

INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION
Republic of Moldova — Local Elections, 3 June 2007

STATEMENT OF PRELIMINARY FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Chişinău, 4 June 2007 – Following invitations from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration and the Central Election Commission of the Republic of Moldova to observe the 3 June 2007 local elections, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to Moldova on 24 April. For observation on election day, the OSCE/ODIHR joined efforts with observers of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM).

The IEOM assessed compliance of the electoral process with OSCE and Council of Europe commitments, and other international standards for democratic elections, and domestic legislation. This statement of preliminary findings and conclusions is delivered prior to the completion of the election process and the expiry of legal deadlines for hearing possible complaints and appeals. A conclusive assessment of the entire election will depend, in part, on the conduct of the remaining phases of the process. The OSCE/ODIHR will publish a comprehensive final report approximately two months after completion of the process, and the Congress will vote on a report on the elections during its next session.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

The 3 June 2007 local elections in the Republic of Moldova were generally well administered and the field of parties and candidates offered voters a genuine choice. However, the elections fell short of meeting some OSCE and Council of Europe commitments that are central to a genuinely competitive election process. In particular, the right of citizens to seek public office was not fully respected and media access was not equitable.

A number of opposition candidates were intimidated and pressured by the authorities, as well as by some members of the governing party, as corroborated by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM. In most of the reported cases, this led to candidate withdrawals, and in some instances, this resulted in disqualification of lists, as the number of remaining candidates fell below the required minimum. Some of them were reinstated after parties sought legal redress.

The Central Election Commission (CEC) made commendable efforts to remain impartial throughout the process. The election campaign was lively and visible in urban centres, but more low-key elsewhere. Although campaign activities were generally unimpeded, equal opportunities were not always provided to all contestants, and several political parties complained that their meetings were at times obstructed.

Campaign coverage in the media was restricted by a legal provision that was interpreted as prohibiting any coverage of campaign activities outside debates and paid electoral spots. In their prime-time news, publicly funded *Moldova 1* and the majority of monitored TV stations provided extensive coverage of the activities of state authorities, thus benefiting pro-government candidates.

The public broadcaster provided opposition candidates with some access and coverage in the news programmes only in the last days of the campaign. The Audio-Visual Co-ordinating Council (CCA) issued a warning to *Moldova 1*, *Radio Moldova*, *Antenna C*, and private *NIT TV* for their failure to observe the principles of balance, fairness and impartiality in their news programmes.

Overall, positive aspects also included:

- The Election Code generally provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections, if implemented in good faith. While recent amendments have reflected a number of recommendations by the OSCE/ODIHR and the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe (VC/CoE), some key recommendations remain to be addressed.
- The election administration, which for the first time included party-nominated members at all levels, performed its duties in a satisfactory manner.
- The CEC adopted a wide range of decisions and regulations to complete and clarify the existing legal provisions.
- The CEC worked in a transparent manner by opening its meetings to the public and media and by publishing its decision on its website. It conducted its activities in an impartial, professional and collegial manner.
- Public and private media broadcast regular TV debates, providing candidates with a forum to exchange views. However, the decision of the Party of the Communists of the Republic of Moldova (PCRM) not to participate in most of the debates somewhat diminished their value for citizens.
- Higher-level courts generally issued better-reasoned and transparent judgements, although in some cases decisions did not have a sound evidentiary and legal basis.
- The domestic Civil Coalition for Free and Fair Elections – Coalition 2007 deployed some 30 long-term and 2,000 short-term observers.

However, other shortcomings were noted:

- While voter lists were updated within the legal deadline in most areas, the EOM observers reported numerous instances of lists being posted with delays and with incomplete data.
- A number of District Electoral Councils (DECs) did not consistently handle candidate registration and drawing of lots to determine the order of candidates and lists on a ballot.
- Concurrent jurisdiction of electoral bodies and courts with respect to electoral complaints led to duplication of efforts and confusion.
- The CEC often faced difficulties in meeting the three-day deadline for the consideration of complaints. Some written decisions did not clearly state the facts and evidence, and legal grounds were not always sound.
- The CEC lacked the power to impose sanctions in cases of violations due to the lack of enforcement mechanisms in the election legislation.
- As of 31 May, four out of the 21 political parties and electoral blocs participating in the elections had failed to submit complete reports on their campaign finances to the CEC, and one had not opened a campaign account as required by the law.
- In most cases, local authorities made municipal billboards available to contestants but not always on an equal footing and at times in insufficient quantities.
- Women were under-represented at higher levels in the election administration. The lack of comprehensive gender-disaggregated data hindered an effective overall assessment of women's participation in the electoral process.

Election Day was generally calm, and, overall, voting was conducted in line with legal procedures. IEOM observers assessed the voting process as “good” or “very good” in 96 per cent of polling stations visited. The secrecy of the ballot was not always ensured, mainly because voters did not fold their ballots properly. Observers reported a number of mostly isolated problems, including the presence of unauthorized persons in polling stations and campaigning. Cases of group voting were observed in 20 per cent of polling stations, as were very few cases of proxy voting.

The vote count was assessed less positively, with 22 per cent of observers rating it as “bad” or “very bad”. Observers noted a range of problems and procedural shortcomings, including during reconciliation procedures, in determining ballot validity, and in completing and posting the results protocols. Some PEB members would have benefited from a more extensive training.

As during previous elections, voting did not take place on the territory controlled by the Transdniestrian authorities. In Corjova, a Moldovan-administered commune on the left bank of the Nistru/Dniestr, voting was effectively prevented during most parts of the day because the access to the polling station was blocked by the Transdniestrian militia.

Both organizations represented in the IEOM stand ready to continue their support for the efforts of the authorities, political parties and civil society to improve the electoral process in Moldova, in line with OSCE commitments, Council of Europe and other international standards for democratic elections.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Background

The 3 June local elections were the fourth since Moldova gained independence in 1991, and the third national ballot since the PCRM came to power in 2001. In the 2005 parliamentary elections, the PCRM gained a majority of seats in the Parliament (56 of 101), but was compelled to seek support from the Democratic Party (PD), the Christian Democratic People’s Party (PPCD) and the Social Liberal Party (PSL) to elect President Vladimir Voronin for a second term on 4 April 2005. The Moldova Noastră Alliance (AMN), which contested the elections in a coalition with the PD and PSL, did not take part in the vote.

While the PD and the PPCD have maintained a degree of collaboration with the PCRM, the PSL has retracted its initial support. The remaining centrist and centre-right opposition is mainly composed of the Social Democratic Party of Moldova (PSDM), the Popular Republican Party (PPR) and two newly created parties, the Social Democracy Party (PDS) and National Liberal Party (PNL). The leftist opposition is represented by the electoral bloc “Patria Rodina – Ravnopravie” (EBPRR).

Election System and Legal Framework

The local elections were conducted to elect 899 mayors and 11,967 members of rayon (district), municipal, town, communal and village councils for four-year terms. The turnout requirement was lowered from 33 to 25 per cent of the number of registered voters, and removed altogether for second rounds and repeat voting.

Councillors were elected under a proportional representation system without a threshold. Mayors were elected using a majoritarian system. Where no mayoral candidate won an absolute majority of the valid votes cast, a runoff will take place 14 days after the first round between the two candidates who received the highest number of votes.

The legal framework is composed of a number of laws, CEC decisions and regulations, including the Electoral Code, which was adopted in 1997 and amended numerous times since, most recently in 2005 and 2006. The Code generally provides an adequate basis for the conduct of democratic elections, if implemented in good faith. While recent amendments to the Code reflected a number of OSCE/ODIHR and VC/CoE recommendations, some key ones remain to be addressed. The CEC has indicated its intention to recommend to the Parliament further amendments to the Electoral Code.

Election Administration

The elections were administered by a four-tiered structure: the Central Election Commission (CEC), 35 Level 2 District Electoral Councils (DECs)¹, 899 Level 1 DECs, and 1,934 Precinct Electoral Bureaus (PEBs). As during previous elections, voting did not take place on the territory controlled by Transnistrian authorities.

Following the July 2005 Electoral Code amendments, political parties can nominate election commission members at all levels, proportional to their representation in the Parliament. However, election commissioners cannot be members of political parties.

The CEC is responsible for ensuring due implementation of election legislation. Since the start of the electoral period on 30 March, the CEC demonstrated initiative and adopted a wide range of decisions and regulations, as well as explanations and clarifications of the Electoral Code. The CEC lacked the power to impose sanctions in cases of violations due to the lack of enforcement mechanisms in the election legislation. Occasionally, it failed to follow upon the implementation of its decisions, especially on the campaign, candidate registration and use of public resources by candidates. CEC meetings were open to the public and the media and were generally conducted in a professional and collegial manner. Most decisions were adopted unanimously and posted on the CEC website.

Level 2 and Level 1 DECs were generally formed within the legal deadlines; in some cases, however, delays were reported with Level 1 DECs. Level 2 DECs were mostly well prepared and applied the law consistently. However, the PEBs did not appear to have received adequate support from higher-level commissions what resulted in them being not always fully operational by the legal deadline. In Briceni and Sîngerei, observers witnessed representatives of the local administration interfering in the work of DECs.

Voter Registration

Voter lists were verified twice in the run-up to the election. As a result of the first verification, carried out up to 1 March 2007, the CEC announced that 2,447,715 voters would be eligible to cast ballots in the local elections. Following the second verification, the number of eligible voters dropped down to 2,340,514.

While voter lists were updated in most areas by the legal deadline, observers reported numerous instances of lists not posted on time, posted in mayoral buildings rather than at polling stations, available for scrutiny only upon request or showing incomplete data. They also reported cases of citizens living abroad and not officially de-registered who were removed from the lists.

¹ Two additional electoral districts covering the territory controlled by the Transnistrian authorities remained without appointed DECs.

Citizens residing on the territory controlled by the Transnistrian authorities were not included in any voter list; however, voters from Chitcani and Cremenciug villages were able to vote on supplementary lists in Copanca, and voters from Gîsca – in Fărlădeni, all located in Causeni Level 2 electoral district.

Candidate Registration

Political parties and socio-political organizations, that were registered by 29 March 2007, were eligible to nominate candidates. Independent candidates could run after collecting support signatures.

Twenty-two of 27 registered political parties and socio-political organizations competed in the elections. Two of these parties ran as an electoral bloc. One socio-political organization, the European Action Movement (MAE), was denied registration by the Ministry of Justice, whose decision was overturned by the Chişinău Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court. It was, however, registered too late to be able to field candidates.

A total of 4,766 candidates registered to run for mayor, and some 60,000 for rayon, municipal, town and village councils. There were 565 independent candidates running for mayors and approximately 1,000 for councillor seats. In Chişinău, 18 candidates ran for mayor, including one independent candidate. The field of candidates provided voters with a genuine choice.

The sequence of registration of party lists and candidates by DEC's determines the order in which they appear on ballots. The process was generally orderly; however, observers reported that a significant number of DEC's did not handle the process in a transparent, consistent and impartial manner. Some took decisions that favoured the governing party. In some cases, such as in Chişinău, Bălţi and Hînceşti, the DEC's allegedly registered PCRM candidates before the agreed registration date. In other places, such as in Căuşeni, Edineţ, Teleneşti and Ocnîţa, the DEC's arbitrarily imposed the ranking. Other procedural inconsistencies were reported in Hînceşti, Ungheni, Cahul and Sîngerei.

A number of opposition candidates were intimidated and pressured by the authorities, as well as by some members of the governing party, as corroborated by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM. Several cases implicated senior public servants from the education and health departments, State Ecological Inspectorate, as well as some members of the Parliament. In Briceni, Floreşti, Drochia, Soroca, Ocnîţa, Şoldăneşti, Orhei, and Nisporeni, observers received first-hand accounts from candidates, who confirmed that they had been coerced into signing resignation letters, while others had withdrawn “voluntarily” due to fear of retribution, such as dismissals. Teachers and health-sector personnel were the most affected. In Briceni, for example, as a result of these withdrawals, the rayon council lists of the PSL, PSDM, PPR and EBPRR were declared invalid by the Level 2 DEC, as the number of candidates remaining on the lists fell below the required minimum. In Ocnîţa, two party lists were invalidated by the Level 1 DEC on the same grounds. Three of the lists in Briceni were later reinstated after parties sought legal redress.

Credible allegations of pressure and intimidation were also made in Floreşti, Străşeni, Ungheni, Rîşcani, Ialoveni, Criuleni, Ocnîţa, Cahul, Călăraşi, Teleneşti, Nisporeni, Taraclia, Orhei and Sîngerei. In Hînceşti, a PPCD candidate was physically threatened. In Ştefan Vodă and Cahul, two PSL candidates and local councillors faced summary dismissal and suspension from their jobs in the State Ecological Inspectorate. In other instances, there is evidence to suggest that several court cases were re-opened in order to exert pressure on electoral contestants.

The observers reported a number of cases of mayors who, in contravention of the law, did not step down from their position while running as candidates, or who continued to perform mayoral duties after resigning. In Strășeni, a mayor reportedly continued to sign expenditure vouchers, although he had stepped down from his position.

Campaign Environment

The campaign was low-key with the exception of major cities and towns, where posters were displayed with greater visibility and where meetings and rallies took place. Political parties generally resorted to small-scale meetings with voters, door-to-door canvassing and distribution of campaign material. These activities were generally unimpeded.

However, equal opportunities were not always provided to all contestants. According to a CEC regulation, equal space of at least one square meter per board had to be allocated by municipal authorities for candidates to display their electoral posters. Although billboards were in many cases made available, the regulation was generally not adhered to. In Chișinău, the municipality failed to guarantee the minimum space required per candidate and per billboard. In Bălți, the municipality allocated areas for placing posters but did not provide the necessary boards, having thus left the procurement, installation and dismantling of these boards to political parties. These measures favoured parties with greater financial resources. In addition, while supporters from opposition parties were criticized and at times arrested for placing posters in unauthorized places, the PCRM was neither criticized nor held liable for the same infringements.

In Telenești, a scheduled and authorized meeting of the PSL in the House of Culture was prevented by a concomitant meeting organized by the Speaker of Parliament. In Chișinău, a protracted legal dispute between the PCRM and the PPCD over access to the main square for a rally on 1 June was resolved in the last instance in favour of the PPCD by the Supreme Court, which overturned the initial decision of the Chișinău municipality to grant the venue to the PCRM. In addition, several allegations were received that the PCRM held meetings in workplaces during working hours, including in a court in Sîngerei.

Furthermore, several political parties such as the PPCD, AMN, PDS and PSL complained that, at times, they faced obstructions and pressure. Credible reports were received from opposition parties that the police detained party supporters while conducting campaign activities, especially in major cities and towns. In Chișinău, a party supporter was detained and fined by a territorial court for holding a poster in his hands. Several other instances were reported, such as in Chișinău and in Florești, where the police forbade supporters to display posters and banners on their private property. In Chișinău, a university teacher and opposition candidate alleged that he had been wrongfully accused of forcing his students to campaign, and that this was used to discredit him and to intimidate his students.

As of 31 May, four out of the 21 political parties and electoral blocs participating in the elections failed to submit complete reports on their campaign finances to the CEC, one of which did not open a campaign account as required by the law. Subsequently, the CEC issued warnings to non-compliant parties.

Participation of Women and National Minorities

While the legal framework generally provides a sound basis for the participation of women in the electoral process, the *de facto* electoral environment did not facilitate their participation as candidates. Some female candidates reported intimidation of a gendered nature. Most interlocutors

cited societal and economic factors that compromise women's ability to run as candidates on an equal footing with men.

In the election administration, women were under-represented at higher levels. Of nine CEC members, only the Deputy Chairperson was a woman. Women represent some 46 per cent of Level 2 DEC members, but only 37 per cent of chairpersons. In nearly half of Level 1 DECs, women represented 75 per cent of members and 64 per cent of chairpersons. In polling stations visited by IEOM observers on election day, women accounted for 78 per cent of PEB members and 63 per cent of PEC chairpersons. Based on information received from the CEC for 20 out of 35 rayons and municipalities where elections took place, women represented 21 per cent of mayoral candidates. The EOM was not provided with comprehensive data on female candidates and voters.

According to the 2004 census, national minorities account for around 24 per cent of Moldova's population. The Constitution and the Electoral Code provide equal rights for minorities in the elections. However, the registration requirements in the Law on Political Parties and Socio-Political Organizations adversely affect their ability to form parties, especially if they are regionally concentrated.

Minority issues have not been visible in political discourse, but most political parties reported inclusion of national minorities in their lists. Some party lists included a small number of Roma candidates.

The Media

Despite a diverse media environment, a number of interlocutors expressed concerns about the lack of pluralism in the country's broadcasting sector, the ability of the media to provide diverse information, and media independence.

Regular televised debates, both on publicly funded and private broadcasters, gave candidates opportunities to inform voters of their platforms. The PCRM decided not to participate in most of the debates, as was its right. The lack of opportunity to address questions to the PCRM candidates, in particular incumbents, was compounded by the fact that media generally chose not to pose critical questions. In addition to debates, candidates were able to convey their message to the electorate through paid political advertising and in the print media.

However, the majority of monitored TV stations through their prime-time news provided extensive coverage of the state authorities, thus favouring pro-government candidates. News coverage of the campaign was restricted by a legal provision, interpreted as prohibiting any coverage of campaign activities outside debates and paid electoral spots in order not to violate the principle of equality.

In its prime-time news and current-affairs programs, the publicly funded *Moldova 1* displayed a clear bias and provided substantial coverage of the activities of state authorities outside the campaign context. A similar pattern was observed on publicly funded *Radio Moldova*. In the four weeks preceding the elections, *Moldova 1* provided a total of 74 per cent of its political and election-related prime-time news coverage to the President, the Government, and the Speaker of Parliament, and 6 per cent to the PCRM. This coverage was overwhelmingly positive in tone. Thus, both *Moldova 1* and *Radio Moldova* failed to meet their legal obligation to create equal conditions for candidates and political parties.

The Audio-Visual Co-ordinating Council (CCA), the main regulatory body for the broadcast media, issued warnings to *Moldova 1*, *Radio Moldova*, *Antenna C radio* and the private *NIT TV* for their

failure to observe the principles of balance, fairness and impartiality in their news programmes. *Moldova 1* was also criticized for its favourable coverage of the state authorities and lack of critical reporting. A decrease in the amount of prime-time news coverage devoted to the state authorities (53 per cent against 93 per cent in early May) was noted in the last week of the campaign on *Moldova 1*. A similar trend was observed on *Radio Moldova*. In addition, *Moldova 1* and *Radio Moldova* offered some access and coverage of opposition candidates in the last days of the campaign.

Discernable differences among private broadcasters were observed in their news coverage. *NIT* and *N4* adopted a pattern similar to that of *Moldova 1*. *Euro TV* and *Radio Antenna-C* also generally provided favourable news coverage of the activities of State authorities. In the dispute between the PPCD and PCRM about the right to use Chişinău's main square for a rally, some critical coverage of the PCRM appeared on *Euro TV*. *Pro TV* and *TV7* were the only channels to provide more balanced coverage of the campaign. However, their potential audience is far smaller than that of the two main networks, *Moldova 1* and *NIT*.

Paid advertising was used extensively by a number of candidates. Major TV channels aired a spot in which the Speaker of Parliament, Marian Lupu, supported the PCRM mayoral candidate in Chişinău, Veaceslav Iordan. This appeared to violate the CEC decision on media coverage of the campaign, which states that “any images representing the institutions of the President, Parliament, or the central and local public administration may not be used”. The CEC decided that the Speaker of Parliament did not appear in his official capacity, but as a private citizen, which therefore did not constitute a violation. The CEC issued warnings to several candidates in the last week of the campaign, due to the fact that they featured buildings and symbols of state and municipal institutions.

Negative campaigning surfaced in the media some three weeks prior to election day. A PCRM spot was aired targeting the PDS candidate for Chişinău mayor, Dumitru Braghîş. A similar spot produced by the PDS and targeting the PCRM was temporarily banned by a Chişinău Territorial Court, following a PCRM complaint claiming defamatory content. This decision was upheld by the Chişinău Court of Appeal, and the case is expected to be considered in substance by the territorial court only after the end of the campaign, which constitutes an undue delay of justice in a time-sensitive period. Furthermore, the CEC, upon a CCA request, issued a warning to two private broadcasters, *Pro-TV* and *Euro-TV*, for exceeding the daily time limits for paid advertising in favour of candidates from the PDS, PD and PPCD. However, no such warning was issued to *NIT*, which allocated more than the prescribed paid airtime to some electoral contestants between 21 May and 1 June.

The political and election-related prime-time news coverage of the regional broadcasters monitored by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM showed a pattern of political favouritism towards the local authorities. In Gagauzia, for example, the publicly funded local broadcaster, *TV Gagauzia*, provided the local authorities with 92 per cent of its coverage, which was overwhelmingly positive or neutral in tone. By comparison, on *Teleradio Bălţi*, which is owned by the city council, local authorities received 71 per cent of the coverage, which was also mainly positive or neutral in tone.

Complaints and Appeals

Despite a high number of allegations, there were relatively few formal complaints. Several opposition parties stated that they did not file formal complaints because they lacked trust in the impartiality of electoral bodies and courts and feared retribution. Complaints and appeals covered a broad range of issues, including, *inter alia*, candidate registration, suspension of public duties, use of administrative resources, campaign issues, and intimidation of candidates. Concurrent jurisdiction of

electoral bodies and courts as regards electoral complaints led to overlapping of efforts and confusion.

Observers reported that some DEC's did not properly consider appeals and occasionally allowed for violations of legal procedures, including non-compliance with CEC decisions. The CEC received over 140 complaints; notably, very few were filed by the PCRM. The CEC often faced difficulties in meeting the required three-day deadline for consideration of complaints, thus delaying legal redress during a time-sensitive period. Some written CEC decisions did not clearly state the facts and evidence, and legal grounds were not always sound. Many complaints were rejected on the grounds of lack of evidence.

One notable CEC decision warned the PCRM candidate for Chişinău Mayor, Mr. Iordan, for his failure to fully suspend his former responsibilities as Acting Mayor; however, this decision was later cancelled by the Chişinău Court of Appeal. Another CEC decision informed the Prosecutor-General's Office about its non-compliance with the provisions of the Electoral Code that prohibit prosecution of candidates during the electoral period. In another case, the CEC recognized intimidation by public officials that resulted in the resignation of a number of candidates, and ordered the candidates' reinstatement. This decision was upheld by the Chişinău Court of Appeal.

Territorial Courts, Courts of Appeal and the Supreme Court issued a number of election-related judgements. Generally, the higher the level of the court, the better-reasoned and transparent the judgements were, although in some cases decisions did not have a sound evidentiary and legal basis.

Domestic Observers

Moldovan election legislation provides for domestic and international observation. In these elections, the main domestic observation effort was carried out by the Civil Coalition for Free and Fair Elections – Coalition 2007, which comprises 16 non-governmental organizations and, in addition to carrying out media monitoring, training of election officials, and public-awareness and voter-education campaigns, deployed some 30 long-term and 2,000 short-term observers.

Election Day

Election Day was generally calm, and, overall, voting was conducted in line with legal procedures. IEOM observers assessed the voting process as good or very good in 96 per cent of polling stations visited, while PEBs' understanding of procedures was assessed positively in 86 per cent. Opening procedures were generally adhered to. Preliminary CEC data put voter turnout at 46 per cent. In Corjova, a Moldovan-administered commune on the left bank of the Nistru/Dniestr river, voting was effectively prevented during most of the day by Transdnestrrian militia, which blocked access to the polling station. In other Moldovan-administered communes on the left bank, elections took place unimpeded.

The secrecy of the ballot was not consistently ensured. Observers reported that during the application of the control stamp immediately before ballots were inserted in ballot boxes, the secrecy was fully safeguarded in only 61 per cent of polling station visited, mainly because voters did not fold their ballots properly. Furthermore, in 13 per cent of polling stations, not all voters marked their ballots in secrecy.

Group voting was observed frequently in 7 per cent of polling stations visited and isolated occurrences in another 13 per cent. Only very few cases of proxy voting were reported.

The presence of unauthorized persons was noted in 7 per cent of polling stations. Only in two cases did such persons interfere or direct the process. In 3 per cent of polling stations visited, persons influenced or tried to influence voters. Campaigning or campaign material in and around polling stations were reported from 2 and 3 per cent of polling stations visited, respectively.

In 46 per cent of polling stations, some voters were turned away because they had improper or no identification or were at the wrong polling station. In polling stations visited, the number of voters added to the supplementary voter list averaged 7.6 per cent, while some 2 per cent of voters used the mobile ballot box. Observers reported that the provisions for handling of absentee voting certificates were not always applied properly.

A large number of polling stations observed were not accessible for voters with disabilities. Furthermore, some 7 per cent of polling stations were overcrowded. Domestic non-partisan observers, mostly from the Coalition 2007, were identified in 73 per cent of polling stations, and party and candidate representatives in 99 per cent. They conducted their activities largely unobstructed.

The vote count was assessed less positively, with 22 per cent of observers rating it as “bad” or “very bad”. In 59 per cent of counts observed, voters waiting in line at 21:00 were not allowed to vote contrary to the CEC decision. IEOM observers noted a range of procedural shortcomings, including failure to count and cancel unused ballots (19 per cent), to establish the number of voters who voted by counting the signatures on voter lists (24 per cent), to reconcile the number of ballots in the mobile box with the number of voters who voted outside the polling station (23 per cent), and to establish the number of ballots found in ballot boxes (35 per cent).

IEOM observers reported that controversies over ballot validity arose in 68 per cent of counts observed. In 26 per cent of counts, the PEB chairperson did not show all ballots to other PEB members and observers before declaring them invalid. In 8 per cent of counts observed, the criteria for determining ballot validity were not reasonable, and in 10 per cent they were not applied consistently.

Some 51 per cent of PEBs had difficulties reconciling the results, and 31 per cent had problems completing the results protocols. Protocols were sometimes completed with pencil (11 per cent) or not given to those entitled to them (14 per cent). In 59 per cent of counts observed, protocols were not immediately posted outside polling stations as required by law. Some PEB members would have benefited from a more extensive training.

IEOM observers followed the handover of material to a limited number of Level 1 DECAs, as were the reconciliation and tabulation procedures at the DEC.

In Chişinău, the CEC implemented an electronic voter list pilot project in three polling stations out of four initially envisaged.

*This statement is also available in Moldovan and Russian.
However, the English version remains the only official document.*

MISSION INFORMATION & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Ambassador Dieter Boden led the OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission. Mrs. Susan Bolam led the delegation of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.

The OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission opened in Chişinău on 24 April with 25 experts and long-term observers deployed in Chişinău and five regional centres. On election day, the IEOM deployed some 187 short-term observers from 45 OSCE participating States, including an 17-member delegation from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. The IEOM observed voting in some 750 polling stations out of a total of 1,934, located in all 35 second-level administrative units where voting took place. Counting was observed in 50 polling stations, and reconciliation procedures were followed in 30 Level 1 DECes.

The IEOM wishes to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and European Integration, the Central Election Commission, and other national and local authorities for their assistance and cooperation during the course of the observation. The IEOM also wishes to express its appreciation to the OSCE Mission to Moldova and other international organizations and embassies for their support throughout the duration of the mission.

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