



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

LOCAL ELECTIONS
25 May and 8 June 2003

OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Report



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Table of Contents

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	2
III. BACKGROUND.....	2
A. POLITICAL BACKGROUND.....	2
B. ELECTION ENVIRONMENT.....	3
IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	4
A. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION.....	4
B. GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS.....	4
C. EVALUATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	4
V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.....	5
A. STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF THE ELECTION ADMINISTRATION	5
B. ORGANIZATION OF ELECTIONS	5
C. VOTER REGISTRATION.....	6
D. VOTER IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS.....	6
E. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION.....	6
F. CAMPAIGN FINANCE.....	7
VI. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND NATIONAL MINORITIES.....	8
VII. ELECTION CAMPAIGN.....	9
VIII. MEDIA AND ELECTIONS.....	11
A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	11
B. MEDIA REGULATIONS DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN	11
C. MEDIA MONITORING	12
IX. DISPUTES, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PRIOR TO ELECTION DAY.....	14
X. CIVIL SOCIETY AND DOMESTIC OBSERVERS	14
XI. OBSERVATION OF VOTING AND COUNTING.....	14
A. GENERAL ASSESSMENT	14
B. VOTING PROCEDURES.....	15
C. VOTE COUNT	15
D. TABULATION AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS.....	15
XII. POST-ELECTION DAY DISPUTES, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS.....	15
XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS	16
A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	16
B. VOTER REGISTRATION.....	17
C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.....	17
D. CAMPAIGN AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE	17
E. MEDIA	17
F. ELECTION DAY AND VALIDATION OF RESULTS	17
G. GENDER.....	18
ANNEX – ELECTION RESULTS.....	19
RESULTS OF ELECTIONS FOR MAYORS	19
RESULTS OF ELECTIONS FOR <i>RAION</i> AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS	19
RESULTS OF ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL COUNCILS (TOWNS, VILLAGES, COMMUNES).....	20
ABOUT THE OSCE/ODIHR.....	21

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
LOCAL ELECTION
25 May and 8 June 2003
FINAL REPORT OF THE OSCE/ODIHR ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION (EOM)¹

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The administration of the 2003 local elections in Moldova, the legislative framework, and the conduct of voting were generally in accordance with OSCE commitments for democratic elections. However, notable shortcomings observed during the campaign, including allegations of widespread abuse of power by the authorities, were a source of concern and marked a negative development.

The election campaign began slowly, in part due to numerous public holidays, limited campaign budgets, and media restrictions on free airtime. The campaign became notably aggressive in Moldova's capital, Chisinau, where it appeared that the central government wanted to defeat the incumbent.

Negative trends observed during the campaign included:

- heavily biased state media providing distorted information to voters;
- dismissal of the News Director at the state news agency, which appeared to be politically motivated;
- arrests of some opposition candidates, and threats of arrest of others;
- use of administrative resources for campaign purposes; and
- a strict policy of the Ministry of Interior regarding law enforcement, which may have discouraged a more lively public campaign.

Moldova's legal framework generally provides an adequate basis for democratic elections. However, recent amendments to the Law on Political Parties and Socio-Political Organizations raise concerns with regard to:

- data protection, related to requirements for provision of comprehensive personal data for party members, and
- freedom of association, related to stringent requirements for party registration.

If enforced, the amended law may have a negative impact on political pluralism in the Republic of Moldova and compromise future elections.

A number of positive elements were observed, including:

- generally successful management of consequences from (a) compression of the campaign timeframe and (b) territorial-administrative reform that greatly increased the number of electoral bodies,
- election officials at all levels who for the most part carried out their duties competently and professionally;
- public confidence in the process on election day; and
- overall efficient and expeditious handling of complaints.

On election days, international observers assessed positively the work of some 85 per cent of the polling stations visited. A number of deficiencies were noted, including compromise of ballot secrecy and presence of policemen in the polling station. Domestic observers were initially barred

¹ This report is also available in Moldovan/Romanian. However, the English version remains the only official document.

from observing the second round in a few polling stations, however, timely intervention by central and district election officials resolved this problem.

Relatively few election-related complaints were filed with competent authorities, perhaps reflecting ignorance or a popular lack of confidence in the courts and other state institutions. Complaints mainly focused on allegations about misuse of public resources for campaign purposes, or for obstruction of opposition campaigning, including overzealous enforcement of public security. The most serious complaints were filed by the PCRM. One led to a recount in Chisinau that did not change the first-round result significantly, and the other challenged compilation of the voter lists in Chisinau for the second round.

The OSCE/ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities and civil society of Moldova to remedy the remaining shortcomings and challenges identified in this report and OSCE/ODIHR's previous election reports.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Following an invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Republic of Moldova, the OSCE/ODIHR established on 25 April 2003 an Election Observation Mission (EOM) in the Republic of Moldova to monitor the 25 May 2003 local elections.

Ambassador Michael G. Wygant (USA) was appointed Head of the EOM, which comprised 17 election experts and long-term observers from 12 OSCE participating States. The EOM was based in Chisinau and two regional centres. On 25 May, the EOM deployed 98 short-term observers from 26 OSCE participating States, who reported from some 482 polling stations out of the 1,938. Further, the EOM deployed 58 observers from 17 OSCE participating States to observe the 8 June 2003 second round elections for Mayor and repeat elections. The EOM received reports from some 349 out of 958 polling stations operational on 8 June. The Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (CLRAE) observed both the 25 May 2003 poll and 8 June 2003 second round and repeat elections, and together with OSCE/ODIHR issued a joint press release the days following both rounds of voting.

The EOM wishes to express its appreciation to the CEC, Municipal and District Election Councils, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as other central and municipal authorities, for their co-operation and assistance during the course of the observation mission. The EOM is also grateful for the support of the OSCE Mission in the Republic of Moldova and the Embassies and Consular Offices of OSCE participating States in Chisinau.

III. BACKGROUND

A. POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The 25 May local elections marked the middle of the Parliament's term of office. In the February 2001 parliamentary elections, the Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) won a constitutional majority, 71 out of 101 mandates, and the Parliament elected Vladimir Voronin, Chairman of the PCRM, as President of the Republic of Moldova. Two other parties surpassed the 6 per cent threshold and entered Parliament: the center-left Braghis Alliance (later renamed the

Social Democratic Alliance of the Republic of Moldova), led by former Prime Minister Dumitru Braghis, and the right-wing Christian Democratic People's Party (PPCD), led by Iurie Rosca.

The 2003 local elections were not held on the territory of Transdnistria, which had not been under the *de facto* control of the central government since the end of the armed conflict between the Moldovan Government troops and separatist forces in 1992. To accommodate this extraordinary situation, as in previous elections, the CEC issued a special regulation, permitting voters living in an enclave (one commune and two villages) under the administration of Moldovan authorities but blocked by Transdnistrian authorities, to travel to special voting precincts and vote for the Causeni District Council.

B. ELECTION ENVIRONMENT

The OSCE/ODIHR had found that previous elections were conducted generally in accordance with OSCE commitments and international standards for democratic elections. However, the 2002 Bashkan (Governor) elections in the Territorial Autonomous Unit of Gagauzia (A.T.U. Gagauzia) raised serious concerns. Consequently, the 2003 local elections were closely watched, particularly with regard to effective and impartial election administration and the transparent implementation of election legislation.

Significantly, the 2003 local elections were called shortly after a territorial-administrative reform in February 2003 replaced the 10 *judets*, introduced in 1998, with 32 *raions*, thus reverting to the pre-1998 administrative system. The reform increased the number of units of local self-government (towns, villages and communes) from 644 to 898 and the number of elected councilors from nearly 6,500 to some 12,000. Besides the costs of such reorganization, the reform required the CEC to constitute and train some 250 additional Election District Councils.

Another issue of concern was the Law on Parties and Socio-Political Organizations, amended on 13 December 2002. Key elements in the amendments were requirements that:

- Political parties submit to the Ministry of Justice annual membership lists with signatures and comprehensive personal data of at least 5,000 members, and
- Signatories of the above lists should be residents of at least half of the 32 *raions*, with no less than 600 members residing in each of these *raions*.

The Constitutional Court, in June 2003, did not find unconstitutional these amendments. However, political parties, NGOs and international experts criticized sharply the new provisions on grounds of:

- violation of privacy of personal data, and
- restriction of the freedom of association.

The new provisions were said by some to aim at dissolution of political parties on the eve of local elections. On 27 February 2003, the Parliament amended the Law, extending the 1 March 2003 deadline for submission of party membership lists to 1 December 2003.

In addition, an important structural reform of the judiciary was in the process of implementation at the time of the elections. The existing four-level judicial system was to be replaced by a three-level one, with a "Supreme Court of Justice" as the third and final instance. The restructuring of the judicial system and potential reduction of the number of judges raised concerns regarding the independence of the judiciary and a further weakening of the separation of powers.

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

A. APPLICABLE LEGISLATION

The Constitution of the Republic of Moldova provides for the fundamental rights and freedoms in a democratic society. The Election Code, (1997, amended 1999, 2000, 2002 and 2003), is a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections.² Other applicable laws are the Law on Parties and Socio-Political Associations (1991, amended 1993, 1998, 2002, 2003), the Law on Administrative Procedures (2000), and the Code on Administrative Offences (1985, amended 1988, 1990, 1993, 1995, 2001, 2002). Several other laws were recently adopted, redrafted or fundamentally amended, such as the Law on Administrative-Territorial Organization (2001, amended 2003), the Law on Local Public Administration (2003), and the Law on Judicial Organization (1995, amended 1997, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2003).

B. GENERAL PROVISIONS FOR LOCAL ELECTIONS

Chapter VIII of the Constitution sets forth the principles of public administration and local self-governance. The Election Code regulates the elections for *Raion* Councils, Municipal Councils and municipal mayors, as well as District (cities, villages and communes) Councils and local mayors, all elected for a four-year term.

All citizens residing in Moldova, who are 18 years and older, have the right to vote in local elections and stand for local councils. Exceptions are those declared incapacitated or sentenced to imprisonment, by a final decision of a court of law. Conscripts and citizens who are not in the country on voting day cannot participate in local elections.³ Citizens over 25 years can stand for the office of the mayor.⁴ The law provides for polling stations to be established for a minimum of 30 voters in hospitals and other institutional facilities. Mobile ballot boxes, if requested, are brought to the homebound.

Mayors are elected through a two-round system. A candidate has to receive more than 50 per cent of the valid votes in order to be elected as Mayor. Should no contestant receive more than 50 per cent of the vote, a second round is held two weeks later between the two contestants who received the highest numbers of votes.

Councilors are elected through proportional representation based on party or bloc candidate lists. Independent candidates can also stand for councilors. Mandates for municipal and local councils are allocated using the d'Hondt formula and, unlike the parliamentary elections, there is no threshold requirement.

The Election Code requires at least one third of the registered voters to participate for an election to be valid. There is no turnout requirement for run-off elections. Elections are declared null and void if violations of the election code influenced the results. Based on a court decision, the CEC organizes repeat elections within two weeks, with the same voter lists and candidates. The turnout requirements apply for repeat elections.

C. EVALUATION OF THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK

As noted in previous OSCE/ODIHR statements, in general, the legal framework in Moldova provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections. Nevertheless, both the

² Laws regulating the media during the elections are addressed in chapter VIII of this report.

³ Election Code; Articles 29, 123

⁴ Election Code; Article 124

OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Venice Commission have pointed out several aspects of the Election Code that could be improved. Some of these recommendations have already been adopted, specifically the criteria for determining whether a vote is valid.⁵ However, revision of the voter register requires extensive modification of legislation and more resources. Notwithstanding the overall adequate legislation, regulations and a precise procedures manual would help ensure a cohesive and consistent application of the law. The recently adopted Civil Code, Penal Code, Civil Procedure Code and Penal Procedure Code include sanctions and penalties for election related violations. However, the Election Code does not contain reference to sanctions for violations of the Election Code or decisions of the CEC, which is a serious omission.

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

A. STRUCTURE AND COMPOSITION OF THE ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The election administration is organized in a three-tier structure. The CEC is a permanent state body responsible for the overall conduct of the elections. District Election Councils, in their areas of jurisdiction, are responsible for the conduct of the elections from registration of candidates to tabulation of the results. Polling Boards conduct the poll and the vote count.

The CEC consists of nine members. Three are nominated by the President, three by Parliament, and three by the Supreme Judicial Council. Parliament approves the membership and the Chairperson of the CEC, while his/her Deputy and the Secretary are elected by the CEC members by a majority vote. The Chairperson, his/her Deputy and the Secretary are permanently employed, while the rest work actively with the Commission only through the election period. CEC members can only serve two consecutive terms, and the six-year term of the present CEC expires this year. Decisions are taken by a majority vote, and political parties and electoral blocs may each appoint one member with a consultative vote. As noted by the EOM, the CEC worked in an open and transparent manner. Representatives of political parties and the press may attend Commission's meetings.

The CEC appoints District Election Councils based on proposals of the corresponding local executive authorities, coordinates their activities, distributes funds and provides material support, publishes lists of parties and electoral blocs, and the final results.

District Election Councils were established at the *Raion* and Municipal level, as well as in the A.T.U. Gagauzia. District Electoral Councils consist of between 7 and 11 members. Members of electoral commissions cannot be members of political parties. Representatives of political parties may attend meetings but cannot vote. District Election Councils exercise control over the compilation of the voter lists, appoint Polling Boards, register independent candidates and the lists of candidates of political parties and electoral blocs, announce district results and issue binding decisions on complaints related to activities of lower-level electoral bodies.

Polling Boards were formed 20 days before the elections, and consisted of between 5 and 11 members. Each Polling Board was responsible for a minimum of 30 and maximum of 3,000 voters.

B. ORGANIZATION OF ELECTIONS

Given the constraints of these elections, including the shortened timeframe for election preparation reduced from 90 to 60 days, and the increased number of District Election Councils, the difficulties

⁵ Election Code; Article 57(2) [Modified by Law; no.796-XV; 25.01.2002]

in administration of the elections noted by the EOM were understandable. At the same time, the experience of the CEC made up for certain weaknesses at the local level, and for the most part the elections were organized competently and in accordance with the law.

C. VOTER REGISTRATION

Although the CEC, District Election Councils and Polling Boards have the responsibility for reviewing and ensuring the integrity of the voter lists, the Mayor's Office must compile the voter lists and confirm its accuracy by door to door visits.⁶ The Mayor signs the voter lists 10 days before the elections. Approximately 2.275 million voters were registered for the 2003 local elections. An estimated 600,000-700,000 voters reside abroad, which in part explains the large number of people excluded from the voter lists.

On election day, citizens omitted from the voter lists are entered on supplementary voter lists upon presentation of identification documents proving their place of permanent residence within the polling station area.⁷ Approximately 7.4 per cent of the citizens that cast ballots on 25 May were added to a supplementary list. An additional 4.9 per cent of the voters were added to supplementary lists during the second round mayoral contests. This number appears to be high considering that the voter lists for the second round included the original voter list and the supplementary list for the first round elections. Therefore, 4.9 per cent of the voters, who cast ballots in the second round, had not voted in the first round nor were included on voter lists in their communities. This is an issue that warrants careful examination before the next elections. Although the Election Code provides for public display of the voter lists prior to the elections, this regulation was not respected in many locations.⁸

D. VOTER IDENTIFICATION DOCUMENTS

The Election Code provides, Article 39, paragraph 6 and 7, that:

- A voter may be included on the voter list at only one polling station, based on "acts" proving his/her permanent residence in the area of the respective polling station.⁹ While the principle is clear, neither the law nor any administrative instructions define the procedures for its implementation, notably which are the "acts" that could prove permanent residence.
- A person who changes residence after the voter lists are closed will be issued a voting certificate. However, the Election Code or regulations of the CEC did not describe in details the procedures and documentation required to implement this provision. Therefore it was not implemented in a uniform manner and was subject to interpretation.

The Mayor's Office mails voting invitations to voters, informing them of the address of their respective polling stations. This invitation is widely used as a voting identification document.¹⁰ While this may be a minor violation, particularly in communities where Polling Boards know voters personally, it has the potential for abuse.

E. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

By the time the 2003 local elections were called, the Ministry of Justice had registered 25 parties and socio-political organizations. Of these, 19 fielded candidates in the local elections; 11 parties

⁶ Election Code, Article 39.

⁷ Election Code; Article 53, Paragraph 2.

⁸ Election Code; Article 40.

⁹ Election Code; Article 39 (6)

¹⁰ Only four identification documents are accepted: national identification card; passport of the former Soviet Union; Moldovan passport or temporary identity document.

ran individually, while the remaining eight were parts of two electoral blocs. In addition, over 1,500 independent candidates ran for office.¹¹ The two electoral blocs were the Social Liberal Alliance “Our Moldova” (ASL “MN”) which united the Social Democratic Alliance of Moldova, the Liberal Party, the Alliance of Independents, and three smaller parties, and the Electoral Bloc “Social Democratic Party—Social Liberal Party” (PSD–PSL).

The following parties ran separately in the 2003 local elections:

- Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM);
- Christian Democratic People’s Party (PPCD);
- Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM);
- Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova (PDAM);
- Centrist Union of Moldova (UCM);
- Socialist Party of Moldova (PSM);
- Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova (PSRM);
- Republican Party of Moldova (PRM);
- Republican Socio-Political Movement “Ravnopravie” (“Equality”);
- Movement of Professionals “Speranta–Nadejda” (“Hope”);
- Socio-Political Movement “Forta Noua” (“New Force”).

More than 47,000 candidates contested the 25 May local elections. Almost 3,500 candidates competed for the 898 mayoralities, over 6,000 candidates ran for 1,126 seats on *raion* and Municipal Councils, and over 37,000 candidates stood for 10,859 local council seats. The PCRM registered the highest number of candidates (over 12,700), followed by “Our Moldova” (roughly 10,900), the Democratic Party (roughly 6,500), the PPCD (roughly 5,500), and the PSD–PSL bloc (roughly 4,300). Generally, a greater number of candidates contested each seat in urban areas.

F. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The law prohibits foreign funding of political parties, however it does not provide for penalties or sanctions in case of non-compliance, nor is there any audit and review mechanism. Parties, electoral blocs and independent candidates were required to open an “Electoral Account” in a bank into which campaign funds could be transferred. The CEC established limits for funds to be deposited on those accounts - amounting to 1,000,000 lei (€ 60,600) for a political party or electoral bloc, for independent candidates for mayors – ranging from 200,000 lei (€ 12,120) for Chisinau to 50,000 lei (€ 3,000) for communes/villages, and for independent candidates for councilors – in the range from 75,000 lei (€ 4,550) for Chisinau Municipal Council to 15,000 lei (€ 900) for local councils. Additional limits were established for the second round. Electoral contestants were required to report to the electoral bodies, on a bi-weekly basis, the amounts and sources of all funds received and the expenses incurred. These financial disclosure reports were public. According to data released by the CEC, the top spenders were the PCRM with some 641,000 lei (€ 38,900), “Our Moldova” with 194,000 lei (€ 11,750), the PPCD with 166,000 lei (€ 10,000), and the Electoral Bloc “PSD–PSL” with 140,000 lei (€ 7,500). Chisinau Mayor S. Urechean, running for re-election, spent around 194,000 lei (€ 11,750) for his first-round mayoral campaign. While none of the parties appeared to exceed the spending limit, most of them used nearly the whole amount from their electoral accounts for campaign purposes.

¹¹ The EOM received reports that some “independent” candidates were actually affiliated with a party. For example, Mayor Urechean of Chisinau ran as an independent but the Alliance of Independents, which he heads, was part of “Our Moldova.”

VI. PARTICIPATION OF WOMEN AND NATIONAL MINORITIES

The Constitution guarantees equal rights for women and men. The Law on Political Parties and Socio-Political Organizations states that parties and socio-political organizations shall promote the principle of gender equality in decision-making organs at all levels. Nevertheless, women remain underrepresented. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, ten women were elected including the Speaker of Parliament, up from nine in 1998. The number of women in parliament has since increased to 16, as lower ranked women on party lists replaced parliamentarians who had resigned. Out of 20 government ministers, only the finance minister is a woman, as well as seven out of 38 deputy ministers and two out of 12 government department heads. In 1999, 9.5 per cent, or 61 of 644 mayors were women.

For these elections, 892 women ran for office. The EOM analyzed women representation in 12 *raions*. The EOM found that 20 per cent, or 37 out of the 185 elected mayors, are women and 17.2 per cent, or 66 out of 384 elected *raion* councilors are women. The share of women councilors elected on party lists is highest for the PCRM (21.4 per cent), followed by the Democratic Party (17.4 per cent) and the PPCD (16.1 per cent). Of the councilors elected from “Our Moldova” only 8.7 per cent are women. In addition, two out of seven independent councilors (28.6 per cent) elected in these 12 *raions* are women. Although women were underrepresented at the District Election Councils, they comprised more than 75 per cent of the Polling Boards.

National minorities account for more than 30 per cent of the population of the Republic of Moldova. According to the last census (1989), the breakdown is: Ukrainians 13.6 per cent, Russians 13 per cent, Gagauz 3.5 per cent, and Bulgarians 2 per cent. Roma officially account for only 0.2 per cent of Moldova’s population, but NGOs and Roma community leaders claim that real numbers are substantially higher.

In the Republic of Moldova, there are no parties representing national minorities. Nevertheless, with the exception of Roma, minorities are well represented in local governments. Only in the village of Raicula was a Roma elected Mayor in the 1999 local elections. In 2003, very few Roma ran for seats in local and municipal councils. Even in communes where Roma account for over 80 per cent of the population, there were few or no Roma candidates.

In the commune of Cioresti (*raion* Nisporeni), which has a substantial Roma population, the logo of an independent candidate for mayor was omitted from the ballot. The candidate argued that, since many in the Roma community are illiterate, the absence of the logo adversely affected his chances in the poll. The second instance court rejected his appeal and declared the first round results valid.

Russian is the language predominantly used by national minorities. In accordance with the Law on Languages, ballots are provided in both Moldovan/Romanian and Russian, and the Election Code is available in both languages.¹² But a few substantive errors in the Russian text caused confusion.¹³

¹² According to Article 13 (1) of the Constitution, “the state language of the Republic of Moldova is Moldovan, and its writing is based on the Latin alphabet.”

¹³ Election Code; Article 55, paragraph 3 incorrect Russian translation of who is authorized to attend the poll caused confusion on Election day.

VII. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The election campaign is regulated by Art. 47 of the Electoral Code.¹⁴ Citizens, parties and socio-political organizations are free to promote their electoral programs; to discuss the professional, political and personal qualifications of candidates; to campaign for and against candidates and political parties at meetings, rallies and public forums; and to use media and other forms of communication as long as they do not “disturb public order or are unethical” in their conduct. Candidates are only permitted to campaign after they register for the election.

Candidates are liable for the content of all printed campaign material, which must contain the candidate’s name, date of publication, print run and printing house. Local public administration must provide all candidates with equal space for display of posters. District Election Councils, Polling Boards and local public administration are required to ensure, under equal terms and conditions for campaigning, the holding of public meetings of candidates and parties. Campaign activities are prohibited 24 hours prior to the opening of the polls and on election day. Publication of opinion polls is prohibited from ten days prior to election day.

The election campaign began at a low pace, in part due to the large number of public holidays, including Easter, and limited campaign budgets, as well as restricted free airtime on state and local media. Opposition parties tried to portray these local elections as a “no confidence vote” on the Government. The PCRM relied on the image of President Voronin to promote the party candidates and campaigned that their election would directly benefit the population by improving relations between central and local government.

Although generally low-key, at times the election campaign was aggressive. In Chisinau, the PCRM spent more time on a negative campaign against the incumbent Mayor Urechean supported by “Our Moldova”, than on campaigning for its own candidate, Transport and Communications Minister Vasile Zgardan. The PCRM accused Mayor Urechean of mismanagement and incompetence during his nine years in office. After the first round, the PCRM Central Committee publicly claimed that the capital had become “the center of financial and criminal separatism” with “forces ready to overthrow the Government at any moment.” Urechean’s representative on the Chisinau Municipal Election Council believed these statements to be in violation of the Constitution and the Criminal Code, and asked the Prosecutor General’s office to press charges. Shortly before the second round posters appeared in the city featuring President Voronin asserting he would “vote against Serafim Urechean,” and claiming that the municipality was being run with “unprecedented cynicism.”

Mayor Urechean was summoned on 20 May to testify as a witness in a criminal case against the Director of the Chisinau water company. A witness who fails to heed a summons can forcibly be brought into the investigator’s office, and refusal to appear can be sanctioned with a fine or up to 15 days of administrative detention. Mr. Urechean moved for a postponement citing as reasons the final days of his campaign and a lawyers’ strike. At a press conference on 21 May, Urechean stated he feared imminent arrest for failure to appear as a witness. The next day, the Ministry of Interior issued a press release stating that although Urechean failed to comply with the summons, he would not be brought into testify or arrested. After the first round Urechean complied with the summons.

Of particular concern was the timing of the arrests of two incumbent mayors standing for re-election. The Liberal Party candidate and Mayor of Hincesti, Vasile Colta, was arrested and

¹⁴ This article also regulates media coverage of the campaign and campaigning in mass media and is discussed in detail in the section on the media.

charged with large-scale theft two days after he registered his candidacy. According to the General Prosecutor's Office, Colta had been under investigation since September 2001, but the investigation was only finalized on 17 April 2003. Due to health problems, Colta remained in pre-trial detention in a local hospital through the elections. The Mayor of Vadul lui Voda, Nicolae Ciobanu, an independent candidate, was also arrested on corruption charges. Neither candidate proceeded to the second round.

Despite frequent allegations of misuse of administrative resources during the campaign period, and more serious allegations of threats and intimidation, individuals and parties rarely submitted complaints to the courts, claiming lack of confidence in the system. One allegation was that the central authorities misused public resources for campaign purposes and pointed to the Government payment of a bonus to all war veterans for Victory Day on 9 May. Just prior to the second round, the National House of Social Insurance (social security fund) distributed humanitarian food aid, which reportedly included PCRM campaign material, in the suburbs of Chisinau. The Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova videotaped the evidence and Euro TV aired the tape. Inside the Ministry of Transport and Communications, PCRM posted its leaflets on notice boards intended for the Ministry's news. Allegedly, government fiscal controllers more frequently inspected the books of businesses run by opposition supporters, and the offices of opposition mayors, than others. Accusations of misuse of administrative resources were not limited to Chisinau. For example, in Taraclia, the local PCRM office "temporarily" operated in the same building as the Mayor's Office.

Opposition parties reported that their candidates, as well as independent candidates, had been pressured not to run for office. Prior to the first round, the PPCD informed the EOM that the police restricted distribution of party's campaign flyers, brought their staff in for questioning and confiscated campaign material. The Ministry of Interior had a policy during the campaign period of strict enforcement of public order and safety. Distribution of campaign material at busy intersections was considered as a traffic hazard and public nuisance. Campaign material lacking the information required by law was confiscated. This was true of most parties' materials including that of the PCRM and the PPCD. One high-ranking police officer defined the task of the police as protecting the contestants from violating the law. The Ministry of Interior's strict enforcement policy undoubtedly impeded a more lively campaign.

On 25 April, the police temporarily detained and confiscated the equipment of a film crew shooting a campaign spot for the PSD-PSL bloc. A citizen allegedly complained that the crew was painting "Jewish symbols" on the sidewalk and "involving minors in politics"—a small girl was drawing an eight pointed star, the party logo, for the campaign spot. The crew was not charged with creating a public disturbance, but with filming without a license.

The organizer of the 13-14 May demonstration in front of Minister Zgardan's home, NGO activist Valeriu Ciobanu, was arrested and sentenced to 10 days of administrative detention and fined 540 lei (€ 34) for unauthorized assembly, hooliganism and insults. On 20 May, following an appeal, a court annulled the detention sentence, but not the fine. Mr. Ciobanu stated he would appeal this as well.

VIII. MEDIA AND ELECTIONS

A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Since 1996, the Audiovisual Coordinating Council of Moldova (CCA), a state body authorized to license and supervise the broadcast media and propose campaign regulations, has registered some 200 television and radio stations and licensed 26 radio and 98 television channels. However, due to a weak economy and a small advertising market, the Moldovan media lack financial independence. While in Chisinau and larger towns there is access to a wider range of media, in remote areas the choice is quite limited. In general, television is the most popular source of information. State TV and radio, Moldova 1 (TV M1) has the widest coverage, however, on the territory of Transdnistria it is available only via satellite. The electronic media mainly rebroadcast programs of Russian or Romanian media outlets and local production is limited. Newspaper budgets are even tighter; of the three “dailies” two publish four editions weekly, and the remaining one only five.

The Parliament adopted the law on the national public audiovisual company “Teleradio-Moldova” on 26 July 2002. The law requires the company’s reorganization as a national public audiovisual institution with a 15-member Board of Observers tasked to approve the statute and propose the Director to Parliament for approval. The Board of Observers had finally been appointed in May 2003 and its first meeting only took place on 12 June 2003.

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship, while the Civil Code prohibits defamation of individuals, including public officials. Fear of violating this provision apparently accounts for much of the self-censorship. Political pressure on the media is evident and some 150 journalists and supporters from 40 organizations joined a march for the freedom of the press in Chisinau on 8 May.

Cornelia Cozonac, formerly News Department Director at the state news agency MOLDPRES claimed at a news conference chaired by Mayor Urechean that President Voronin’s press service required her institution to disseminate its reports without editing, verification or comments. On 6 June 2003, Ms. Cozonac received a dismissal notice for incompetence and dissemination of false information. Valeriu Renita, President Voronin’s press spokesman, then called on the EOM to assert that his office never required the news agency to disseminate information as she claimed.

B. MEDIA REGULATIONS DURING THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

The media regulations, published by the CCA and CEC on 28 March and on 4 April respectively, required that all electoral contestants participate on equal terms and enjoy equal access to the mass media. As a result, Teleradio-Moldova Company provided each political party and electoral bloc with four minutes of free airtime on television and eight minutes of free time on radio and two minutes on television and four minutes on radio for independent candidates for the entire electoral period. Local public channels provided political parties and electoral blocs with ten minutes of free airtime on television and twenty minutes on radio, and with five and ten minutes respectively for independent candidates. The regulations limited paid broadcast time to 75 minutes for each contestant. No electoral contestant could exceed 2-minutes time of both free broadcast and paid campaign advertisements on both public and private TV channels and radio in any one-day. For the run-off and repeat elections, the same media regulations were applied. Public and private radio and television were prohibited from covering the electoral campaign in the news. The Law prohibited candidates holding public positions from using their office to appear on the media to campaign.

Nearly all political parties and electoral blocs complained that the free airtime media provisions were overly restrictive. On 24 April, PCRM appealed against the media regulations of the CEC and

requested that the regulations provide political parties with an additional 30 minutes of free airtime on public television and radio and that candidates be allowed to air election campaign advertisements on Sundays.¹⁵ On 7 May the CEC rejected the appeal for more airtime but agreed to allow the media to air campaign advertisements on Sundays.

The CEC regulations did not specifically provide for debates among candidates as it had for 2001 parliamentary elections. Many in the broadcast industry believed debates were not allowed and very few were organized. Therefore for the second round, the CEC recommended that the media organize debates.

C. MEDIA MONITORING

On April 26, the EOM began monitoring the coverage of the election campaign in the media. Seven TV channels¹⁶ and 10 newspapers¹⁷ were analyzed to assess the media coverage of contestants and other political figures.

In Chisinau, media provided diverse information about the candidates and contestants presented their platforms during the free time available. Compared to broadcast media, the print media provided more comprehensive coverage of the campaign.

In general, the electronic media dedicated significant amounts of time to the President and Government. Although regulations prohibited broadcast media from presenting candidates on the news, Mayor Urechean and to a lesser extent Minister Zgardan could often be seen on the air in their official capacities. The other six candidates for Mayor of Chisinau did not have this institutional advantage.

Although few debates were broadcast prior to the first round, Chisinau-based Euro TV organized eight debates, four between the municipal council candidates, and four between the mayoral candidates. For the second round, Euro TV attempted to organize debates on 4 - 6 June between Mayor Urechean and Minister Zgardan. Minister Zgardan declined the invitation, and instead Euro TV aired an interview with Mayor Urechean.

In contrast to the OSCE/ODIHR report from the 2001 Parliamentary Elections, which noted that the state broadcasting media “provided voters with unbiased information on political contestants”¹⁸, during this campaign the media were heavily biased in favor of the state authorities. The EOM media monitoring revealed that State TV Moldova 1 (TV M1) provided the President with 45 per cent and Government with 43 per cent of the news coverage, and that almost all the coverage was positive. A similar pattern could be observed on the weekly political programs *Argument* and *Rezonance*. In *Rezonance*, Mayor Urechean received 81 per cent of the coverage and was portrayed negatively. “Our Moldova” appealed to the CEC and on 18 April, the CEC decided that TV M1 should provide “Our Moldova” with rebuttal time. However, TV M1 complied with this decision only on 4 June, giving Mayor Urechean two minutes on each of its two news programs. The second most covered politician on *Rezonance* was President Voronin. He was given 12 per cent of the relevant time and was either portrayed positively or in a neutral manner. Although reporting improved between the first and the second round, similar trends were still evident.

¹⁵ CCA originally decided to prohibit the media from airing election campaign spots on Sundays.

¹⁶ State TV Moldova 1 (TV M1), private First Channel (former ORT Moldova), the local channels Euro TV, NIT, TV Gagauzia, TV Balti and TV6 Balti. TV M1 and First Channel have republic-wide coverage.

¹⁷ *Moldova Suverana, Nezavisimaia Moldova, Flux, Komsomolskaia Pravda, Moldovskie Vedomosti, Jurnal de Chisinau, Accente, Saptamana, Timpul and Ekonomiceskoye Obozrenie.*

¹⁸ Republic of Moldova, Parliamentary Elections, 25 February 2001, OSCE/ODIHR Final Report, p. 7.

Even though state TV did not organize debates between the Mayoral candidates, it provided Gheorghe Benderschi, the Director of the Center for Protection of Consumers' Rights with an hour of free airtime to discuss with Mayor Urechean the quality of municipal services in Chisinau.¹⁹ Mr. Urechean declined the invitation and Mr. Benderschi used the hour to express his views on City Government and its Mayor. On 6 June, the last day of the campaign, state TV rebroadcast this program.

A countervailing bias, favoring the incumbent municipal authorities, was noted on Euro TV run by the Chisinau Municipality. It presented Urechean positively and gave him 73 per cent of the political coverage, while the other candidates received less than 2 per cent. Prior to the second round, Euro TV continued to present Mayor Urechean positively and portrayed Minister Zgardan negatively.

In the lead up to the elections, First Channel provided the President with 17 per cent of its political coverage, the Government with 54 per cent and Chisinau City Hall with 27 per cent. NIT news programs dedicated 38 per cent of its political coverage to the President, 48 per cent to the Government and 12 per cent to City Hall. Both channels presented the President and the Government positively while portraying City Hall and Mayor Urechean negatively. Prior to the 25 May voting, both channels aired get-out-the-vote spots showing the deterioration of the city and its services. The patterns were similar for the second round.

The EOM also monitored the local TV channels in Balti (TV6 and BTV) and in Gagauzia until 25 May. While BTV provided the incumbent with airtime during the news and favorable reporting, TV6 did not show him in the news. TV Gagauzia did not cover the campaign on the news programs.

On 4 June, two Comrat-based TV channels, *Yeni Ay* and ATV, transmitted an 8-minute long video negatively portraying the Comrat Mayor, Constantin Taushanji. On 5 June, Mr. Taushanji filed a complaint with the local court, claiming that this broadcast violated the Election Code. The Court on 6 June rejected the claim, but on 5 June, while the case was still pending, local state TV Gagauzia re-aired the video during prime time.

Prior to the first round, both state-owned newspapers *Nezavisimaia Moldova* (in Russian) and *Moldova Suverana* (in Moldovan/Romanian) dedicated more than 70 per cent of their political reports to extremely positive coverage of the President and the Government. Both newspapers also published many highly negative reports about City Hall and the incumbent Mayor. The news coverage was similar for the second round. Minister Zgardan's coverage was largely positive while Mayor Urechean's was negative (the ratio of coverage was approximately 2:1).

Conversely, the Government and President were portrayed negatively in *Flux*, *Moldavskie Vedomosti*, *Accente* and *Timpul*. *Flux* presented PPCD and its candidate Mr. Cubreacov positively. *Timpul*, *Saptamina*, *Jurnal de Chisinau*, *Accente* and *Moldavskie Vedomosti* portrayed Mr. Urechean in positive terms.

In violation of the Election Code, the newspaper *Stolitza (Capitala)* published an opinion poll on 17 May. Acting on a PCRМ complaint, the CEC noted that the newspaper violated the law.

¹⁹ The Center for Protection of Consumers Rights registered themselves as an NGO domestic observer group for the 25 May local elections and increased their numbers for the 9 June run-off elections.

IX. DISPUTES, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS PRIOR TO ELECTION DAY

In accordance with Article 65 of the Election Code, any voter or electoral contestant has the right to appeal a decision or action taken by an electoral body to a higher-level electoral body or a court of first instance. Complaints against decisions or actions of the CEC are appealed to the Supreme Court of Justice.

Perhaps due to the lack of confidence in the courts and other state institutions, the number of complaints filed with the competent authorities was relatively small. Nevertheless, for the most part complaints were handled efficiently and expeditiously. Some 40 complaints were filed to courts of law or electoral bodies during the campaign, mostly alleging misuse of public resources for campaign purposes or for obstructing the campaign of opposition parties. Other allegations accused the police of overzealous enforcement of public security.

One of the more significant and controversial cases was related to the question whether students could vote where they study but may have not registered permanent residence. Some 50,000 students live in private homes in Chisinau, but are often not registered as permanent residents. Similar situations exist in the university towns of Cahul and Balti. The Supreme Court examined the issue and concluded that students, as all other electors, should vote according to their registered permanent residence, as stipulated in Article 39 (6) of the Election Code.

X. CIVIL SOCIETY AND DOMESTIC OBSERVERS

The CEC accredited 2,006 domestic observers from the League for the Defense of Human Rights of Moldova (LADOM), 20 observers from the Helsinki Committee for Human Rights in the Republic of Moldova, 7 observers from the Association of Participatory Democracy (ADEPT), 15 observers from the Center for Protection of Consumers Rights, and 59 journalists representing 19 media. The numbers of accredited observers for the 8 June second round and repeat elections remained the same with two exceptions. The number of LADOM observers dropped to 700, while the Center for Protection of Consumers Rights numbers registered 57 observers.

During the second round of voting a number of LADOM observers were initially denied the right to observe on grounds that they did not have proper accreditation. This occurred in Chisinau, Balti, and Cahul. In Balti, a PCRM Member of Parliament forcibly took the accreditation of one LADOM observer asserting that domestic observers lacked authorization to observe the second round. The CEC and District Election Council's rapid intervention resolved these problems early in the day. Nevertheless, the EOM received reports that in a few polling stations Chairpersons refused to sign domestic observer complaints and attach them to the minutes.

XI. OBSERVATION OF VOTING AND COUNTING

A. GENERAL ASSESSMENT

Polling took place in general accordance with the Election Code during both electoral rounds. On 25 May, the EOM deployed 55 observation teams, which visited 517 out of 1,932 polling stations. For the 8 June second round, 36 teams visited 349 out of 958 polling stations. During both observations nearly 85 per cent of polling stations visited were positively assessed. In a few cases observers saw candidates present in polling stations. Isolated allegations of partisan Polling Board Chairpersons resulted in the replacement of personnel.

B. VOTING PROCEDURES

In both rounds of voting, the greatest concern amongst the observers was the failure to protect secrecy of the ballot. The Law required the voted ballot to be stamped on the back prior to depositing it in the ballot box. Often the ballot was presented unfolded to the Polling Board member with voter's choice clearly visible.

During the first round, observers reported police inside many polling stations. The CEC advised the Ministry of Interior prior to the second round that the Election Code requires policemen to remain outside the polling station unless invited in by the Chairman to re-establish order or to vote. Nonetheless, observers reported that on 8 June policemen were present in 28 per cent of the polling stations visited.

In both the first and second round, use of mobile ballot boxes appeared problematic. In a few cases, failure to bring mobile ballot boxes to voters potentially impacted on the outcome of the election and resulted in repeat elections. Allegations of proxy voting were also reported. Group voting was evident and maintaining order was sometimes a problem.

C. VOTE COUNT

The Polling Boards for the most part conducted the count competently and efficiently. However, procedures could still be enhanced, particularly with regard to improving the paper trail, packaging and storing unused ballots, invalid ballots and valid ballots, and ensuring that the receipt of ballots is verified and documented prior to the opening of the polls. Such steps would improve the integrity of the count. As demonstrated during the recount in Chisinau, better procedures during the count would have simplified the recount. Furthermore, as recommended in previous OSCE/ODIHR reports, the results should be posted promptly outside every polling station. Particularly for local elections, this would raise the level of confidence in the accuracy of the count and improve its integrity by allowing all protocols to be carefully scrutinized.

D. TABULATION AND ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

The CEC reported overall voter turnout at 50.69 per cent for the first round, and 60.7 per cent for the second round. In all four repeat elections the one-third-turnout requirement was met.²⁰ Voter turnout was slightly higher in Chisinau (46.6%) for the second round than for the first. Mayor Urechean won in Chisinau with 53.9 per cent of the vote, and the incumbent Mayor in Comrat also retained his seat.

XII. POST-ELECTION DAY DISPUTES, COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Nearly 100 complaints were submitted on 25 May election day or soon thereafter contesting the results of the elections. The most significant case was filed by the PCRM in Chisinau, which led to a recount of all ballots for both the Municipal Council and mayoral race. One unusual aspect of this complaint was that the PCRM challenged the results of the elections, claiming inaccuracies in protocols at nine polling stations and errors in determining the validity of the ballots at three polling stations. The recount of all 277 polling stations, completed on 5 June, confirmed that 35 polling stations had no errors in the vote count, 226 had minor errors, and 16 had serious errors, including 200 ballots taken from one candidate and added to others at one polling station. However, none of

²⁰ See Annex for election results.

these errors changed the outcome and the second round election took place on 8 June as scheduled. Nonetheless, the CEC replaced a number of Polling Board Chairpersons for the second round.

Following the second round elections, the PCRM again filed a complaint claiming serious problems with the compilation of voter lists and citing 30 alleged violations of the election law and contested the results in several polling stations in Chisinau. On 10 June, the CEC voted not to send the voter lists from the first and second round for verification.

As a result of complaints and court decision, repeat elections for Mayor were held in the village of Grozesti (Nisporeni *Raion*) and the commune of Cosauti (Soroca *Raion*). In Grozesti, the mobile ballot box, although requested, was not brought to the voters and in Cosauti five people voted twice. In both cases, the races were close enough so that these irregularities could impact on the results. Two council races had to be repeated on 8 June for Oniscani commune (Calarasi *Raion*) and Chirianca village (Straseni *Raion*). In both cases, there were typographic errors on the ballots. In addition, after contestants appealed the results, the courts determined that in four localities no second round was required, and in another four localities no candidate had received more than 50 per cent of the vote as initially reported thus second rounds were required.

On 8 June, some appeals were still pending in the Courts. On 10 June, the CEC announced that in Horesti, Tipala and Zimbreni (Ialoveni *Raion*), and Izbiste (Criuleni *Raion*) and in Alava (Stefan Voda *Raion*), repeat elections would be held as well as a second round for Mayor in Cosauti (Soroca *Raion*). All these elections took place on 22 June.

In Ialoveni, the only *Raion* where “Our Moldova” won a greater number of seats in the *Raion* Council than the PCRM, complaints involved compilation of the voters lists, issuance of multiple ballots, proxy voting, substitution of protocols, non-delivery of the mobile ballot box and campaigning on election day.

XIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are offered for consideration to the Moldovan authorities.²¹ The OSCE/ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities and civil society of Moldova to remedy the remaining shortcomings and challenges.

A. LEGAL FRAMEWORK

1. The Law on Political Parties and Socio-Political Organizations should be revised with a view to decrease the minimum number of registered party members, remove the requirement to submit annually a detailed list of party members for re-registration and ease requirements for regional party branches. Moreover, as this law discriminates against regionally based minorities, consideration should be given to including provisions that would promote meaningful participation of minorities in the political process.
2. A serious omission in the Election Code is absence of sanctions for violations of the election law. The CEC should be authorized to impose administrative sanctions for non-compliance with its orders or decisions.

²¹ The OSCE/ODIHR has also published a number of documents that could assist the competent authorities, including 1) Guidelines for Reviewing a Legal Framework for Elections (January 2001), 2) Guidelines to Assist National Minority Participation in Election Processes (January 2001), and 3) Resolving Election Disputes in the OSCE Area (July 2000).

3. Provisions should be adopted to allow conscripts to vote for local authorities in their home community by way of an absentee ballot or some other special voting procedure.
4. The official translation of the Electoral Code into Russian should be reviewed.

B. VOTER REGISTRATION

5. The entire system for voter registration should be reconsidered with a view to updating voter lists and creating a republic-wide database to prevent potential multiple registrations. Until a revised voter registration system is in place, the Mayor's Offices should be given clear instructions on the eligibility for inclusion in the voter lists.
6. Clear procedures and timelines for display, review and entering updates would help improve the accuracy of the voter lists.
7. Procedures are needed for the use of the supplementary voter list. This would limit the possibility of double voting and ensure consistency of application throughout the country.
8. The need of a certificate to vote should be reviewed. If deemed necessary, procedures should be elaborated regulating its use.
9. An exhaustive list of accepted identification documents should be included in either the Election Code or regulations of the CEC.

C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

10. The tasks and the competencies of Polling Boards and accredited domestic observers must be defined to avoid disputes and discussions on polling day.
11. The CEC should provide training for all members of the Municipal and District Election Councils.
12. Voter education materials should be elaborated in a timely manner and widely disseminated.

D. CAMPAIGN AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE

13. Although campaign finance regulations are articulated in the law, it should also include sanctions in case of non-compliance, as well as an audit and review mechanism.

E. MEDIA

14. CEC and CCA should give consideration to making free air time more ample.
15. Broadcasters should be encouraged to organize debates and provide contestants with equitable debate conditions.
16. Broadcasters should not provide members of government who are also candidates with excessive news coverage.
17. Restrictions on covering the campaign limited freedom of the press. News programs should provide neutral and impartial campaign coverage.
18. The public should be informed if a message is a paid political advertisement.

F. ELECTION DAY AND VALIDATION OF RESULTS

19. An Election Day Procedures Manual would benefit the process.
20. Better safeguards for secrecy of the vote should be applied through voter education encouraging voters to fold ballots, or through the introduction of envelopes.
21. Precise procedures regarding the use of mobile ballot boxes are needed.
22. An accountable paper trail and concrete procedures should be developed for receiving ballots, storing unused ballots, packing used, unused, invalid and spoiled ballots. Such steps would improve the integrity of the count. Better security is advisable for the collection and storage of the control stamps.

23. Measures for enhancing transparency during the vote count, such as presenting each ballot for examination by Polling Board members upon request, should be considered.
24. Election results should be promptly posted outside every polling station.
25. The Election Code should regulate who can request a recount, on what grounds a recount can be ordered, and who conducts the recount.

G. GENDER

26. Political parties should be encouraged to promote the participation of women, both as party members and as candidates.

ANNEX – ELECTION RESULTS

RESULTS OF ELECTIONS FOR MAYORS²²

Contestants	Mayoralties Won			
	Round 1	Round 2	Total	Per cent
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova	266	101	367	41.1%
Social Liberal Alliance “Our Moldova”	102	87	189	21.2%
Democratic Party of Moldova	26	46	72	8.1%
Electoral Bloc “Social Democratic Party – Social Liberal Party”	13	30	43	4.8%
Christian Democratic People’s Party	6	14	20	2.2%
Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova	6	12	18	2.0%
Centrist Union of Moldova	3	14	17	1.9%
Movement of Professionals “Speranta–Nadejda”	2	1	3	0.3%
Socialist Party of Moldova	1	2	3	0.3%
Republican Socio-Political Movement “Ravnopravie”	0	2	2	0.2%
Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova	0	2	2	0.2%
Republican Party of Moldova	0	0	0	0.0%
Socio-Political Movement “Forta Noua”	0	0	0	0.0%
Independents	76	80	156	17.5%
Total	501	391	892	100.0%

RESULTS OF ELECTIONS FOR *RAION* AND MUNICIPAL COUNCILS

Contestants	Votes		Mandates	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova	595,267	48.1%	615	54.6%
Social Liberal Alliance “Our Moldova”	247,746	20.0%	229	20.3%
Democratic Party of Moldova	95,011	7.7%	92	8.2%
Electoral Bloc “Social Democratic Party – Social Liberal Party”	54,852	4.4%	36	3.2%
Christian Democratic People’s Party	110,166	8.9%	82	7.3%
Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova	32,198	2.6%	31	2.8%
Centrist Union of Moldova	19,703	1.6%	13	1.2%
Movement of Professionals “Speranta–Nadejda”	2,227	0.2%	2	0.2%
Socialist Party of Moldova	2,507	0.2%	0	0.0%
Republican Socio-Political Movement “Ravnopravie”	10,514	0.9%	2	0.3%
Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova				
Republican Party of Moldova	961	0.1%	0	0.0%
Socio-Political Movement “Forta Noua”	N/A		N/A	
Independents	67,257	5.4%	23	2.0%
Total	1,238,409	100.0%	1,126	100.0%

²² Source: CEC. The results do not include repeat elections or run-offs resulting from repeat elections, which are scheduled for 22 June 2003.

RESULTS OF ELECTIONS FOR LOCAL COUNCILS (TOWNS, VILLAGES, COMMUNES)

Contestants	Votes		Mandates	
	Number	Per cent	Number	Per cent
Party of Communists of the Republic of Moldova	473,532	44.9%	5,417	49.9%
Social Liberal Alliance "Our Moldova"	215,807	20.5%	2,391	22.0%
Democratic Party of Moldova	91,109	8.6%	946	8.7%
Electoral Bloc "Social Democratic Party – Social Liberal Party"	49,729	4.7%	497	4.6%
Christian Democratic People's Party	66,966	6.4%	570	5.2%
Democratic Agrarian Party of Moldova	27,934	2.7%	279	2.6%
Centrist Union of Moldova	19,437	1.8%	163	1.5%
Movement of Professionals "Speranta–Nadejda"	2,297	0.2%	19	0.2%
Socialist Party of Moldova	1,951	0.2%	24	0.2%
Republican Socio-Political Movement "Ravnopravie"	4,457	0.4%	35	0.3%
Party of Socialists of the Republic of Moldova	1,814	0.2%	19	0.2%
Republican Party of Moldova	626	0.1%	2	0.0%
Socio-Political Movement "Forta Noua"	162	0.0%	2	0.0%
Independents	98,652	9.4%	495	4.6%
Total	1,054,573	100.0%	10,859	100.0%

ABOUT THE OSCE/ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is the OSCE's main 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 Document).

The ODIHR, based in Warsaw, Poland, was created as the Office for Free Elections by the OSCE Heads of State or Government at the 1990 Paris Summit. In 1992, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratisation. Today it employs over 80 staff.

The ODIHR is the lead agency in Europe in the field of **election observation**. It co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers every year to assess whether elections in the OSCE area are in line with national legislation and international standards. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into all elements of an electoral process. Through assistance projects, the ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

The Office's **democratization** activities include the following six thematic areas: rule of law, civil society, freedom of movement, gender equality, trafficking in human beings and freedom of religion. The ODIHR implements more than 100 targeted assistance programs, seeking both to facilitate and enhance State compliance with OSCE commitments and to develop democratic structures.

The ODIHR **monitors** participating States' compliance with OSCE human dimension commitments. It also organizes several meetings every year to review the implementation of OSCE human dimension commitments by participating States.

The 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. The Office also acts as a clearing-house for the exchange of information on Roma and Sinti issues among national and international actors.

All ODIHR activities are carried out in close co-ordination and co-operation with OSCE institutions and field operations, as well as with other international organizations.

More information is available on the ODIHR [website](#), which also contains a comprehensive library of reports and other documents, including all previous election reports and election law analyses published by the ODIHR.