

ICT and Elections

THEMATIC WORKSHOP

Information Technology and Elections Management
Informed Decisions for Sustainable Outcomes



European Commission
Development and Cooperation DG
Eutops/afid



United Nations
UN
Development Programme

5 - 9 March 2012, Mombasa, Kenya

Session: e-Voting Theories

Electronic Voting in Ireland A Case Study

Ronan McDermott



European Commission
Development and Cooperation DG
Eutops/afid



United Nations
UN
Development Programme

5 - 9 March 2012, Mombasa, Kenya

Elections in Ireland

- Unusual (though not unique) STV PR system to elect *Dáil* (parliament)
- Direct elections for President of Ireland
- Local Government bodies directly elected
- European Parliament elections

Elections Management in Ireland

- Ministry has legislative responsibility
- Independent Returning Officers conduct elections
- Local Authorities responsible for Voter Registration
- Previous government committed to a unified Elections Management Body

What Drove e-Voting?

- National Pride
- Cost
- Speed of Counting

Soft Factors

- Transparency
- Sustainability
- Cultural Relevance
- Civic Acceptance
- Political Acceptance

Procurement and Early Tests

- Request for proposals - 1998
- Enabling Legislation – 1999-2000
- Tender and bidding - 2000
- Early test phase – 6 machines – 2001
- Further Legislation – 2001

Procurement and Pilot Tests

- 600 machines procured for pilot tests
- Pilot test – three constituencies – early 2002
- 400 machines procured for more pilot tests in a referendum – late 2002
- 6,000 machines ordered in March 2003 for use nationwide in June 2004

Political Consensus Lost

- Reports from Returning Officers in pilot constituencies suppressed.
- Efforts by civil society and other stakeholders to seek greater access to the process were dismissed.
- Government used its majority to force a vote and proceed.
- Political opposition to electronic voting hardened.

Commission on Electronic Voting

- Established March 2004
- Independent – chaired by a high court judge
- Explicit mandate with respect to imminent elections – just eight weeks to green light/red light solution
- Final report took over two years

A Difficult Message...

“...the Commission finds that it is not in a position to recommend with the requisite degree of confidence the use of the chosen system at elections in Ireland in June 2004. The Commission wishes to emphasise that its conclusion is not based on any finding that the system will not work, but on the finding that it has not been proven at this time to the satisfaction of the Commission that it will work.”

Commission on Electronic Voting, Ireland, 2004

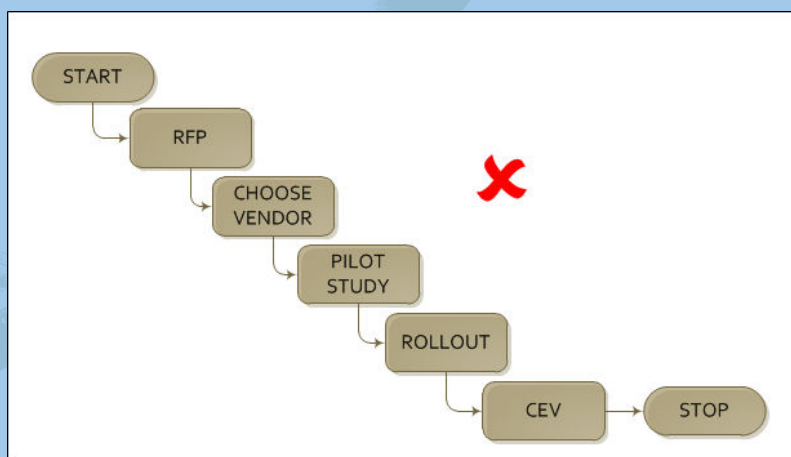
The work of the CEV

- Evaluation of previous testing
- Review of hardware, software, security, testing
- Evaluation of EVM, peripherals, software
- Reliability and Accuracy
- Validity of Counting Software
- Risk & Control Assessment
- Review of Documentation
- and Procedures
- Risk Analysis
- Secrecy of the Ballot
- International Experience
- Comparison of paper and e-voting
- Feasibility of Audit
- Public Submissions
- Vendor Submission

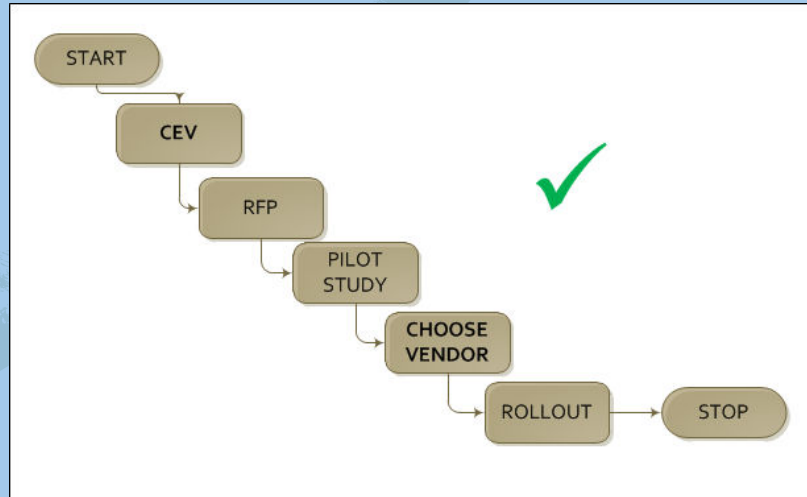
The Endgame

- CEV Final Report 2006
- 2007 Elections conducted using paper ballots
- April 2009 – Minister announces the scrapping of the electronic voting machines
- Total cost – approaching €60m (US\$68m)
- This is over €20 (almost US\$23) per voter

The Irish Approach



A Better Approach



Considerations for EMBs

- Transparency is not negotiable
- Consensus means more than the absence of dissent
- Do not dismiss stakeholder concerns
- Trust is a delicate thing

Considerations - continued

- Keep procurement competitive
- Take a broad view of cost benefit
- Consult, consult, consult
- Learn from the mistakes of others – these lessons are free!

A Parting Thought

“The most difficult subjects can be explained to the most slow-witted man if he has not formed any idea of them already; but the simplest thing cannot be made clear to the most intelligent man if he is firmly persuaded that he knows already, without a shadow of doubt, what is laid before him.”

Leo Tolstoy, 1897