**Case Study: The Irish Elections, June 2004**

The Irish government, in 2004, launched an electronic voting system which was envisaged to make voting results easier to compute and eliminate the traditional paper and pencil approach. The e-voting system was planned for use in local and European elections and was believed at the time that it will improve the overall voting experience of European citizens (Melia & Byrne, 2012). A pilot test of the e-voting system was conducted in three constituencies during the 2002 elections and the Irish government seemed pleased with the outcome despite public opposition and a few problems (Collins, 2009).

However, an Independent Electoral commission advised against the use of this system for the 2004 elections as its accuracy and security could not be verified (Zelic & Stahl, N.D). It turned out that the expensive voting machines were flawed in the sense that they could not produce printouts for vote results to be double-checked (Melia & Byrne, 2012). Hackers also demonstrated how easy it was to re-program the machine to enable stealing of votes (Smyth, 2006). This debacle led to the Irish government abandoning its e-voting agenda and reverting to the old manual paper system just 5 days to the June 2004 elections (Zelic & Stahl, N.D).

Melia & Byrne (2012) reported that the failure of the e-voting system resulted in a loss of €55m of tax-payers’ money. €51m of that was spent on acquiring 7500 voting machines and another €4m spent on storage costs. According to Zelic & Stahl (N.D), the outcome of the 2004 elections were massively swayed as the ruling party experienced the worst election results since 1920s. Nedap, the Dutch Firm that manufactured the voting machines was also criticized for producing faulty equipment (Smyth, 2006).

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