



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

IRELAND

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

24 May 2007

OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Report



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I.	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
II.	INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
III.	BACKGROUND	3
IV.	LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK	3
	A. GENERAL OVERVIEW	3
	B. SUFFRAGE RIGHTS	4
	C. CAMPAIGN FUNDING AND REPORTING	4
	D. ELECTORAL DISPUTES	5
V.	ELECTORAL SYSTEM.....	5
VI.	ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION	7
VII.	VOTER REGISTRATION	10
VIII.	CAMPAIGN	12
IX.	MEDIA	14
X.	WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION	15
XI.	NATIONAL MINORITY PARTICIPATION	15
XII.	VOTING	16
XIII.	COUNTING	18
	ANNEX I - REPORTED RESULTS.....	20
	ANNEX II - EXAMPLE OF A COUNT	21
	ABOUT THE OSCE/ODIHR	23

IRELAND

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS (DÁIL ÉIREANN) 24 MAY 2007

OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Report

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to an invitation from the Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) deployed an Election Assessment Mission (EAM) to the 24 May 2007 Dáil Éireann (the Lower House of Parliament) elections in Ireland.

Overall, the 24 May elections to the Dáil Éireann reflected a stable democratic tradition in the conduct of elections in Ireland. Irish voters, political parties and candidates expressed a high level of confidence in the election administration and the entire process. Seats in the Dáil Éireann are allocated through the single transferable vote (STV) electoral system, which provides for a generally proportional representation through a strong majoritarian contest. Elections took place in a competitive environment, with a broad choice of candidates and political parties available to the voter.

The candidates focused primarily on local issues and conducted a grass-roots style of campaigning, in particular through door-to-door canvassing. At national level, the campaign focused on the incumbent Taoiseach's (Prime Minister) efforts to gain a third term in office, leading the Fianna Fáil party against its main competitor, the Fine Gael party. The campaign was dynamic and appeared to attract significant public interest. However, some interlocutors complained that early campaigning permitted political parties to spend outside the campaign finance regulations.

The media provided extensive and balanced coverage of the election process, in particular the public broadcaster Irish Radio and Television (RTE). RTE formed an Election Steering Group which met every day throughout the campaign to monitor the balance and content of its coverage, and resolve any complaints using an informal process. Newspapers also provided broad coverage of the election process, at both the national and regional level.

The legal framework provides a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections. It could, however, be usefully made more accessible through the consolidation of amendments into a single document. In line with the legal requirements, the election was announced less than four weeks prior to election day, allowing a short time period to conduct the election campaign and to carry out administrative election preparations. In addition, the electoral act includes a provision that could inhibit civil society organizations from carrying out advocacy efforts and other legitimate election-related activities.

Returning officers throughout Ireland are responsible for the administration of elections to the Dáil Éireann, receiving guidance from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. Returning officers and polling officials were professional and efficient, however new polling officials could benefit from training prior to election day.

Voter registration is carried out according to a decentralized process, on an annual basis, by the local government authorities. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM was informed of the initiative of the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government to improve the voter registers this year, through the provision of more resources and staff. While improvements in the voter registers were generally recognized, some interlocutors voiced concern that some eligible voters might have been inadvertently taken off the register during its revision. A more comprehensive nationwide approach to voter registration could further improve accuracy of the lists.

While international observation is not explicitly recognized in the election legislation, members of the OSCE/ODIHR EAM were granted full access to the process, including voting and counting. In order to be fully consistent with the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document, election legislation should be amended to explicitly permit international and domestic non-partisan observation.

Voting on election day was conducted in a professional manner and in a calm atmosphere. The STV electoral system allowed for voters to express as many preferences as there were candidates on the ballot of each constituency, efficiently reflecting the voters' choices. Voters appeared to have a genuine interest in participating as reflected also in the reported turnout above 63%.

In line with the law, the counting process started on the morning after election day, and finished in all of the 43 constituencies by the evening of Sunday, 27 May. The count was conducted in a fully transparent and efficient manner, with political party representatives checking all stages of the process.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Following an invitation from the Department of Foreign Affairs of Ireland to observe the 2007 Dáil Éireann elections, the OSCE/ODIHR deployed an EAM from 17-29 May 2007. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM, headed by Mr. Nikolai Vulchanov, consisted of eight experts from seven OSCE participating States. Based in Dublin, the OSCE/ODIHR EAM also sent teams to Cork, Galway, Kildare and Wicklow. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM met government officials, election authorities, political party and candidate representatives, the media and civil society at both the national and regional levels.

In line with standard OSCE/ODIHR practice, the deployment of an OSCE/ODIHR EAM does not envisage any systematic or comprehensive observation of voting and counting procedures. Although OSCE/ODIHR EAM members visited polling stations on election day, and counting centers on subsequent days, this was on a limited basis.

The OSCE/ODIHR expresses its appreciation to the Department of Foreign Affairs, as well as to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the returning officers, registration authorities, candidate headquarters and political parties, media representatives and civil society organizations, for the cooperation and assistance offered to the OSCE/ODIHR EAM.

III. BACKGROUND

In line with the Constitution, President Mary McAleese signed a proclamation on 30 April to dissolve the Dáil Éireann (the Lower House of Parliament) on the advice of the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Mr. Bertie Ahern. The proclamation allowed the Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government, Mr. Dick Roche, to issue an order appointing 24 May as polling day.

The 24 May elections elected the 30th Dáil Éireann. The Oireachtas (Irish Parliament) consists of the directly elected Dáil Éireann and the indirectly elected Seanad Éireann (the Upper House of Parliament). The term of office of the 166-member Dáil Éireann is a maximum of five years.

The 2007 Dáil Éireann elections marked the first occasion that the OSCE/ODIHR had attended Irish elections.

IV. LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

A. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The legal framework in Ireland provides a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections. The electoral framework consists mostly of primary legislation specific for different types of elections. Basic requirements to the Dáil Éireann elections, including the membership and suffrage eligibility, the electoral system, and mandate duration are established in the 1937 Constitution of Ireland.

The 1992 Electoral Act regulates the registration of voters and the preparation and conduct of Dáil elections, while the 1997 Electoral Act contains, *inter alia*, provisions on campaign spending limits and financial reporting and on the establishment of a Constituency Commission¹. Both Acts were amended in 1996, 1998, 2001, 2002, 2005, 2006 and 2007. However, the amendments have the form of separate acts that are not integrated in the relevant legal texts².

The Irish authorities could usefully consider consolidation of the electoral legislation in order to further enhance its accessibility and facilitate its implementation.

The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government may issue regulations for implementation of the Electoral Acts, which become effective only after their approval by each House of the Oireachtas.³ Prior to the 2007 Dáil elections, the Minister adopted Electoral Regulation No.156 of 2007 covering a number of technical aspects of the electoral process.⁴

¹ The Constituency Commission is in charge of the reporting on and revision of electoral constituency boundaries.

² The most recent consolidation of the electoral legislation took place in 1992, when a single Electoral Act repealed and replaced a number of acts dating back to the 19th century.

³ Please see Section 3 of the 1992 Electoral Act.

⁴ Prescribing the form of candidate nomination papers, the form of the ballot paper, documents that voters may be required to produce as proof of identity at a polling station, etc.

Decisions and activities of returning officers in each constituency constitute another important aspect of the electoral framework. Under Section 31 of the 1992 Electoral Act, the returning officers enjoy ample powers to undertake any measures they deem necessary for effective conduct of the elections.

Recent amendments to the legal framework included enabling the exercise of suffrage by prisoners through postal voting in 2006,⁵ in line with the case law of the European Court of Human Rights.⁶ Furthermore, an amendment enacted in April 2007 enhanced the inclusiveness of the candidate nomination process by providing for the collection of at least thirty support signatures from voters as an alternative requirement to the payment of a deposit of 500 Euros.⁷

B. SUFFRAGE RIGHTS

Voter eligibility for elections to the Dáil Éireann is extended to Irish citizens over the age of 18, as included in the register of electors which came into force on 15 February 2007, as well as British citizens who are ordinarily resident in Ireland. Irish citizens residing abroad cannot vote in the elections in Ireland, with the exception of civil servants on diplomatic missions and their spouses.

Consideration could be given to extending voting rights to such citizens who have had registered residence in Ireland for a considerable period of time prior to a given election, or who have lived in Ireland on a permanent basis, but resided abroad for a limited period of time prior to a given election due to specific reasons such as business or family issues.

C. CAMPAIGN FUNDING AND REPORTING

Legal provisions on election spending limits and financial reporting⁸ establish an adequate framework for controlling campaign finance during the relatively short campaign period. Electoral contestants are required to observe the spending limits⁹ and to report to the Standards in Public Office Commission¹⁰ on donations received and expenditures made for the period starting on the date of the Dáil dissolution and ending on election day. However, practice shows that actual campaign spending begins long before the stipulated period, and some interlocutors expressed the view that spending during the pre-election period rendered limits almost obsolete.

⁵ Please see Electoral (Amendment) Act No. 33/2006.

⁶ The case of *Hirst vs. the United Kingdom*.

⁷ The 2007 Electoral (Amendment) Act was initiated and adopted in response to a judgement of the Supreme Court of 13 November 2006 in the cases of *King, Cooney and Riordan vs. The Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, the Attorney General and others*, by which the Supreme Court had recognised the existing candidate nomination requirements as unduly onerous and unconstitutional.

⁸ The 1997 Electoral Act with subsequent amendments.

⁹ From 30,150 to 45,200 Euro depending on the number of seats for the constituency.

¹⁰ The Standards in Office Commission was established in December 2001. Its members are: the Ombudsman, Controller and Auditor General, Clerk of Dáil, Clerk of Seanad, a former judge of the High Court, and a former member of Dáil.

*Consideration could be given to amending the 1997 Electoral Act, to extend the reporting period, and once the election is called, to undertake a backward review of accounts according to the established reporting timeframe.*¹¹

At the same time, civil society representatives expressed concerns over another finance-related provision which limits their ability to advocate issues during the election campaign. NGOs are required to register themselves as “third parties” if they envisage accepting a donation “for political purposes” exceeding € 126.97 and disclose their donors. Donations for political purposes from the same donor during the same year may not exceed € 6,348.69. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM was informed that one NGO had challenged the relevant provisions of the 1997 Electoral Act to the High Court as unconstitutionally restricting the rights of NGOs to campaign.¹²

Consideration should be given to amend the 1997 Electoral Act with a view to specifying and limiting the aforementioned definition, as the present definition of donations “for political purposes”¹³ is broad and may constitute an impediment for legitimate advocacy activities of NGOs.

D. ELECTORAL DISPUTES

The 1992 Electoral Act¹⁴ envisages a possibility for challenging the Dáil election to the High Court. In addition to the requirement of justification and grounding of such petitions, complainants must secure the petition by a £ 5,000 deposit, although a lesser amount might be considered appropriate by the High Court. This may discourage seeking legal redress, even in case of a legitimate interest to do so. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM was not made aware of any such cases in this election.

Consideration could be given to revise the size of the deposit with a view to better ensure that legitimate interests could be defended in court and at the same time limit spurious appeals.

V. ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The Dáil Éireann consists of 166 members (TDs) elected from multi-mandate constituencies by a single transferable vote (STV) system,¹⁵ which ensures overall proportional representation. For the purposes of the 2007 Dáil Éireann elections, Ireland was divided into 43 multi-mandate constituencies. Each constituency returned three, four or five TDs, depending on the size of the population of the respective constituency, as

¹¹ Originally, the Electoral Act 1997 had required reporting on all the expenditures incurred “*at any time before the issue of the writ [...] in relation to the election*”. However, the Electoral (Amendment) Act 1998 limited the reporting period to that existing now.

¹² The NGO “Heat” lodged the case in May 2007.

See press release, <http://www.coppolaandrea.com/stopglobalwarming/index.php?sez=7>.

¹³ Please see Section 49, subsection (f) of the 2001 Electoral (Amendment) Act.

¹⁴ Section 132.

¹⁵ This system is used for all elections in Ireland since the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921. Within the OSCE region, the STV is used also in Malta since 1947, in Northern Ireland (United Kingdom), and on one occasion in Estonia, in 1990.

recorded in the official publication of the results of the last census.¹⁶ Boundaries of multi-mandate constituencies follow, to some extent, the boundaries of the 26 counties, with the Constitution giving priority¹⁷ to equal representation of the population.

According to the STV system, the voter can indicate his or her preference for as many candidates as appear on the ballot paper, ranking them in numerical order of preference. By indicating preferences, the voter has the opportunity to transfer his or her vote to another candidate(s), different from his or her first choice, should the candidate of first choice not need the vote because he or she (a) has already been elected, (b) has lost the chance to be elected, or (c) has lost the chance to receive reimbursement for his or her electoral expenses.¹⁸ Similar procedures command second, third, etc. preferences. This allows for the opportunity to maximize the representation in the Dáil of the political preferences expressed by those voters who cast valid ballots.¹⁹ As some voters may have expressed a lesser number of preferences than candidates on the ballot, their votes can, at some stage, become non-transferable due to the lack of further preferences and thus remain without representation.

Seats are allocated to candidates that have received at least as many valid votes²⁰ as the size of the electoral quota. This quota is determined as one plus the ratio of the total of all valid ballots divided by the number of seats allocated by a constituency plus one.²¹ This definition of the quota ensures that the number of candidates that have received such numbers of valid votes would not exceed the number of seats available for allocation. The allocation of seats proceeds as a series of “counts”. At the end of each count there is either an elected candidate(s) or an excluded candidate(s). A “real” example is considered in detail in Annex 2 to illustrate the process.

The count is conducted, in public and in complete transparency, for each constituency beginning at 09.00 on the day following elections. First, the ballots contained in all ballot boxes from the constituency are mixed with a view that any sample of ballots which might need to be considered separately during some stage of the allocation process will be influenced by a particular ballot box as little as possible. Second, all ballots are inspected in order to exclude the invalid ballots. Simultaneously with the separation of

¹⁶ The constituencies for the 2007 Dáil Éireann elections were based on the official results of the 2002 census, as the official results of the 2007 census were not published yet.

¹⁷ Please see Article 16.2.2 of the Constitution.

¹⁸ Electoral expenses are reimbursed to those candidates that have received a number of votes equal to at least one quarter of the electoral quota explained below.

¹⁹ A valid ballot contains at least one preference for a candidate and is stamped (perforated) by the presiding officer. Invalid ballots fail to express clear preference(s) for candidate(s) or contain no stamp (perforation) of the presiding officer. Examples include ballots with no preferences for candidates, ballots where more than one candidate is given the same preference or ballots where there may be a clear second preference but no first preference, etc. For ballots of questionable validity, the returning officer may indicate, on the ballot, which preference will be counted. The ballot will also be invalid if the voter has marked candidates of the same party with the same preference, as preferences must differentiate between candidates.

²⁰ At the first count, each valid ballot is counted as one valid vote for the candidate of first preference. At the subsequent counts, a valid ballot is counted as a valid vote only if it remains transferable in the sense that it contains at least one preference for a candidate that has not been counted yet.

²¹ This formula is known as the Droop quota. If the ratio has a decimal fraction, it is dropped. During the last count, it is possible to allocate a seat to a candidate even if he or she has not reached the quota.

the invalid ballots, valid ballots are sorted by their first preferences. The procedure is completed with a meticulous analysis of the questionable ballots to finally determine the numbers of valid and invalid ballots. Returning officers determine the validity of the questionable ballots in consultation with the representatives of the candidates. Third, the electoral quota is calculated. This concludes the preparation for the first count.

At the first count, if a candidate(s) received first preference votes at least equal to the electoral quota, he or she is deemed elected. If the votes received by the elected candidate(s) exceed the quota, the difference between the votes received and the quota is called a surplus. If the largest surplus, or the sum of surpluses, can materially affect the order of the candidates, then the largest surplus is distributed, counting second preferences in the second “count” of those ballots where the first preferences have already been accounted for. If no candidate(s) is elected at the first count and therefore there is no surplus to distribute, the candidate(s) with the least number(s) of votes that have no chance to be elected will be excluded, and the ballots with their first preferences will be counted for second preferences in the “second count”.

After the first count, a series of counts are conducted subject to detailed rules that account for all possible circumstances, until all vacant seats are allocated to candidates on the basis of second, third and further preferences. During these counts, votes are allocated to remaining candidate(s), on the basis of such preferences, by distributing possible surplus(es) of votes or votes of excluded candidate(s). At a given count, if there is a surplus, the surplus votes are distributed first. If there is more than one surplus, the largest surplus is distributed first. However, surpluses and votes of excluded candidates are distributed only if they have the potential to materially affect the current order of the remaining candidates - to elect a candidate or to prevent the exclusion of a candidate. If in the process of distribution the number(s) of votes for a candidate(s) reaches or exceeds the quota, such a candidate(s) is deemed elected. Possible non-transferable votes are also taken into account. The process is repeated for the subsequent preferences until all seats in the constituency are filled. At the last count candidate(s) could be elected without reaching the quota.

VI. ELECTORAL ADMINISTRATION

Ireland has a decentralized system of election administration, whereby returning officers and registration authorities have the primary responsibility for the conduct of elections in the 43 constituencies established to elect the 166 members of the Dáil. Registration authorities appointed by the town and county councils are responsible for compiling the voter registers.²² The 23 returning officers who have legal responsibility for administration of the elections are chosen among the county registrars. Exceptions are Dublin City, Dublin County, Cork City and Cork County, where the sheriffs are appointed as returning officers.²³ Some returning officers have the responsibility for more than one constituency and may appoint deputy returning officers. The returning officers of Ireland have a professional association that meets several times per year to discuss electoral matters.

²² Please see Chapter VII “Voter Registration”.

²³ Please see Electoral Act 1992, Article 30.1.

The Franchise Section of the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government also has an important role in overseeing elections. The Franchise Section has a 10-person team whose main responsibilities are to provide policy and legislative advice related to elections. During Dáil elections, the Franchise Section provided significant guidance to the local authorities and returning officers who administered the process²⁴. During presidential elections and referenda, the Franchise Section also takes on some election administration responsibilities.

Candidate nominations must be received by the returning officer before noon on the seventh day following the announcement of elections. Candidates can nominate themselves or be nominated by another voter. Political party candidates have to present a “certificate of political affiliation,” issued by the headquarters of the respective political party, to demonstrate that the party has agreed to the candidacy. Independent candidates must have the assent of 30 voters in the constituency, for their nomination, or lodge a deposit of 500 Euro. Returning officers have one hour to rule on the validity of a nomination once it is submitted.

While voter registration authorities and returning officers both have significant roles in conducting the election, at times it appeared that communication between the officials could have been enhanced, particularly regarding the accuracy of the voter lists. In addition, the short timeframe, just under four weeks, appeared to be challenging for carrying out all election preparations.

Consideration could be given to extending the pre-election period to give election officials more time to make the necessary preparations, especially with regard to the voter register and voter lists.

Each of the country’s approximately 6,000 polling stations (known as “tables”) is run by a presiding officer, assisted by a poll clerk, both of whom are selected by the returning officer and who pledge to be independent in their work. A briefing of presiding officers is recommended by the Memorandum from the Franchise Section. However, according to interviews of returning officers, presiding officers and poll clerks, while they are provided with detailed training materials²⁵ prior to the election, most do not attend a briefing session due to the minimal amount of time available during the election period. Returning officers also employ roving election officials who do attend a briefing class and who are responsible for going from polling place to polling place in a constituency to ensure that the guidelines and rules are being followed.

Training for presiding officers and poll clerks should be mandatory for new personnel, and an extended pre-election period could facilitate training of poll officials.

The OSCE/ODIHR EAM did note at the count in those constituencies visited that there were considerable numbers of voted ballots lacking the official stamp, in relation to the total number of invalid ballots, of the polling stations. This is a requirement and is mentioned no less than five times in the instruction manual (see “Voting” section). This constitutes an oversight on the part of the presiding officers, as under the law, the votes

²⁴ Please see Memorandum for the Guidance of Returning Officers at the General Election 2007.

²⁵ Please see Manual for Presiding Officers at a Dáil Election.

on these unstamped ballots are invalid²⁶ and are not taken into account in the seat allocation.²⁷

Every effort should be made to ensure that all presiding officers are fully aware of their legal responsibilities and the potential consequence of disenfranchising voters by failure to apply the official stamp on ballots, thus effectively invalidating them.

Polling stations do not have a minimum or maximum number of voters, but are instead created so as to be accessible by voters, particularly in rural areas. Polling stations appeared to average 400-700 voters. Prior to election day, each voter on the local voter register is mailed a postcard to notify them of their polling place. This card contains the voter's sequenced number in the polling district and facilitates processing at the polling station.

Special voting is provided for approximately 3,000 voters in nursing homes, hospitals or similar institutions, who are unable to come to the polling station. In such cases, special presiding officers are accompanied by the police to bring the ballot paper to the voter. According to the Franchise Section, postal voting is provided for approximately 17,000 voters in six categories: civil servants abroad, defence forces, police (optional), certified disabled, students, prisoners, and those employed elsewhere. No general mechanism for voting abroad is provided for the significant number of Irish citizens living and working elsewhere.

Consideration could be given to extending the pre-election period also to ensure greater electoral access for those eligible for postal voting.

Ballots include all candidates in alphabetical order by last name, with a candidate-provided photo and the symbol of the candidate's political party, if relevant. Ballot instructions direct voters to mark numerical preferences for as many choices as there are candidates.

In addition to the Franchise Section and the city and county authorities and returning officers, several other commissions carry out tasks related to elections. The Constituency Commission was created in 1979 to depoliticize boundary delimitation. It is an independent body led by a high court judge that is formed for a six-month period when census data is considered for the purpose of readjusting election boundaries. The Standards in Public Office Commission is a permanent commission that has been created to enforce political ethics legislation, and which also is responsible for overseeing campaign finance regulations.

Some interlocutors suggested to the OSCE/ODIHR EAM that an election commission be established to consolidate the administration of elections and ensure standardized procedures between authorities. The Minister of Environment, Heritage and Local Government has publicly made such a recommendation²⁸, and the Task Force on Active

²⁶ Please see the 1992 Electoral Act, Article 118.2a.

²⁷ Please see "The Election Book", published by RTE, edited by Tom McGuire, p.45. In the 2002 Dáil election, statistics showed that over 2000 ballots, or 9 per cent of the total number of 20,707 spoiled ballots, fell into this category.

²⁸ Please see Opening Remarks to the Joint Committee on Environment and Local Government, 17 May 2006.

Citizenship, sponsored by the Taoiseach, has also made this recommendation in its report released in April 2007.

Consideration could be given to establishing a permanent independent commission or office in Ireland, that can focus exclusively on election administration matters at national level, with a view to further enhance consistency and efficiency in the conduct of elections.

Electronic voting was not used for the 2007 Dáil elections. Electronic voting machines were purchased and piloted in three constituencies during the 2002 Dáil elections, but have not been used in subsequent elections because of public concern over transparency and security. These machines did not provide for a voter verifiable paper trail which would permit a manual recount in the event of a contested race.

Prior to the 2004 European and local elections, an independent Commission on Electronic Voting was established by the government to look at the secrecy, accuracy and testing of the electronic voting system that had been chosen for use in Irish elections. The Commission had only two months to conduct its initial investigation, but its work was enhanced by consultation with a broad range of experts, including in the academic community. The interim report of the Commission recommended against use of the chosen electronic voting system in the June 2004 elections.

The Commission then undertook a broader study, comparing the chosen system to the paper balloting system, and published its final report in July 2006.²⁹ While this report recognized some benefits of the electronic system, including avoiding spoiled ballots and ensuring a truly random selection of ballots for the transfer of surpluses, it also identified software errors. The Commission recommended further testing and modifications before the equipment could be used in subsequent elections. The Commission was dissolved three months following the publication of its report. The government chose to follow the recommendations of the Commission, prioritising public confidence in the process.

The Irish authorities are encouraged to maintain their considered approach to any future discussion concerning the introduction of new voting technologies, and to ensure that any further discussions on this topic receive the same comprehensive review and are accompanied by broad and inclusive discussion and debate.

VII. VOTER REGISTRATION

Ireland employs a system of voter registration that is locally based, with guidelines provided by the central government. Citizens must be on the voter register to vote.

The legal basis to compile the Register of Electors is found in the Electoral Act of 1992, as amended. Each year the local registration authority, who is appointed by a town or county council, is required to conduct an intensive door to door canvass of each neighbourhood to develop the voter register.³⁰ This register may be used for local,

²⁹ Available at <http://www.cev.ir>.

³⁰ Please see "Preparing & Maintaining the Register of Elections: Guidance for Registration Authorities" distributed by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, May 2006.

national and European elections and must be published by 1 November for public review. EU citizens and non-citizens are eligible to vote in EU or local elections and are duly noted on the register.

Any claims for the addition or deletion of voters' names from the voter registers can be made to the registration authority prior to 25 November. The final register is published on 1 February and comes into force on 15 February for the year ahead. While registers are available to political parties for review, the local databases are not compared on a national or regional basis to check for possible multiple registrations. Indeed, because date of birth information has only been provided by voters on a voluntary basis for the past 5 years, and because there is no unique identifier for each voter, database comparisons appear difficult, if not impossible, to conduct under the current system.

Voters who discover they are not on the register have until 15 days before an election, thus, shortly after the election is announced, to provide documentation to the local registration authority so that they can be placed on a supplemental register. There is no provision in the law or guidelines that permit a voter to obtain a ballot on election day if they are not on the register or supplemental register, even if a clerical mistake has been made.

According to the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, which provides official guidance to local registration authorities, there were approximately 3,066,000 voters on the register of electors for the 24 May election.³¹ The Department informed the OSCE/ODIHR EAM that more than one million modifications were made to voter registers during the latest annual review. This was a result of the Department's special initiative in 2006/2007 aimed at improving the registers, following a public debate on their accuracy. The initiative included 1,500 field workers to support registration authorities as well as a large-scale awareness campaign in the media.

The accuracy of the registers was an issue that was brought up repeatedly with OSCE/ODIHR EAM interlocutors before, during and after the 24 May election. Several officials indicated a noted decrease in the quality of the voter lists since 1978, which was the last time property tax collectors did the enumeration. While some officials noted improvements due to the extensive efforts in 2006/2007 initiated by the Department of Environment, all agreed there was a serious need for a more accurate register, including a complete overhaul of the system based on a long-term solution agreed across party lines. Indeed, the Ministry of the Environment is on record with several significant proposals to develop a long-term solution to this important issue.³²

Some media reported problems with the registers used for the 24 May election as "chaos," quoting party officials and voters.³³ Some voters told interlocutors that they had received several poll cards, indicating their registration in more than one county, and several within the same county. Some voters also noted that their children who had come of voting-age were in some instances left off the rolls, as well as long-time voters who had not moved but were also removed from the rolls. Some voters brought in their

³¹ Voters could check the registry at www.checktheregister.ie.

³² Please see the Opening Remarks by Mr. Dick Roche, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to the Joint Committee on Environment and Local Government, 17 May 2006.

³³ Irish Independent, 25 May 2007, Page 1 "Turnout up – but vote chaos mars polling day"; Irish Daily Star, 27 May 2007, Page 6 "Chaos due to register mix-ups."

multiple poll cards to the polling stations to report their erroneous cards. One voter wrote a letter to the *Independent Times* indicating that somehow he was on the voter lists in four different locations.³⁴

Before election day, returning officers with whom the OSCE/ODIHR EAM spoke indicated an increased number of telephone calls from voters concerned that they had not received their polling card. Some registration authorities informed receiving, just before the election, stacks of documents from voters that were left at their doorstep in 2006 by canvassers. In many cases, those voters were not on the voter lists for this election and could not be added to the supplemental list.

While polling place officials are not required to keep statistics on voters who are turned away, in the Kildare Constituency, the returning officer instructed the polling officials to offer a form to voters not on the lists so that they may have the opportunity to be placed on the register for future elections. The form could be completed immediately or returned to the registration authority by post. Such practice appeared unique among the constituencies visited.

While evidence clearly suggests that there were problems with the accuracy of the voter registers, it did not appear to result in any major disruption of voting on election day, or in a distrust of the count by the political parties or public. It appears that part of the problem with the voter registers is the fact that there is confusion among the voters and inconsistency in application of procedures. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM was informed that some voters believed the process for completing the 2006 household census was the mechanism for getting on the voter registers, thus they did not complete a voter registration form left at their door. There was also some confusion over the term “ordinary residence” that is used on the forms. Some registration authorities appeared to have made extra efforts to conduct follow-up visits to households while others did not take voters off the registers even though they did not respond.

The Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government or a single national registration authority, in consultation with the government, the Houses of the Oireachtas, local officials, political parties and NGOs, should undertake a comprehensive approach to further improving the method of compiling the Register of Electors. Based upon broad consultations, consideration could be given to a system that provides a unique identifier for each voter, which will allow for database comparisons and more accurate voter registers, and potentially more accountability at the local level. In addition, a voter who is removed or not added to the voter register due to a clerical error should be added to a supplemental voter list on election day, if proper documentation is provided.

VIII. CAMPAIGN

Altogether, 466 candidates in 43 constituencies took part in these elections. Six major political parties, Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour, Progressive Democrats, the Green Party and Sinn Féin, as well as a number of independents, participated in the elections. While

³⁴ *Irish Independent*, 26 May 2007, letter to Editor from S. O’Haimeirgin, Naas.

independent candidates had to collect 30 signatures or to lodge a deposit of €500 to qualify as candidates, party candidates qualified automatically.

Prior to these elections, Fianna Fáil led a coalition government with the smaller liberal Progressive Democrats party. Mr. Bertie Ahern has been leader of the Fianna Fáil party, and Taoiseach, for two terms since 1997. Following its defeat in the 2002 elections, long-standing rival Fine Gael elected a new leader, Mr. Enda Kenny, who entered into a coalition pact with the Labour Party in the so-called 'Mullingar Accord'. Following their success at the European and local elections in 2004, this coalition prepared to challenge Fianna Fáil in the 2007 elections.

All political actors expected elections to be held sometime in late spring or early summer, and began their unofficial electoral campaigns in advance of the actual vote. However, Taoiseach Bertie Ahern achieved a degree of surprise when he asked the President of Ireland to dissolve the Dáil on Sunday, April 29, thus signaling the abrupt start of the campaign. President McAleese was due to depart for a state visit to the United States on the following day and hence the urgency.

The dissolution of the Dáil, however, also postponed the opening of the Mahon Tribunal until after the election. *Inter alia*, the Mahon Tribunal that investigated political corruption in its current phase also focused on the private finances of Mr. Bertie Ahern while he was a minister in the 1990s. As it turned out, the question of the Taoiseach's finances dominated the first half of the electoral campaign at the expense of policy debate.

Irish politics defies traditional left-right classifications, and today all major parties gravitate towards the center of the policy spectrum. As parties overall shared many similar elements in their policy perspectives, the campaign tended to focus on personalities and on the questions of competence to lead the country. Throughout the first two weeks of the campaign, the majority of public opinion polls indicated a narrow election.

As the campaign moved into its second half, the focus shifted to the economy. While the Fine Gael-Labour coalition emphasized citizens' concerns over public services and argued that they were more able to address such issues as healthcare or commuting, Fianna Fáil focused on its proven ability to lead a successful economy and questioned the credibility of Fine Gael leader Mr. Enda Kenny.

In a televised debate conducted on 17 May between the leaders of the most influential parties, Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, which followed an earlier debate between the leaders of four smaller parties, the incumbent Taoiseach Mr. Bertie Ahern appeared to prevail over his challenger according to media opinion.

National debates notwithstanding, candidates largely focused on local campaigns, due to the nature of the STV system and the fact that candidates needed only 5,000-10,000 votes in order to get elected. Candidates of the same party were often competing against each other in a given constituency. Candidates conducted vibrant and visible campaigns, canvassing door-to-door and emphasizing local issues, which dominated over national issues overall. The majority of interlocutors acknowledged that the 2007 campaign was the most expensive and visible, with more voters engaged than in the previous two

national elections, as indicated by the increased turnout. This time the online campaign was also very active, with hundreds of web pages and discussion boards engaged in the elections.

Interlocutors throughout the country acknowledged that despite being competitive, the campaign was conducted in a fair and respectful manner towards other candidates. Candidates' posters were ubiquitous and focused on personalities rather than policies. The allocation of places for street political advertising was not regulated and some interlocutors alleged that they were no match for the more influential political parties. Likewise, while campaign spending regulates the official electoral campaign period, *de facto* campaigning began much earlier, with political posters and billboards appearing three months in advance of the poll, but the latter were not included in declared spending. In fact, the only complaint repeatedly raised regarding the level playing field was the absence of any regulations on campaign spending before the official announcement of the election.

IX. MEDIA

The Irish media landscape includes a wide range of print, radio and broadcast media. The public broadcaster Irish Radio and Television (RTE) is the main electronic media source, with a nationwide radio station and three television channels, including an Irish language service. In addition, Ireland has approximately 30 local private radio stations and a private television channel, TV3, which primarily broadcasts entertainment programming. The Broadcasting Commission of Ireland regulates private TV and radio, but not RTE, which is self-regulated. The Broadcast Act of 2001 provides the legal framework for broadcast media in Ireland.

Newspapers are also an important news source in Ireland. There are three national daily "broadsheet" newspapers, and a large number of local newspapers. In addition, several British dailies are available with Irish inserts. The OSCE/ODIHR EAM was informed that newspapers are not regulated by any authority, although the Office of Press Ombudsman and the Press Council will start operating in October 2007.

Prior to the election, RTE formed an internal Election Steering Group which is responsible for providing guidance and ensuring political balance in election programming. During the official election campaign period, the Election Steering Group met every day and political parties and candidates could bring any complaints about programming to their attention. RTE informed the OSCE/ODIHR EAM that very few complaints about bias were received, compared to previous elections. The Election Steering Group generally resolves any such complaints informally with political parties and candidates. Individuals can also file a formal complaint with the Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

During the campaign, RTE broadcast extensive election coverage in news and public affairs programs, as well as Political Party Broadcasts (PPBs), free three-minute segments produced by political parties and shown every evening after the news. Two debates were also broadcast by RTE – one between the two most influential political party leaders and one between the other political parties represented in parliament. Paid political party advertising is not permitted in the broadcast media.

RTE uses the last general elections as a basis for measuring balance in its news coverage and public affairs programs. Broadcast time for PPBs also is allocated to political parties on the basis of the first preference results from the previous general elections. Independent candidates also were afforded some coverage in the news, although RTE recognized that it is challenging to afford them equitable coverage on the national level. RTE monitored balance in its news programming from 1 January 2007, in view of the upcoming elections. During the election campaign, the RTE employed a private company for monitoring news coverage on a strict quantitative basis.

RTE established an election website to encourage young voters and provide news on a constituency basis in an accessible way. The website also provided coverage of the count, in addition to coverage of the count by radio, television and, for the first time, by SMS messaging.

X. WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION

While the incumbent President of Ireland is a woman, as well as her predecessor, women are under-represented in the Dáil Éireann and local government councils. Twenty-two women, representing 13 per cent of the seats, were elected to the Dáil Éireann in the 2007 elections, the same number as in 2002. During the 2004 local elections, 16 per cent of the council seats were won by women. According to interlocutors, many of the women who are successful in Irish politics come from political families. While some women's groups advocate voluntary quotas for women candidates on political party lists, e.g. 40 per cent, only two of the major political parties have implemented some kind of voluntary quotas for their candidate lists.

In the run-up to the elections, the National Women's Council of Ireland (NWCi), an umbrella organization of 165 affiliated groups, issued the election manifesto "What women want from the next Irish government"³⁵ as an advocacy tool for advancing women's issues in the campaign. The NWCi had a series of local events around the country to launch the manifesto and invited local candidates to come and respond to the issues raised in the document.

XI. NATIONAL MINORITY PARTICIPATION

While Ireland experienced a considerable increase in immigration in the last decade, the predominant majority of non-Irish groups resident in the state are either EU citizens or those that arrived relatively recently and are not yet naturalized as Irish citizens, and hence cannot vote in national elections. Overall, Ireland is a homogenous nation without distinct national minorities. The only exception is the Irish Travellers, an indigenous minority group whose culture and traditionally nomadic lifestyle distinguish them from the majority population. One community leader estimated that there are 35,000 Irish Travellers in the country, with 50 per cent in the larger Dublin area and the rest dispersed throughout the country.

³⁵ http://www.nwci.ie/highlights/election_2007

The OSCE/ODIHR EAM was informed that while a few Irish travellers have stood in previous Dáil elections, no travellers were running as candidates in the 2007 elections and no travellers have ever been represented in the Dáil or the Seanad. However, Irish Travellers are more active in local elections, and the current mayor of the town of Tuam is a traveller. While there are no legal impediments to participate politically, voter turnout among Irish Travellers was estimated by one community leader to be below 10 per cent. This was attributed in particular to voter apathy or lack of voter education.

Traveller community representatives reported that while in general discrimination against them exists, they did not have any complaints about specific incidents of racist or intolerant discourse in this election campaign. Traveller organizations reported carrying out election activities, including organizing candidate forums to raise awareness of the issues most important to travellers and to encourage candidates to comply with the Code of Conduct against inflammatory language in the campaign. Traveller groups also carried out voter education initiatives, to target in particular the relatively high number of illiterate voters in their community and to encourage broader participation.

XII. VOTING

In line with standard OSCE/ODIHR practice, the deployment of an OSCE/ODIHR EAM does not envisage any systematic or comprehensive observation of voting and counting procedures. However, the OSCE/ODIHR EAM members visited a limited number of polling stations in Dublin City, Wicklow, Galway and Cork. In addition, OSCE/ODIHR EAM members went to see the early voting on the island of Inish Mór, which was conducted on 23 May.

In general, OSCE/ODIHR EAM members noted that the election was conducted in a professional manner and calm atmosphere. No particular noteworthy incidents were observed. All polling stations visited appeared to be orderly, with signs directing voters to their respective polling place. Most polling locations had more than one polling station in the building, often in one large room. In locations with more than 4 polling stations, a supervisory presiding officer was appointed to direct voters to the correct station. Most buildings that housed polling stations visited appeared to be accessible to disabled voters. Police officers (*Gardai*) were generally present in the polling stations, in an unobtrusive manner, and also were responsible for transporting ballot boxes and materials at the end of the election day to the counting centers.

Each polling station was staffed by a presiding officer and a polling clerk. Most of the polling workers were experienced, having worked in that capacity for up to thirty years. First-time poll workers were trained on the spot, as in most cases no training was provided prior to election day. However, all polling staff had received a manual with detailed guidelines. In most of the visited polling stations the procedures were properly followed and the presiding officers appeared knowledgeable about their duties. However, the OSCE/ODIHR EAM noted that in a small number of polling stations visited some procedures were not properly followed. This was also apparent in the count where, in some constituencies visited, a number of ballots had not been stamped by polling officials and had to be declared invalid.

Voters were asked their name and address and found on the voter list, or if they had their voter card, this facilitated the process as it contained the number of their place on the list. For these elections, guidance was given to polling officers to ask every fourth voter to produce evidence of their identity.³⁶ Voters asked for identification had to produce evidence of their identity, or they were not allowed to vote. If voters were not on the voter list or the supplemental list of voters, they could not vote. Experts saw a small number of voters turned away because their names were not on the voter list. On a few occasions, the OSCE/ODIHR EAM noted that voters had received two or more voter cards, which they brought to the polling station to inform the authorities of the discrepancy. In one constituency visited, the returning officer had asked polling officials to keep note of people not found on the voter lists, so that they could be corrected in the future.

OSCE/ODIHR EAM members noted a number of voters who needed to ask for guidance on how to mark the ballot paper. In general, polling officials did not check with voters that they understood how to mark their ballot papers as such an instruction was not included in the *Manual for Presiding Officers*. *Such an instruction might decrease the number of spoiled ballots.*

According to the *Manual for Presiding Officers*, blind or physically incapacitated persons can ask their companion or the presiding officer to mark their ballot for them. However, the political party representatives in the polling stations known as “personation agents”, have the right to be present and to hear the choice of the voter, which may jeopardize the principle of vote secrecy.

Additional mechanisms to allow blind and incapacitated voters to vote in secrecy should be considered. Personation agents should not be allowed to hear the voter’s choice.

While most polling stations visited by the OSCE/ODIHR EAM had an organised layout and adequate resources, some polling stations in rural areas only had one voting booth and voters were encouraged to use tables or window ledges to mark their ballot papers. Marking a ballot outside of the voting booth could also jeopardize secrecy of the vote.

An adequate number of voting booths should be provided in all locations so as to further safeguard voter secrecy.

Although the law provides for political party representatives – “personation agents” - in the polling stations, few parties took advantage of this possibility. While their intended purpose is to provide transparency and detect any possibility of irregularities, representatives now primarily assist in the identification of voters on the voter list, reflecting the high level of confidence parties have in the process. In Cork, experts were informed that candidates and political parties no longer make use of this possibility.

While the election legislation does not explicitly allow for international observers in polling stations and counting centers, the returning officers have the right to allow additional persons to be present at their discretion. While OSCE/ODIHR EAM experts were granted full access to the voting and counting process without any problems or obstacles, such permission should be explicit in the legislation, in order to be consistent

³⁶ In prior elections it was every 20th voter.

with the OSCE Copenhagen Document. Domestic non-partisan observers should also be permitted access in the legislation.

Election legislation should be amended to allow for the presence of international and domestic non-partisan observers.

XIII. COUNTING³⁷

After the closure of polls, at 22.30 on 24 May, polling station officials completed their tasks, in line with the instructions provided by the *Manual for Presiding Officers*. The packed election materials, including the Ballot Account Forms of the Presiding Officers, were delivered by presiding officers, under *Gardai* escort, to the premises where counting was to start at 09.00 on 25 May.

Counting attended by OSCE/ODIHR EAM members proceeded in full respect of the legal provisions. Ballot boxes were opened and ballots counted to reconcile with Ballot Accounting Forms of the Presiding Officers. Simultaneously, ballot papers that were marked by voters in a way that could raise questions were separated for further scrutiny, first preferences were noted by the “tallymen”³⁸ and ballots of all boxes from the constituency were mixed in large boxes to prevent possible influence of a particular ballot box on any sample of ballots to be used in future counting procedures. At times, minor discrepancies were identified when there were two or more polling stations (ballot boxes) in the same polling premise and some ballot papers were cast in a wrong ballot box. Then, reconciliation was made taking into account that factor as well.

Ballots which were marked in a way which could raise questions about voters’ choices, were further analyzed and adjudicated by the returning officer, in consultation with the agents of the candidates and parties contesting the election. On most occasions noted by OSCE/ODIHR EAM members, the returning officers’ adjudications resulted from consensus assessments by the candidates’ representatives. This contributed further to the transparency of the process.

Typical cases of invalid ballots included: (a) ballots that were not stamped (perforated) by the presiding officers and (b) ballots which contained no preference for candidates. The latter included ballots where more than one candidate was marked with first preference, contained no first preference, or no preference at all. If the first preference was clearly expressed, but there was more than one candidate marked for second preference, such a ballot was deemed valid for the first preference only. Higher preferences were treated in the same manner.

After all ballots cast were qualified and counted as valid or invalid, the electoral quota for each constituency was calculated.³⁹ Simultaneously, counting staff counted the ballots for first preferences and returning officers announced the results from the first count. The counting then proceeded with counting second, third, etc. preferences. After each count, returning officers announced publicly and in a standardized manner the outcome of the

³⁷ OSCE/ODIHR EAM members attended Counting Centers in Dublin City, Dublin County, Cork City, Galway and Wicklow.

³⁸ Political party and candidate representatives.

³⁹ Please see Section V, “Electoral System”.

respective count, until all seats in the constituency were allocated to the successful candidates.

Counting procedures were conducted in public, in a transparent and open manner, in large halls and in the presence of party agents, tallymen, media representatives and citizens. Often, party agents of different parties and candidates were cooperating in order to update each other's information on the results as they became clear. No complaints about the conduct of the count were heard by the OSCE/ODIHR EAM, which was granted full access to the counting process and was able to assess any details of interest or note.

ANNEX I - REPORTED RESULTS

The following were the final results as reported by Irish Radio and Television (RTE) at the time of the OSCE/ODIHR EAM:

Party	Per cent of first preference votes	Seats	Per cent of seats⁴⁰
Fianna Fáil	41.6	78	47.0
Fine Gael	27.3	51	30.72
Labour	10.1	20	12.05
Green Party	4.7	6	3.61
Sinn Féin	6.9	4	2.41
Progressive Democrats	2.7	2	1.2
Others (Independents)	6.6	5	3.01

Source: www.rte.ie

The media reported that turnout exceeded the 2002 figure of 63%. See “Elections 2007 – High Turnout Reported” RTE, 24 May, 2007.

⁴⁰

The last column has been added to the RTE information in order to illustrate proportionality.

ANNEX II - EXAMPLE OF A COUNT

This Annex is based on the seat allocation conducted in one of the Ireland's 43 constituencies. The figures in the table are presented following permission of the respective returning officer (RO) with the purpose of illustrating the seat allocation by the STV method. The constituency returned five members of the Dáil. The number of valid ballots cast was 64,925, the number of invalid ballots was 554 and the electoral quota was:

$$1 + (64,925 / (5 + 1)) = 10,821.$$

No candidate was elected after the first count, column 2 of the Summary Table. Therefore the RO excluded candidates K, N, I and L because the total of their votes was "less than the votes of the next lowest candidate". Furthermore, "their exclusion separately could not save any of their election expenses which are not already saved."

At the second count, the votes for candidates K, N, I and L were distributed, according to second preferences, between the eleven candidates remaining in the contest but again none of them reached the quota, column 3. Thus, the RO excluded the lowest ranking candidate C.

At the third count, the votes for the excluded candidate C were distributed among the remaining ten candidates, column 4. The distribution was based on the second preferences marked in those ballots where candidate C was given first preference and the third preferences in those ballots where candidate C was given second preference. After the third count, no candidate reached the quota and the RO excluded the lowest ranking candidate E.

At the fourth count, column 5, the votes of the excluded candidate E were distributed among the remaining nine candidates, on the basis of the first unused preferences, similarly to the explanation for the third count. As a result, candidate M reached the quota and was elected with a surplus of 275 votes. However, the distribution of this surplus would not "materially affect the progress of the count because such distribution cannot elect a continuing candidate, cannot save the lowest candidate from exclusion and cannot save the election expenses of the lowest candidate". Therefore, the RO excluded the lowest candidate B.

At the fifth count, column 6, after distribution of the votes of candidate B, candidate A reached the quota and was elected with a surplus of 71 votes. As the surpluses, in total could not materially affect the progress of the count for the same reasons as in the fourth count, the RO excluded the lowest candidate H.

At sixth count, column 7, no one was elected. However, as the surplus of 275 votes of candidate M exceeded the difference between candidates D and G, and had the potential to affect the progress of the count, the RO ordered its distribution.

The seventh count, column 8, comprised the distribution of the surplus of candidate M. As this surplus was less than the number of ballots in the last parcel of 422 ballots that resulted in the election of candidate M, the count proceeded by first identifying the 89 non-transferable votes of this parcel and then distributing the 333 transferable votes, multiplying the respective votes for the remaining candidates D, F, G, J and O by the ratio 275/333. As no candidate reached the quota in this count and the remaining surplus of 71 votes of the elected candidate A could not materially affect the progress of the count, the RO excluded the lowest ranking candidate D.

Parliamentary elections (Dáil Éireann), 24 May 2007
OSCE/ODIHR Election Assessment Mission Final Report

At the eighth count, column 9, after distribution of the votes of the excluded candidate D, the votes for candidate J exceeded the quota and candidate J was elected with a surplus of 2297 votes. This surplus was to be distributed among the remaining candidates F, G and O as it exceeded the difference between the two lowest candidates and could elect a continuing candidate.

At the last ninth count, column 10, candidate O reached the quota and was elected. This left one seat, the last one, to be filled. At this stage, the RO deemed elected candidate F as this candidate had more votes than candidate G plus the untransferred surplus of 71 votes of candidate A. Candidate F was deemed elected without reaching the quota.

Summary Table for Seat Allocation

Candidates	Valid Votes								
	Count 1	Count 2	Count 3	Count 4	Count 5	Count 6	Count 7	Count 8	Count 9
A	9,431	+242 9,672	+283 9,956	+267 10,223	+669 10,892	10,892	10,892	10,892	10,892
B	3,234	+71 3,305	+78 3,383	+168 3,551	-3,551 -	-	-	-	-
C	2,246	+141 2,387	-2,387 -	-	-	-	-	-	-
D	4,790	+193 4,983	+723 5,706	+128 5,834	+896 6,730	+401 7,131	+13 7,144	-7,144	-
E	2,841	+52 2,893	+116 3,009	-3,009	-	-	-	-	-
F	6,961	+109 7,070	+209 7,279	+235 7,514	+266 7,780	+451 8,231	+19 8,250	+1,035 9,285	+917 10,202
G	5,029	+120 5,149	+44 5,193	+368 5,561	+183 5,744	+1,383 7,127	+144 7,271	+500 7,771	+245 8,016
H	3,857	+44 3,901	+34 3,935	+362 4,297	+405 4,702	-4,702	-	-	-
I	365	-365	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
J	6,751	+123 6,874	+482 7,356	+188 7,544	+486 8,030	+1,619 9,649	+29 9,678	+3,440 13,118	-2,297 10,821
K	79	-79	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
L	903	-903	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
M	10,246	+227 10,473	+201 10,674	+422 11,096	11,096	11,096	-275 10,821	10,821	10,821
N	120	-120	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
O	8,072	+105 8,177	+132 8,309	+664 8,973	+184 9,157	+447 9,604	70 9,674	+757 10,431	+857 11,288
Nontransferable	-	40	85 125	207 332	462 794	401 1,195	- 1,195	1,412 2,607	278 2,885

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 co-ordinates and organizes the deployment of thousands of observers to assess whether elections in the OSCE region are conducted in line with OSCE Commitments, other international standards for democratic elections and 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 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).