th anniversary of the Electoral Council. It comprises a collection of contributions from Edward Brüheim, Heleen Hörmann and Ron de Jong, with the title *Honderd jaar Kiesraad 1917-2017* (One Hundred Years of the Electoral Council 1917-2017).

In 2016, Jurjen Dieleman, a student trainee from Radboud University Nijmegen, carried out an investigation into political parties that had been registered by the Electoral Council in the past but did not participate in elections.

Scientific Advisory Council

The Electoral Council has had a Scientific Advisory Council in place since 2008. This council consists of internal and external experts in the areas of elections and electoral law. The Scientific Advisory Council is responsible for supervising and assessing the Electoral Council's studies. The members of the Council are:

Chairman.	Prof. W. Voermans, <i>Professor of Constitutional and Administrative Law at Leiden University</i>
Members:	Dr. H. van der Kolk, <i>Senior University Lecturer and Political Sciences researcher at the University of Twente</i> Dr. J. van Merriënboer, <i>Historian and Researcher at the Centre for Parliamentary History</i>
Secretary:	Dr. R. de Jong, <i>Researcher at the Electoral Council</i>

The Scientific Council met once in 2016 to discuss ongoing research activities.

Government Information (Public Access) Act

The Government Information (Public Access) Act (Wob) provides for the passive and active disclosure of documents. The Electoral Council discharges its duty of active disclosure by providing as much relevant information as possible. This is mainly done through the website www.kiesraad.nl and through publications in the Government Gazette.

In 2016, the Electoral Council received three requests under the Government Information (Public Access) Act, and the requested information was provided with the exception of information that was already publicly available.

- A citizen submitted a request for information, including minutes and communications with third parties, on the decision that a copy of a signature is permitted in the final request to hold a referendum;
- A citizen submitted a request for information on the number of FTEs that was employed in the organization in 2015, an organization chart, the job classification system and all labour costs in 2015;
- An association submitted a request for information on electronic filing of final requests to hold a referendum by means of the application of GeenPeil. Part of the request was sent to the Electoral Council by the Ministry of BZK.

Furthermore, the Electoral Council received a 'Wob' request at the end of 2016, which it is processing. The Electoral Council did not receive requests pursuant to the Reuse of Public Sector Information Act. However, the Council did receive one request to inspect personal data pursuant to the Personal Data Protection Act.



8. Network – national and international

Also in 2016, attention was paid to building and maintaining the Electoral Council's national and international network.

National

Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations

As in previous years, the Electoral Council regularly held consultations with administrative and official representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations on policy, legislative and administrative matters in 2016.

Association of Netherlands Municipalities and Dutch Association for Civil Affairs

There is regular contact with the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (Vereniging van Nederlandse Gemeenten, VNG) and the Dutch Association for Civil Affairs (Nederlandse Vereniging voor Burgerzaken, NVVB), for example in connection with NVVB's Elections Committee.

Political parties, municipalities, provinces and water boards

In the run-up to the first referendum pursuant to the Advisory Referendum Act, various instruction meetings were held for municipalities on use of the Supporting Software for Elections (Ondersteunende Software Verkiezingen, OSV). In addition, an instruction meeting for political parties and municipalities was held in respect of the redistricting elections in Schijndel, Sint-Oedenrode and Veghel, which jointly constitute the municipality of Meijerijstad as of 1 January.

Guest lectures and presentations

Staff members of the Secretariat gave a few guest lectures and presentations in 2016, for example at Radboud University Nijmegen and the University of Groningen.

International

Foreign delegations

The Electoral Council received delegations from Botswana and Myanmar in 2016.

Working visit

A delegation from the Electoral Council participated in the UK Visitors' Programme in Manchester from 21 to 24 June. The programme was organized by the British Electoral Commission. Furthermore, a delegation from the Electoral Council attended the 2016 U.S. Election Program (USEP), organized by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES) from 7 to 9 November.

Conferences

The Venice Commission (an advisory body of the Council of Europe) organizes an annual conference for European EMBs (Electoral Management Bodies). On 14 and 15 April, a delegation from the Electoral Council took part in the 13th European Conference, which took place in Bucharest (Romania). The overarching theme was: 'New Technologies in Elections: Public Trust and Challenges for Electoral Management Bodies'.

From 18 to 21 October, a delegation from the Electoral Council participated in the international conference on electronic voting in Lochau-Bregenz (Austria).

The seventh Global Elections Organization (GEO-7) Conference took place in Washington on 10 and 11 November. A delegation of the Electoral Council participated in discussions on technology that is or may become important to organizations that organize elections.



9. Finances

The budget of the Electoral Council is included in Chapter VII of the National Budget of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations, under Policy Article 1 'Public Administration and Democracy'.

The Council follows the budget and accountability cycle of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. Since 2012, all the overhead expenses of the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations have been combined in the budget. The Electoral Council's overhead expenses are also placed here. The Council's programme budget, however, is indicated separately in the National Budget.

A Supervision Arrangement has been made with the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. The Electoral Council periodically reports to the ministry on operational results.

Expendable Budget

The expendable budget of the Electoral Council amounted to € 3,025,000 in 2016. However, as forecasted referenda and relevant costs failed to materialize, the programme was underspent and € 600,000 of the budget that had been provided in the context of the referendum was returned to BZK in October. The total expendable budget for 2016 therefore was reduced to € 2,425,000 of which € 1,899,683 has been spent. € 17,250 was booked as an end-of-year margin in the 2016 Autumn Memorandum.

Remuneration for the Electoral Council Chair and members

The Electoral Council members received a remuneration for their efforts in 2016. The Chair received a monthly remuneration based on 0.3 FTE in scale 18 in accordance with the Civil Servants' Pay Decree (Bezoldigingsbesluit Burgerlijke Rijksambtenaren, BBRA). Electoral Council members received a remuneration of € 274.79 per meeting plus a travel allowance.

As a result of the implementation of the Senior Officials in the Public and Semi-Public Sector (Standards for Remuneration) Act (Wet Normering bezoldiging topfunctionarissen public and semi-public sector, WNT), the reporting obligation under this Act applies to the positions of the Chair and Electoral Council members.¹⁷ These standards apply to both the members of the Electoral Council and its official staff members.

Deposits

Political parties that participate in elections in which the Electoral Council acts as central electoral committee for the first time, must pay a deposit for the nomination of candidates, and also for registration if they participate with an appellation. The Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations received 37 deposits from political parties in 2016: 33 for registration of names ('appellations') and four for nomination of candidates. These deposits are refunded if the parties satisfy the relevant legal requirements. If this is not the case, the deposits are forfeited to the State.

¹⁷ See 2016 Annual Report of the Ministry of BZK.

