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The
Electoral
Commission



The Electoral Commission's Welsh language scheme

April 2010

Translations and other formats

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1 Introduction

1.1 Under the Welsh Language Act 1993 every public body providing services to the public in Wales has to prepare a scheme setting out how it will provide those services in Welsh.

1.2 This is the Electoral Commission's scheme.

1.3 It describes how we will give effect, so far as is both appropriate in the circumstances and reasonably practicable, to the principle established by the Welsh Language Act that, in the conduct of public business and the administration of justice in Wales, the Welsh and English languages should be treated on a basis of equality.

1.4 The scheme covers the services that we provide to the public in Wales.

1.5 In this scheme, the term **public** means individuals, legal persons and corporate bodies. It includes the public as a whole, or a section of the public, as well as individual members of the public. The term includes voluntary organisations and charities. Directors and others representing limited companies are also within the meaning of the term 'public'. It does not, however, include persons who are acting in a capacity which is representative of the Crown, Government or the State. Consequently, persons who fulfil official functions of a public nature, even though they are legal persons, do not come within the meaning of the word *public* when they are fulfilling those official functions.

1.6 Further information about the scope and purpose of Welsh language schemes can be found in the Welsh Language Board's guidelines (www.Welsh-language-board.org.uk).

1.7 The Electoral Commission is a UK-wide body serving voters across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. We support elections to Parliaments, Assemblies and local authorities across the UK as well as to the Westminster and European Parliaments. We ensure that we are accountable to elected representatives across the UK and maintain good communication with political parties.

1.8 The Electoral Commission Board currently comprises six Commissioners, one of whom is the Chair. The Commission Board will increase in due course from six members to 10 with the advent of additional Commissioners brought in by the Political Parties and Elections Act 2009 (PPE Act). All Commissioners are appointed by Her Majesty The Queen. We are accountable to the UK Parliament, and specifically to a Committee chaired by the Speaker of the House of Commons.

1.9 We have offices in London, Edinburgh, Cardiff and Belfast, and offices based in Exeter, London, Coventry and York that cover the regions of England.

1.10 Our main responsibilities are to:

- register political parties and third parties
- ensure that people understand and follow the rules on party and election finance
- publish details of where parties and candidates get money from and how they spend it
- set the standards for running elections and report on how well this is done
- make sure people understand it is important to register to vote, and know how to vote

1.11 This scheme was approved by the Welsh Language Board under Section 14 of the Act. It came into effect on 12 April 2010.

1.12 This scheme replaces our previous scheme, dated January 2006.

1.13 The Electoral Commission is keen to promote equality and diversity both as an employer and through its work. To support this aim the Commission has published a Single Equality Scheme and this can be found on the Commission's website.

2 Background

2.1 The Commission has adopted the principle that in the conduct of public business in Wales it will treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality. This Scheme sets out how the Commission will implement that principle in its provision of services to its stakeholders and the public in Wales.

2.2 The Commission publishes a number of reports, documents and statutory forms, as well as publications and communications materials aimed at the public in general. The Commission also undertakes public awareness campaigns in line with its statutory goal of promoting awareness of electoral and democratic systems.

2.3 Respect for both languages when operating in Wales has been the working approach of the Commission since it was established. It has, for example, accepted accounts from political parties in both English and Welsh and published reports that pertain directly to Wales bilingually within one volume.

2.4 The publication of a Welsh Language Scheme by The Electoral Commission incorporates many of the current working practices of the Commission in its operations in Wales and further formalises its language policies as required by the Welsh Language Board. This Scheme also covers work undertaken by third parties operating under contract to the Commission.

2.5 The Commission undertakes to monitor the effectiveness of implementation of the measures set out in this Scheme and will continue liaison from the Welsh Language Board as it is implemented.

2.6 In drawing up the Scheme, the Electoral Commission aims to ensure that Welsh and English speaking stakeholders, and the public in general, have access to services in their preferred language. In its public facing operations in Wales the Commission will treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality with both languages enjoying the same status and validity.

2.7 The Electoral Commission will require third parties it appoints, who have public facing functions in Wales, to abide by this Scheme and treat Welsh and English on the basis of equality when engaged in work for the Commission.

2.8 The Commission will monitor the Scheme closely to ensure that standards are maintained. As stipulated in the Scheme, the Commission's Wales Office will make an undertaking that all public documents it produces will be published bilingually. These are listed in Appendix A.

2.9 Where necessary the translation services for publications from the Commission's other offices may be arranged through the Commission's Wales Office.

3 Service planning and delivery

Steps to be taken to deliver services in the Welsh language

3.1 This Welsh Language Scheme applies to the Commission in its entirety and will be led by the Commission's Wales Office

3.2 This Scheme is designed to encourage a corporate level engagement with the Welsh language across the Commission. This should ensure stakeholders and members of the public who choose to communicate with the Commission in their preferred language, be it Welsh or English, are enabled to do so without there being a detrimental effect on the quality of service they receive.

3.3 The Commission will respond to written enquiries in the language in which they are received. Steps will be taken, via the Commission's website, a circular to stakeholders and signage in the Commission's Wales Office, to publicise the existence of the Wales Office and its capacity to operate bilingually.

The standard of service in Welsh

3.4 The Commission is committed to the dissemination of information to the public in Wales on the basis of equality between the Welsh and English languages. The Commission will deliver an equally high standard of service in Welsh and English and will set specific standards as to the use of Welsh. These standards and their implementation will be closely monitored as outlined in the relevant section of this Scheme.

New policies and/or initiatives

3.5 When the Commission formulates relevant new policies or initiatives we will assess the linguistic consequences beforehand to ensure that they meet the commitments given in this Welsh Language Scheme

3.6 Any staff involved in formulating new policies within the Commission will be made aware of the Welsh Language Scheme and any new policy or initiative will therefore promote and facilitate the use of Welsh wherever possible and will be consistent with this scheme rather than undermining it.

3.7 The Commission will undertake to consult with the Welsh Language Board in advance regarding proposals which have implications for this Scheme.

4 Dealing with the Welsh-speaking public

Written communication

4.1 The Electoral Commission welcomes written correspondence from the public in Welsh and English. Every letter received in Welsh by the Commission will receive a signed acknowledgement and/or a signed reply in Welsh. Should a member of staff be in receipt of a letter in Welsh and not themselves be able to correspond in Welsh, they will obtain translation facilities or otherwise will refer it to the Head of Office Wales who will be able to arrange for a signed reply to be issued in Welsh

4.2 The time targets for acknowledging letters in Welsh will be the same as for those in English (currently 5 working days) and should not result in any undue delay. Full answers, provided in Welsh or bilingually, will be provided within the same timescale as those given in English. The Commission's current policy is that answers should be expected within 5 days unless the correspondent is otherwise notified.

4.3 If the Commission is made aware that a specific stakeholder wishes to correspond in Welsh, or bilingually, for instance following a telephone or face-to-face conversation in Welsh, then letters instigated by the Commission will accord with that preference. Written communication from the Commission's Wales Office to stakeholders and the public will be distributed bilingually or in accordance with their language preference and the Commission will record language choice for use in telephone and other forms of communications where practicable.

Telephone communications

4.4 The Commission welcomes telephone calls from the public in Welsh and English. All staff, whether or not they are Welsh speaking, will give a bi-lingual greeting. A bi-lingual greeting will also be included on the Wales Office voicemail system.

4.5 If a caller wishes to speak Welsh they will be transferred to a Welsh speaker who is qualified to deal with their enquiry if one is available. In the event that a Welsh speaking staff member is not available the caller will be offered one of three options:

- Their call will be returned in Welsh as soon as a Welsh speaking staff member is available. They will be given an indication of when that might be.
- They can continue the call in English.
- They can continue the call by written correspondence in Welsh (or English if they prefer).

Public meetings and electors' rights

4.6 The Commission rarely holds meetings with the general public. However, Commissioners and Commission staff will hold meetings and conferences with various interest/professional groups via conferences and similar forums. In the course of its work the Commission, or third parties engaged by it, may also hold meetings with the general public as part of research programmes in which the Commission is engaged.

4.7 Invitations to any public meeting held by the Commission will be issued bilingually and we will welcome contributions in both Welsh and English. We will either inform the public that translation facilities will be made available or invite the public to let us know in advance which language they would like to speak in. In parts of Wales where at least 25% of the local population are Welsh speakers, we will make translation facilities available to allow participants to speak in their chosen language.

4.8 If it is not known beforehand who will be attending the meeting and whether or not anyone will wish to speak Welsh, the organiser of the meeting will decide according to his/her discretion whether a simultaneous translation service should be provided or not. That decision will be based on the nature of the meeting, its geographical location, who is likely to attend and previous experience of similar meetings.

Formal meetings

4.9 The Commission is committed to presenting a fully bilingual corporate identity in Wales. As part of this commitment should a stakeholder request a formal meeting with the Commission a language choice will be offered and accommodated.

5 Fulfillment of the Commission's role in Wales

Corporate identity and image

5.1 In Wales the Commission has adopted a fully bilingual public image and corporate identity as reflected in the Commission's name, address, logo, and standard factual information on stationery (e.g. letter heading, fax papers, business cards), identification badges and publications intended for the Welsh public at large. A review of current stocks will be undertaken to ensure that all relevant items comply with the requirements of the Scheme. The Commission will comply with the requirements of this Scheme when developing new corporate material.

5.2 In the Commission's Wales Office bilingual stationery is employed in all correspondence.

Signage

5.3 The Commission is committed to the provision of bilingual information signs within its Wales Office, including internal and external signage Schemes.

5.4 Where bilingual or separate Welsh and English signs are provided, they will be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence.

Website

5.5 The Commission's UK-wide corporate website is currently provided in English. A Welsh 'gate way' has been created leading to material which has been produced bilingually. This material will be presented in a format equal in terms of size, quality, legibility and prominence.

5.6 The Commission is committed to develop the Welsh language content on its website to include corporate information and expand on details of its objectives, and roles and responsibilities.

5.7 Where forms and guidance are presented on the website English and Welsh versions will be made available in line with the commitments made under the publications section of this Scheme (Appendix A).

5.8 Furthermore, there will be improved sign-posting across the site to signal to Welsh language users on what information can be found in Welsh across the site.

5.9 The Commission will prepare a programme over a four year period beginning in April 2010 setting out how we will increase the Welsh language

content of the corporate website over time. We will review our progress on an annual basis with the Welsh Language Board.

5.10 Visitors to the site are welcome to post Welsh messages requesting further information and to send Welsh language e-mails to the Commission. These will be responded to in accordance with the measures outlined in 'written communication'.

Forms and related guidance

5.11 The Commission will provide bilingual forms and guidance related to our work in Wales through the Commission's website.

Publishing and printing material for the general public in Wales

5.12 The Commission is committed to providing printed material aimed at the public in Wales in both Welsh and English with a presumption in favour of a single document rather than separate English and Welsh versions.

5.13 Should it be necessary to publish separate language versions of the same title – for example due to its length and size – the Commission will issue them simultaneously and distribute them together. They will carry a notice indicating a separate Welsh/English version is available.

5.14 Publications to the public in Wales and produced by third parties working under contract the Commission will be required to comply with the Scheme.

5.15 Where the Commission produces a bilingual version of a priced document its price will not be greater than a single language version of that document. Where separate Welsh and English versions of a document are produced the price of the Welsh version will be the same as the English version.

5.16 Written guidance will be made available to staff, designers and consultants working for the Commission who are dealing with bilingual publications. Staff may request this guidance from the Commission's Wales Office.

Research

5.17 Where the public in Wales is asked for information in response to written questionnaires as part of a research programme for the Commission's national studies, such questionnaires will be presented, and may be answered, in either English or Welsh.

Press releases

5.18 Press releases to the press and broadcasting media in Wales will be issued bilingually where appropriate or in the requested language

5.19 The Commission will ensure that Welsh speakers are available to undertake interviews with the Welsh language press and broadcasting media.

Advertising and campaigns

5.20 If the Commission, or an appointed agency or third party, are advertising or promoting the democratic process to the general public in Wales, in line with the Commission's role as defined in PPERA, they will do so bilingually with published advertisements presented in both languages when advertising in the printed press or on billboards which are situated or located in Wales. Advertising and campaigns involving other media channels will be presented in the language appropriate to that channel, or bilingually where appropriate.

5.21 Electoral Commission displays at exhibitions and conferences in Wales will be fully bilingual.

Referendum question assessment

5.22 By law the Commission must comment on the intelligibility of UK, national and regional referendum questions and some local government referendum questions.

5.23 A referendum question should present the options clearly, simply and neutrally and so it should:

- Be easy to understand
- Be to the point
- Be unambiguous
- Avoid encouraging voters to consider one response more favourable than another
- Avoid misleading voters

5.24 The Commission will consult fully with the Welsh Language Board to ensure that the Welsh language question used on bilingual ballot papers in Wales fully mirrors the principles considered in the development of any question

5.25 The Commissions will also ensure that the process of assessing the Welsh language question put to us by the Secretary of State will mirror that of the drafted question

Official public notices and recruitment advertising

5.26 If the Commission publishes official notices or advertises staff vacancies in publications distributed mainly or wholly in Wales it will do so bilingually and the Welsh and English versions will be shown together and be equal in terms of format, size, quality, legibility and prominence.

6 Implementing and monitoring the Scheme

Staffing

6.1 The human resources department of The Electoral Commission will keep a record of staff members who speak Welsh to aide in cross referral of Welsh language enquiries. The number and distribution of Welsh speakers at present does enable the Commission to provide a fully bilingual service across all its services. The measures set out below are intended to reinforce the Commission's ability to continue to meet that objective with the support of its staff.

6.2 The Commission will examine its services so as to identify those jobs where the ability to speak Welsh is essential or desirable and will formulate job descriptions accordingly. This requirement may be defined as a component of a team rather than being attached to a particular post. It must be stressed that no post holder currently unable to speak Welsh will have their employment adversely affected by the language policies in this Scheme.

6.3 The Commission will encourage people with bilingual skills to apply for jobs in the Wales Office by including a statement in the appropriate recruitment advertisements that the Commission operates a Welsh Language Scheme and welcomes applications from Welsh and English speakers.

6.4 No staff will come under any pressure to train in Welsh language skills or otherwise learn the language and all appointments will be made on merit and in accordance with equal opportunities policies and employment legislation.

Learning Welsh

6.5 The Commission is fully committed to encouraging and supporting those members of staff who want to learn Welsh or improve their skills in Welsh.

Recruitment

6.6 Linguistic ability will be considered as one of the many relevant skills when appointing staff within Wales. Where linguistic ability in Welsh is considered to be essential or desirable, this will be stated in relevant job advertisements.

Administrative arrangements

6.7 Guidance will be issued to all staff to ensure familiarity with this Scheme via the Commission's intranet. This guidance, which will include a Briefing and Flowchart, will identify how the Scheme is to be implemented and will specify responsibilities of relevant staff in implementation.

6.8 Each directorate and devolved office of the Commission will assume responsibilities for aspects of the Scheme which relate to their own areas of work. The Commission will ensure via its normal contractual procedures and Scheme monitoring group, that translators used by the organisation are suitably qualified and able to provide a high quality service.

Services delivered on behalf of the Commission by other parties

6.9 The Electoral Commission will, when making any new agreements, require any bodies, organisations or companies or other parties carrying out services on its behalf for the public in Wales to comply with appropriate provisions of this Scheme. The Commission will ensure that its contractors or agents who provide services to, or communicate with, the public in Wales implement all relevant elements of this Scheme when carrying out their role. Such contractors and third parties will be required to cooperate with the Commission in the effective monitoring of the Scheme and regular performance reports will be expected from them as part of the standard monitoring arrangements.

6.10 Relevant tendering documents and contracts relating to third parties, agents and contractors undertaking to provide services to the public in Wales on behalf of the Commission will specify the requirements as to the use of the Welsh language in accordance with this Scheme.

Monitoring

6.11 The implementation of the Scheme will be monitored by the Head of Office Wales supported by the Principal Officer Wales in consultation with relevant directorates.

6.12 The Commission will monitor the implementation of the Scheme which will enable the organisation to achieve the following goals:

- Measure if the Commission is complying with this Scheme and how well it is accomplishing this.
- Measure the quality of Welsh language service.
- Measure the effectiveness of the Commission's Scheme management procedures.
- Compare resources available to need in terms of complying with this Scheme and draw conclusions on the sufficiency of those resources.
- Identify weaknesses in service provision and provide an action plan and timetable to remedy that situation.
- The Commission will provide the Welsh Language Board with an annual report which describes progress in implementing the measures in the scheme.

Publicising the Scheme and the Electoral Commission's Welsh language services

6.13 The Electoral Commission is committed to ensuring a strong level of awareness of its Welsh Language Scheme. The Commission believes that its employees and contractors should be aware of the needs and requirements placed upon them by this Scheme. The Commission also believes it is a priority that its stakeholders and the public in general are aware that the Commission operates a Welsh Language Scheme.

6.14 The Electoral Commission will inform the public in Wales of the Scheme ensuring that those who deal with the Commission are aware of the Scheme and its contents. Copies of the Scheme will be made available on request to any relevant stakeholders or members of the public who request them.

6.15 The following methods of publicising the Scheme will be adopted:

- a) publication of the Scheme on the Commission's website with guidance made available to employees and contractors
- b) text to be prepared for the Commission website
- c) copies of the Scheme to be distributed to the Commission's contractors as well as to other interested organisations, individuals or stakeholders such as the National Assembly on request

6.16 We will cooperate with the Board in order to resolve complaints – and during any investigation held under Section 17 of the Welsh Language Act

Complaints

6.17 Any enquiries or complaints regarding this Scheme should be directed to:

Rhydian Huw Thomas
Deputy Head of Wales Office
The Electoral Commission
Caradog House
1-6 St Andrews Place
Cardiff
CF10 3BE

Tel. 02920 346800
Email: rthomas@electoralcommission.org.uk

We will welcome, consider and record any complaints or suggestions for improving its bilingual services.

Appendix 1: A breakdown of Commission output in the context of this Scheme

Table A1: Guide on breakdown of Commission output

Output	Audience	Language provision
Statutory reports UK wide statutory reports Wales specific statutory reports Annual / Corporate Plan	General General General	English only Bilingual Bilingual
Guidance / Forms / Questionnaires UK wide* Wales specific Circulars / Admin alerts	Specific stakeholders Specific stakeholders Specific stakeholders	Bilingual Bilingual English only
Issues Papers / Consultation papers / Briefings / Factsheets UK wide Wales specific	Specific stakeholders Specific stakeholders	English only Bilingual
Public awareness campaigns / Community bases awareness campaigns UK wide Wales specific	General General	Bilingual in Wales Bilingual in Wales
Human resources UK wide Wales Office posts	Potential applicants Potential applicants	English only Bilingual

* The Commission seeks to provide forms and related guidance in regard to elections held in Wales bilingually through the Commission's website. The Commission has initiated a programme of rolling translation which will allow it to fulfill this aim.

Appendix B: Action plan

Table B1: Action plan for the corporate website

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
Ensure it is clear for Welsh users where they can find Welsh content on the site	Clean up the home page of the Cymru area to include a consistent feature where it explains to users how to use the website to find content in Welsh.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove existing 'irregular' features. • Remove the dynamic listings on the bottom of the Cymru page that currently says 'Guidance', 'Forms' etc as these give the user a false expectation. 		
Develop the Welsh language content on the website to include corporate information	Add pages to secondary navigation including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • about us • corporate objectives and achievements • roles and responsibilities • corporate structure 			
Improve sign posting and cross-linking so users don't find Welsh content appearing in the middle of English pages	At the moment, links to Welsh content can be found outside of the Cymru pages, e.g. the UK Parliamentary elections pages under Guidance . This is where content to guidance and forms in Welsh appear with their English equivalent on the same page.	There needs to be improved sign posting and cross-linking so that if there is Welsh content available as users navigate the English pages, they can select that option and be taken to a separate page to access the Welsh content.		

Ensure the Cymru pages are all in Welsh		Currently on the Cymru page, half of the page is in Welsh and half in English. We aim to ensure that all navigation on the Cymru page is in Welsh.		
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Table B2: Effective understanding of the Commission’s Welsh Language Scheme

	2010–11	2011–12	2012–13	2013–14
a) Staff training	Develop and distribute an internal guide to Welsh Language Scheme to all staff by April 2011	Develop interactive learning module for all staff on Welsh Language Scheme by April 2012	Detailed series of staff briefing sessions across the Commission by 2013	Staff survey on opinion’s attitudes to the Welsh language scheme and its effectiveness by 2014
		Work with the Campaigns and Public Information Team in developing a resource for staff on all aspects relating to public information (correspondence, public and internal meetings, help lines etc) and the Welsh Language	Work with the Campaigns Team in developing a resource for staff relating to Campaigns / Advertising and the Welsh Language	Work with the Research Team in developing a resource for staff relating to the Commission’s research work and the Welsh Language
b) Staff audit	Carry out an internal audit of all staff to ascertain those able to speak, write and read the Welsh Language effectively within the organisation	Carry out an internal audit of all staff to ascertain those able to speak, write and read the Welsh Language effectively within the organisation	Carry out an internal audit of all staff to ascertain those able to speak, write and read the Welsh Language effectively within the organisation	Carry out an internal audit of all staff to ascertain those able to speak, write and read the Welsh Language effectively within the organisation

c) Elections	Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any election held in Wales	Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any election held in Wales	Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any election held in Wales	E Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any election held in Wales
d) Referendums	Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any referendum held in Wales	Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any referendum held in Wales	Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any referendum held in Wales	Ensure that staff are aware of the obligations under the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme in its preparation work for any referendum held in Wales
	Ensure that the Commission complies with its Welsh Language Scheme in ensuring the intelligibility of any referendum question is judged and tested equally in Welsh and English	Ensure that the Commission complies with its Welsh Language Scheme in ensuring the intelligibility of any referendum question is judged and tested equally in Welsh and English	Ensure that the Commission complies with its Welsh Language Scheme in ensuring the intelligibility of any referendum question is judged and tested equally in Welsh and English	Ensure that the Commission complies with its Welsh Language Scheme in ensuring the intelligibility of any referendum question is judged and tested equally in Welsh and English

e) Monitoring the Commission's Welsh Language Scheme	Report back to the Welsh Language Board on how the Commission is meeting the requirements of the scheme and action plan by June 2010	Report back to the Welsh Language Board on how the Commission is meeting the requirements of the scheme and action plan by June 2011	Report back to the Welsh Language Board on how the Commission is meeting the requirements of the scheme and action plan by June 2012	Report back to the Welsh Language Board on how the Commission is meeting the requirements of the scheme and action plan by June 2013
				Produce a revised version of the Welsh Language Scheme in conjunction with the Welsh Language Board by March 2014

Table B3: Working with third parties and groups

	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Advice to contractors	Ensure that all contractors working with the Commission are provided with a copy of the updated Welsh Language Scheme	Ensure that all contractors working with the Commission are provided with a copy of the updated Welsh Language Scheme	Ensure that all contractors working with the Commission are provided with a copy of the updated Welsh Language Scheme	Ensure that all contractors working with the Commissions are provided with a copy of the updated Welsh Language Scheme
	Face to face briefings with new contractors / suppliers who will be working with the Commission in Wales	Face to face briefings with new contractors / suppliers who will be working with the Commission in Wales	Face to face briefings with new contractors / suppliers who will be working with the Commission in Wales	Face to face briefings with new contractors / suppliers who will be working with the Commission in Wales

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see inside back cover for details.

We are an independent body set up by
the UK Parliament. Our aim is integrity and
public confidence in the democratic process.
We regulate party and election finance and
set standards for well-run elections.

Democracy matters