



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

# REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA

**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**  
**21 April and 5 May 2019**

**ODIHR Election Observation Mission**  
**Final Report**



Warsaw  
21 August 2019

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>I.</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>II.</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>III.</b>	<b>BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>4</b>
<b>IV.</b>	<b>ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>5</b>
<b>V.</b>	<b>ELECTION ADMINISTRATION</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>VI.</b>	<b>VOTER REGISTRATION</b> .....	<b>9</b>
<b>VII.</b>	<b>CANDIDATE REGISTRATION</b> .....	<b>11</b>
<b>VIII.</b>	<b>ELECTION CAMPAIGN</b> .....	<b>12</b>
<b>IX.</b>	<b>CAMPAIGN FINANCE</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>X.</b>	<b>MEDIA</b> .....	<b>17</b>
	<b>A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT</b> .....	<b>17</b>
	<b>B. MEDIA LEGAL FRAMEWORK</b> .....	<b>18</b>
	<b>C. MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>XI.</b>	<b>COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS</b> .....	<b>20</b>
<b>XII.</b>	<b>CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>XIII.</b>	<b>ELECTION DAY</b> .....	<b>23</b>
	<b>A. FIRST ROUND</b> .....	<b>23</b>
	<b>B. SECOND ROUND</b> .....	<b>24</b>
<b>XIV.</b>	<b>POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>XV.</b>	<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>26</b>
	<b>A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>27</b>
	<b>B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS</b> .....	<b>28</b>
	<b>ANNEX I: FINAL RESULTS</b> .....	<b>30</b>
	<b>ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION</b> <b>MISSION</b> .....	<b>31</b>
	<b>ABOUT ODIHR</b> .....	<b>37</b>

**REPUBLIC OF NORTH MACEDONIA**  
**PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION**  
**21 April and 5 May 2019**

**ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report<sup>1</sup>**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following an invitation from the authorities of the Republic of North Macedonia and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) for the 21 April 2019 presidential election. The ODIHR EOM remained in the country to observe the second round of the election held on 5 May. For both election days, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). The ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as national legislation.

The Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 22 April concluded that “voters were able to make an informed choice between competing political visions, with fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression respected in the campaign. Despite some technical challenges, the election was overall well-administered. Regulatory gaps were partially addressed through cross-party political agreements, but there remains a need to finalize a previously initiated reform of electoral legislation. Election day was peaceful, orderly and transparent, and assessed positively overall by IEOM observers”.

As none of the candidates achieved the required number of votes to be elected in the first round, a second round was held on 5 May. The Statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued on 6 May concluded that “in the well-administered run-off to the presidential election, continued respect for fundamental freedoms allowed voters to make an informed choice between candidates. Shortcomings in campaign rules were again evident in the second round, reflecting broader deficiencies in the electoral law. The transparency of campaign finance was diminished by incomplete reporting. Election day proceeded smoothly, with key procedures generally followed in a transparent manner”. While met in this election, the 40 per cent turnout requirement for a second round created the potential for cycles of repeat elections.

The legal framework is generally conducive to holding democratic elections. However, the Electoral Code does not adequately regulate important elements of the campaign. In the absence of explicit rules for presidential candidates, these elements were conducted on the basis of cross-party agreements that did not provide equal opportunities to all contestants. Many prior ODIHR recommendations regarding the legal framework remain unaddressed, including those related to the right to stand, voting rights of persons with mental disabilities, scrutiny of interim campaign finance reports, and legal standing to file complaints. Overall, regulatory shortcomings undermined legal certainty and highlighted the importance of finalizing legislative reform.

The election was administered by a three-level administration, comprising the State Election Commission (SEC), Municipal Election Commissions, and Electoral Boards. The election administration fulfilled its key functions in a professional manner, operated transparently and impartially, and enjoyed the confidence of most stakeholders throughout the process. The transparency and efficiency of the SEC was, at times, hindered by technical malfunctions of its information and communication systems, which also raised questions about ICT security. The SEC carried out voter

---

<sup>1</sup> The English version of this report is the only official document. Unofficial translations are available in the Macedonian and Albanian languages.

education in broadcast and social media, in multiple languages and with sign language interpretation, but the scope and visibility of this campaign was limited.

The SEC is responsible for maintaining the voter register, which is based on information from the civil and other national population registers. Voters whose identification documents expired prior to election day were automatically excluded from the voter lists, presenting an unreasonable barrier to exercising the right to vote, at odds with international standards. While stakeholders did not express major concerns about the accuracy of the voter register, discrepancies between the various state databases and diverse data formats continued to pose challenges.

In an inclusive manner, the SEC registered all three candidates who succeeded in collecting the required number of voter support signatures for their nomination, including one woman and one ethnic-Albanian candidate. Although registered as non-partisan, each of the three candidates was supported by political parties prior to the collection of signatures and registration, and used party symbols for identification on the ballot. While a few complaints were filed, most interlocutors did not raise concerns about the overall process of candidate registration.

The campaign took place in a calm and peaceful environment. Fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression were respected, and the election participants were able to campaign freely and without hindrance. Notably in this election, the ruling party and several ethnic-Albanian parties jointly supported a presidential candidate, and candidates reached out to different ethnic communities. Party leaders featured prominently at campaign events, despite candidates not being formally affiliated with political parties. In general, state officials appeared to be careful to maintain a clear distinction between their official and political activities, and to avoid using state resources in the campaign. According to several ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the perceived politicization of public sector appointments creates an expectation on employees to support the ruling parties, even in the absence of explicit instructions.

Women are under-represented in public life. At the time of the election campaign, only 4 out of 26 government ministers were women, and only 6 out of 81 mayors. Although one candidate was a woman, women featured infrequently as campaign speakers and the attendance of women at campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM was disproportionately low. Two candidates raised issues related to women's participation and gender equality. Women were well-represented in the election administration.

Campaign finance rules set out general disclosure and reporting requirements, which candidates largely complied with. However, there was no uniform reporting of candidate expenditures and reporting rules lack clarity for a two-round contest and do not address third-party campaigning. Together with the limited powers and resources of the institutions involved in campaign finance supervision, this diminished the transparency of campaign finance the effectiveness of oversight.

The public broadcaster and most monitored media provided impartial coverage, which, altogether, gave voters the opportunity to make an informed choice. The media regulator fulfilled its legal obligations and conducted monitoring of media coverage of the campaign. The media presented diverse information on the candidates and the supporting political parties through various programmes, paid advertisements and televised debates. Newly introduced state reimbursement of the political advertisements aimed to promote greater access to the media for all contestants.

Most election-related complaints are handled by the SEC, while the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) handles complaints related to campaign finance and abuse of state resources. The SEC reviewed pre-election complaints within the legal deadlines, but decisions lacked substantive reasoning. Complaints about election day irregularities were handled by the SEC

transparently and effectively after both rounds. Notwithstanding, restrictions on who has the right to file complaints and appeals does not fully ensure the availability of legal redress.

Both election days were calm and well-administered. The overall assessment of voting, counting and tabulation was positive, with key procedures followed. In both rounds some eligible voters were not found on voter lists and observers saw instances of family and group voting, which primarily impact women's opportunity to cast their vote freely and in secret. In the second round the IEOM observed clear indications of vote-buying. The SEC published preliminary results on its website soon after the closure of polls, disaggregated by municipality and by polling station, which provided transparency. All candidates accepted the election results and the post-election atmosphere was peaceful.

This report offers a number of recommendations to support efforts to bring elections in North Macedonia further in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations relate to the continued need for reform of the electoral legislation and the strengthening of the capacity of oversight bodies, particularly with regard to the campaign and campaign finance. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and prior reports.

## II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation from the authorities of the Republic of North Macedonia to observe the 21 April 2019 presidential election and in accordance with its mandate, ODIHR deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 11 March. The EOM, headed by Corien Jonker, included 11 experts based in Skopje and 18 long-term observers who were deployed throughout the country from 20 March. The ODIHR EOM remained in the country to observe the second round of the election held on 5 May. The Mission remained in North Macedonia until 17 May to follow post-election developments.

For both election days, the ODIHR EOM was joined by delegations of the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly (OSCE PA) and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). Ms. Sereine Mauborgne was appointed by the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office as Special Co-ordinator and leader of the OSCE short-term observer mission. Mr. Reinhold Lopatka headed the OSCE PA delegation. Ms. Marie-Christine Dalloz headed the PACE delegation.

On the first-round election day, 240 observers from 38 countries were deployed, including 189 long-term and short-term observers deployed by ODIHR, as well as a 40-member delegation from the OSCE PA and a 12-member delegation from the PACE, and of whom 43 per cent were women.<sup>2</sup> Opening was observed in 93 polling stations and voting in 979 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 87 polling stations, and the tabulation in 69 Municipal Election Commissions (MECs). Early voting was observed in 13 special polling stations on 20 April. For the run-off on 5 May, 172 observers from 32 countries were deployed, including 156 long-term and short-term observers deployed by ODIHR, as well as a 11-member delegation from the OSCE PA and a 5-member delegation from the PACE. Opening was observed in 64 polling stations and voting in 688 polling stations across the country. Counting was observed in 71 polling stations, and the tabulation in 61 MECs. Early voting was observed in 13 special polling stations on 4 May.

The ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as national legislation. This

---

<sup>2</sup> Women comprised 36 per cent of experts in the ODIHR EOM core team and 39 per cent of ODIHR EOM long-term observers.

final report follows two Statements of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions, which were released at press conferences in Skopje on 22 April and on 6 May.<sup>3</sup>

The ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the invitation to observe the election and to the State Election Commission for its assistance. The ODIHR EOM also expresses its appreciation to other institutions, political parties, media and civil society organizations for sharing their views, as well as to the resident international community and the OSCE Mission to Skopje for their co-operation.

### III. BACKGROUND

On 8 February 2019, the speaker of parliament called a presidential election for 21 April. The previous president, Gjorge Ivanov, was first elected in 2009, endorsed by the then ruling party, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party of Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE), and re-elected for a second and final term in 2014. A protracted political crisis in the following years led to early parliamentary elections in December 2016, which eventually resulted in a new government led by the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM) in coalition with the mainly ethnic-Albanian party, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI), which had previously been in coalition with VMRO-DPMNE.<sup>4</sup>

Parties have traditionally competed for votes mainly within their respective ethnic communities, while governing coalitions have been formed across the ethnic divide, including ethnic-Albanian parties. However, in the 2017 municipal elections, the SDSM and the DUI supported each other's candidates in several mayoral races, and the SDSM has made efforts to appeal to ethnic-Albanian voters. In this election, for the first time in the first round of a presidential election, one candidate, Stevo Pendarovski, was endorsed by both ethnic-Macedonian and ethnic-Albanian parties: the political bloc led by the SDSM, as well as DUI, the Democratic Party of Albanians and AlternAtivA.<sup>5</sup> Gordana Siljanovska Davkova was endorsed by the political bloc led by VMRO-DPMNE, while the third candidate, Blerim Reka, was endorsed by two ethnic-Albanian parties in opposition, the Alliance of Albanians (AA) and BESA.<sup>6</sup>

As none of the three candidates achieved the required majority of registered voters to be elected in the first round on 21 April, the two candidates who received the highest number of votes, Mr. Pendarovski and Ms. Siljanovska Davkova, proceeded into a second round on 5 May.

The election took place in the context of important developments for the country's ambitions for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU). Following a bilateral agreement with Greece ("Prespa Agreement") in June 2018, and a consultative referendum in September, the parliament enacted constitutional amendments in January 2019 to change the country's constitutional name in accordance with the agreement. On 6 February 2019, NATO member states signed a protocol on North Macedonia's accession. In the pre-election period, the prime minister publicly highlighted the importance of the democratic conduct of the election in advancing the country's progress towards EU accession and NATO membership.

---

<sup>3</sup> See also [prior ODIHR observation reports in North Macedonia](#).

<sup>4</sup> In the ruling coalition, the SDSM-led bloc holds 49 of 120 seats, DUI – 10, AlternAtivA – 3, the Democratic Party of Albanians – 2, and the National Democratic Revival – 1. The opposition VMRO-DPMNE-led bloc holds 43 seats, the Alliance for Albanians – 2, and BESA – 2. Another 8 deputies were expelled from the VMRO-DPMNE-led bloc following a parliamentary vote on constitutional changes in 2018. Forty-five members of parliament are women, and 23 identify themselves as ethnic-Albanian.

<sup>5</sup> Mr. Pendarovski previously stood for president in 2014, also endorsed by SDSM.

<sup>6</sup> *Besa* means "pledge" in Albanian.

#### IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

The president is directly elected by popular vote under a majoritarian system for a term of five years, with a maximum of two terms. To be elected in the first round, a candidate must receive the votes of a majority of all registered voters.<sup>7</sup> Otherwise, a second round is held within two weeks between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes. The candidate who receives more votes in the second round is elected, provided that there is a turnout of at least 40 per cent of registered voters. Otherwise, the entire election process is repeated. The law does not specify when repeat elections should be held. As previously pointed out by ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), there are no guarantees that a repeat election would enjoy a higher voter turnout, thus the second round turnout requirement may lead to cycles of failed elections.<sup>8</sup>

*Consideration should be given to reviewing the existing thresholds for presidential elections to minimize the risk of failed elections. The legal framework could be amended to calculate the winning majority in the first round from the number of votes cast, while the second round threshold requirement could be removed.*

The presidential election is primarily regulated by the 1991 Constitution and the 2006 Electoral Code.<sup>9</sup> The country is party to international and regional instruments relevant to the holding of democratic elections.<sup>10</sup> Recent amendments to the Electoral Code in 2018 and 2019 changed the composition of the State Election Commission (SEC), extended its mandate, and provided for reimbursement of paid political advertisements from the state budget. The legal changes were approved by the parliament through a fast-track procedure without, according to ODIHR EOM interlocutors, meaningful consultation with stakeholders.<sup>11</sup>

While the overall legal framework is conducive to the conduct of democratic elections, a number of prior ODIHR and Council of Europe recommendations remain to be addressed, including those related to the right to stand, voting rights of persons with mental disabilities, scrutiny of interim campaign finance reports, and legal standing to file complaints.<sup>12</sup> A majority of ODIHR EOM interlocutors, including the SEC, underlined the need for a comprehensive reform of electoral legislation.<sup>13</sup>

Certain provisions of the Electoral Code do not reflect the specific requirements of a presidential contest. For example, rules on the allocation of media advertising and commercial billboard space refer

---

<sup>7</sup> As noted in the [2011 ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Opinion on the Electoral Code](#), this high threshold (50 per cent of registered voters) is a departure from a more common rule of more than 50 per cent of the valid votes cast in an election.

<sup>8</sup> The [2011 ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Opinion on the Electoral Code](#) recommended that the threshold requirement in the second round be removed. See also [prior ODIHR observation reports in North Macedonia](#).

<sup>9</sup> The legal framework also includes, *inter alia*, the 2004 Law on Political Parties, the 2004 Law on Financing Political Parties, the 1996 Criminal Code, the 2013 Law on Media, and the 2013 Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services, as well as instructions of the State Election Commission.

<sup>10</sup> North Macedonia has ratified key international and regional human rights instruments, including the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#), [European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#), [United Nations \(UN\) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities \(CRPD\)](#) and the [UN Convention against Corruption \(UNCAC\)](#).

<sup>11</sup> Paragraph 5.8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits participating States to adopt legislation "at the end of a public procedure".

<sup>12</sup> In paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves "to follow up promptly the ODIHR's election assessment and recommendations".

<sup>13</sup> In line with prior ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations, the government, in consultation with civil society and political parties, initiated reform of electoral legislation, but these reforms are pending and require further public consultation.

only to political parties of the ruling or opposing parliamentary alliances and do not mention presidential candidates.<sup>14</sup> The law also does not regulate all aspects for holding a second round.<sup>15</sup> The majority of instructions adopted by the SEC for this election largely reproduced the Electoral Code and did not provide additional clarity.<sup>16</sup> In the absence of explicit regulations, pertinent issues were determined by cross-party political agreements, which extrapolated the Electoral Code's rules for political parties in parliamentary elections to independent candidates in presidential elections but did not provide equal opportunities to all contestants (see also *Media*).<sup>17</sup> No candidates raised concerns to the ODIHR EOM about this arrangement. However, the regulatory gaps undermined legal certainty.<sup>18</sup>

*A comprehensive review of electoral legislation should be undertaken to address the shortcomings identified in this and prior ODIHR reports. Campaign and media rules should regulate the presidential contest and ensure equal opportunities for candidates. Rules for the second round should be clarified. The reform process should be public, inclusive, and carried out sufficiently in advance of the next election.*

## V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The election was administered by a three-level administration, comprising the SEC, 80 Municipal Election Commissions (MECs), and 3,396 Electoral Boards (EBs) including at some 32 diplomatic and consular offices in 24 countries. Throughout the electoral process, most ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed confidence in the overall professionalism and impartiality of the election administration at all levels.

The SEC is the highest electoral authority with regulatory, monitoring and oversight powers, responsible for organizing and supervising elections and referenda. Established in July 2018, the current SEC is composed of seven members (including three women) nominated by parliamentary political parties.<sup>19</sup> Initially set for six months to administer the 2018 referendum, the mandate of the current SEC was extended in November 2018 for up to two years. To perform its tasks, the SEC is supported by 34 regional offices and a secretariat. Contrary to a prior ODIHR recommendation, a number of essential secretariat employees, including in the legal department, worked on a temporary contract basis. Although for the electoral period the SEC resources were strengthened by recruiting additional temporary personnel, a lack of capacity in the legal and ICT departments undermined the effectiveness of preparations.

---

<sup>14</sup> In an attempt to address some of the gaps in the law, minor last-minute changes to the Electoral Code were introduced by the parliament on 27 March, which added the word “candidates” alongside political parties to certain campaign-related provisions. However, they entered into force on 21 May and thus were not applicable for this election.

<sup>15</sup> While most provisions of the Code apply to both rounds, the law is silent on such issues as the accreditation of observers and candidate representatives, and the allocation of billboard and poster space between the run-off candidates. The law also lacks clarity on second round reporting requirements for campaign finance.

<sup>16</sup> These include instructions on candidate nomination and registration, distribution of advertising boards and billboards, on electoral dispute resolution, and on homebound voting.

<sup>17</sup> For example, the candidate backed by the ruling parties was allocated 40 per cent of the overall commercial billboard space, with another 40 per cent divided between two candidates backed by opposition parties, and the remaining 20 per cent distributed among the three candidates upon their agreement.

<sup>18</sup> Section II.2.a of the Venice Commission's [2002 Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) recommends that “Apart from rules on technical matters and detail – which may be included in regulations of the executive –, rules of electoral law must have at least the rank of a statute”.

<sup>19</sup> Four members were nominated by the ruling parties (three by SDSM and one by DUI), including the vice president, and three by the opposition parties (two by VMRO-DPMNE and one by BESA), including the president.



*To ensure the stability and professionalism of the election administration, legal provisions should be adopted which clearly establish the composition and length of mandate of a permanent State Election Commission. Essential personnel of the SEC secretariat should be employed on a permanent basis.*

In general, the SEC operated collegially and complied with legal deadlines, although it was late with some preparations.<sup>20</sup> During the electoral period, the commission held public sessions attended by various stakeholders, including candidate representatives, accredited observers and representatives of media. However, the sessions were not regularly announced in advance or invitations were sent with short notice. In line with its mandate to provide uniform implementation of the law, the SEC issued regulations, although sometimes relatively late in the electoral process and not always supplying sufficient guidance.<sup>21</sup>

SEC decisions were generally adopted unanimously and in an impartial manner. Draft decisions were, nonetheless, mainly discussed by the SEC in closed meetings, limiting public sessions to formal voting, which detracted from transparency. Moreover, some session minutes and decisions adopted were published belatedly. While the sessions were predominantly held in the Macedonian language, several important decisions were also announced in Albanian. At some sessions, sign-language interpretation was provided, enhancing the availability of information to the public.

For several weeks before the first round, the SEC's key information and communication technology (ICT) systems did not function properly, which affected the timely provision of information, including the publication of session minutes, instructions and decisions, the online verification of voters' data in the voter register, and the online register of complaints.<sup>22</sup> According to the SEC, these technical failures did not impact preparations for the second round.<sup>23</sup> Notwithstanding, the incident raised questions about the ICT security of the SEC.

*The State Election Commission should develop comprehensive cyber security guidelines for all personnel and systems that handle or contain election data. It should conduct trainings for all State and Municipal Election Commission members and staff in mitigating risks and handling possible cyber security incidents.*

The MECs, appointed in 2016, comprise five members and their deputies, randomly selected by the SEC from among employees of the state and municipal administration for a term of five years. While the law requires the work of the election administration to be public, the level of transparency of MEC activities varied by municipality. ODIHR EOM observers were permitted to attend MEC sessions, however, the majority of MECs did not announce the sessions in advance, nor did they publish the minutes of sessions or any decisions.

*In order to increase transparency and public awareness, Municipal Election Commissions should publish decisions and minutes of sessions in a timely and consistent manner. Adequate means, such as access to the municipality websites or social media platforms, should be provided for this purpose.*

---

<sup>20</sup> For example, the printing of training manuals for lower-level commissions, selection of substitutes for MEC and EB members who resigned or were not able to assume their tasks, as well as reimbursement of media campaign costs. Further, the decision on the amounts of remuneration for some temporary staff as well as MEC and EB members was adopted only after the election.

<sup>21</sup> Such instructions included those on filling the results and tabulation protocols and on aggregation of the preliminary results using the mobile application Viber. Counting and tabulation on election days evidenced diverging interpretations of the SEC regulations.

<sup>22</sup> According to the SEC, some ICT failures were the result of malware inadvertently downloaded by an employee.

<sup>23</sup> According to the SEC, an audit into ICT malfunctions will be conducted following the election.

EBs are composed of three members randomly selected by MECs from among civil servants for a four-year term, as well as two temporary members nominated by the parliamentary parties for each election. The current non-partisan EB members were appointed in 2017. Most MECs finalised the formation of EBs on schedule, although the inaccessibility and inaccuracy of the database of potential EB members, administered by the Ministry of Information Society and Administration, delayed the process in some cases.<sup>24</sup> In general, the lower-level election bodies worked in a professional and efficient manner.

According to the Electoral Code, each gender should be represented by at least 30 per cent of members in election administration bodies, and all ethnicities that comprise at least 20 per cent of the respective municipality population should be represented on an adequate and equitable basis. These requirements were largely respected, however, country-wide data on gender and ethnic composition of election administration at all levels is not compiled by the SEC.<sup>25</sup> In case of a shortfall in suitable appointees in the public administration, especially among women from minority communities, the SEC and MEC needed to select members from other municipalities. Representatives of the country's smaller ethnic communities, including Roma, opined to the ODIHR EOM that they were under-represented in electoral bodies, as in other state bodies.<sup>26</sup> Women were well-represented in the election administration (constituting some two-thirds of members), but represented only one-third of MEC presidents. Among the EBs observed by the ODIHR EOM on election day, some two thirds of members and presidents were women.

*In line with international standards, disaggregated data on gender and ethnic representation produced during the electoral process should be published in a comprehensive manner.*

Before the first round, the MECs conducted training sessions for all EB members, using a video covering the election day procedures. Presidents and deputies of EBs received additional training sessions, organized in smaller groups, by certified SEC trainers. For these interactive training sessions, the SEC produced training materials in five languages and included minority-language speakers among the trainers. According to the MECs, these additional training sessions contributed to reducing errors during the election days, and several informed the ODIHR EOM that all EB members would have benefitted from such training activities. At the same time, training manuals were not provided to most EB members until the day prior to the first election day and not all newly selected EB members were trained. Following complaints against results of several polling stations after the first and the second round (see *Complaints and Appeals* and *Post-Election Developments*), the SEC decided on dismissals from 13 and 6 EBs, respectively, due to procedural shortcomings.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Some two weeks before the first round, 90 EBs under the administration of eight MECs were not completed. According to the MEC in the municipality of Saraj, on the first election day, 15 EBs were still incomplete, mostly missing one member. These EBs were reportedly completed by the run-off election day. The deadline for formation of EBs was 1 March, and for MECs was 21 February.

<sup>25</sup> Out of 80 MECs, five did not comply with the requirement for gender representation, one with the ethnic balance. Paragraph 48d of the CEDAW General Recommendation No. 23, requires state parties to provide “statistical data, disaggregated by sex, showing the percentage of women relative to men who enjoy those rights,” while Paragraph 17 of the CERD General Recommendation No. 32 advises that “appraisals of the need for special measures should be carried out on the basis of accurate data, disaggregated by race, colour, descent and ethnic or national origin”. See also paragraph 29 of the [2018 CEDAW concluding observations](#) and paragraph 6 of the [2015 CERD concluding observations](#).

<sup>26</sup> Paragraph 24 of the [2015 CERD concluding observations](#) noted that “since 2001, the representation of smaller ethnic communities in public administration has increased. Despite this apparent progress, the Committee believes that efforts are still needed in terms of access to leading and managerial positions by the members of the communities who are not majority, in particular of those who belong to smaller ethnic communities”. See also paragraph 29.b of the [2018 CEDAW concluding observations](#), which noted “a lack of programmes and strategies to ensure the participation of Roma women, rural women and women with disabilities in all spheres of life and in decision-making positions and processes in public and private organizations”.

<sup>27</sup> In total, 79 EB members were dismissed after the first round. Where individual responsibility could be established, only the responsible EB members were dismissed, otherwise the entire board was replaced.

The voter education campaign delivered by the SEC during the election period was low-key, primarily using broadcast and social media, and started relatively late in the pre-election period.<sup>28</sup> The SEC informed the ODIHR EOM that the scope of voter education was limited by budget constraints. Positively, voter education videos were available in the Macedonian and Albanian languages, supported by sign language interpretation, and with subtitles for other ethnic communities. The education materials included information on voters' rights, voting procedures, and electoral offences. However, voter education did not include timely and detailed information about the prohibition of group and family voting and complaint procedures for voters on election day. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors pointed out that there had been insufficient information during the public scrutiny period of voter lists about the exclusion of voters due to expired identification documents (see *Voter Registration*).

*In order to enhance the effective exercise of voting rights, the SEC should develop and implement a timely, comprehensive and targeted voter education programme, including information on voter registration, family voting, and complaints procedures.*

Early voting was administered for homebound voters, internally displaced persons, and voters in penitentiary institutions on 20 April and 4 May.<sup>29</sup> Positively, as a pilot project, early voting was also arranged in one retirement home and one special hospital in Skopje. In total, 6,621 voters cast ballots during in-country early voting in the first round.

## VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens aged at least 18 years as of election day are eligible to vote. Contrary to international standards and a prior ODIHR recommendation, persons with disabilities who are deprived of their legal capacity are disenfranchised.<sup>30</sup>

*As previously recommended, the legislation should be harmonized with the objectives of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, by removing all restrictions on voting rights on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability.*

The registration system for in-country voting is passive and continuous, based on information extracted from the civil and other national registers.<sup>31</sup> Citizens registered as temporarily residing abroad were included in separate voter lists within the country. They could also actively register for out-of-country

---

<sup>28</sup> The media campaign was supplemented by a tour of an information minivan around the country. The SEC also established a free telephone hotline for voters' inquiries. A specialised video telephone line was available for voters with hearing impairments. According to the SEC, the telephone line was used by 89 voters.

<sup>29</sup> An opportunity to vote earlier was also available on 17 April and 1 May at the SEC for members of EBs who administered voting abroad.

<sup>30</sup> See Articles 12 and 29 of the 2006 CRPD. See also paragraph 9.4 of the 2013 CRPD Committee's Communication No. 4/2011, which states that "Article 29 does not foresee any reasonable restriction, nor does it allow any exception for any group of persons with disabilities. Therefore, an exclusion of the right to vote on the basis of a perceived or actual psychosocial or intellectual disability, including a restriction pursuant to an individualized assessment, constitutes discrimination on the basis of disability, within the meaning of article 2 of the Convention".

<sup>31</sup> Four times a year, the Ministry of Internal Affairs provides the SEC with information on the citizens who reached voting age, and the issuance of identification documents based on citizenship and residency records. The basic courts inform the SEC about citizens deprived of legal capacity and those placed in pre-trial detention. Every month, the Ministry of Justice provides information about deceased persons. The Ministry also compiles a special voter list of internally displaced persons. No later than 30 days prior to election day, the body in charge of administering sanctions submits data to the SEC on persons who are in custody or serving a prison sentence.

voting at polling stations in diplomatic and consular offices.<sup>32</sup> While the SEC is responsible for maintaining and updating the voter register, it does not have the capacity to administer the organisational, technical and methodological processing of data, which is performed by the State Statistical Office.

All citizens have the right to verify their individual data in the voter register in-person or online and to request changes throughout the year. Public scrutiny of the voter list for this election was held between 23 February and 14 March, when the voters were able to verify the data and request changes or corrections in-person in the SEC regional offices.<sup>33</sup> According to the SEC, 53,972 voters used this opportunity, including voters who came to sign candidate nomination lists.<sup>34</sup> The SEC provided copies of the preliminary voter lists to five parliamentary parties after the conclusion of public scrutiny. Concern over misuse of voters' personal data by political parties to track and pressure voters was voiced by some ODIHR EOM interlocutors.

The voter register was closed on 29 March, some three weeks before election day. Some ODIHR EOM interlocutors opined that a closure of the voter register far in advance of election day, together with the relatively short scrutiny period, did not give the voters sufficient opportunity to inform the SEC on recent changes in their data. The final register included 1,808,131 voters, of which 77,579 were included in special lists of voters temporarily residing abroad.<sup>35</sup> The law does not provide for an update of the voter register between the two rounds to reflect changes in civil registration data.<sup>36</sup>

*To improve the accuracy of the voter lists and to facilitate voters' participation, consideration should be given to extending the period of scrutiny of the voter lists and to bringing the deadline for changes closer to election day. An update of the voter register between rounds could also be considered.*

Citizens are included in the voter register if they are registered residents and possess a valid identification card or a passport. Voters whose identification documents expired prior to election day were automatically removed from the voter lists, unless they renewed their documents and notified the SEC regional office of the change before the end of public scrutiny period on 14 March. A significant number of eligible voters who renewed their expired documents but did not notify the authorities were thus disenfranchised, at odds with international standards.<sup>37</sup> On election days, the ODIHR EOM observed voters with valid identification documents being turned away because they were not included in voter lists.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>32</sup> A minimum of 10 registered voters is required to open a polling station. Thirty-four polling stations were opened in diplomatic and consular offices abroad, where 832 voters cast their ballots in the first round, and 827 in the run-off.

<sup>33</sup> Interlocutors informed the ODIHR EOM that the printed voter list was not displayed in several offices, including Kumanovo, Gevgelija, Prilep, Strumica, and Shtip.

<sup>34</sup> As a result, 517 voters were added to the voter lists, 412 were excluded, and data of 129 voters were corrected.

<sup>35</sup> Special lists also included 1,640 voters in prisons, 71 voters in institutions for the elderly, 7 internally displaced persons, and 357 members of out-of-country electoral boards.

<sup>36</sup> According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 1,145 citizens turned 18 between 22 April and 5 May.

<sup>37</sup> Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits participating States to "guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens". Paragraph 11 of the 1996 UN Human Rights Committee (CCPR) General Comment 25 requires states to take "effective measures to ensure that all persons entitled to vote are able to exercise that right. Where registration of voters is required, it should be facilitated and obstacles to such registration should not be imposed".

<sup>38</sup> Since 1 March, voters could renew or replace IDs in an expedited procedure. According to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, out of 47,903 citizens whose documents expired between 8 February and 21 April, 38,166 received renewed IDs by 14 March and additional 6,226 voters renewed their documents between 15 March and 21 April. However, only 517 voters were re-entered to the voter register during the public scrutiny period.

*Eligible voters should not be excluded from the voter register due to expired documents. Legislative and administrative measures should be taken to enable everyone who has the right to vote to effectively exercise this right.*

Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors pointed out improvements in the accuracy of the voter register, referring to various efforts of the SEC, such as an extensive audit undertaken in 2016.<sup>39</sup> Although the results of the audit were subsequently reversed, stakeholders expressed general confidence about the voter register, despite the continued inclusion of deceased voters and inconsistencies in address data. At the same time, structural deficiencies hinder the maintenance of the voter register. Discrepancies between individual data in the various state registers and their diverse data formats impede effective data exchange among the state institutions, despite some initial efforts to harmonize data.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, poor quality of address data leads to difficulties and errors in assigning voters to polling stations.<sup>41</sup>

*In a coordinated effort and according to clearly defined responsibilities, the state authorities should continue updating and harmonising all pertinent registers and databases to provide an accurate basis for the voter register.*

## VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

According to the Constitution, a citizen aged at least 40 who has been resident in the country for at least 10 of the last 15 years is eligible to stand for the office of president. The latter requirement runs counter to OSCE commitments and international obligations.<sup>42</sup>

*The authorities should reconsider the residency requirement for presidential candidates.*

Nomination of a presidential candidate must be supported by signatures of 30 members of parliament or at least 10,000 voters. As required by law, voters signed in support of nominees at the premises of SEC regional offices, allowing for direct verification of authenticity of the signatures. In order to facilitate the process, the SEC opened 45 temporary offices in addition to its 34 permanent regional offices. Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed confidence in the practice of signature collection at SEC regional offices, although two complaints were filed to the SEC.<sup>43</sup>

---

<sup>39</sup> Prior to the 2016 early parliamentary elections, the SEC cross-checked the main Ministry of Internal Affairs database against other state institutions and conducted extensive field checks. The SEC identified 330,549 inconsistent data entries, including some 171,500 citizens who were considered to be temporarily residing abroad. Some 28,000 voters were removed from the voter register. This audit of the voter register applied only for the 2016 elections.

<sup>40</sup> The Ministry of Information Society and Administration has developed plans to establish a permanent national population register which would include the standardization of the coding, naming and numbering of streets across different institutional registries. Although a pilot project to update the land registries has been undertaken in four municipalities, the ODIHR EOM was not informed of a timeline for completion of the new national register.

<sup>41</sup> According to ODIHR EOM interlocutors, problems are mainly caused by incorrect, inconsistent, and obsolete street names, as well as non-existent addresses and house numbers. Numerous citizens may be registered at one address since the requirement to declare a change of address is not always enforced. Citizens temporarily residing abroad are included in the voter register based on their last place of residence in the country.

<sup>42</sup> Paragraph 15 of the [UN CCPR General Comment No. 25](#) states that “persons who are otherwise eligible to stand for election should not be excluded by unreasonable or discriminatory requirements such as education, residence or descent, or by reason of political affiliation”. See also Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) and sections I.1.1.c.iii-v of the [2002 Venice Commission Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) (Code of Good Practice).

<sup>43</sup> Two unsuccessful candidates alleged obstacles to signature collection including irregular working hours of the SEC regional offices; both complaints were rejected as inadmissible.

The Electoral Code stipulates a two-week period for signature collection, which took place between 23 February and 9 March. As previously recommended by ODIHR, voters could sign in support of more than one candidate. Given the considerable number of signatures required to be collected, this time limit is relatively short and has the potential to constrain the inclusiveness of the candidate nomination process.

Of the nine prospective candidates who announced their intention to collect voter support signatures, three succeeded in collecting the required number. The SEC received and considered the nomination documents within the legal deadline, and three candidates were registered on 21 March, including one woman and one ethnic-Albanian candidate. According to the SEC, Mr. Pendarovski was supported by 31,729 voter signatures, Mr. Reka by 11,128, and Ms. Siljanovska Davkova by 15,926. Although registered as non-partisan, each of the three candidates was supported by political parties prior to the collection of signatures and registration, and used party symbols for identification on the ballot.<sup>44</sup> Most interlocutors did not raise concerns about the overall inclusiveness of the process.

## VIII. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The campaign took place in a calm and peaceful environment. Fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression were respected, and the election participants were able to campaign freely and without hindrance. The official campaign period commenced on 1 April, 20 days before the election day. There was a campaign-silence period commencing 24 hours before each election day, and lasting until the polls closed. The Electoral Code provides a sanction for campaigning outside the campaign period for legal entities. The rules led to an anomalous situation in which the would-be candidates campaigned until their formal registration, and then ceased campaigning until the start of the campaign period. Meanwhile, political parties continued their activities, including supporting the presidential candidates they had endorsed.<sup>45</sup>

*Consideration should be given to aligning the official campaign period with the timeline for registration of contestants, to ensure campaign regulations apply consistently to all participants. Regular political activities before the official campaign period should not be outlawed.*

Before the first round, the candidates campaigned extensively around the country using a variety of traditional means, as well as social media platforms. They held small-scale meetings with voters as well as larger rallies together with party leaders, who featured prominently in the campaign. While the provisions in the Electoral Code regarding the allocation of commercial billboards were unclear (see *Legal Framework*), in practice commercial billboards were extensively used and their placing did not prove contentious. Local activists carried out door-to-door campaigning and distributed leaflets. Campaigning before the run-off was more subdued, as the short campaign period coincided with the Orthodox Easter and Labour Day holidays, and both remaining candidates avoided large-scale campaign rallies in favour of smaller-scale events and extensive use of paid media advertisements. The Prespa Agreement and Euro-Atlantic integration featured prominently in both rounds of the campaign, as well as emigration, corruption, and the rule of law.

Although all candidates were nominally independent, Mr. Pendarovski and Ms. Siljanovska Davkova in particular depended heavily on the organizational support of the parties. While the candidates generally avoided harsh language, there were instances of inflammatory rhetoric by party

<sup>44</sup> Mr. Pendarovski used the symbol of the SDSM, Mr. Reka used the symbols of the Alliance of Albanians and BESA along with his own symbol, while Ms. Siljanovska Davkova used the symbol of VMRO-DPMNE.

<sup>45</sup> The SEC rejected three complaints alleging early campaigning by Ms. Siljanovska Davkova and by Mr. Pendarovski.

representatives, as well as in traditional and social media.<sup>46</sup> In the final days of the first-round campaign, public controversy emerged over claims by the opposition that an SDSM mobile application for canvassers was misusing personal data, which SDSM denied. The Directorate for Personal Data Protection conducted an investigation of the application and informed the ODIHR EOM that while there were some minor irregularities, there was no evidence of a breach of personal data. In the second-round campaign, both sides employed increasingly negative campaign messages, with mutual accusations of abuses of power while in government.

The Electoral Code contains detailed provisions to uphold the separation of state and party, prohibit the abuse of state resources and ensure the equitable use of public spaces.<sup>47</sup> For the most part, state officials appeared to maintain a clear distinction between their official duties and political activities by not using state resources or engaging in campaign activities during office hours.<sup>48</sup> Notwithstanding, the ODIHR EOM received several allegations that public sector employees had been pressured to attend or not attend campaign events, notably in the south-west of the country. No specific allegations were verified. As required by the Electoral Code, the candidates signed a code of conduct including a pledge not to exert pressure on public sector employees. The Ministry of Information Society and Administration introduced an online tool through which public employees could report any instances of pressure, but no such reports were filed.<sup>49</sup> The Ombudsperson's office received some reports of pressure on people not to vote. According to several ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the perceived politicization of public sector appointments creates a widespread view that employees should support the ruling parties, even in the absence of explicit instructions.

*Continued vigorous efforts should be taken by the authorities to counter any form of pressure on public-sector employees, including clear public statements and written instructions by senior state officials that such pressure will not be tolerated and that no citizen should fear any negative consequences as a result of supporting or not supporting any candidate or party. Public-sector employees should be actively encouraged to report any instances of pressure, and such cases should be thoroughly investigated and prosecuted, with protection for those who report these cases.*

The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) is mandated to react to potential abuses of state resources, including during the election campaign. However, the SCPC lacked sufficient financial and human resources to effectively monitor compliance with election regulations. The SCPC published a database of vehicles belonging to state institutions and relied on civil society organizations to report whether such vehicles were used for campaigning; only one such report was filed. The Electoral Code prohibits the initiation of public funding for infrastructure projects during the election period, as well as, except in urgent cases, the employment of new public employees. Several complaints alleging breaches of these rules were submitted to the SCPC (see *Complaints and Appeals*).<sup>50</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Including against Mr. Reka at campaign events of mainly ethnic-Albanian parties in the governing coalition, as well as against Mr. Pendarovski in traditional and online content.

<sup>47</sup> The use of state offices, equipment or personnel for campaign purposes is prohibited. Election participants are required to notify the authorities at least 48 hours in advance of holding a campaign event in a public place. Some buildings may not be used for campaign events, including religious buildings, hospitals, schools, retirement homes and other public institutions, unless no other appropriate venue is available.

<sup>48</sup> In between the two election rounds, the ODIHR EOM received one report of a state official participating in a campaign event during working hours in Skopje. Furthermore, one complaint about a municipality office in Shuto Orizari being used for a press conference in support of Mr. Pendarovski was upheld by the State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption.

<sup>49</sup> The Ministry informed the ODIHR EOM that nine reports were filed using the tool, but that none of them concerned election-related pressure on public officials.

<sup>50</sup> Of 16 complaints submitted to the SCPC on this subject matter, only two were partially upheld, in that the SCPC concluded that information about the initiatives should not have been published in the media during the pre-election period. Two cases were opened by the SCPC *ex officio*.

*The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption should be provided with adequate human and financial resources to effectively carry out its mandate during the electoral period.*

The country comprises several ethnic communities.<sup>51</sup> A notable feature of the election campaign was that Mr. Pendarovski's candidature received support not only from SDSM, but also from parties mainly representing ethnic-Albanian citizens and other ethnic groups. In his campaign discourse, Mr. Pendarovski stressed his commitment to a multi-ethnic society and the importance of inter-ethnic cohesion, and prominent ethnic-Albanian politicians spoke at several campaign events. Mr. Reka campaigned in both the Macedonian and Albanian languages, although his campaign focused on ethnic-Albanian voters. The parties supporting Mr. Reka urged ethnic-Albanians to vote for him to demonstrate their numbers in the population. In the second round, Ms. Siljanovska Davkova's campaign also disseminated advertisements in the Albanian language.

Several parties represent smaller ethnic minorities, most of which are aligned with either the SDSM or VMRO-DPMNE. Representatives of these parties actively participated in the campaign, especially in places where their communities are concentrated. Interlocutors from the Roma community informed the ODIHR EOM that while much remained to be done to address the needs of Roma, abuses such as pressure and vote-buying have decreased in prevalence. Positively, a campaign event was organized by the NGO *Avaja* before the second round, which featured both presidential candidates and promoted the participation of Roma voters.

Women are under-represented in public life.<sup>52</sup> Only 4 of 26 government ministers are women, and only 6 of 81 mayors. Although one candidate was a woman, women featured infrequently as campaign speakers and the attendance of women at campaign events observed by the ODIHR EOM was disproportionately low. In her campaign, Ms. Siljanovska Davkova frequently addressed issues related to gender equality, promising that if elected she would work to promote the participation of women in her cabinet and in public life. Mr. Pendarovski also pledged to further women's participation in politics.

Some efforts were made in the campaign to address the concerns of people with disabilities, with candidates occasionally calling for increased measures to improve their situation in society. Positively, sign language interpretation was provided at some larger campaign events. ODIHR EOM interlocutors described some progress in recent years in improving conditions for persons with disabilities, for example in providing for access to public buildings, including the parliament building. However, persons with disabilities mostly lack equal access to physical and communications infrastructures, and no persons with declared disabilities are currently members of parliament.<sup>53</sup>

---

<sup>51</sup> According to the last census of 2002, 64.2 per cent of the population declared themselves as ethnic Macedonians, 25.2 per cent as ethnic Albanians, 3.8 per cent as ethnic Turks, 2.7 per cent as ethnic Roma, 1.8 per cent as ethnic Serbs, 0.8 per cent as ethnic Bosniacs, 0.5 per cent as ethnic Vlachs, and 1 per cent as other. In the absence of recent census data, the current ethnic composition of the country is uncertain.

<sup>52</sup> Paragraph 29 of the [2018 CEDAW concluding observations](#) expressed concern that women remain “underrepresented in the Assembly, the Cabinet and municipal councils, among mayors, in decision-making positions in the foreign service and in the judiciary;” and at “a lack of programmes and strategies to ensure the participation of Roma women, rural women and women with disabilities in all spheres of life and in decision-making positions and processes in public and private organizations”.

<sup>53</sup> See paragraph 18 of the [2018 CRPD concluding observations](#), which recommended “the mandatory application of accessibility standards in all areas, particularly regarding buildings, transport, other facilities and services open to the public, and information and communications technologies and systems”.



## IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance is regulated by the 2006 Electoral Code, the 2004 Law on Financing of Political Parties, and the 2018 Law on Prevention of Corruption and Conflict of Interest.<sup>54</sup> Some prior ODIHR and Council of Europe recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to scrutiny of interim reports, the deadline for filing final reports, and the scope of their audit.<sup>55</sup> The legal framework sets out general campaign finance disclosure and reporting requirements, but the rules lack clarity on the frequency of the reporting and sanctions for non-submission of interim reports, and do not address third-party campaigning and reporting of loans.

Parties are eligible for public funding if they received at least one per cent of the vote in the previous parliamentary or local elections.<sup>56</sup> Presidential candidates do not receive direct public funding for the campaign, but following 2018 amendments to the Electoral Code, political advertisements in the media are reimbursed from the state budget. The Electoral Code establishes a campaign expenditure limit of MKD 110 per registered voter (amounting to some MKD 198 million or some EUR 3.2 million), which according to the relevant institutions applied for both rounds cumulatively. Candidates and political parties informed the ODIHR EOM of an informal cross-party agreement to further limit expenses on media advertising, to reduce the overall cost to the state budget in reimbursements.

Electoral contestants were obliged to register unique tax numbers and opened separate bank accounts, through which all campaign-related financial transactions needed to be conducted. Campaigns are funded by party membership fees and private donations. Public, foreign and anonymous donations, among other sources, are prohibited. Donations were limited to EUR 3,000 for individuals and EUR 30,000 for legal entities, including in-kind contributions.<sup>57</sup> While political parties actively campaigned for the candidates they endorsed, there are no explicit regulations on third-party campaigning and no requirements for accounting of expenses incurred by political parties supporting candidates.<sup>58</sup> Following 2018 amendments to the Law on Financing of Political Parties and the Electoral Code, political parties can receive bank loans, which can be transferred to the campaign accounts of candidates. Two political parties have informed the ODIHR EOM that they had taken loans for the presidential campaign, while no loans were reported by candidates.<sup>59</sup> This lack of regulation negatively impacts the transparency of campaign finance.<sup>60</sup>

---

<sup>54</sup> The law gives SCPC powers to initiate procedures in case of suspicion of violations of campaign finance rules either *ex officio*, upon complaint by a campaign organizer or an observer.

<sup>55</sup> See the [2014 GRECO Third Evaluation Round Second Compliance Report](#) and the [2016 ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Opinion on the Electoral Code](#), as well as [Recommendation Rec\(2003\)4](#) of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.

<sup>56</sup> Pursuant to 2018 amendments to the Law on Financing of Political Parties, the amount of public funding for political parties increased from 0.06 to 0.15 per cent of the total income of the state budget.

<sup>57</sup> The reported amount of income received by contestants was some MKD 20 million to Mr. Pendarovski, some MKD 16 million to Ms. Siljanovska Davkova, and some MKD 1 million to Mr. Reka. Ms. Siljanovska Davkova financed her campaign mostly by donations from individuals, Mr. Reka by donations from legal entities, including political parties BESA and AA, and Mr. Pendarovski by membership fees from SDSM.

<sup>58</sup> Party accounts are audited annually but their reports do not separately reflect campaign spending in the presidential election.

<sup>59</sup> Paragraph 171 of the [2011 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation](#) (Guidelines on Political Party Regulation) recommends that rules on transparency deal consistently with loans and their value is reported properly in the financial reports of parties and candidates.

<sup>60</sup> Article 7.3 of the [2003 UN Convention Against Corruption](#) provides that states should "consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures... to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and, where applicable, the funding of political parties".

*To enhance the transparency and oversight of campaign finance, the legislation should regulate third-party activities and require accounting of expenses incurred by political parties supporting candidates. Loans received by political parties and candidates for the purpose of election campaigning should be subject to similar restrictions and reporting requirements as donations.*

Contestants must submit two interim and one final campaign finance report to the SEC, State Audit Office (SAO) and SCPC.<sup>61</sup> The second interim report is submitted one day before election day, which does not provide sufficient time for its publication. The law obliges the receiving institutions to publish the interim reports from each contestant, however, these institutions do not scrutinize the interim reports, which hinders early detection of irregularities. The final reports should be submitted to the SAO within four months of the election, which is an unduly protracted deadline.<sup>62</sup> By law, the SAO has 60 days for audits, although it does not interpret this as a deadline for finalization of the audit of final reports.

Candidates generally complied with the reporting requirements for campaign financing, however, different understandings of the requisite frequency and format resulted in non-uniform reporting.<sup>63</sup> While two candidates submitted two interim reports prior to the first-round election day as required by law, Ms. Siljanovska Davkova submitted only one.<sup>64</sup> Further, the candidates used different reporting templates.<sup>65</sup> Each candidate submitted an interim report prior to the run-off.

*The State Audit Office should be mandated to review interim reports and to promptly publish its findings. The deadline for the submission of final reports should not exceed one month after the election. The rules should clarify the reporting structure and requirements, to provide for uniformity of campaign finance reporting.*

By law, the SAO is the primary supervisory body for political and campaign financing. Other institutions also have oversight and investigative powers over campaign financing.<sup>66</sup> In practice, the SCPC did not have the resources to monitor campaign financing during the electoral period. The scope of the SAO's oversight is limited to the income and expenses reported by contestants, and the SAO does not have sufficient powers and resources to investigate the accuracy of the information. Overall,

---

<sup>61</sup> On 4 March 2019, these three institutions signed a memorandum on the exchange of information on irregularities in financial reports and subsequent measures to be undertaken.

<sup>62</sup> Paragraph 200 of the [Guidelines on Political Party Regulations](#) recommends that "Reports on campaign financing should be turned into proper authorities within a period of no more than 30 days after the elections [...] In an effort to support transparency, it is good practice for such financial reports to be made available on the Internet in a timely manner". According to the SAO, based on its audit of campaign finance reports of the 2016 parliamentary and 2017 local elections, no violations were found.

<sup>63</sup> The Ministry of Finance issued a new reporting template requiring a detailed breakdown of expenditures, including the paid political advertisement, but only Mr. Pendarovski used it in the first round of reporting. Mr. Pendarovski declared some MKD 30 million and included funds for paid advertisement, while Ms. Siljanovska Davkova and Mr. Reka excluded paid advertisement and declared some MKD 2.2 million and 1.5 million, respectively, according to the interim reports.

<sup>64</sup> The Electoral Code (Article 84-b) requires submission of the second interim report for the second half of the campaign one day after the end of the campaign.

<sup>65</sup> Mr. Pendarovski used the required new reporting template that included a detailed breakdown of expenditures in both rounds. Ms. Siljanovska Davkova and Mr. Reka initially used the same outdated template but Mr. Reka submitted his second report in the required new template.

<sup>66</sup> By law, both the SAO and the SCPC can initiate cases related to violations of campaign finance regulations. These can be referred to the prosecutor's office. While the Electoral Code (Article 74-a) mandates the SAO to hear complaints related to campaign finance violations, the SAO informed ODIHR EOM that it had no jurisdiction to consider such complaints.

regulatory shortcomings and limited powers and resources of the institutions involved diminished the transparency of campaign finance and the effectiveness of oversight.<sup>67</sup>

*The scope of audits by the State Audit Office (SAO) should ensure comprehensive review of compliance with campaign financing rules, and the SAO should be granted the necessary investigatory powers. To enhance the transparency and effectiveness of campaign finance oversight, the SAO should have adequate resources and technical expertise.*

## X. MEDIA

### A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT

The media environment is diverse, comprising approximately 250 media outlets, including some 130 broadcasters. Eight of these, including three public channels, are TV channels with national terrestrial outreach and seven additional broadcasters reach the entire territory through cable and satellite. Television remains the primary source of political information.<sup>68</sup> At the same time, growing Internet penetration has led to a significant development of online sources of political information (with some 100 news websites), and social networks, in particular Facebook, provide important platforms for public discourse. There are six daily newspapers operating in the country.<sup>69</sup> In 2018, the government introduced subsidies for newspapers aiming to support this traditional segment.

Most ODIHR EOM interlocutors highlighted improvements in media freedom in recent years.<sup>70</sup> The Broadcasting Law was amended to prohibit advertising of public campaigns through the broadcast media, which, although the revenue partially supported local broadcasters, had been widely perceived as a mechanism for buying favourable coverage with public funds. Conversely, following the cancellation of the license fee in 2017, the public broadcaster is financed exclusively from the state budget.<sup>71</sup> While some ODIHR EOM interlocutors remarked that this funding structure might undermine its independence, they also noted that it could temporarily provide desired financial stability. New management of the public broadcaster is expected to be appointed, as foreseen by the law, in late 2019.

*To enhance the public service mandate, including the capacity for investigative and analytical reporting, diversification of funding should be considered with the aim to strengthen financial independence of the public broadcaster.*

The media environment suffers from an oversaturated media landscape within a limited advertising market, with a number of prominent private media financed by businesses close to political groups, as

---

<sup>67</sup> Paragraph 214 of the [Guidelines on Political Party Regulations](#) recommends that “the regulatory authority should be given the power to monitor accounts and conduct audits of financial reports. The process [...] should be stated in relevant legislation”. See also paragraph 220, as well as Article 7.3 of the [2003 UN Convention Against Corruption](#).

<sup>68</sup> The public broadcaster *Macedonian Radio and Television* (MRT) operates *MRT1*, *MRT2* (programmes aired in minority languages, primarily in Albanian), a parliamentary channel and three radio stations. In 2018, five major private channels (*Alfa*, *Alsat-M*, *Kanal 5*, *Sitel*, and *Telma*) established the Macedonian Media Association to advocate for interests of private broadcasters.

<sup>69</sup> *Sloboden Pechat* is a daily with the highest declared circulation (some 12,000 copies). There are also two dailies in Albanian.

<sup>70</sup> However, on 17 April, a media crew of *TV21* were verbally threatened and intimidated in Aracinovo. See also the [statement of the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media](#).

<sup>71</sup> The Broadcasting Law currently envisages 0.8 per cent of the country’s budget (with a gradual increase up to 1 per cent) to be dedicated to public media institutions (MRT, Macedonian Broadcasting which maintains the public broadcasting network, and the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Services (AVMS)). The public broadcaster is entitled to 74.5 per cent and the AVMS to 6 per cent of the sum.

well as from a decreasing interest in the journalistic profession. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors described a persistent lack of respect for basic journalistic standards by numerous online media sources, and raised concerns for the professionalism and financial sustainability of the media.

*The state should further publicly promote the existing self-regulatory mechanisms and bodies established to protect professional and ethical journalistic standards, such as the Council of Media Ethics. In addition, it should consider structural and targeted policies to enhance the quality of journalism, including in local media, and to strengthen media and digital literacy.*

## **B. MEDIA LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The legal framework provides detailed regulation of the conduct of media during the election campaign for both rounds. However, various provisions refer only to the coverage of political parties and not to presidential candidates.<sup>72</sup> These provisions were applied by the SEC in accordance with an agreement brokered by the government and parliamentary political parties, in which Mr. Pendarovski and Ms. Siljanovska Davkova would use an equal portion of paid advertisements in the media, and Mr. Reka approximately one-third of their share. While the agreed conditions were not equal, the candidates reported satisfaction with the arrangement.

The public broadcaster is obliged to air free political advertisements, whereas other types of media, including Internet portals, are entitled to offer paid political advertisements to be reimbursed from the state budget. The newly introduced state reimbursement of political advertisements aimed to promote greater access to the media for contestants. At the same time, many ODIHR EOM interlocutors criticized the substantial use of public funds to reimburse political advertisements, as well as the lack of public consultation before introducing the change.

All interested private media had to announce their pricelists for such advertisements within five days from the announcement of the elections. Internet portals were also required to register with the SEC within three days from the announcement to be entitled for the reimbursements.<sup>73</sup> According to the SEC, 92 broadcasters, 83 online portals and 6 newspapers met the respective deadlines.<sup>74</sup> The SEC did not consider those media outlets that missed the deadline.<sup>75</sup>

The SEC reimbursed the costs of advertisements on the basis of invoices submitted by the media and, in the case of broadcast media, based also on the monitoring reports of the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS).<sup>76</sup> The SEC processed reimbursements throughout the campaign

---

<sup>72</sup> For example, the Electoral Code (Art. 75-f.1) provides for division of paid political advertisement only among political parties, based on their status (ruling, opposition, other parliamentary parties, and non-parliamentary parties).

<sup>73</sup> According to ODIHR EOM interlocutors, a lack of basic rules for online sources that officially do not have the status of a media outlet led to some portals aspiring for the public funds without any prior record or with a history of spreading disinformation, leaving their credibility in question. One of the registered portals was listed as a Facebook account, while some others were registered in different languages.

<sup>74</sup> Each outlet was entitled to offer paid advertisements in either round at its own discretion.

<sup>75</sup> One such outlet, *ITV*, filed a complaint against this approach of the SEC, claiming that it was ready to pay a fine for the missed deadline. The law provides a possibility to sanction outlets for breach of the deadline, if the AVMS initiates a misdemeanour procedure, which the AVMS decided not to pursue. The Basic Court Skopje 2 requested the SEC to add *ITV* to its list (after two complaints by this channel were dismissed by the Administrative Court), and the channel started to air paid political advertisements on 14 April. Following an appeal by the SEC, this decision was reversed by the Appeals Court and the channel's initial claim was dismissed by the same basic court on 22 May.

<sup>76</sup> The AVMS monitored paid political advertisements in 27 private broadcasters.

period, but the amounts of funds paid to broadcasters were published only after the second round election day, between 21 and 29 May.<sup>77</sup>

*If the policy of reimbursing political advertisements is to be preserved, the law should be amended to provide for a reasonable and realistic timeframe for reimbursements.*

The Electoral Code stipulates that broadcasters covering the election are obliged to do so in a fair, balanced and unbiased manner in their overall programming. From 9 February through the second round, the AVMS monitored media compliance with the campaign requirements and issued five comprehensive monitoring reports.<sup>78</sup> In accordance with the law, it also provided basic media monitoring updates to the SEC on a daily basis. Positively, and in a timely manner, the AVMS identified and reacted to four violations of the legal requirements and also reminded broadcasters of the prohibition to feature children in the contestants' promotional materials.<sup>79</sup>

### C. MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS

[Click Here to Read Media Monitoring Results](#)



The ODIHR EOM media monitoring found that before the first round the public broadcaster had provided impartial coverage and that, overall, the media had presented diverse information on the candidates and the supporting political parties, through various programmes and five televised debates with all candidates.<sup>80</sup> This provided voters with an opportunity to make an informed choice. Apart from the debates, the public broadcaster aired interviews with two candidates, but decided not to air any other free political presentation.<sup>81</sup>

Most monitored channels covered all three candidates comparably, with prevalently neutral information.<sup>82</sup> Public television *MRT1* dedicated to Mr. Pendarovski some 17 per cent, to Ms. Siljanovska Davkova 15 per cent, and to Mr. Reka 13 per cent. The leaders of SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE were also regularly featured.<sup>83</sup> In addition, all monitored channels dedicated a significant portion of political coverage to government activities (21 to 37 per cent), including both positive and negative reporting.

<sup>77</sup> The SEC is obliged to pay for these expenses twice: on the 12<sup>th</sup> day of the election campaign and not later than 10 days after the end of campaign.

<sup>78</sup> The AVMS conducted 24/7 quantitative and qualitative monitoring, including the tone of 15 TV channels prior to the campaign and 32 channels during the campaign. It issued three reports before the first round, two reports covering the pre-campaign period and one covering the first part of the first-round campaign. Before the run-off it issued its fourth report covering the second part of the first-round campaign. The fifth report covering the run-off campaign was issued one week after the election.

<sup>79</sup> The AVMS initiated four misdemeanour procedures against Tetovo-based *Uskana TV*, national *ITV*, Ohrid-based *TV-M* and Radovish-based *Kobra TV*.

<sup>80</sup> Monitoring was conducted daily from 18:00 until 24:00 of public *MRT1* and *MRT2* (Macedonian and Albanian languages, respectively) and private *Alfa* (Macedonian language), *Alsat-M* (bi-lingual), *Kanal 5*, *Sitel*, *Telma*, and *24 Vesti* (Macedonian language). Politics-related articles of the newspapers *Koha* (Albanian language), *Sloboden Pechat*, *Nezavisen Vesnik* and *Nova Makedonija* (Macedonian language) and online media [www.kurir.mk](http://www.kurir.mk), [www.sdk.mk](http://www.sdk.mk), [www.plusinfo.mk](http://www.plusinfo.mk) (Macedonian language), [www.lajmpress.org](http://www.lajmpress.org) (Albanian language) were also monitored.

<sup>81</sup> According to the public broadcaster, there were no such requests from contestants. While it organised debates with all the candidates in both rounds, it also aired individual interviews prior to the first round (Ms. Siljanovska Davkova decided not to take part).

<sup>82</sup> As an exception, *Sitel TV* focused mostly on Mr. Pendarovski (20 per cent) and Ms. Siljanovska Davkova (18 per cent), while Mr. Reka only received some 6 per cent.

<sup>83</sup> VMRO-DPMNE received between 9 (*Alsat-M*) to 19 per cent (*Sitel*) of political coverage, and the SDSM between 1 (*Alsat-M* and *MRT2*) to 6 per cent (*Sitel*). The SDSM leader was given between 6 (*Sitel*) and 10 per cent (*Alfa* and *Alsat-M*), in his capacity as prime minister.

Online and print media provided varying levels of coverage of the campaign, at times lacking balance in tone and coverage. For example, the newspaper *Sloboden Pечат* featured mostly neutral and critical coverage of Ms. Siljanovska Davkova, while the coverage of both Mr. Pendarovski and Mr. Reka was mainly neutral or positive.<sup>84</sup> The online news portal *kurir.mk* covered Ms. Siljanovska Davkova favourably, while the coverage of Mr. Pendarovski was mostly negative and of Mr. Reka neutral. In most monitored media, contestants were presented in a more balanced manner, both in space and tone.

In the second round, overall, most of the monitored media continued to present diverse information on the candidates and the supporting political parties. Various political programmes, paid advertisements, and three televised candidate debates contributed to the ability of voters to make an informed choice.

Reduced media coverage of the second round reflected the decrease in campaign activity by candidates.<sup>85</sup> Notwithstanding, a majority of monitored channels covered contestants and their supporting parties in an equitable manner, with comparable airtime and a balanced tone. The public channels *MRT1* and *MRT2* dedicated 28 and 18 per cent of political coverage to Ms. Siljanovska Davkova, respectively, and 19 and 14 per cent to Mr. Pendarovski, both of which comprised mostly neutral information. However, the private channel *Alfa*, while presenting balanced coverage of candidates, showed negative coverage of the SDSM and the prime minister, primarily in its weekly analytical programme. Online portal *kurir.mk* again presented preferential treatment of Ms. Siljanovska Davkova and VMRO-DPMNE, while the coverage of Mr. Pendarovski and the SDSM was mostly negative. In the monitored private channels, coverage of government activities generally decreased in comparison with the first round, but coverage of the prime minister was higher (between 8 and 15 per cent), and was mostly neutral in tone.

## XI. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The legal framework provides mechanisms for election dispute resolution but some prior ODIHR recommendations, such as those related to limited standing and restrictive deadlines, remain unaddressed. Under the Electoral Code, the SEC handles most complaints related to elections in the first instance, while the SCPC handles complaints related to campaign finance and the abuse of state resources. The basic courts have jurisdiction over electoral offences.<sup>86</sup> Most deadlines for the submission and resolution of complaints are very short, which may jeopardize effective legal redress.<sup>87</sup>

*Deadlines for the submission and resolution of complaints should allow adequate preparation and a reflected decision.*

---

<sup>84</sup> Mr. Pendarovski received 24 per cent of political coverage, Ms. Siljanovska Davkova 23 per cent, and Mr. Reka 6 per cent.

<sup>85</sup> Media devoted significant attention to events other than the presidential contest, including a leadership dispute within the Islamic Religious Community, and a Western Balkan intergovernmental summit in Berlin.

<sup>86</sup> While the Electoral Code (Article 73) gives candidates the right to directly lodge a case with the relevant basic court if their campaigns are interfered with, in practice, according to ODIHR EOM interlocutors, individuals have to first initiate the case with the prosecutor's office and cannot directly address the court. No cases were filed to the basic courts.

<sup>87</sup> Most deadlines are 24 or 48 hours. For instance, complaints about rejection of candidate lists must be submitted within 24 hours and then decided within 24 hours. On the other hand, the 7-day deadline to decide on complaints on campaigning in the silence period is too long. Section II.3.3 (95) of the [Code of Good Practice](#) states that "time limits must [...] be long enough to make an appeal possible, to guarantee the exercise of rights of defence and a reflected decision. A time limit of three to five days at first instance (both for lodging appeals and making rulings) seems reasonable. It is, however, permissible to grant a little more time to [the highest court] for their rulings".

While the law authorises MECs to decide on complaints, it does not specify which complaints fall under their jurisdiction. In this election, MECs did not handle complaints and many stated to the ODIHR EOM that they had no capacity or training to do so.

*To improve access to legal remedy and decrease the workload of the State Election Commission, the legal framework should specify which election-related complaints are handled by Municipal Election Commissions, and their capacity to consider such complaints should be strengthened.*

The SEC's decisions on complaints and the annulment of results can be appealed to the Administrative Court, which is the final instance in these cases. However, other decisions and actions of the SEC are not subject to judicial review. There is likewise no timely judicial review of SEC regulations.<sup>88</sup> Only contestants may challenge voting irregularities and election results. Voters can only challenge a violation of their right to vote, and citizen observers do not have the right to file complaints related to their observation.<sup>89</sup> The SEC's written responses rejecting inadmissible complaints are not regarded as decisions and cannot be appealed. Overall, the legal framework does not fully provide for effective legal redress, contrary to OSCE commitments and Council of Europe standards.<sup>90</sup>

*The legal framework should be reviewed to eliminate undue restrictions on the right to lodge electoral complaints and appeals, and to provide for effective legal remedies. Decisions and actions of the election administration should be reasoned and subject to legal guarantees for timely and effective judicial review.*

Few complaints were filed with the SEC in the pre-election period.<sup>91</sup> The SEC considered complaints within the legal deadlines, but decisions lacked substantive reasoning. An electronic system for tracking complaints by the SEC, required by the Electoral Code, was not operational throughout the entire election period, decreasing the transparency of complaint resolution.

The SEC is mandated to handle complaints concerning irregularities in election day procedures, including the voting, counting and tabulation processes, as well as challenges to the results. These SEC decisions can be appealed to the Administrative Court. Contestants have the right to submit complaints within 48 hours from the publication of preliminary results. The Electoral Code requires the SEC to annul polling station results in case of procedural irregularities, including extra ballots in the box or the suspension of voting for more than three hours.

Following the first round election day, the SEC received 14 complaints regarding irregularities, all lodged by Ms. Siljanovska Davkova's representatives.<sup>92</sup> Based on the review of these complaints,

---

<sup>88</sup> Regulations may be challenged in the Constitutional Court, however, expedited deadlines for handling such cases are not envisaged.

<sup>89</sup> Complaints filed by two unsuccessful candidates regarding the signature collection process and one from citizen observers related to alleged early campaigning were not accepted because the complainants were not entitled to file such complaints by law.

<sup>90</sup> Paragraph 5.10 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that "everyone shall have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity". Section II.3.3.3.f of the [Code of Good Practice](#) recommends that "all candidates and all voters registered in the constituency concerned must be entitled to appeal". See also Article 2.3(a) of the 1966 ICCPR. See also paragraph 18.2 of the [1991 OSCE Moscow Document](#), and [Rec\(2004\)20](#) of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on judicial review of administrative acts.

<sup>91</sup> The SEC received and rejected one complaint related to voter registration and three related to early campaigning. The Administrative Court upheld the SEC's decision not to include a voter in the voter list due to lack of valid documents and official residence.

<sup>92</sup> Alleged irregularities included giving voters extra ballots or ballots with the ballot stub, people not on the voter list allowed to vote, incorrect determination of invalid ballots, and ballot box stuffing.

voting results were annulled in seven polling stations.<sup>93</sup> Voting results of one additional polling station were annulled by the SEC at its own initiative due to inconsistencies in the results protocols. Seven additional complaints were rejected as unsubstantiated. While some complaints did not meet the formal requirements for submission, positively, the SEC still considered the merits of such cases. In three cases the SEC examined election materials, and in two cases conducted a recount of ballots.<sup>94</sup> Additionally, the SEC received and upheld five complaints from homebound voters who had not been allowed to vote in the first round. The SEC decided on all cases in open session and published the decisions online, contributing to transparency.

Following the runoff, the SEC received 11 complaints regarding irregularities, all lodged by Ms. Siljanovska Davkova's representatives. These alleged discrepancies in the results protocols, homebound voters allowed to vote without signing the voter list, voting on behalf of someone else, and series of seemingly identical signatures on the voter list. Based on the review of these complaints, voting results were annulled in four polling stations. Seven complaints were rejected as unsubstantiated. In nine cases the SEC examined election materials, and in five cases recounted ballots. The SEC decided all cases in open session and published the decisions online, contributing to transparency. None of these decisions were further appealed.

The SCPC received 22 election-related complaints, all from VMRO-DPMNE, alleging unlawful initiation of infrastructure projects, employment, and other spending in the election period. Most of these complaints were rejected as unsubstantiated.<sup>95</sup> Further, the SCPC initiated seven cases *ex officio*, related to initiation of an infrastructure project, appointments and promotions in the army, and termination of employment after the election was called. All cases were considered within the legal deadlines, in public hearings, and decisions were published within 24 hours, providing transparency. However, there is no deadline to finalize cases that require substantial investigations. The Administrative Court decided on appeals against decisions of the SCPC and the SEC within legal deadlines and its judgments were published online in a timely manner.<sup>96</sup>

## XII. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION

Contributing to the transparency of the electoral process, the Electoral Code provides for observation at all stages by citizen and international observers, as well as representatives of election contestants. The accreditation process for citizen observers is centralized and the accredited organisations are listed on the SEC website, while the responsibility for registration of candidate representatives lies with the MECs. The badges issued to observers and candidate representatives did not indicate their affiliation. In several instances, the IEOM observers saw that candidate representatives were completing their badges themselves.

In view of a high number of requests to observe the election, the SEC extended the period for accreditation applications before the first round, and this period was further prolonged, with no deadline set, for the run-off. First-round accreditations remained valid in the second round. In an inclusive process, the SEC accredited 3,381 citizen observers and 520 international observers in total for both

---

<sup>93</sup> In six polling stations results were annulled due to one extra ballot found in the box.

<sup>94</sup> The legal framework does not regulate recount procedures.

<sup>95</sup> Nine were dismissed, two partially upheld and one upheld. One complaint was sent to the public prosecutor's office for investigating a potential criminal offence.

<sup>96</sup> The Court dismissed two appeals by a media outlet, which missed the deadline to announce its price list and was therefore not approved by the SEC for paid political advertising, and upheld two SEC's decisions not to include voters in the voter list due to the lack of valid documents and official residence. Two appeals against the SCPC decisions to initiate proceedings were upheld and in two cases court overturned the SCPC decisions to initiate proceedings.



rounds. Citizen observer groups included CIVIL and Citizens' Association MOST, which also conducted parallel vote tabulation.<sup>97</sup> Several organizations of persons with disabilities, such as *Inkluziva*, also observed the election.

### XIII. ELECTION DAY

#### A. FIRST ROUND

On 21 April, voting took place in 3,395 polling stations in the country.<sup>98</sup> Election day was calm and the polls were well-administered. The IEOM observed opening in 93 polling stations, voting in 979 polling stations, counting in 87 polling stations and tabulation in 69 MECs.

Early voting was held a day earlier, on 20 April, for homebound voters, internally displaced persons, voters in penitentiary institutions and in one retirement home and one special hospital in Skopje. On the same day, voting also took place in out-of-country polling stations. The IEOM observed voting in 12 penitentiary institutions and the retirement home. Voting in these institutions proceeded in an orderly manner and was assessed positively in all observations. Instances of voters not being found on voter lists in prisons highlighted the need for timely updates of these lists. Some voters did not have valid ID cards and were allowed to vote with prison IDs.

On election day itself, the opening was assessed positively in nearly all of the polling stations observed. Electoral boards were generally aware of the procedures and worked in a transparent manner, although some irregularities were observed, such as not showing the empty ballot box (12 cases) or not filling in the protocol before voting began (19 cases). Eighteen of the observed polling stations opened with a short delay.

Throughout the day, observers assessed the overall process as transparent, which was supported by the presence of citizen observers (39 per cent of observations) and candidate representatives (70 per cent). The conduct of voting was assessed positively by the IEOM in 99 per cent of observations. The voting process was smooth and procedures were followed in almost all observations, including checking voter identification, ensuring voters signed the voter list, and marking voters' fingers. Observers noticed that EB members did not always instruct voters how to properly mark ballots.

Overall, no major violations were observed on election day. However, IEOM observers noted cases of group and family voting (3 per cent of observations), which primarily impact women's opportunity to cast their vote freely and in secret.

While the SEC took measures to increase the number of barrier-free polling stations in advance of this election, polling station premises were assessed to be suitable for independent access by persons with disabilities in only 46 per cent of observations.<sup>99</sup> In 80 per cent of observations, the layout of the polling station was suitable for voters with disabilities, and nearly all observed polling stations were equipped

---

<sup>97</sup> MOST deployed 2,030 observers in both rounds, and CIVIL 162.

<sup>98</sup> Based on a SEC decision from 8 April, 2 polling stations with no registered voters were not established and 82 polling stations with fewer than 10 registered voters in 28 municipalities were assigned to nearby polling stations, but with separate election material (see also *Second Round*). An additional polling station in the municipality of Studenichani did not open due to a local citizen protest.

<sup>99</sup> The SEC acquired mobile access ramps and two wheelchair staircase transporters. In 2017, the SEC conducted an assessment of 2,733 polling station premises in public facilities for accessibility for voters with disabilities and found that 51 per cent of these premises were equipped with access ramps, however, the ramps were often not sufficiently strong or wide for a regular wheelchair.

with a Braille ballot frame. In several instances, IEOM observers noted that procedures for assistance to voters with disabilities were not respected, sometimes resulting in proxy voting.

*To facilitate the equal participation of persons with physical disabilities in elections, the State Election Commission, in co-operation with the relevant state authorities, should continue to take measures to improve the accessibility of polling stations and to train polling station staff about assistive tools.*

Counting was assessed positively overall, although the IEOM observed that not all EBs followed the procedures and often omitted important safeguards, such as establishing the number of used ballots (19 observations) and determining the number of voters who signed the voter list (17 observations) before opening the ballot box.

No concerns were raised about the accuracy of the vote count and the validity of ballots was determined largely consistently. The SEC attributed the significant number of invalid ballots (including blank votes) in the first round to the intentional spoiling of ballots by citizens, reflecting their political stance, rather than a lack of understanding on how to mark the ballot.<sup>100</sup> Notwithstanding, the law is ambiguous on the determination of invalid ballots. The Electoral Code provides for a circle around the candidate's number as the only valid mark, while also stipulating that the ballot should be considered valid if the will of a voter can be established in a clear and unambiguous way. In its instructions, the SEC admitted also circles around the candidate's name or symbol. Also, each polling station received the exact number of ballots as the number of registered voters and EBs were instructed not to issue replacements to voters who spoiled ballots unintentionally.

*Consideration should be given to clarifying the rules to preserve the validity of ballots that clearly express the voters' will. Consideration should also be given to allow for the replacement of accidentally spoiled ballots.*

Procedures were generally followed during tabulation at MECs and the process was assessed positively in all but one observation. Observers noted that MEC practices varied with respect to resolving discrepancies in EB protocol data, indicating a lack of adequate instructions from the SEC on this issue.

The SEC informed the public on the turnout six times during the election day and started to publish preliminary results on its website on a continuous basis less than an hour after the polls closed, disaggregated by municipality and polling station, providing a high degree of transparency. The final results of the first round were announced by the SEC on 25 April, with the nationwide turnout of 41.7 per cent.<sup>101</sup> As none of the three candidates achieved the required majority of votes to be elected in the first round, the two candidates with the highest number of votes proceeded into the second round on 5 May.

## **B. SECOND ROUND**

The second election day proceeded smoothly and was well-administered. Candidate representatives or citizen observers were present in most polling stations observed, contributing to transparency of the process. As in the first round, women were well-represented in the various election bodies, accounting for around two-thirds of all members and two-thirds of presidents in electoral boards.

Voters who were registered for out-of-country or homebound voting for the first round were automatically included in these voter lists for the second round, with additional applications for

---

<sup>100</sup> In the first round, 4.3 per cent of ballots cast were deemed invalid. The highest rates were recorded in Chucher-Sandev, Makedonska Kamenica, and Delchevo, at respectively 7.7, 6.5, and 6.2 per cent.

<sup>101</sup> A minor correction of these results was adopted on 3 May.

homebound voting accepted until 27 April. These voters as well as voters in penitentiary institutions cast their ballots the day before, on 4 May. In all 13 observations of the IEOM, the process of early voting was orderly and procedures were largely followed. In one observation, concerns over secrecy were expressed because envelopes with the ballots were not properly sealed. As in the first round, some voters were unable to vote because they were not on the lists or did not have the required identification documents.

On election day, the opening was assessed positively in all 64 polling stations observed. Procedures were known to EBs and largely followed, although in 12 instances the EBs did not fill in protocols before the start of voting. Most polling stations opened on time or with a short delay. In one observation, the opening was delayed by over one hour due to the replacement of incorrectly printed voter lists.

Voting was well-organized and the process was assessed positively in 99 per cent of IEOM observations. Key procedures were followed throughout the day, including the checking for and marking of voters' fingers with ink, checking IDs, and signing of voter lists. A few negative assessments were related to inadequate voting premises, which were not suitable for polling and sometimes compromised secrecy of the vote. As in the first round, instances of family voting were observed (3 per cent of observations), which tend to negatively effect women. The voting process was generally transparent, although in a few instances the IEOM observers were not allowed to view voter lists. During the day, several credible allegations of vote-buying were made to the IEOM, which also observed clear indications of vote-buying in Shtip and Strumica.

*The State Election Commission and other actors should continue voter and civic education efforts to prevent family voting and preserve free choice for each voter. These education efforts should also tackle vote-buying, while law enforcement agencies should investigate vote-buying allegations and hold their organizers to account.*

While polling station premises allowed for independent access of persons with disabilities in only 41 per cent of observations, in 82 per cent of observations the layout inside the polling stations was assessed as suitable for voters with disabilities. As in the first round, a Braille ballot frame for voters with visual impairment was available in all but nine observed polling stations, although the IEOM interlocutors reported that these devices were rarely used.

Counting was observed in 71 polling stations. While it was carried out efficiently, observers noted that the conduct was hasty and in most cases the EBs did not perform the required procedures before opening the ballot box, including counting signatures on the voter lists (20 cases), determining the number of used ballots (20 cases), and rendering the remaining ballots unusable (14 cases). Procedures for the ballot count itself were well-followed, with ballots counted accurately and consistent determination of invalid ballots. Transparency of the count was enhanced by the presence of candidate representatives (59 cases) and citizen observers (16 cases) but the EBs did not post copies of the results protocol at the polling stations in 29 cases.

As in the first round, in polling stations with fewer than 10 registered voters, the secrecy of vote was compromised, as the voter's choice could be revealed during the count, contrary to international standards.<sup>102</sup> Although the SEC reassigned the voters from such polling stations to the closest polling station, these polling stations were not merged and ballots were cast in separate ballot boxes and counted

---

<sup>102</sup> See Article 25 of the ICCPR: "Every citizen shall have the right and the opportunity... to vote and to be elected at genuine periodic elections which... shall be held by secret ballot, guaranteeing the free expression of the will of the electors." Paragraph 7.4 of the OSCE Copenhagen Document requires that the OSCE participating States "ensure that the votes are cast by secret ballot or by equivalent free voting procedure".

separately. Similarly, when a small number of votes from penitentiary institutions and IDPs are counted at the MEC, the choice of these voters may also be revealed.

*To ensure secrecy of the vote, polling stations with fewer than ten voters should be merged with nearby polling stations and their ballots cast together. Counting procedures for votes from penitentiary and other institutions should preserve the secrecy of the voters' choices.*

Tabulation was assessed positively at all of the 61 MECs observed. While observers noted good organization of the process, the premises were assessed as insufficient in four instances. Discrepancies in the results protocols were primarily resolved by MECs re-examining the election material, however, in a few cases EBs were called back to conduct recounts themselves, highlighting a lack of uniform guidance on this stage of the process.

The SEC released information on voter turnout throughout the day and published preliminary results as they were processed, with full preliminary results available before midnight, disaggregated by municipality and polling station. The SEC announced the voter turnout of 46.7 per cent. Accusations of irregularities were aired during the day by VMRO-DPMNE, which also alleged that voters were being unduly influenced by the ruling parties. The Minister of Interior reported isolated irregularities. Notwithstanding, both candidates accepted the election result on election night.

#### **XIV. POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS**

The final results were announced by the SEC on 11 May in the session followed by the presentation of a certificate to the newly elected president, Mr. Pendarovski. For the first time, the certificate was written in Albanian in addition to the Macedonian language. Mr. Pendarovski was inaugurated as president by the parliament on 12 May. The post-electoral atmosphere was calm and peaceful. Following the election, the prime minister declared that the election had been successful and democratic, and that the country was prepared for integration with Europe. The leader of VMRO-DPMNE, while expressing satisfaction that Ms. Siljanovska Davkova had secured the highest number of votes in a majority of municipalities, repeated his earlier assertion that she could have lost only as a result of electoral malfeasance, although not providing any evidence or submitting any complaint.

#### **XV. RECOMMENDATIONS**

These recommendations as contained throughout the text are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in North Macedonia and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with past ODIHR recommendations that have not yet been addressed.<sup>103</sup> ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of North Macedonia to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

---

<sup>103</sup> In paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves “to follow up promptly the ODIHR’s election assessment and recommendations”. The follow-up of prior recommendations is assessed by the ODIHR EOM as follows: recommendations 5, 6, 12, 16, 19, 26, 30 and 31 from the final report on the 2009 presidential election, 17 and 24 from the final report on the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections, and 11, 19, 21 and 22 of the final report on the December 2016 parliamentary elections are fully implemented. Recommendations 9, 18 and 22 of the final report on the 2009 presidential election, 7, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 21, and 22 of the final report on the 2014 presidential and parliamentary elections, 2, 8, 23 and 25 of the final report on the December 2016 parliamentary elections, and 6 and 10 of the final report on the 2018 referendum are mostly implemented. Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 23, 25, and 29 from the 2009 final report on the presidential election, 1, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 18 and 25 from the 2014 final report on the presidential and parliamentary

## A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. A comprehensive review of electoral legislation should be undertaken to address the shortcomings identified in this and in prior ODIHR reports. Campaign and media rules should regulate the presidential contest and ensure equal opportunities for candidates. Rules for the second round should be clarified. The reform process should be public, inclusive, and carried out sufficiently in advance of the next election.
2. Consideration should be given to reviewing the existing thresholds for presidential elections to minimize the risk of failed elections. The legal framework could be amended to calculate the winning majority in the first round from the number of votes cast, while the second round threshold requirement could be removed.
3. To ensure the stability and professionalism of the election administration, legal provisions should be adopted which clearly establish the composition and length of mandate of a permanent State Election Commission. Essential personnel of the SEC secretariat should be employed on a permanent basis.
4. In a coordinated effort and according to clearly defined responsibilities, the state authorities should continue updating and harmonising all pertinent registers and databases to provide an accurate basis for the voter register.
5. Continued vigorous efforts should be taken by the authorities to counter any form of pressure on public-sector employees, including clear public statements and written instructions by senior state officials that such pressure will not be tolerated and that no citizen should fear any negative consequences as a result of supporting or not supporting any candidate or party. Public-sector employees should be actively encouraged to report any instances of pressure, and such cases should be thoroughly investigated and prosecuted, with protection for those who report these cases.
6. The State Audit Office should be mandated to review interim reports and to promptly publish its findings. The deadline for the submission of final reports should not exceed one month after the election. The rules should clarify the reporting structure and requirements, to provide for uniformity of campaign finance reporting.
7. The scope of audits by the State Audit Office (SAO) should ensure comprehensive review of compliance with campaign financing rules, and the SAO should be granted the necessary investigatory powers. To enhance the transparency and effectiveness of campaign finance oversight, the SAO should have adequate resources and technical expertise.
8. The legal framework should be reviewed to eliminate undue restrictions on the right to lodge electoral complaints and appeals, and to provide for effective legal remedies. Decisions and actions of the election administration should be reasoned and subject to timely and effective judicial review.

---

elections, 1, 6, 13, 14, 15, 20, 26 and 29 from the final report on the December 2016 parliamentary elections, and 2, 11, 12 and 14 from the final report on the 2018 referendum are partially addressed. See also [www.paragraph25.odihr.pl](http://www.paragraph25.odihr.pl).

## **B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Election Administration**

9. The State Election Commission should develop comprehensive cyber security guidelines for all personnel and systems that handle or contain election data. It should conduct trainings for all State and Municipal Election Commission members and staff in mitigating risks and handling possible cyber security incidents.
10. In order to increase transparency and public awareness, Municipal Election Commissions should publish decisions and minutes of sessions in a timely and consistent manner. Adequate means, such as access to the municipality websites or social media platforms, should be provided for this purpose.
11. In line with international standards, disaggregated data on gender and ethnic representation produced during the electoral process should be published in a comprehensive manner.
12. In order to enhance the effective exercise of voting rights, the SEC should develop and implement a timely, comprehensive and targeted voter education programme, including information on voter registration and complaints procedures.

### **Voter Registration**

13. As previously recommended, the legislation should be harmonized with the objectives of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, by removing all restrictions on voting rights on the basis of intellectual or psychosocial disability.
14. To improve the accuracy of the voter lists and to facilitate voters' participation, consideration should be given to extending the period of scrutiny of the voter lists and to bringing the deadline for changes closer to election day. An update of the voter register between rounds could also be considered.
15. Eligible voters should not be excluded from the voter register due to expired documents. Legislative and administrative measures should be taken to enable everyone who has the right to vote to effectively exercise this right.

### **Candidate Registration**

16. Consideration should be given to extending the period for the collection of supporting signatures by prospective candidates.

### **Election Campaign**

17. Consideration should be given to aligning the official campaign period with the timeline for registration of contestants, to ensure campaign regulations apply consistently to all participants. Political activities before the official campaign period should not be outlawed.

### **Campaign Finance**

18. The State Commission for the Prevention of Corruption should be provided with adequate human and financial resources to effectively carry out its mandate during the electoral period.

19. To enhance the transparency and oversight of campaign finance, the legislation should regulate third-party activities and require accounting of expenses incurred by political parties supporting candidates. Loans received by political parties and candidates for the purpose of election campaigning should be subject to similar restrictions and reporting requirements as donations.

## **Media**

20. To enhance the public service mandate, including the capacity for investigative and analytical reporting, diversification of funding should be considered with the aim to strengthen financial independence of the public broadcaster.
21. The state should further publicly promote the existing self-regulatory mechanisms and bodies established to protect professional and ethical journalistic standards, such as the Council of Media Ethics. In addition, it should consider structural and targeted policies to enhance the quality of journalism, including in local media, and to strengthen media and digital literacy.
22. If the policy of reimbursing political advertisements is to be preserved, the law should be amended to provide for a reasonable and realistic timeframe for reimbursements.

## **Complaints and Appeals**

23. Deadlines for the submission and resolution of complaints should allow adequate preparation and a reflected decision.
24. To improve access to legal remedy and decrease the workload of the State Election Commission, the legal framework should specify which election-related complaints are handled by Municipal Election Commissions, and their capacity to consider such complaints should be strengthened.

## **Election day**

25. To facilitate the equal participation of persons with physical disabilities in elections, the State Election Commission, in co-operation with the relevant state authorities, should continue to take measures to improve the accessibility of polling stations and to train polling station staff about assistive tools.
26. Consideration should be given to clarifying the rules to preserve the validity of ballots that clearly express the voters' will. Consideration should also be given to allow for the replacement of accidentally spoiled ballots.
27. The State Election Commission and other actors should continue voter and civic education efforts to prevent family voting and preserve free choice for each voter. These education efforts should also tackle vote-buying, while law enforcement agencies should investigate vote-buying schemes and hold their organizers to account.
28. To ensure secrecy of the vote, polling stations with fewer than ten voters should be merged with nearby polling stations and their ballots cast together. Counting procedures for votes from penitentiary and other institutions should preserve the secrecy of the voters' choice.

**ANNEX I: FINAL RESULTS<sup>104</sup>**

Number of registered voters on the voter list	1,808,131
Number of registered voters on the in-country list	1,726,696
Number of registered voters on the list of voters temporarily residing abroad	77,579
Number of registered voters for out-of-country voting	1,781

**FIRST ROUND**

Number of voters who voted	753,556	41.68%
Number of invalid ballots	32,697	4.34%

Blerim Reka	79,888	10.60%
Gordana Siljanovska Davkova	318,341	42.25%
Stevo Pendarovski	322,581	42.81%

**SECOND ROUND**

Number of voters who voted	843,508	46.65%
Number of invalid ballots	30,406	3.60%

Gordana Siljanovska Davkova	377,446	44.75%
Stevo Pendarovski	435,656	51.65%

<sup>104</sup> According to SEC decisions nos. 09-1414/4 of 3 May and 08-1769/1 of 11 May. Percentages of votes for each candidate are calculated from the total number of votes cast, including invalid votes.



## ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

### OSCE Parliamentary Assembly

Sereine	Mauborgne	Special Coordinator	France
Maximilian	Unterrainer	MP	Austria
Anne-Cecile	Blauwblomme-Delcroix	MP	France
Inese	Ikstena	MP	Latvia
Igors	Aizstrauts	MP	Latvia
Arman	Teimouri	MP	Sweden
Ahmet	Arslan	MP	Turkey
Burak	Meydan	Staff Member	Turkey
Hatice	Er As	Staff Member	Turkey
Iryna	Sabashuk	Secretariat	Ukraine
Andreas	Baker	Secretariat	Denmark

### Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe

Marie-Christine	Dalloz	Chairperson	France
Joseph	O'reilly	MP	Ireland
Florence	Ganoux	Venice Commission	France
Chemavon	Chahbazian	Secretariat	Armenia
Daniele	Gastl	Secretariat	France

### ODIHR EOM Short-term Observers

Tobias	Burghardt	Austria
Matthias	Pühringer	Austria
Agnes	Taibl	Austria
Milutin	Jokic	Bosnia and Herzegovina
Ivaylo	Kashkanov	Bulgaria
Margarita	Nikolova-Ivanova	Bulgaria
Svetlana	Stamenova	Bulgaria
Jette	Egelund	Denmark
Thomas	Frank	Denmark
Kirsten	Joergensen	Denmark
Poul	Lauritsen	Denmark
Tue	Magnussen	Denmark
Kirsten	Mogensen	Denmark
Jørgen	Poulsen	Denmark
Christoffer	Bonn	Finland
Karita	Immonen	Finland
Melissa	Diagne	France

Catherine	Greze	France
Guillaume	Javourez	France
Véronique	Lasserre-fy	France
Ambroise	Mazal	France
Michel auguste	Rivollier	France
Claudio	Serafini	France
Christel Marie-Claude	Thibault	France
Valerie	Adams	Germany
Ulrike	Bickel	Germany
Thomas	Doehne	Germany
Matthias	Dornfeldt	Germany
Frank	Fischer	Germany
Thomas	Froehlich	Germany
Henning	Horstmeyer	Germany
Anke	Kerl	Germany
Bernd	Leber	Germany
Oliver	Pahnecke	Germany
Claudia	Preusser	Germany
Faik Yanki	Puersuen	Germany
Hildegard	Rogler-Mochel	Germany
Eckart	Rohde	Germany
Alexandra	Dobolyi	Hungary
Tibor	Kőszegvári	Hungary
Kartal	Kovalovszki	Hungary
Teresa	Doherty	Ireland
Brendan	Gogarty	Ireland
Elizabeth	Spelman	Ireland
Maria	Alcidi	Italy
Paolo	Carlotto	Italy
Walter	Citti	Italy
Alessandro	Giongo	Italy
Elsa	Pacella	Italy
Alessia	Riva	Italy
Miljana	Rakocevic	Montenegro
Vana	Vojinovic	Montenegro
Egbertus	Bom	Netherlands
Leonardus Wilhelmus	Den biggelaar	Netherlands
Maria Johanna Josefa	Lucas	Netherlands
Christina	Van hout	Netherlands
Rune	Hauger	Norway
Gent	Ramadani	Norway
Nils Gunnar	Songstad	Norway
Mariana	Ionescu	Romania
Nikola	Jelić	Serbia
Jovana	Presic	Serbia

Eva	Mašánová	Slovakia
Carlos-Maria	De Ceron y Castro	Spain
Ana	Hernández Rodríguez	Spain
Xira	Ruiz Campillo	Spain
Lars	Bjorklund	Sweden
Maj	Gustafsson	Sweden
Lennart	Haggren	Sweden
Kajsa	Ljungberg	Sweden
Stina	Magnuson Buur	Sweden
Helena	Munther	Sweden
Kajsa	Norman	Sweden
Ruth	Bourke Berglund	Sweden, Ireland
Bernhard	Albrecht	Switzerland
Shumit	Chanda	Switzerland
Daniele	D'esposito	Switzerland
Diana	Ferrari	Switzerland
Monica	Giambonini	Switzerland
Dally	Hakem	United Kingdom
David	Harrison	United Kingdom
Christopher	Jones	United Kingdom
Ben	Jones	United Kingdom
Paula	Keaveney	United Kingdom
Melanie	Leathers	United Kingdom
Roy	Martin	United Kingdom
John	Mills	United Kingdom
Valerie	Solomon	United Kingdom
Guy	Summers	United Kingdom
Alison	Sutherland	United Kingdom
David	Taylor	United Kingdom
Susan	Trinder	United Kingdom
Jonathan	Turner	United Kingdom
Keith	Turner	United Kingdom
Joseph	Worrall	United Kingdom
Sairah	Akhtar-Zaidi	United States
Deborah	Alexander	United States
Karolis	Butkevicius	United States
Paul	Calbos	United States
Kyle	Bowers	United States
Michael	Eldred	United States
Michael	Forster Rothbart	United States
Nina louise	Frankel	United States
Andrew	Gridinsky	United States
Robert scott	Heaslet	United States
Stephen	Hemphill	United States
Marsha	Kennedy	United States

Matthew	Kennis	United States
Nicholas	La Strada	United States
Aubrey	Menarndt	United States
Brooke	Nagle	United States
Urania	Petit	United States
Octavius	Pinkard	United States
Azita	Ranjbar	United States
Michael	Schuetz	United States
Gregory	Slotta	United States
Jenny	Sowry	United States
Andreea	Vesa	United States
Daniel	Villegas	United States
John	Winters	United States

### Long-Term Observers

#### ODIHR EOM Core Team

Corien	Jonker	Head of Mission	Netherlands
Vasil	Vashchanka		Belarus
Kseniya	Dashutina		Belarus
Monica	Moravcová		Czech Republic
Marcela	Mašková		Czech Republic
Valeriu	Mija		Moldova
Max	Bader		Netherlands
Tomasz	Jańczy		Poland
Ranko	Vukčević		Serbia
Ivan	Godársky		Slovakia
Robert	Bystricky		Slovakia
Ruslan	Ovezdurdyev		Turkmenistan
Liudmyla	Shkirko		Ukraine
Peter	Palmer		United Kingdom

#### ODIHR EOM Long-Term Observers

Poul	Svane	Denmark
Irmeli	Vieno	Finland
Sabrina	Rouigui	France
Galina	Diran	Germany
Wolfgang	Graf von Schmettau	Germany
Paolo	Pagotto	Italy
Chiara	Steindler	Italy
Darko	Pavlović	Netherlands
Vida	Koren Holm	Sweden
Lars	Tollemark	Sweden
Thomas	Hug	Switzerland

Thomas	Holzer	Switzerland
Andreas	Speiser	Switzerland
Wiktorija	Wislowska	Ukraine
Mitchell	Polman	United States
Patrick	Reilly	United States

## ABOUT ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is OSCE's principal institution to assist participating States "to ensure full respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to abide by the rule of law, to promote principles of democracy and (...) to build, strengthen and protect democratic institutions, as well as promote tolerance throughout society" (1992 Helsinki Summit Document). This is referred to as the OSCE human dimension.

ODIHR, based in Warsaw (Poland) was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today it employs over 150 staff.

ODIHR is the lead agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. Every year, it co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers to assess whether elections in the OSCE region are conducted in line with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into the electoral process in its entirety. Through assistance projects, the ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include: rule of law, legislative support, democratic governance, migration and freedom of movement, and gender equality. ODIHR implements a number of targeted assistance programmes annually, seeking to develop democratic structures.

ODIHR also assists participating States' in fulfilling their obligations to promote and protect **human rights and fundamental freedoms** consistent with OSCE human dimension commitments. This is achieved by working with a variety of partners to foster collaboration, build capacity and provide expertise in thematic areas including human rights in the fight against terrorism, enhancing the human rights protection of trafficked people, human rights education and training, human rights monitoring and reporting, and women's human rights and security.

Within the field of **tolerance and non-discrimination**, ODIHR provides support to the participating States in strengthening their response to hate crimes and incidents of racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance. ODIHR's activities related to tolerance and non-discrimination are focused on the following areas: legislation; law enforcement training; monitoring, reporting on, and following up on responses to hate-motivated crimes and incidents; as well as educational activities to promote tolerance, respect, and mutual understanding.

ODIHR provides advice to participating States on their policies on **Roma and Sinti**. It promotes capacity-building and networking among Roma and Sinti communities, and encourages the participation of Roma and Sinti representatives in policy-making bodies.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE participating States, OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations. More information is available on the ODIHR website ([www.osce.org/odihr](http://www.osce.org/odihr)).