Conclusions and recommendations of the final report

Online voting technology has not yet reached a level where the benefits of online voting would be greater than its risks. From the technical point of view, it would be possible to implement an online voting system, but there are deficiencies in how the verifiability and the prevention of pressuring voters could be reconciled. In practice, voters would have to be able to ensure that their vote has been counted as cast, but the system should still not produce a receipt that could be used to pressure voters or sell votes.

The most significant risk is related to voters' confidence and the possibility of losing it. It is possible to shake voters' confidence in the voting system even without any actual technical capabilities, since harm can be done just by spreading false information and rumours. When votes can be concretely counted and recounted, it is easy to remove any suspicions of manipulation of the election results, at least. The electoral organisation should have the means to identify harmful activities, prevent them and obtain the evidence required to bring criminal charges or to verify that the election result is indisputable and no manipulation has taken place. Currently, this is not yet possible.

A separate recount of votes to detect and correct mistakes that have occurred in the vote count is not possible in online voting. In an online voting system, the information produced by the system on which votes have been counted needs to be trusted. If a recount of votes was carried out in an online voting system, it would be based on the information produced by the system itself and would give the same result as the actual count.

The Security Strategy for Society[1] sets the following goal: "The operating conditions required for holding regular general elections shall be secured in all security situations and the preparedness to hold extraordinary general elections shall be maintained at all times. Organisational arrangements, data systems and election materials shall be kept up-to-date in compliance with the requirements (e.g. specific functionality, time and security requirements)."

In 2018, a feasibility study will be launched in order to reform the election information system or parts of it. The study should examine the requirements resulting from the changing operational environment and the digitalisation of elections in the long term.

International experiences and best practices in the digitalisation of elections must be actively monitored. Cooperation methods should be developed between the electoral organisations of the Nordic countries. The Nordic countries share a similar history in the building of a welfare state and fostering societal stability, and the reliability of elections has therefore been a top priority in all of these countries.

The working group draws attention to the fact that the development and digitalisation of elections comprises much more than just online voting. Introducing electronic options in addition to the currently well-functioning electoral system is not the only way to develop democracy; instead, other ways to improve citizens' activeness and participation, enabled by digitalisation, should be identified.

The work should be continued with the aim of renewing and planning participation practices in a way that makes participation as easy and convenient as possible for citizens with different backgrounds. Along with digitalisation, democratic structures are now more visibly present in citizens' everyday lives. Open governance, discussions in the social media, electronic democracy services and different tools make decision-making processes visible and provide opportunities for discussion.

The parliamentary monitoring group for the preparation of online voting emphasised that the risks in online voting are considerable and there would be a risk of losing the voters' currently strong confidence in the election arrangements if online voting was introduced. The way of organising a recount and guaranteeing the secrecy

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[1]Security Strategy for Society 2017 (description sheet in English). Security Committee.
https://www.turvallisuuskomitea.fi/index.php/files/35/YTS2017%20materiaalit/75/YTS_2017_su_verkkojulkaisu.pdf

of the ballot as well as the voters' confidence in elections and the legitimacy of elections must be taken into account when discussing the possibilities to introduce online voting. The parliamentary working group emphasised that if an online voting system is introduced, the costs cannot be cut or the integrity of the process compromised to save money.

The monitoring group came into the conclusion that online voting should not be introduced in general elections, because the risks involved are greater than the benefits. Online voting would not resolve the current problems, such as the low voter turnout.

The parliamentary monitoring group emphasised the need to further consider how the participation of citizens and residents of municipalities could be strengthened, for example by creating new electronic participation tools for the use of local authorities.