

Presentation of A.V. Vavilov, Deputy Chairman of the CEC of Russia,  
at the conference of the Association of European Election Officials  
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Practical Organization of Professional Training of the Personnel of Election Commissions in the  
Russian Federation

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, allow me to thank the organizers of the conference for the opportunity to take part in the discussion at this authoritative forum and express my conviction that the exchange of opinions here will be of practical importance.

Over the past years, the training and professional upgrading of the personnel of election commissions has been one of the priorities in the activity of the Central Election Commission of Russia.

In spite of the fact that the young democracy of Russia is merely fifteen years old, in the past years we have formed a system of continuous multi-level training for the personnel of election commissions at the federal level and down to the local level.

This was greatly facilitated by the establishment of the Center for Training in Election Technologies at the CEC of Russia, which organizes and coordinates the work in the field of the legal culture of election process participants.

The need for systematic planned organization of this work arose in connection with the updating of the Russian Federation laws on elections and referenda and rotation of the personnel of election commissions.

Therefore, in 2001 – 2003, a three-level training system was developed for the first time, which was based on the experience accumulated in the field of the professional training of the personnel of election commissions and embraced election commissions of all levels – from election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects to precinct election commissions. The training was carried out in two stages.

At the first stage (September 2001 – June 2002), professional upgrading courses were organized in Moscow for the heads of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects.

At the second stage (latter half of 2002 – 2003), training was organized for members of district, territorial and precinct election commissions and members of the staff of elections commissions of the Russian Federation subjects and it was conducted directly in the subjects of the Russian Federation.

The practical experience gained in the organization and conduct of the training of the personnel of election commissions in 2001 – 2003 showed that it was advisable and to continue this promising work.

In accordance with the Plan for the Organization of the Training of Personnel of Election Commissions of the Russian Federation for 2004 – 2007 approved by the CEC of Russia we have

successfully accomplished the task of purpose-oriented training of election and referendum officials, primarily, members of election commissions of all levels and members of their staff, which was targeted at the main categories of the personnel of election commissions, depending on their functional duties, level of responsibility and qualification. The list of the categories of the trainees was extended to include staff members of election commissions concerned with the legal, documentary and financial support of their activity.

At the same time, measures were taken to improve the forms of the organization and conduct of the training.

The multi-discipline study program “Election Law and Election Process in the Russian Federation” prepared for the 2006 academic year by the Russian Center for Training in Election Technologies was based on a balanced combination of theoretical sessions (lectures, lecture-dialogues) and practical sessions (seminars, practical training, business games, etc.).

A special feature of the program was its adaptation not only to the concrete category of the trainees (chairpersons, deputy chairpersons, secretaries) but practically to each of nine groups of trainees who took the training course in Moscow in 2006. For this purpose a study was made of the functional duties of the heads of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects and the forms and contents of training sessions were suggested on the basis of this study.

The training sessions of all of these nine groups of trainees were conducted by highly qualified lecturers of the Russian Civil Service Academy, members of the CEC of Russia and its staff, executives of the Federal Center of Informatization and the Center for Training in Election Technologies.

An important role in the organization of the training is assigned to the exchange of the experience, collective discussion of the problems included in the study program. This is particularly important because the representatives of each subject of the Russian Federation have accumulated unique experience in the course of many years of their practical work.

The training sessions include roundtables with the participation of the officials of the Prosecutor General’s Office of the Russian Federation, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation and the Interior Ministry of Russia, which allows the real state of affairs to be discussed in the form of a dialogue when judicial disputes connected with the organization and conduct of elections are considered.

In the course of the training we have, for the first time, successfully applied the practice of presentation of elections commissions of the Russian Federation subjects. Such presentations take place in the conference hall of the CEC of Russia, where 28 such presentations were held in 2006.

At the presentations the trainees could get acquainted with the system of the election commissions of the region; the history of the elections in the given Russian Federation subject; the legislative activity of the election commission; interaction of the election commission with the bodies of state power and local self-government, with law enforcement bodies and public organizations; the commission’s activity related to the conduct of elections and raising the legal culture of voters and election officials. All speakers at such presentations showed slides and special video films which disclosed the geopolitical, socio-cultural, scientific, technical and production potential of the regions.

The presentations included exhibitions of publications issued by election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects.

A special feature of the professional upgrading courses for the heads of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects was organization of in-situ training sessions at the place of location of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects. These in-situ training sessions dealt with such subjects as raising of the professional qualifications of election and referendum officials and the legal education of voters in the Russian Federation.

Apart from the acquaintance with the work of election commission of the Russian Federation subject, with the historical and cultural features of the region the participants in in-situ sessions were offered specially prepared role-playing games, roundtables, business games, open lessons, students' festivals and master classes. The participants in all these events included students of higher educational establishments, representatives of the regional branches of political parties, deputies of parliaments, representatives of the administration of the Russian Federation subjects, journalists, members of youth parliaments, and so on.

On the whole, the practice of organization of in-situ training sessions proved highly effective: it made it possible for the participants directly and thoroughly to get acquainted with the work of a number of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects and draw on the useful experience directly at the source thereof.

A new form of training in 2006 was preparation of papers on the problems of election law and election process by the heads of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects.

The topicality and importance of the problem raised by the author of the paper, the arguments in support of the conclusions, the style of the presentation and the practical value of the work were the criteria on the basis of which 27 best papers were selected and recommended for publication in the Journal About Elections, the organ of the CEC of Russia, in the form of postal roundtable.

In the organization of the training process use is made of computer testing programs to test the professional knowledge gained by the trainees in the course of their practical work and directly during the training.

Preliminary testing made it possible to identify the most topical areas to be dealt with during subsequent training of a concrete group of trainees. The comparison of the results of the preliminary and concluding tests made it possible to reveal the progress made by the trainees.

In addition to this, provisions were made for checking the computer literacy of the trainees and trainees were instructed in the practical utilization of the main functions of the State Automated System "Vybory."

The concluding stage of the training is, naturally, certification of the trainees and receipt of a uniform certificate.

So far as training directly in the Russian Federation subjects is concerned, the practical experience shows that at the level of the Russian Federation subjects the training conducted at the federal level is transformed with due account for the national, historical and other peculiarities.

To aid election officials in the Russian regions the Central Election Commission prepares methodological materials to be used in the training of members of territorial and precinct election commissions and other electoral process participants.

Considering the special features of the preparation and conduct of the federal election campaigns scheduled for December 2007, the need for the election process participants to concentrate on the study of the innovations of the federal laws the arrangements have already been made to circulate to election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects the program of the study course “Election Law and Election Process of the Russian Federation,” test assignments, a manual for organization of the training of members of precinct election commissions.

Over a million Russian citizens live abroad and, therefore, special study programs have been prepared for training members of precinct election commissions formed outside the Russian Federation. These programs are posted on the website of the CEC of Russia.

Training organizers are continuously looking for new forms and methods of training and for topical subjects, extending the training to ever new categories of trainees. The use of new unusual and attractive forms of training stimulates the professional interest of election officials, contributes to the growing prestige of the institution of elections and to the formation of a positive public opinion about elections.

In August 2007, using an updated study program “Election Law and Election Process in the Russian Federation” we organized training of newly elected chairpersons and secretaries of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects, which were formed in May – August 2007.

Also in August 2007, a seminar was organized for the chairpersons of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects on the theme “Fight Against Unlawful Technologies in Election Campaigns.” This was the first seminar of this kind and it was devoted to the problem of countering unlawful technologies in the course of election campaigns. The main rapporteurs at the seminar were the authoritative technologists some of them competing with each other by favoring different candidates or parties. In the course of the discussion the greatest interest was evoked by the problems connected with the infractions likely to appreciably affect the election results: infractions in the preparation of registration documents for clearing the party or candidate for elections; infractions in the conduct of election campaigning; infractions in the course of voting and vote counting at polling stations; infractions in completing the protocols of election commissions and other election documents.

At the seminar a roundtable was organized on the theme “Unlawful Technologies and Prognostication of the Behavior of Election Process Participants.” Its participants, who included members of the CEC of Russia, chairpersons of election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects, representatives of the law enforcement bodies, heads and employees of PR agencies, exchanged the experience in stopping unlawful technologies in the course of elections.

In the course of the business game at the seminar - countering unlawful technologies - the players simulated possible situations in which unlawful technologies may be used in voting and vote counting and devised measures to stop this unlawful activity.

In connection with the forthcoming federal election campaigns in 2007 – 2008, a model polling station was organized at the Central Election Commission for a business game – the work of the precinct election commission on voting day. A training film prepared on the basis of the results of this business game was circulated to all election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects.

Election commissions of the Russian Federation subjects use the forms of the work with young people which I find rather interesting.

The knowledge of young people about elections is expanded by the use of the citizenship education programs and programs for the study of the election process; the interactive methods of work, such as school Olympiads for citizenship education disciplines and election law; debates, competitions, compositions. We attach a great importance to the formation of representative bodies of school self-government, first at the level of classes and then at the level of schools, such bodies being elected by voting. In order to realize the interests of young people in the power structures youth parliaments are formed on an alternative election basis in most regions of Russia. The first voting experience of the future and young voters gained in games and training creates the atmosphere of healthy competition and rivalry and forms a stable democratic world outlook.

To raise the social activity of young people, form a positive public opinion about the forthcoming elections and create an HR reserve for election commissions of all levels tours of the building of the CEC of Russia are organized for students of the higher educational establishments and for schoolchildren of senior grades since May 2007. On the tour the young people are told about the operation of State Automated System of the Russian Federation GAS “Vybory and shown the exhibitions organized in the building.

Such tours are highly popular. This does not only propagandize the work of the CEC of Russia but also contributes to active participation of voters in election campaigns.

Thus, the conclusion that may be drawn from the foregoing is that the professional training of the personnel of election commissions of all levels in the Russian Federation is one of the most important elements of the activity of the CEC of Russia.