



Press Release

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Maltese parliamentary delegation participates in high-level conference on the Future of Election Observation

MP Mario Galea participated in a high-level conference on the Future of Election Observation, at the European Parliament in Brussels, on 10-11 October 2018.

The aim of the conference was to create a platform for discussions between experts hailing from various organisations, institutions, and other important stakeholders active in election observation, and parliamentarians from the European and national parliaments who are highly experienced in election observation. The aim was to discuss how to make concerted efforts and increase cooperation to not repeat past mistakes and to face current challenges to election observation in an adequate and efficient way.

The conference was divided into a number of sessions, starting with a session on the challenges and opportunities of election observation: ICT, tackling disinformation, and the use of social media, followed by sessions on the organisation of elections, conflict prevention, security and peaceful transition; the role and best practices of parliamentary observation, including the code of conduct; and enhancing EU-AU-UN cooperation on electoral processes and electoral observation, including methodology of election observation missions.

Mario Galea participated as a panel speaker in the session on the role and best practices of parliamentary observation, including the code of conduct. In his address, he emphasised the advantages of having an election observation mission to monitor elections for a sovereign state such as deterring fraud, enhancing the public's trust in the democratic process, and in having an external review of the electoral process which could be an opportunity to make improvements. He also explored these arguments from a human rights perspective, referring to a number of rights and fundamental freedoms at the core of the work of election observers such as the right to vote through secret ballot, the right to run for office, the right for universal and equal suffrage, freedom of expression, freedom of affiliation and association, freedom of assembly, freedom of opinion, freedom from discrimination, and the right for an effective remedy, to mention a few. This link highlights the importance and relevance of election observation. It also emphasises the responsibility of those who participate in such missions.

He mentioned a scandal involving a PACE-election observation mission in Azerbaijan which occurred in 2010, describing the election as flawed with human rights violations. And yet, the head of mission gave the all-clear. This scandal, also referred to as caviar diplomacy as Azeri caviar constitutes a very fine gift indeed, not only exposed the lack of integrity of a corrupt few, but

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compromised election observation missions more broadly. Mario Galea therefore stressed the importance that parliaments select the right observers for these missions and called on national parliaments to adopt a code of conduct and to establish a supervisory committee to monitor its implementation to ensure that certain internationally-set standards are followed by participants and in case of breaches, those Parliaments can take measure accordingly. A number of international institutions and inter-parliamentary organisations, including the European Parliament, have adopted or are in the process of adopting a joint code of conduct.

MP Galea also made a brief intervention in the debate which took place during the first session on ICT and the use of social media. He focussed on crowd-sourcing observation that is, having the electorate monitoring and commenting on the election on social media. This phenomenon should complement, but never substitute, traditional election observation.

Mario Galea has both academic and practical experience in election observation. He is in possession of a post-graduate diploma in Election Observation and Election Assistance from the National University of Catalonia, Spain. He participated both as a member and as head of mission on behalf of the European Union, the Commonwealth Secretariat, and the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, to mention some, in Gambia, Gaza and the West Bank, Yemen, and Zimbabwe, amongst others.