

How to communicate uncertainty?

PANDEMIC

COVID-19

ELECTIONS

PANDEMIA

COVID-19

ELECCIONES

пандемия

COVID-19

выборы

جائحة

كوفيد-19

والانتخابات

PANDEMI

COVID-19

PEMILIHAN



Ingrid Bicu
International IDEA

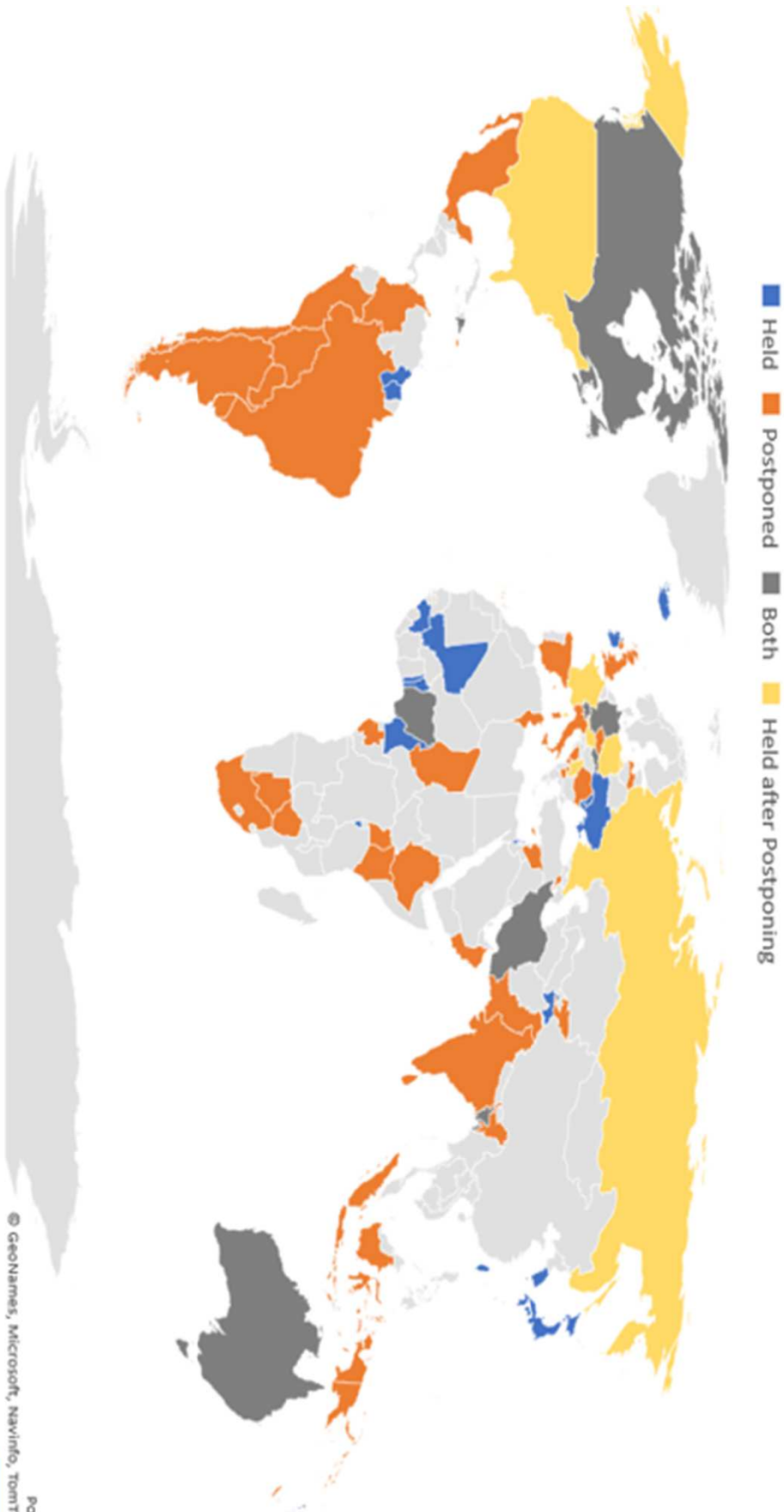
Association of European Election Officials
(ACEEEO)

2 June 2020

THE THIRD ONLINE
SYMPOSIUM

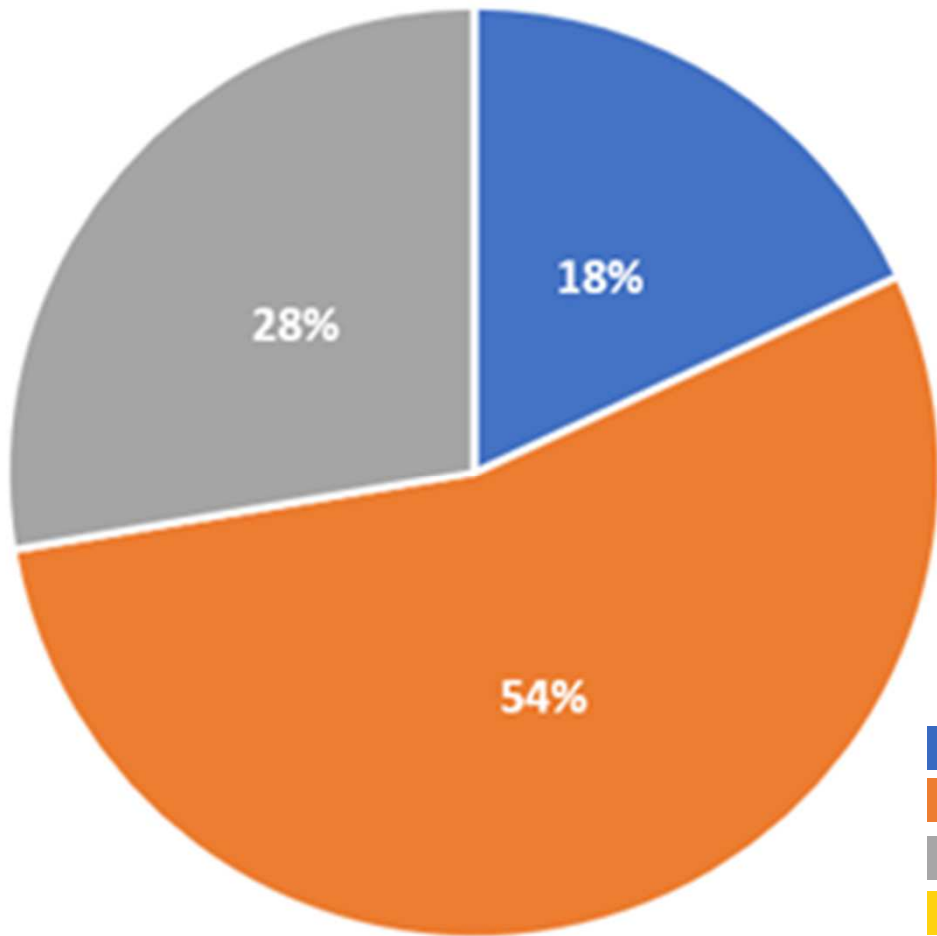
Impact of COVID-19 on Elections - Global overview

Covid-19: Holding or Postponing Elections?

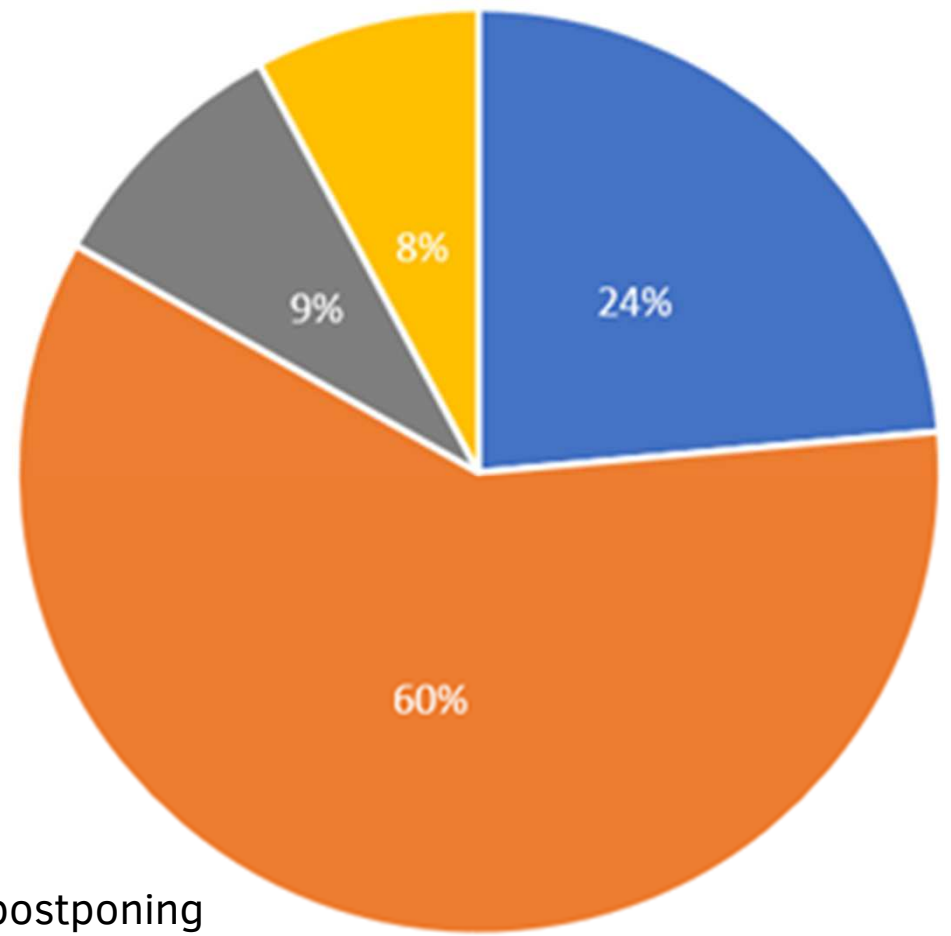


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beginning of June 2020



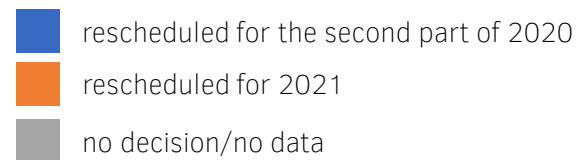
end of June 2020



- held
- postponed
- both
- held after postponing

Postponed elections.. for how long?

The initial unity and collective support for the emergency measures is being replaced by debate.



When elections are held amid COVID-19, the decision could be perceived as irresponsible and in case of low turnout, the legitimacy of elections questioned.

When elections are postponed due to the pandemic, the political rights of the citizens are suspended.

When the rules are changed in the middle of the game (alternative voting arrangements), it could be associated with an attempt of fraud.

Inadequate voter information campaigns may prevent the electorate from properly casting their ballots.

The limitations to in-person campaigning and fundraising could raise concerns over the capacity of the voters of making informed decisions and question the fairness of elections.

The (international) observation missions initially planned may no longer be deployed, also raising concerns about the legitimacy of elections.

SCENARIO ANALYSIS - THE ELECTORAL CYCLE

Meanwhile ...

democracy is at risk of becoming a collateral victim of COVID-19.

A CALL TO
 **DEFEND DEMOCRACY**

PROPER COMMUNICATION BUILDS TRUST AND REDUCES FEAR of abuse

In the absence of proper communication, the restrictive measures imposed by many states to contain the spread of the virus do nothing but grow the public fear, now increasingly related to the (risk of permanent) loss of fundamental rights and liberties.

However, even the rights restricting decisions, when clearly explained and effectively communicated, have the potential of consolidating trust, which in turn dispels fear.

ANSWERS

ADDRESS FEAR

COMMUNICATING

UNCERTAINTY

BUILDS TRUST

CITIZENS HAVE TO DISTINGUISH BETWEEN A WIDE VARIETY OF DATA AND INFORMATION, OFTEN CONFLICTING, UNDER THE PRESSURE OF TIME AND FEAR.

FALSE INFORMATION IS WIDELY DISSEMINATED, INCLUDING FROM STATE LEADERSHIP STRUCTURES, GENERATING EVEN MORE CONFUSION AND DISTRUST.

STATE INSTITUTIONS FOUND THEMSELVES INVOLVED IN THIS GLOBAL CRISIS WHILE FACING A SIGNIFICANT DEFICIT OF TRUST.

An effective communication should...

- Build and maintain trust and credibility
- Position the EMB as the main source of information and expertise on everything related to elections
- Inform and educate the citizens
- Address rumors and mis/disinformation
- Facilitate bidirectional communication, collaboration and cooperation
- Develop/implement/support informed decision making mechanisms

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WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES?

Creating a clear and common understanding of and compliance with the decided measures.

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WHO IS THE TARGET AUDIENCE

Voters, poll workers, candidates, political parties, observers etc. with an emphasis on inclusivity.

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WHAT DO YOU COMMUNICATE?

The consistency of the messages conveyed by all the actors involved is key in maintaining the trust and decrease the level of uncertainty among the population.

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WHO COMMUNICATES?

EMBs have a central role in presenting the arguments for the decisions made related to elections, the expected outcomes, the risks as well as the measures that will be put in place as a guarantee for safeguarding democracy.

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HOW?

The electoral authorities must prove leadership through coherently and unambiguously explaining the options, the decisions made, the reasons behind them, the data and information they rely on and the expected results, while also recognizing uncertainty in a transparent and empathetic way.

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**THROUGH WHAT
MEANS?**

Fact-based information and messages must be conveyed through all the available means to reach all the audiences.

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**WHEN AND HOW
FREQUENT?**

Information should be shared regularly. New developments, guidance or decisions should be publicly communicated as soon as possible to avoid the spread of rumors.

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**HOW DO YOU
REACT TO
CRITICISM?**

Having a quick reaction can be as useful as having no reaction, depending on the context. Again, transparency is key.



THANK YOU

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