



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

# NORWAY

## PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

11 September 2017

OSCE/ODIHR Election Expert Team Report



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**NORWAY**  
**PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS**  
**11 September 2017**

**OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Report<sup>1</sup>**

**I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Following an invitation from the Permanent Mission of Norway to the OSCE and based on the findings and conclusions of a Needs Assessment Mission, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) deployed an Election Expert Team (EET) for the 11 September parliamentary elections. The OSCE/ODIHR EET focused its assessment on the work of the election administration and political party and campaign finance.

Norway is a parliamentary representative constitutional monarchy with legislative power vested in a unicameral parliament directly elected through a proportional open list system. As noted in previous OSCE/ODIHR assessments, the applicable legal framework generally provides a solid basis for the conduct of democratic elections. In addition, a number of OSCE/ODIHR recommendations are pending consideration as part of an on-going legislative review process.

The election administration, overseen by the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization and comprising four levels of electoral bodies, operates efficiently and enjoys high public confidence. Stakeholders welcomed the establishment of a new Directorate of Elections with delegated authority over several key aspects of election management and noted its enhanced capacity. Last-minute regulations aimed at enhancing the security of counting and tabulation processes necessitated additional operational measures, but were overall effectively managed by local election officials. Voters were afforded ample opportunities to vote ahead of elections. The equality of choice and opportunity is not fully safeguarded for specific groups of voters, including those voting in advance from a different constituency and visually impaired voters.

Political party and campaign finance are regulated by a sound legal framework, including requirements on campaign donation disclosure and annual reporting serving to ensure transparency. Public funding constitutes the primary source of party income; however, in recent years there has been a sharp increase in the amount of private donations. Some OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors raised concerns about potential undue influence of large donors on politics. Accountability is ensured through effective oversight by the Political Parties Act Committee. During the electoral period, the Committee issued 14 formal warnings and withdrew partial public funding of one party for failure to disclose reportable donations within established timeframes.

**II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Following an invitation from the Permanent Mission of Norway to the OSCE and based on the findings and conclusions of a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) conducted from 21 to 23 June, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) deployed an Election Expert Team (EET) to observe the 11 September parliamentary elections. The OSCE/ODIHR EET consisted of three experts drawn from three OSCE participating States.

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<sup>1</sup> The English version report is the only official document. An unofficial translation is available in Norwegian.

The OSCE/ODIHR EET focused its assessment on the work of the election administration and party and campaign finance. The report is thus limited in scope and does not offer an overall assessment of the electoral process. Specific areas under review were assessed for compliance with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as with national legislation. In line with the OSCE/ODIHR methodology, the OSCE/ODIHR EET did not undertake comprehensive and systematic observation of election day procedures. This final report should be read in conjunction with the 2017 OSCE/ODIHR NAM report and previous reports, which provide additional detail on electoral processes in Norway.<sup>2</sup>

The OSCE/ODIHR EET wishes to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation (MLGM), the National Electoral Committee (NEC), lower-level electoral committees, candidates, political parties, and other interlocutors for their co-operation and assistance.

### III. BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Norway is a parliamentary representative constitutional monarchy. The King's council and the cabinet, led by the prime minister, exercise executive power. Legislative authority is vested with the 169-seat unicameral parliament (*Storting*) elected for a four-year term. On 22 April, the government set the date of the parliamentary elections for 11 September.<sup>3</sup>

Following the 2013 parliamentary elections, a centre-right minority coalition was formed comprising the Conservative and the Progress parties, with support from the Liberal and the Christian Democratic parties based on separate co-operation agreements. The parliamentary opposition included the Labour, Centre, Socialist Left and the Green parties.

The OSCE/ODIHR has previously assessed three elections in Norway since 2002. Most recently in 2013, the OSCE/ODIHR deployed an Election Assessment Mission (EAM) for the parliamentary elections. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM final report noted the high level of confidence in the electoral process among electoral contestants and the general public, as well as professionalism and efficiency of the election administration.

### IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Members of parliament are elected through a proportional system with 150 members elected from 19 multi-member constituencies. The remaining 19 compensatory seats are allocated to parties that receive over four per cent of votes cast at the national level to maintain the proportionality of representation. Elections can be contested by registered political parties and voter initiative groups upon either meeting minimum electoral support requirements or the submission of support signatures. At odds with the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, independent candidacies are not possible.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See all previous [OSCE/ODIHR reports on Norway](#).

<sup>3</sup> Concurrently with parliamentary elections, elections were held for the Sami parliament (*Sámediggi*), a legislative body representing the Sami minority, and for two municipal councils.

<sup>4</sup> Registered parties and voter initiative groups that received less than 500 votes in the constituency or less than 5,000 votes nationwide in previous parliamentary elections are required to collect at least 500 signatures in support of their candidate list. Paragraph 7.5 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) guarantees the “right of citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties.”

An open-list system is used and voters cast preferential votes for individual candidates on party lists. This option has limited practical effect, as a candidate must be marked on the ballot in the same way by at least half of the party's voters. A number of OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors opined that this high threshold should be reviewed.

In its 2013 final report, the OSCE/ODIHR EAM assessed the applicable legal framework as generally providing a solid basis for the conduct of democratic elections. Recommendations in the 2013 OSCE/ODIHR final report and earlier reports were duly considered by the authorities; however, some remain to be addressed. This includes recommendations to better guarantee the equality of the vote in the distribution of seats among constituencies, to reconsider the duty to accept candidacy, to remove the ban on the right of government ministry employees to be elected, to provide the right to appeal all election-related matters to a competent court, and to review the role of parliament in the certification of election results.

A number of these issues are to be examined by a committee newly established by parliament, tasked with reviewing the conduct and legal framework of elections. OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors welcomed this initiative, noting inclusiveness in the committee's composition and the expected comprehensiveness of the review.

## V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

### A. MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

Overall responsibility for the elections rests with the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization (MLGM). Based on the MLGM's regulation from January 2016, several key MLGM responsibilities pertaining to elections, were delegated to a new Directorate of Elections (Directorate). This change was enacted to introduce a degree of independence in the administration of elections and place key functions, including the tabulation of results and management of an integrated electronic administration system (*Elektronisk Valgadministrativt System; EVA*), in a more autonomous and specialized body. The Directorate is staffed by professional civil servants, some of whom previously worked on election matters within the MLGM.

Elections are administered by Polling Committees, Municipal Electoral Committees (MECs), Constituency Electoral Committees (CoECs) and the NEC. Main election management tasks are performed by MECs who set procedures, train polling and counting staff, decide on voting hours and locations, and establish results for the municipality. CoECs approve candidate lists, print ballots, conduct final vote counts and allocate mandates. The NEC is a temporary body, with members appointed by the King from all parliamentary parties and is charged with hearing complaints and awarding compensatory seats.

CoECs and MECs are elected from within their respective local councils, with administrative tasks delegated to local government staff. Gender requirements exist for electoral committees and were implemented accordingly.<sup>5</sup> The OSCE/ODIHR EET noted widespread trust in the performance of election officials at all levels.

The Directorate provides support to electoral committees, which includes training for MECs and CoECs, information and resources through a web-portal, suggesting approaches to election

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<sup>5</sup> The Local Government Act requires 40 per cent representation of either gender in such council committees.

organization and assistance with the *EVA*. The Directorate's mandate also includes providing voters with information on elections and making elections accessible to all voters.<sup>6</sup>

The collaboration between local election officials and the Directorate continues to evolve. Although the Directorate was established in January 2016, many of its key staff were not in place until August 2016. OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors consistently supported the establishment of the Directorate, and were complimentary of developed resources such as the web-portal. Some local election officials stressed a preference for more specific instructions over general guidance and drew attention to the needs of newly appointed staff and of those in small communities who receive little support.<sup>7</sup> Officials noted that trainings and support provided by the Directorate had improved throughout the electoral year. Overall, the election administration operates efficiently and stakeholders welcomed the establishment of the Directorate and noted its enhanced capacity.

## **B. OPERATIONS (VOTING, COUNTING AND TABULATION)**

Voters are afforded ample opportunities to cast a ballot. Early voting began on 1 July, followed by advance voting from 10 August until 8 September.<sup>8</sup> Voters could also vote by post. During advance voting, a voter may use any voting location in the country. To cast preferential votes for candidates, a voter must be voting in his/her home constituency; otherwise, only a party vote can be cast using the available constituency ballot or a universal ballot.<sup>9</sup> Ballots cast out of the municipality are sent to the home MEC for counting. Currently, there is no confirmation of receipt of postal, early or advance votes.

Some 36 per cent of ballots cast were advance votes. Nearly 100,000 voters cast ballots from outside of their home constituency. Since the given constituency does not have in its possession all regional lists, apart from not being able to cast preferential votes, out-of-constituency voters may not be presented with a full choice of parties and voter initiative groups, or may vote for a party or group not running in their constituency. This practice affects equality of choice, disadvantaging those parties and initiative groups contesting the elections in only some constituencies, and may result in an invalidation of ballots.

*The Directorate and municipalities could consider introducing measures to better facilitate party and preferential choices in advance voting.*

On election day, voters could cast a ballot at any polling station within their municipality, a process simplified in many municipalities by the use of an electronic voter register to identify and to mark voters.<sup>10</sup> To vote, a voter selects his/her party or initiative group ballot, and may change candidate rankings (if desired). Allowing unfettered access to ballots could compromise voting.<sup>11</sup> Officials at

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<sup>6</sup> The Directorate maintains a voter information website and provided grants to support voter information initiatives. MECs undertook similar voter education efforts.

<sup>7</sup> In this context, a positive role is played by *Valgforum*, an association of election officials. This voluntary organization serves as a peer-to-peer platform to share information and exchange best practices in election administration.

<sup>8</sup> A voter who cannot vote during the advance voting period or on election day may apply for early voting. Unlike advance voting, early voting ballots are not cast directly in the ballot box, but are kept by the voter's home municipality until the final voter register is ready.

<sup>9</sup> Voters can request a ballot from their municipality; however, this appears to be a rarely used option. Universal ballots feature all parties running in the elections across the country, but not voter initiative groups. The latter are only included in ballots in respective constituencies.

<sup>10</sup> In addition to 11 September, municipalities had an option to offer voting on 10 September.

<sup>11</sup> For example, a voter may shuffle ballots between stacks, which could lead to casting a vote for a wrong party, remove ballots of a party, or cross-off and/or rank candidates on numerous blank ballots.

all levels were aware of such risks and trained staff accordingly. The design of older voting booths and busy periods during voting may still not fully prevent such problems.

The Representation of People Act (Elections Act) states that a polling committee may require an unrecognized voter to provide proof of identity.<sup>12</sup> Bank cards are widely accepted as an identification document (ID) and are frequently used for voter identification. The OSCE/ODIHR EET was informed that newly issued bank cards do not contain photos, leaving a driver's license and passport as the main documents used to establish identity.

*Lists of acceptable forms of ID could be expanded or clarified to accommodate voters without a passport or driver's license.*

According to the Anti-Discrimination and Accessibility Act, municipalities are obliged to make polling accessible for all voters.<sup>13</sup> The design of some voting booths enabled visually impaired voters to independently select a party or voter initiative group ballot. Voters could also use the universal ballot, available in Braille. There is no possibility for visually impaired voters to independently make preferential candidate choices. The current practice may conflict with existing regulations and international commitments.<sup>14</sup>

*Additional measures should be undertaken to allow visually impaired voters to independently select candidates.*

Advance votes were counted by MECs during election day, often using ballot scanners.<sup>15</sup> On 1 September, the MLGM issued a new regulation that first required a hand count of all ballots. According to the MGLM, this measure was to bolster confidence in the electoral process and to dismiss concerns that results from counting with scanners could be compromised. Many MECs were required to make last-minute operational and procedural re-arrangements; nevertheless, the OSCE/ODIHR EET was informed that MECs successfully coped with this new requirement by employing additional resources and making adjustments to counting schedules. No significant issues resulting from the decision to institute a hand count were reported to the OSCE/ODIHR EET.

To complete a first count of votes, MECs were obliged to wait until 17:00 the day after the elections for advance votes arriving late. According to the Elections Act, it is the voter's responsibility to ensure that his/her vote arrives before this deadline. As voters are able to cast advance votes through the Friday before election day, there is a potential that some votes arrive after the deadline and thus are to be discarded.<sup>16</sup>

*Advance voting procedures could be adjusted to allow all valid ballots cast to be counted.*

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<sup>12</sup> Polling committees visited by the OSCE/ODIHR EET always required voters to present ID.

<sup>13</sup> If a voting location is inaccessible, a voter may request to vote outside of the premises.

<sup>14</sup> Article 26 of the Election Regulations requires that blind and partially sighted voters shall be able to vote without having to request assistance. Paragraph 11 of the [United Nations Human Rights Committee \(UNHRC\) General Comment \(GC\) No. 25 to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#) requires that "states must take effective measures to ensure that all persons entitled to vote are able to exercise that right." Article 29 of the [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) recommends State parties to "promote actively an environment in which persons with disabilities can effectively and fully participate in the conduct of public affairs, without discrimination and on an equal basis with others [...]"

<sup>15</sup> Ballot scanners were used in 193 of 426 municipalities.

<sup>16</sup> In 2013, at least 1,653 votes arrived too late to be counted. In 2016, Norway Post ceased Saturday service, which resulted in some ballots sent only on Monday, the day before the deadline.

A second count, often done with the use of scanners, is verified against the first count and approved by the MEC, and results are submitted through the *EVA*. CoECs carried out a third and final scanned count of all respective municipalities before establishing the results.<sup>17</sup> Results were published online by the MLGM on a rolling basis after the close of polls, by polling station, with the exception of cases where the MEC decided to group polling stations for counting for operational convenience or to protect vote secrecy.<sup>18</sup>

*Except where vote secrecy is challenged, results should be published by polling station to enhance transparency and allow for greater scrutiny of results.*

### C. ELECTRONIC ADMINISTRATION

While the organization of elections is decentralized, many core functions are universally administered through the *EVA*, a configuration of several, separate yet integrated systems and modules, which have been enhanced with each successive election since the MLGM began using elements of a common election management system in the 2011 local elections. The *EVA* is used to facilitate the management of election administration processes, including the registration of candidate lists, the design, printing and scanning of ballots, vote tabulation and the publication of results. It is also key to the functioning of the electronic voter register as a means to identify voters who cast ballots. Municipalities are not legally required to use the *EVA*. However, its many functionalities, ease of use and availability to municipalities at no cost have led to its universal adoption. Election officials at all levels were highly complimentary of the system, emphasizing that it helped to organize their work, to meet deadlines and to correctly and consistently follow procedures.

Testing of the *EVA*, including scanning functions, was done twice before election day. Electoral committees and the Directorate were reportedly satisfied with system operations and security. However, shortly before election day, in response to the ongoing public debate over potential external attacks on the *EVA*, the Directorate issued new IT security recommendations aimed at enhancing the security of counting and tabulation processes. These were only partially implemented by MECs and CoECs due to time constraints.<sup>19</sup>

*In case modifications are introduced to electoral operations, including to electronic systems, full compliance should be ensured for all levels of the election administration.*

No problems related to the integrity of the scanners or with vote tabulation were subsequently reported. Contrary to international standards and good practice, source codes were not available for public scrutiny prior to these elections.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> In Oslo, only two counts are done due to its dual status as a municipality and constituency.

<sup>18</sup> In total, 202 MECs counted polling stations together, establishing results only at the municipality level.

<sup>19</sup> These included the reinstallation of software between municipal and constituency counts (where sharing scanners) and disconnecting the scanning network from the *EVA* and manually transferring results data on encrypted drives.

<sup>20</sup> Source documents were made available during elections in 2011 and 2013, when Internet voting pilots were conducted. The Directorate is considering making source codes and technical documents available for public scrutiny after these elections. Paragraph 19 of [UNHRC GC No. 34](#) to Article 19 of the ICCPR reads: "To give effect to the right of access to information, States parties should proactively put in the public domain Government information of public interest. States parties should make every effort to ensure easy, prompt, effective and practical access to such information." Recommendations 33 and 39 of the [Council of Europe Recommendation \(2017\)5](#) states that electronic voting systems should be disclosed for verification purposes and auditable, with findings made publicly available.



*Source codes of software used to facilitate key voting procedures could be made available for external verification and reviews made public.*

## VI. POLITICAL PARTY AND CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Political party and campaign finance is regulated mainly by the Political Parties Act (PPA) and a supplementary MLGM Regulation on Certain Matters Concerning Political Parties, which specify parties' reporting, accounting and bookkeeping responsibilities.<sup>21</sup>

The PPA was amended significantly in 2013, embracing recommendations by OSCE/ODIHR and the Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) in the field of political finance.<sup>22</sup> The amendments improved disclosure and reporting requirements, emphasized the importance of independent auditing and the role of the Political Parties Act Committee (PPAC) as an oversight body. Sanctions and penalties for grave negligence and violations were also introduced.

### A. INCOME AND EXPENDITURES

Public funding is a significant source of party income. In 2016, it constituted 74.4 per cent of all party funds.<sup>23</sup> At the national level, 10 per cent of envisaged funding constitutes "basic support" paid equally to all parties that received at least 2.5 per cent of votes in the last parliamentary elections, or won at least one seat in parliament. The remaining 90 per cent of funding is given for each vote received by a party in the last parliamentary elections. In 2017, parties at the national level received 296 million NOK in public funding.<sup>24</sup>

The PPA allows parties to receive private donations, excluding from anonymous, state, public or foreign donors. Parties used this option actively – especially at the national level. During the 2017 campaign, parties reported a total of 66.3 million NOK in donations equal to or exceeding 10,000 NOK.<sup>25</sup> This constituted a significant increase in comparison with the number of such donations preceding the 2013 parliamentary elections.<sup>26</sup>

The left-wing parties tend to enjoy the support of trade unions, whereas parties on the right attract more donors from the business sector. The Labour Organization – the largest trade union in the country, contributed the largest single donation – 17 million NOK to the Labour Party. The largest enterprise contribution of 3 million NOK was donated to the Conservative Party. Some OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors raised concerns about the potential undue influence of prominent donors, yet they were reluctant to advocate for a contribution ceiling. Only the Red Party informed

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<sup>21</sup> In addition, the Penal Code, Taxation Act, Value Added Tax Act, Bookkeeping Act, Accounting Act, National Lottery Act, Media Act, and the Auditors Act include provisions relevant to parties' financial management.

<sup>22</sup> See OSCE/ODIHR final reports on the 2009 and 2013 parliamentary elections and [GRECO Report RC-III \(2013\) 5E](#).

<sup>23</sup> This and other figures on party and campaign funding are provided by [Statistics Norway](#).

<sup>24</sup> Approx. 31.3 million EUR; EUR 1 is approximately 9.45 NOK. Constituency and municipal units of political parties are considered separate legal entities, with a right to their own public funding.

<sup>25</sup> According to the PPA, the electoral period during which special donation disclosure provisions applied was from 1 January until 8 September.

<sup>26</sup> The comparison is based on data provided by Statistics Norway for the 2013 and 2017 elections, as of 14 September 2017.

the OSCE/ODIHR EET of its intention to advocate for donation limits.<sup>27</sup>

According to the PPA, expenditure of public funding should not be subject to any limitations or conditions from the government. The prohibition of buying TV advertising, stipulated in the Media Act, constitutes the only legal limitation related to campaign expenditures and is assessed by the majority of political parties positively as contributing to a level playing field.

## **B. DISCLOSURE AND REPORTING**

Income and expenditures related to electoral campaigns are included in parties' annual reports, which need to be submitted by 1 June of the following year. During an election year, donations above 10,000 NOK need to be reported separately within four weeks of receipt, but not later than on Friday before the elections in case donation is made less than four weeks prior to elections. The provision extends to multiple donations received from the same source if together they exceed the aforementioned amount. A number of parties informed the OSCE/ODIHR EET that in case of active fundraising and reliance on smaller donors, the provision requires substantial efforts by parties to monitor donations.

The PPA qualifies donations not only as monetary contributions, but also as goods, services and other benefits received free of charge or at a reduced price. According to the law, in-kind donations are to be valued at market price. Although further guidance on reporting and the valuation of in-kind donations is provided in the MLGM Guidelines, some party representatives noted that reporting on non-monetary contributions can be problematic.<sup>28</sup> Parties that received services free of charge or at a reduced price were at times uncertain how to assess whether the value of a service received within a certain period exceeded 10,000 NOK and thus required disclosure within four weeks. Since some third parties actively promoted certain parties, questions were raised by a number of OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors as to whether this practice should be reported as in-kind donations.

On 29 August, upon the Progress Party's inquiry, the PPAC issued an interpretation of the PPA about parties' duty to report contributions granted to party members and candidates as private individuals. According to the PPAC's interpretation, the PPA limits its scope to political parties and their youth branches, thus contributions given directly to candidates or other party members fall beyond the party's reporting obligations. In practice, reporting on donations received directly by party members and candidates varied among parties.<sup>29</sup>

OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors in academia and civil society expressed trust in the campaign financing system, but opined that the increasing role of donations and the ongoing debate on the role of individual candidates in the context of the electoral system should require further discussions about campaign finance regulations.

*To enhance transparency of party income, further provisions on regulating and disclosure of monetary and in-kind contributions to party members and candidates could be considered.*

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<sup>27</sup> See paragraphs 170-175 of the [OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on the Political Party Regulation](#).

<sup>28</sup> See the [Guidelines for reporting in-kind donations and reporting political and business agreements with the donor](#), issued on 28 February 2011.

<sup>29</sup> For instance, the Labor Party informed the OSCE/ODIHR EET about a case of paid leave having been granted by the employer of one candidate. The party reported the candidate's salary for that period as an in-kind donation.

Annual financial reports and reports on donations are submitted to Statistics Norway, which publishes them online. All OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors assessed the reporting system as fully transparent and trustworthy. Parties emphasized the positive role of Statistics Norway in supporting them in the reporting process, which a majority of parties described as complex and cumbersome at times. The complexity notwithstanding, no party encountered major problems with annual financial reporting.

### C. OVERSIGHT

The PPAC, an independent administrative body composed of five members appointed by the King for a six-year term, is responsible for political and campaign finance oversight. It is vested with powers to control party compliance with political and campaign financing provisions, to impose sanctions, and to interpret relevant legal provisions. The PPAC can act upon its own initiative or the initiative of a citizen. Sanctions imposed by the PPAC are based on information provided by Statistics Norway and can be subject to court review. Over the electoral period, the PPAC issued 14 formal warnings for late reporting of donations to 8 parties and their territorial units. It also passed a decision to confiscate 12,000 NOK from the Green Party's public funds for a repeat violation of donation reporting obligations.<sup>30</sup>

In another case, the Baerum municipal branch of the Conservative Party was penalized with a 200,000 NOK fine for failing to report a number of donations received during the electoral period. The fine was imposed by the Public Prosecutor as the case involved other financial mismanagement issues. OSCE/ODIHR EET interlocutors, including sanctioned parties, assessed the PPAC's work and its oversight capacities positively.

Pursuant to the Auditors Act, parties' central structures are obliged to undergo an annual audit. In addition, the PPAC can also request that a central structure or its branches compliance be checked by a designated supervisory body, the Party Auditing Committee (PAC).<sup>31</sup> During non-election years, the PAC undertakes annual routine controls of one per cent of parties and their branches and provides parties with guidance on accounting, bookkeeping and reporting duties. Political parties that have been subject to PAC control in 2016 assessed its work positively.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations, as contained throughout the text, are offered with a view to further enhance the conduct of elections in Norway and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with past OSCE/ODIHR recommendations that remain to be addressed. The OSCE/ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of Norway to further improve the electoral process and in following-up on the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> The amount withheld equaled the value of the donation that the Green Party failed to report on time during the 2017 electoral period. The Green Party received a written warning for the same type of violation during the 2015 local elections.

<sup>31</sup> The PAC is an expert body associated with the PPAC, composed of accounting and audit professionals and tasked to carry out detailed verifications of parties' accounts. It was established in line with the GRECO recommendation to ensure appropriate independent monitoring of political funding. See [Greco RC-III \(2013\) 5E](#).

<sup>32</sup> In paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves "to follow up promptly the ODIHR's election assessment and recommendations".

1. The Directorate and municipalities could consider introducing measures to better facilitate party and preferential choices in advance voting.
2. Additional measures should be undertaken to allow visually impaired voters to independently select candidates.
3. Advance voting procedures could be adjusted to allow all valid ballots cast to be counted.
4. Lists of acceptable forms of ID could be expanded or clarified to accommodate voters without a passport or driver's license.
5. Except where vote secrecy is challenged, results should be published by polling station to enhance transparency and allow for greater scrutiny of results.
6. In case modifications are introduced to electoral operations, including to electronic systems, full compliance should be ensured for all levels of the election administration.
7. Source codes of software used to facilitate key voting procedures could be made available for external verification and reviews made public.
8. To enhance transparency of party income, further provisions on regulating and disclosure of monetary and in-kind contributions to party members and candidates could be considered.

## ANNEX: FINAL RESULTS<sup>33</sup>

Total number of registered voters	3,765,245
Total number of votes cast	2,945,345
Turnout (percentage)	78.2
Total number of invalid votes	5,179
Total number of blank votes	18,509

Distribution of valid votes and seats to political parties, which entered the parliament:<sup>34</sup>

Political Party	Votes Received	Percentage	Number of Seats
Labour Party	800,947	27.4	49
Conservative Party	732,895	25.0	45
Progress Party	444,681	15.2	27
Centre Party	302,017	10.3	19
Socialist Left Party	176,222	6.0	11
Liberal Party	127,910	4.4	8
Christian Democratic Party	122,797	4.2	8
Green Party	94,788	3.2	1
Red Party	70,522	2.4	1

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<sup>33</sup> Source web page: <http://www.valgresultat.no>

<sup>34</sup> Other nine political parties received 1.8 per cent of votes altogether and did not qualify to enter the parliament.

## ABOUT THE OSCE/ODIHR

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

The OSCE/ODIHR, based in Warsaw (Poland) was created as the Office for Free Elections at the 1990 Paris Summit and started operating in May 1991. One year later, the name of the Office was changed to reflect an expanded mandate to include human rights and democratization. Today it employs over 130 staff.

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

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

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

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

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

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

More information is available on the ODIHR website ([www.osce.org/odihr](http://www.osce.org/odihr)).