

Introduction

The e-voting trial in 10 Norwegian municipalities in the next local elections may be considered partly as a natural experiment and partly as an extension of a trend in which new information and communications technology has become part of the everyday lives of most people, social organisations, private institutions and the public authorities. Whichever viewpoint is taken, it is essential to understand e-voting and its democratic effects in connection with its specific context: Norwegian local democracy and local elections in 2011.

The overall purpose of this E-voting Survey is partly to evaluate e-voting's democratic effect with reference to specific evaluation criteria and partly to explain this effect (or even the lack of democratic effect). Our approach is thus that The 2011 e-vote project can be understood as a democratic project anchored in a general goal of democratic benefit - that the project shall have a democratic effect - while at the same time, the project is being undertaken in a context which it is important to bear in mind when explaining the extent of the realisation of goals.

For this purpose, it is appropriate to apply an analytical approach that frames the project as a whole while at the same time identifying the connections between focus and issues in the individual sub-projects, A1 - A7, under Area A: E-voting Research Assignment. The framework will also form a central basis for the construction of the final report in Area B: Coordination of Research. Refer to the section on Area B: Coordination of Research for a fuller description of this analytical framework.

The project description will also describe how Area B: Coordination of Research will be performed. This includes a description of the administrative part of the coordination work, maintaining professional quality assurance and considerations of ethical research, as well as a description of how the final report will be structured through a presentation of the overall analytical framework and a tentative outline. This framework also sketches out key points of connection between the different sub-projects.

Area B: Coordination of Research

The Institute for Social Research (ISF) has solid experience of coordinating responsibility for earlier research and evaluation projects that can be compared with the E-voting Survey (see attachment 3), project management responsibility for two research and evaluation projects connected with the forthcoming local election, to which it is particularly

relevant to connect the E-voting Survey. ISF is also an active participant in several of the E-voting Survey's sub-projects (as described below). We believe therefore that ISF will have a particularly good basis for leading and taking responsibility for Area B: Coordination of Research. - That is to say the coordination of research activities and preparation of the final report. In this context we also refer to the previously issued cooperation declarations from the five research institutions that participate as sub-contractors in Area A, in which they consent to ISF's assuming project management and coordination responsibility for the E-voting Survey (see also attachment 5). Attachment 5 includes the cooperation declarations of the sub-contractors.

The tasks involved in Area B: Coordination of Research will be handled by Researcher II Signe Bock Seggaard (ISF) together with Researcher I Jo Saglie (ISF). Professor Harald Baldersheim of the Department of Political Science will also assist in this work. It is our experience that, to be able to implement a project as large as the E-voting Survey, it is absolutely essential that the project manager is accessible and has the capacity to handle administrative tasks as well as more academic issues. It is important not to underestimate how demanding of resources such a comprehensive coordination project is, as well as the importance of having the capacity to handle unexpected events. For the same reason, we believe it will be necessary to have three researchers involved in this coordination project. These are researchers who have also previously been involved in both administrative and academic coordination work.

Signe Bock Seggaard has a Ph.D. in political science and is Researcher II at the Institute for Social Research. She has published on the subjects of local e-democracy, municipal news dissemination and communicating on the internet, as well as voter behaviour and participation in church elections. In 2009 she gave a doctoral disputation on e-democracy in Norwegian and Danish municipalities from a democratic, organisation theory and media perspective. Seggaard was project manager on a project to evaluate a number of local e-democracy projects in Norwegian municipalities and currently works as leader of a research project to look at candidates' use of social media in the 2011 local elections. Seggaard was also project manager of a project that analysed voter behaviour and participation in the 2009 church elections. She also has administrative experience of organising the Local Democratic Forum network of researchers at the Department of Political Science (University of Oslo). Seggaard is co-editor of an anthology on social capital in Norway that will be published by Cappelen Damm AS in June 2011.

Jo Saglie is Dr. polit. in political science, a researcher at the Institute for Social Research and has a part time position at the Sámi University College in Kautokeino during the period 2009-2011. Saglie has experience as a project manager, including The Local Democracy surveys in 2003 and 2007, Sámi electoral research programmes and the project Democratic

Control in a Multi-level System. He is widely published in subjects such as political parties, local politics, welfare policy, election participation and the EU issue in Norwegian politics. He has edited several anthologies and was co-editor of the periodical *Tidsskrift for Samfunnsforskning* from 2005 to 2010.

Harald Baldersheim is Professor of Political Science at the University of Oslo. His academic focus in research and teaching is public politics and administration, with particular emphasis on local politics and administration. He has led a number of large research projects and evaluation programmes relating to public administration and politics, including evaluation of the free municipality trials. Recent projects include *Power on the Internet*, *Power over the Internet*, financed by the Communication, Information, Media programme at NFR. He has published a number of books and articles on local democracy, e-administration and e-democracy and regularly contributes to conferences and events aimed at local politicians and civil servants. He edited the book *Electronic Voting and Democracy* (Palgrave 2004) with Nibert Kersting and is a member of the Research Committee on e-Democracy at the International Political Science Association.

Two research and evaluation projects to which it is particularly important to connect the E-voting Survey are The 2011 Local Democracy Survey and the Evaluation of the trials in 20 municipalities involving voting rights for 16- and 17-year-olds. Researcher II Johannes Bergh (ISF), project leader for these surveys, is also participating as a researcher in the E-voting Survey. The closeness of these projects, as well as establishing a working relationship between Bergh, Saglie and Seggaard, ensures easier administrative coordination and effectiveness, as well as academic quality and synergy effects right across these research projects. Several of the researchers on the E-voting Survey are also involved in these other two research projects (as well as Bergh, Saglie and Seggaard, this also applies to Ødegård and Christensen). This will provide the basis for a final report of high academic quality that can be delivered at a predetermined time.

The specification of requirements defines two specific areas of responsibility for Area B: Coordination of Research. These are 1) coordination of the research group and activities including data collection and 2) responsibility for preparing a final report based on the contributions of the sub-projects. We go on to describe how the two areas of responsibility will be met.

Coordination of research activities and quality assurance

Quality assurance and organisation of activities

Many of the researchers involved in Area A: E-voting Research Assignment have cooperated on a number of projects and work in close

proximity to each other. This will enable the research to be coordinated on a continual basis and through joint events where all the researchers meet. The project manager of Area B: Coordination of Research, Signe Bock Seggaard, will also have ongoing contact with the researchers/project managers of the individual sub-projects. Continuous contact and joint events will be particularly important if Area A: E-voting Research Assignment will include research centres other than those subscribed to the present project. This means that if KRD chooses several suppliers in Area A, ISF, as responsible for the coordination of the project, will integrate existing research groups into the outlined set up through joint meetings, ongoing contact and activities. For further information about how ISF as coordinator will handle any issues if KRD happen to choose several suppliers in Area A, refer to the section on Handling Several Suppliers in Area A.

The ongoing contact and joint events will help to keep the individual sub-projects on schedule, coordinate the administration of research and quality assure the research and its results through a system of discussion and disputation. The purpose of the joint meetings is primarily to maintain academic quality. Given the broad composition of the project groups, with researchers with Norwegian and international expertise in relevant areas, quality assurance will be to a high academic standard.

Immediately after entering into any contract with KRD, a *start-up meeting* will be organised for all researchers involved. The purpose will be to discuss and coordinate the various systems for data collection and analysis. This also involves discussion and clarification of the survey's theoretical approach to how the *e-voting's democratic effect* can be illustrated in the individual sub-projects, as well as in the final report. The start-up meeting will also discuss more practical conditions regarding conveying the results in the form of reports/memos for each sub-project and the final report. This involves, among other things, the use of notes and references, fonts and styles and the opportunities for electronic document sharing. The purpose is to avoid unnecessary duplication of work and misunderstandings later in the project period. In other words, the purpose of the first joint event is coordination on practical, analytical and theoretical levels. This is important with regards to academic quality assurance of the individual sub-projects and the project as a whole, including the final report.

Because of the relatively short project period, the number of joint events that can be held is limited. However, two further joint meetings is desirable - one halfway through the period and one in the final phase of the research period.

The interim meeting will be held when all empirical data has been collected and the individual sub-projects have an initial understanding of the main trends in their data material. The purpose of such an interim

meeting will primarily be to update each other with regards to progress in the individual sub-projects, as well as to discuss any issues of a practical or research nature. In this context the report/memo from sub-project A6 will be important input for the other sub-projects by means of passing on information about international experience and research findings relating to relevant topics in the e-voting literature. It is therefore assumed that a thorough draft for the report/memo from sub-project A6 would be ready for the interim meeting. An interim meeting is also a good opportunity to identify different trends right across the sub-projects that invite closer attention - particularly in the final report. In this way, the interim meeting becomes an important arena for quality assurance and the exchange of opinions.

The final meeting will be held when all the sub-projects have prepared a first draft for their reports and memos. The structure of this meeting will be based on these interim reports (first drafts). Each sub-project presents an interim report and time is set aside for comments and discussion. In this way, the final meeting will function as a final quality assurance of the interim reports, with regards to both academic quality and presentation. At the same time, the final meeting will provide a good basis for identifying key findings from right across the sub-projects that will be central to the final report.

In order to ensure good academic quality assurance of the reports from each sub-project and the final report, we consider it essential that all sub-projects (A1-A7) and the researchers involved follow the system outlined and hold three joint meetings. This is also reflected in the progress schedule for the project as a whole, see Attachment 4, as well as in the budget for Area B: Coordination of Research, see Attachment 5.

In view of the project's short term nature, unfortunately it will not be possible to use normal channels for academic and technical quality assurance - such as participation in conferences and associated controls through systems for external exposure - to any great extent. Even so, the researchers will be encouraged to participate in academic conferences where possible. In this context, the Nordic local government research conference in Gothenburg in late November 2011 and the Norwegian political science conference in Trondheim in January 2012 will be suitable arenas. Local government researchers from all the Nordic countries and from Norway respectively will attend these events.

As shown in the progress schedule (attachment 4), in addition to the main the main activities there will be other activities connected to the individual sub-projects. In some cases there will be several sub-projects connected to the same activity - particularly with regards to data collection (for example preparation of questionnaires). In this context, ongoing contact and meetings will be necessary across the sub-projects and with the project manager (Signe Bock Seggaard). This is particularly relevant to the

data collection that will be coordinated with The 2011 Local Democracy Survey and the Evaluation of Reduction of Voting Age to 16, which will be carried out by an opinion poll company. It is worth noting that tenders have already been obtained from three opinion poll companies for carrying out a voter survey in the ten e-voting local authorities - see the section on Research Design, Method and Data.

Such a coordination is of both academic and practical benefit. The academic benefit comes from coordination at an early stage of the research process as this provides the best basis for good, comparable data, thus providing good synergy effects. There is a tendency for large representative surveys to have a steadily lower percentage response. This may stem from the fact that surveys are being used by more and more organisations for both research and commercial purposes. The increased use of surveys probably has a negative effect on the percentage response. Due to the declining percentage response, it will be desirable to use the available resources as effectively as possible and in a way that promotes a high percentage response. The practical benefits come partly from the financial savings from coordinating major surveys and partly from the desire to secure a good percentage response and thereby a better quality of research. By coordinating surveys we can achieve precisely this, to the benefit of the E-voting Survey, the Local Democracy Survey and the Evaluation of the trials in 20 municipalities involving voting rights for 16- and 17-year-olds. The surveys in the 10 municipalities will be performed by an external public opinion poll agency and used in sub-projects A1-A5.

It can be seen from the progress schedule (attachment 4) that we will conclude the project period with an *open breakfast seminar* at which key findings and issues will be conveyed to a wider audience. ISF has had good experience with such breakfast seminars to publicly present research results. We envisage that such open breakfast seminars could be organised together with KRD, key politicians and/or representatives from KRD's work on e-voting in 2011 attending as commentators. ISF's information department will assist with the practical implementation of an open breakfast seminar. ISF's information department has extensive experience of organising a number of different types of event, including seminars, launches, presentations etc. The work includes assistance with preparing a programme, invitations to any presenters and other participants, media contact before and after the event and practical assistance during the event including photography and audio-visual recording.

In addition to the activities mentioned, we will also be available for dialogue meetings with KRD during the project period, if required. For practical reasons, it would be appropriate to hold dialogue meetings in connection with the research group interim meeting or final meeting. Relevant topics for a dialogue meeting would include project progress and preliminary results. We would also envision that presenting drafts for

questionnaires and possibly other documents in connection with data collection can be done by means of e-mail.

Handling technical research issues

Safeguarding technical research issues is an important part of quality assurance. ISF's privacy ombudsman for personal data protection is NSD. Researcher I Bernt Aardal is ISF's contact person for the privacy ombudsman. In general the head of the institute is responsible for processing. For each research project, this responsibility is delegated to the project manager, who is responsible to the privacy ombudsman (NSD) and the Data Inspectorate for case handling. For the E-voting Survey, it will be the project manager for Area B: Coordination of Research, Signe Bock Seggaard, who has data processing responsibility. However, for practical reasons this will in many cases be delegated to persons involved in the individual sub-projects A1-A7. This will be clarified at the project kick-off meeting.

ISF has established an internal control system in accordance with the Personal Data Act. This is described more detailed in a document that can be provided if KR D so requires. The institute's routines for processing personal data are laid down in a web structure on the intranet. This structure is used for all projects that handle personal data. Here is recorded the name and location of the dataset, data type, person responsible for processing, dataset owner, the dataset's relationship to the Personal Data Act, the date of report to/response from the privacy ombudsman, projects that use the dataset and projects where use has been concluded.

The institute appoints a personal data auditor. This person receives and handles reports of deviation from the security rules and checks on the handling of datasets with personal data. A report is given to the institute at the end of each year. The institute has a local network with internet connection. Security in processing personal data is achieved by securing the individual workplace, having secure routines for password handling and securing the computer system as well as possible against intrusion from outside.

Reports and coordination of the presentation of results

Each sub-project will be responsible for preparing one or more reports or memos that describe the sub-project in question and its findings and results. The reports/memos are intended to be independent publications that can be read independently of the project's other reports/memos, but which also have clear references to the E-voting Survey as a whole and the final report in particular. Reports/memos for the sub-projects A1-A7 as well as the final report are written in Norwegian, with summaries in English and Norwegian. As mentioned above, the research group will discuss practical aspects of writing reports/memos at the kick-off seminar.

We plan to make all the reports/memos available electronically via the E-voting Survey's page on the ISF website, www.samfunnsforskning.no, after they have been provided to KRD. It will also be possible for collaborating institutions to publish their respective reports/memos electronically, with a link to the website for the survey.

Information is published on ISF's website about the project, its participants, results, publications and resultant media participation, as well as links to other relevant research centres and useful resources. The website could also be used for promoting events in connection with the project.

The information department could also assist with editing reports, preparing them for printing and maintaining a dialogue with printers if printed reports are to be prepared. Distribution of printed reports and promoting them on the internet is a normal part of the information department's assistance.

Handling several suppliers in Area A

As mentioned above, ISF as responsible coordinator will as far as possible facilitate the integration of external contractors and research groups (that are not among the partners in the tender from ISF) in the outlined set up for organising research activities and quality assurance. The main reason for this is to allow for a research based evaluation of the E-voting Survey of a high academic quality, as well as benefiting from each other's expertise. In this context, refer to the earlier description of for the outlined set up.

Including external research groups depends not only on the coordination projects, but also a willingness among external research groups to participate in the set up that has been outlined.

As coordinator, ISF is responsible not only for coordination but also for preparing the final report. According to KRD's specification of requirements, the final report will be written on the basis of the sub-projects. A central issue here is what obligations external research groups (other contractors) have towards the coordinator and the general question of responsibilities. In its responsibility for the project, ISF assumes, for itself and on behalf of its partners, responsibility for supplying reports/memos/final report to agreed deadlines, while ISF gives KRD a guarantee that the deliveries fulfil quality criteria. This responsibility becomes a bit more complicated with regards to the involvement of external research groups. According to an e-mail from KRD dated 15 April, KRD assumes that the coordinator (ISF) and external contractors shall enter into a cooperative agreement with each other to regulate this - KRD, in consultation with the coordinator, will prepare a draft for such a cooperative agreement, ref. the mentioned e-mail from KRD. This is a possible solution for regulating this relationship. But it will also be necessary to regulate external research groups' obligations and

responsibilities (including regulation of cash flow and budget questions) through a contract between KRD as customer and the external research groups in question. This solution means that ISF as coordinator does not have formal responsibility to KRD on behalf of external research groups and that any issues relating to, for example, deliveries from external research groups, including their academic quality, will be handled via KRD. In other words, ISF would want external contractors to sign contracts with both KRD and the coordinator (here ISF). In accordance with the response from KRD (e-mail dated 15 April), ISF believes that this can be done more specifically and the content of contracts clarified *if* and *when* this becomes relevant.

In addition to formal responsibility, there may also be practical and research related issues related to the use of several suppliers in Area A. The extent of these issues will naturally depend on *who* the suppliers are and of course whether they understand Norwegian, as well as *which* sub-projects (A1-A8) these suppliers will perform. If suppliers who do not speak a Nordic language are involved, it will probably be necessary to translate a large part of the data material, including questionnaires and data files. This is time and resource consuming and is a job we believe should be undertaken by competent persons. It would therefore be necessary to set aside extra funding (and time) for this, if translation is necessary.

According to KRD's requirements specification, deliveries may be written in both Norwegian and English, which is a prerequisite for non-Norwegian speakers to be able to assume responsibility for a sub-project. Having some deliveries in English and others in Norwegian is not a problem in itself, but issues could arise when what is written should form the basis for joint meetings and more specific assessment by colleagues, as described above. One way of handling this would be for all joint meetings, including the research groups' presentations, to be in English and for the comments and input of non-Nordic speakers to be based on the verbal presentations rather than the written report drafts, memos etc. This is a feasible solution, but is to some extent a compromise at the expense of academic and professional quality.

A third issue relates to research and concerns ISF's responsibility to the privacy ombudsman for research (NSD) for surveys that must be reported to them. Although responsible to the privacy ombudsman for research (NSD), ISF cannot provide data to organisations that ISF does not have a formal collaboration agreement with. This issue is also linked to the question of regulation of the formal division of responsibility, as discussed above. This issue is thus relevant in the event that external suppliers should have access to empirical data obtained through surveys for which notification is mandatory. This applies for example to data from opinion polls and qualitative interviews. One way of handling this would be to devise a contract between ISF and the external research group that

covered *this area specifically*. Whether or not this is a relevant solution is something that can only be decided when we know *who* the external research groups are.

Final report

The final report for the E-voting Survey will be prepared and written by researchers Signe Bock Seggaard and Jo Saglie with assistance from Harald Baldersheim. In the same way as with the reports/memos from each sub-project, the final report will be made available electronically after it has been provided to the customer, KR D.

The basis for the final report will be the reports that have been written by the individual sub-projects in the E-voting Research Assignment, and an important part of the final report will be to summarise the key findings of the sub-projects. Sub-project A6: International Perspective; Knowledge Status and Experience and associated report will have a specific function at the beginning of the final report as an independent contribution that considers the Norwegian case in an international context. The international perspective will also be a theme for the final report's concluding section on The Way Forward.

The overall purpose of the final report will also be to pull together the threads and identify key patterns (or lack of patterns) right across the sub-projects that tell us something about e-voting's democratic effect with reference to specific reporting criteria and that could also explain this effect (or indeed lack of democratic effect). Our approach is thus that the 2011 e-vote is a democratic project anchored in a general goal of democratic benefit - that the project shall have a democratic effect - while at the same time, the project is being undertaken in a context which is important when explaining the extent of the realisation of goals.

Because the sub-projects have different approaches and use different data sources and different analytical concepts, the final report must illuminate the e-vote from a multi-faceted perspective. This is a strength and is in accordance with the purpose of performing a total evaluation. At the same time, it allows for an ambiguous answer to the question of whether the e-voting trial brings a democratic benefit. That this is a probable outcome does not reflect any lack of professional agreement among the research groups, but rather gives a picture of how complex the question of *democratic benefit* is. This is a discussion that will be taken up in the final report.

The framework of the E-voting Survey

As mentioned, we are aiming at a total evaluation of the 2011 e-vote that we have called the E-voting Survey. In concrete terms, this means that we will illustrate the democratic effect of e-voting, while at the same time we wish to explain the democratic effect achieved by e-voting. As a basis

for this, we have a two part analytical framework that partly establishes relevant criteria for democratic effect and partly specifies possible explanatory factors at different levels. The framework outlined will help to structure the final report and ensure the complete and consistent illustration of the 2011 e-vote.

The framework - evaluation criteria for democratic effect

We will take pains to ensure that the analytical framework for evaluating the democratic effects of e-voting has clear connections with the e-voting project's democratic principles and aims, as these are defined in the Project Mandate for the 2011 E-voting Project (KRD 2011). E-voting in 2011 will also be assessed in the light of international standards for e-voting on the basis of A7. Among other things, this covers the Council of Europe's Recommendation on the Legal, Operational and Technical Standards for E-voting (Council of Europe 2004), The UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (UN 1966/1976) and the European Convention on Human Rights (1950/1953).

The project mandate formulates four reasons¹ for e-voting that are directly connected to the e-voting project as a democracy project and that would be natural to include as evaluation criteria (KRD 2011:5):

1. Increase accessibility for voters in general and especially for groups of voters who do not have full accessibility today
2. New generations of voters expect electronic solutions
3. Faster and more correct election settlements
4. Enabling direct democracy at low cost (referenda)

The main aims for e-voting in 2011 also make clear that there is a general assumption that voting based on the principle of the secret ballot shall be maintained. The extent to which this is possible is a relevant discussion, and a discussion that is already highly visible in Norwegian public debate (Smith 2010). As Norbert Kersting, Ronald Leenes & Jörgen Svensson (2004:285) underline, perhaps the answer is not as open and shut as some critical voices often appear to maintain.

¹ "Reduce costs in the long term" are also mentioned as a reason for introducing e-voting, but are not included here since this is not a part to be evaluated in this research assignment

The specification of requirements also defines some evaluation topics that follow up these grounds. These are topics that are particularly illustrated in A1: Availability and accessibility for voter, A2: Trust and credibility, A3: Secrecy of the vote (e.g. family voting, undue influence) and A4: Efficient counting of votes/fast electoral results.

Increased accessibility is a key concept here, while we also note that increased participation in elections was defined as a main aim in an earlier version of the project mandate: Increase participation by groups of voters who do not have full accessibility today (KRD 2009: point 3.1). There are good reasons for looking at accessibility in connection with participation in elections (Blais 2006:116). That e-voting can be considered an answer to the expectations of new generations may also be seen in connection with the concept of accessibility. The question is: what is accessibility really? Accessibility is often immediately connected with barriers in time and space in relation to time pressures and physical obstacles. But accessibility can also be linked to mental barriers. For first time voters, going into a polling station often involves something totally new, something connected with the adult world, which can in itself be a barrier to participating in the election. The question is whether technology can help to lessen that barrier: young people are generally familiar with new technology and electronic solutions, which, all other things being equal, can be expected to reduce the mental barrier to participating in elections when voting can be done electronically. It is also possible that the outcome might be the opposite, that the introduction of e-voting will tend to increase the mental barrier for those voters who are not familiar with new technology or who find the conditions for participation in e-voting to be demanding - relatively complicated logon procedures and preregistration via "My page" for example. In other words the disadvantages of voting electronically can also be perceived to be greater than the benefits, especially for non-technically proficient people who live near a polling station. A modifying aspect in this context is that in the local elections in the autumn 2011, e-voting is a supplement to other ways of casting a vote, and those voters who perceive e-voting to be a problem can take part in the election in other ways (go to the polling station or cast an advance vote in controlled surroundings) - ways that are familiar.

Another key concept is trust. As we will explain in the next section, trust can also be perceived as a prerequisite for success for e-voting as a democratic process. And it is in just such a perspective that trust will be illustrated in this E-voting Survey.

We believe that it is important to lift the evaluation and to consider the e-voting project's democratic effect in the light of established democratic theory perspectives and research traditions. Accessibility is also an important concept in this aspect. The democratic theorist Robert Dahl (1992; 1989) stresses through the formulation of five ideal criteria for a

democratic process that everyone must have a *sufficient and equal opportunity* with regard to participation, suffrage and understanding. In this way, e-voting can be considered in the light of general democratic criteria. But e-voting can also be seen in the light of more specific democratic models.

E-voting is one of many electronic methods (e-methods) that can support so-called *e-democracy* – particularly so for being the central e-method for so-called *electoral democracy* (Segaard and Ødegård 2010; Zissis, Lekkas, and Papadopoulou 2009). As a method, e-voting can also be seen in context with e-referendum, which is a method for more *direct democracy*.

Very generally, e-democracy can be defined as applying new information and communications technology (ICT) in order to strengthen political democracy and people's participation in democratic communication (Hacker and Dijk 2000:1). Democracy has always been linked with technologies for information and communication, but what is special about the new information and communications technology is that it *can* help to make democracy less dependent on time and space because of the digital relationship with the target group. In this way, the use of ICT has the potential to extend the participation base for democracy.

At the same time, however, we know that the technology presents challenges of both a practical and a more fundamental nature that can have direct significance for the evaluation of e-voting's democratic effect. For this reason, the evaluation's illustration of the democratic effect of e-voting will also include a discussion of the challenges (the risks) that the e-voting municipalities have found in connection with the practical implementation of e-voting. Also included is an evaluation and discussion of the extent to which e-voting contributes in practice to a faster and more efficient count of votes, ref. A4: Efficient counting of votes/fast electoral results.²

Framework - success criteria and possible explanations

Is there a basis for talking about success criteria for e-democracy and more specifically e-voting? We believe so. Fundamentally, the e-voting project is about its ability to strengthen democracy, but to understand the extent to which this happens, we believe it is relevant to see the project in a wider context and ask how far the project has achieved endorsement among key players.

Earlier research has shown that, for this type of project, success is conditional on endorsement through confidence building and legitimacy (Segaard 2010; Segaard and Ødegård 2010).

² It will not include an evaluation of the process of implementing an e-voting system or a technical evaluation of the e-voting system. This is in accordance with the limitation set by the specification of requirements of the Research and Evaluation of the e-vote 2011 project.

In accordance with the limitation set by the specification of requirements for the E-voting Survey and the sub-projects A1-A7, our focus is e-voting as a democracy project in a given context consisting of central stakeholders such as voters, local media and local politicians. The thinking is that conditions in context and among the key players can affect an e-voting project's legitimacy and endorsement (Segaard 2008:338). This can have consequences for the project's implementational and mobilisational abilities. *Trust, endorsement and legitimacy* are in other words keys to understanding the project's ability to succeed - to realise its objectives and achieve the desired result .

First and foremost, an e-voting system must have *the voters' confidence* (Antoniou, Korakas, Manolopoulos, Panagiotaki, Sofotassios, Spirakis, and Stamatiou 2007; Chiang 2009; Christensen, Karlsen, and Aardal 2004; Oostveen and van den Besselaar 2004). A democracy and democratic processes are dependent on trust - the voters' confidence that the democratic system works and that their votes count. Confidence is about the voter having a certain trust in the e-voting system's security, while at the same time also being connected with voters' attitudes to and perception of the system's usefulness and user-friendliness (Chiang 2009). When it comes to electronic voting in controlled surroundings, Christensen, Karlsen & Aardal show that in a Norwegian context "voters who voted electronically are very positive towards the use of ICT in connection with elections (...) There is no difference as regards the gender or education of e-voters when it comes to attitudes to ICT" (2004:42). However experience from e-voting in a polling station cannot necessarily be transferred to e-voting in which votes are cast at home, which has been more controversial.

Referring to the research literature, there are good reasons for considering the characteristics of the voter groups to be key conditions for the success of the e-voting project. Voters' confidence in e-voting should be viewed in the context of their use of other forms of net-based participation. If one is already familiar with electronic tools, all other things being equal, this can be expected to reduce the barrier to electronic voting. In this context, the literature shows within the digital divides that socioeconomic background, ICT competence and the general spread of ICT/internet in society are important conditions for citizens' use of ICT both generally and in a political context (see sub-project A5 for a more detailed account of this literature). That Norway - and the Nordic countries in general - stand out as among the most developed countries in the world in terms of the spread of ICT to many citizen groups will probably tend to weaken the significance of actual access here. That Norway is also characterised by relatively small socioeconomic differences (compared with other countries) may weaken the significance of such conditions.

Norris further shows that political use of ICT/the internet to any great degree is conditional on political interest and commitment, which is the

basis for her conclusion: it is those who are already politically active who participate to any great extent in e-democracy (Norris 2001:238), which gives reasons for expecting that e-voting will not increase electoral participation to any great extent. The spread of ICT in the public, political arena will therefore tend to strengthen rather than weaken political differences between various citizen groups. These are conclusions that have been tested in many empirical studies and that have been supported to a great extent (Frønes 2002; Fuller 2004; Grönlund 2004; Oostveen and Besselaar 2004; Saglie and Vabo 2009; Sipiør and Ward 2005; Sullivan, Borgida, Jackson, Riedel, and Oxendine 2002; Tobiasen 2005). This means that where we often group voters on the basis of demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, there is much to indicate that it may be at least as fruitful to group voters by their attitude, confidence and political commitment.

An exception to the general tendency towards strengthening existing divides is the effect of ICT on the difference between *age groups* with regard to political participation. For example Tobiasen (2005:129) finds that "there is a general tendency that the older one is, the more one follows politics through old technologies. The pattern is thus the opposite of what was the case for political commitment via the internet. That is to say, not only have the young adopted the internet to a greater extent than older citizens, it is also exclusively the internet that the young have adopted." At the same time, Tobiasen stresses that this difference is not only due to competence, "because the elderly are perfectly capable, if they want to and if it interests them" (Tobiasen 2005:131). It should be mentioned in this context that the data material on which Tobiasen bases her conclusions is somewhat limited.

In this context it also seems relevant to investigate possible differences between small and large municipalities (among the municipalities participating in the trials) - in this survey everything is available for this. Saglie & Vabo (2009) found little difference in e-participation (outside elections) between small and large municipalities, which can be explained as the result of two conflicting effects. In small municipalities, access to the internet is poorer (due to less extensively developed broadband), the level of education is lower etc. However this is counterbalanced by a generally higher participation in local politics, which also shows up in electronic participation.

We might also consider that the fact that e-voting as a *supplement to* paper based voting increases accessibility –and therefore the basis for participation–will affect voters' attitude to e-voting. Voter groups that previously perceived the lack of accessibility as a barrier to taking part in elections may find that the barrier is lessened or removed with e-voting, which, regardless of their confidence in the system, may be considered to be positive. It would be interesting in this connection to find out what accessibility means to different voter groups. Do young people have the

same perception of accessibility as the elderly? And what about disabled versus non-disabled? As mentioned earlier, *accessibility in time and space* is one thing, *mental accessibility* is another. Both types of accessibility may be affected by the opportunity for electronic voting.

In order to understand voters' attitudes to e-voting and the extent of its endorsement among voters, it is necessary to consider circumstances and entities that might influence voters' attitudes in this area - opinion-forming entities. In the E-voting Survey, we look more closely at local media coverage of the e-voting project and the e-voting project's endorsement among the local political environment.

Media - and especially local newspapers - are key players in a local community, and they are the voters' most important source of information in local elections (Karlsen 2009). The question is firstly how the e-voting is covered in the media and secondly whether media coverage of the e-voting project has supported its legitimacy and endorsement or whether it has been a barrier. In the modern democracy, the media are key players in politics and opinion forming, where they can in fact take on different roles. In his article on elites in politics and media in Norway, Trygve Gulbrandsen (2010:118-119) summarises these various roles as the fourth state power, meeting place for democratic liberation, communication link between political elite and citizens, the elite's agent, arena for the elites' power struggle and negotiation, political agenda setter and gatekeeper and interpreter of political framing. Depending on what role the media have played and what angle they have taken in their coverage of the e-voting project, we might expect that they have affected public opinion and thereby public confidence in and attitude to using ICT in elections.

In the same way, we might imagine that politicians' attitudes to the e-voting project have an opinion-forming effect on voters in the e-municipalities. Essentially, the e-voting project can be expected to be well endorsed among local politicians, since these municipalities are taking part as a result of actively applying to do so. In September 2009, 56 selected municipalities were invited by KRD to apply to participate as trial municipalities to test e-voting in the 2011 local elections. 35 of these municipalities applied and in January 2010 it was made known that 11 of these had been selected for the trial. Since then, Drammen and the City of Oslo have withdrawn, while Sandnes has joined the trial group. The local political community can therefore be expected to be motivated to make an extra effort to succeed with the e-voting project, which will have a positive effect on voters' attitude to e-voting in these municipalities. Even so, we should not ignore the fact that there have been differences of opinion within parties and local councils and differing perceptions of e-voting, of both a practical and a more fundamental nature. The question is how evident such differences of opinion have been to the general public locally.

For a more detailed account of how the framework will or could be illustrated through empirical surveys, refer to the description of the individual sub-projects A1-A7 under Area A: E-voting Research Assignment.

Tentative outline for the final report

Here is a tentative outline for the final report, on the basis of the above and the individual sub-projects in Area A: E-voting Research Assignment:

1. Introduction
 - 1.1 The issues
 - 1.2 The E-voting Survey research project
2. Norwegian e-voting in an international perspective. Knowledge status and experiences
3. Analytical framework
 - 3.1 Evaluation criteria
 - 3.2 Explanatory factors - players and context
4. Results and key findings
 - 4.1 Democratic effect
 - 4.2 Explanations of democratic effect
5. Conclusion – discussion of democratic theory
 - 5.1 The way forward
6. References
7. Appendix – the reports and memos for each sub-project (possibly with a balanced summary)

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