



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

# REPUBLIC OF LATVIA

**Parliamentary Elections**  
**4 October 2014**

**OSCE/ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT**

**10-12 June 2014**



Warsaw  
7 July 2014

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**REPUBLIC OF LATVIA  
PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS  
4 October 2014**

**OSCE/ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report**

**I. INTRODUCTION**

In anticipation of an invitation to observe the 4 October 2014 parliamentary elections and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) from 10 to 12 June. The NAM included Ms. Tatyana Bogussevich, OSCE/ODIHR Senior Election Adviser, and Ms. Tamara Otiashvili, OSCE/ODIHR Election Adviser.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and preparations for the parliamentary elections. Based on this assessment, the NAM should recommend whether to deploy an OSCE/ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming elections, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Justice, the Central Election Commission, the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau, the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs, as well as with representatives of political parties, media, and civil society. A list of meetings is included as an annex to this report.

The OSCE/ODIHR would like to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for its assistance and co-operation in organizing the NAM. The OSCE/ODIHR would also like to thank all of its interlocutors for taking the time to meet with the NAM and to share their views.

**II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Latvia is a parliamentary republic with legislative power vested in a 100-member parliament (*Saeima*). The parliament is elected for a four-year term under a proportional representation system in five constituencies.

The political landscape is generally divided along ethnic and linguistic lines. Parties are broadly perceived as representing either Latvian speakers or the country's considerable Russian-speaking population, many of whom are non-citizens. In recent month, the events in Ukraine have had an impact upon Latvian politics, bringing national security issues to the forefront in the upcoming elections.

The election-related legal framework has undergone revision since the last election and addresses some previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations. The restriction on the right to vote for persons with mental disabilities was removed and homebound voting was introduced for physically disabled voters. Following recent amendments, candidates are no longer required to submit a self-evaluation of their proficiency in the Latvian language and the law also allows voters to cast ballots up to three days before election day, with ballots being "safe kept" by commissions until counting on election day. While amendments also narrowed the scope of the lustration provisions so that it no longer applies to individuals who held technical support positions, the restrictions as such remain. Notwithstanding, a number of previous OSCE/ODIHR

recommendations appear unaddressed, including the absence of provisions for independent candidacy as stipulated in paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.

In line with a previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendation, citizenship is now granted to children born in Latvia to non-citizens under simplified procedures. This change was welcomed by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors as a measure by the state to ensure greater integration.

The election administration for parliamentary elections operates at three levels, led by the Central Election Commission (CEC) and supported by 119 Municipal Election Commissions and 952 Polling Station Commissions (PSCs), including 97 PSCs abroad. All interlocutors met with by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM expressed full confidence that the CEC would administer the elections in a professional, transparent, and neutral manner.

All citizens aged 18 years or older by election day are entitled to vote. There is no voter registration and voters may vote at any polling station in any constituency regardless of their residence. A passport is the only identification document with which a voter can vote; it is stamped as a safeguard against multiple voting. The potential disenfranchisement of a considerable group of voters who do not have passports was seen as a serious issue by the majority of OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors. In order to address this problem, the government decided to issue such voters temporary voting cards; procedural details were being developed at the time of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM.

The campaign period commences 120 days before election day and finishes at midnight on 3 October. New campaign regulations prohibit paid political advertising on television for a period of 30 days before elections. All political parties met with by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM welcomed this restriction by stating that this could help focus the campaign on substance and not have it dominated by parties' paid promotional materials. While the campaign has not yet started it will likely centre around issues of national security, events in Ukraine and their impact on the country, as well as on social issues and employment.

The amended legal framework establishes a stricter framework for campaign finance regulation. This includes lower donation and campaign expenditure limits. Provisions include disclosure and reporting requirements to the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB), the agency tasked to oversee compliance. Parties are obliged to submit full financial reports to the KNAB one month after the elections; no interim reporting is required. Due to reported serious disagreements among KNAB's leadership, some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors questioned the bureau's ability to fulfil its duties in a timely and professional manner. For its part, the KNAB expressed confidence that the current situation would not impact its work.

The media environment is diverse, yet the majority of OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors considered it divided along linguistic lines. Many media outlets are perceived as being affiliated with influential businesses or political actors. Election contestants are entitled to a set amount of free airtime on public television and radio. Compliance with media regulations is overseen by the National Electronic Media Council (NEMC). Some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed uncertainty as to the NEMC's ability to provide sufficient oversight and to ensure balanced coverage.

The OSCE/ODIHR NAM noted the confidence of interlocutors in the integrity of the electoral process and the professionalism and impartiality of the election administration. No significant

concerns were expressed related to the respect for fundamental freedoms, transparency of the electoral process, candidate registration, and election day proceedings. However, OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that the legal framework, especially regulating media and media coverage of the campaign, as well as political party and campaign finance could benefit from review. They expressed interest in OSCE/ODIHR's expertise in these areas and noted that a potential election-related activity and subsequent recommendations would be a useful contribution to the reform process. On this basis, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Assessment Mission to specifically look into the issues outlined in this report, such as the application of an amended legal framework, political party and campaign finance, as well as media coverage of the campaign.

### III. FINDINGS

#### A. BACKGROUND

Latvia is a parliamentary republic with legislative powers vested in the 100-member parliament (*Saeima*) and executive power exercised by the government, led by the prime minister. The president has a primarily ceremonial role as the head of state and is elected by the parliament. The last parliamentary elections were held on 17 September 2011 and resulted in the victory of the Unity Party, which formed the coalition government with the National Alliance, Everything for Latvia! - for Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK and Zatlers' Reform Party leaving the Harmony Centre and the Union of Greens and Farmers in opposition.

In November 2013, the prime minister resigned from office having taken political responsibility for the national tragedy of a supermarket collapse in Riga. In January 2014, President Andris Berzins nominated Laimdota Straujuma from the Unity Party as the next prime minister. A new government was confirmed consisting of Unity, Zatlers' Reform Party and the National Alliance.<sup>1</sup> The Harmony Centre remained the largest opposition party in the parliament.

The political landscape is generally divided along ethnic and linguistic lines. Parties are broadly perceived as representing either Latvian speakers or the country's considerable Russian-speaking population, many of whom are non-citizens. In recent months, events in Ukraine have had an impact upon Latvian politics, bringing national security issues to the forefront in the upcoming elections and are anticipated to feature in the campaign. In April 2014, the government ordered a suspension of the retransmission of a Russian TV channel *Rossiya RTR* in support of Ukraine's territorial integrity and increased production of Russian language news programs on the public broadcaster.

After the restoration of Latvia's independence in 1991, citizenship was granted automatically to those who had held citizenship prior to 1940 and to their descendants, leaving a large number of Latvian residents without any citizenship. Currently, there are approximately 283,000 people registered as "non-citizens," and not entitled to vote. In a positive development, in 2013 the Law on Citizenship was amended, which simplified procedures for granting citizenship to children born in Latvia to non-citizens. This change was welcomed by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors as a measure by the state to ensure greater integration. The Council of Europe's Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities

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<sup>1</sup> In 2013, the National Alliance, Everything for Latvia! - for Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK was joined by the Union of Greens and Farmers, which was previously in opposition.

welcomed this amendment, the demonstrated enhanced support for the cultural activities of minority communities, as well as language courses funding by the state. However, it noted that “number of ‘non-citizens’ remains high and determined efforts must be made to actively promote and facilitate their naturalisation process.”<sup>2</sup>

The OSCE/ODIHR has previously observed three parliamentary elections in Latvia since 1998.<sup>3</sup> For the 17 September 2011 early parliamentary elections, the OSCE/ODIHR deployed a limited election observation mission, which found that the “elections took place in a democratic and pluralistic environment, characterized by the rule of law, respect of fundamental freedoms, functioning democratic institutions and the existence of a genuine choice between parties offering different political platforms.”

## **B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM**

Elections are regulated primarily by the Constitution and the *Saeima* Election Law (election law). These are supplemented by the Law on the Central Election Commission, Law on Political Parties, Law on Pre-Election Campaign, Law on Financing of Political Organizations, as well as by instructions of the Central Election Commission (CEC).

Since the 2011 elections, the legal framework has been amended, addressing some previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendations.<sup>4</sup> While it is not a good practice to amend the legal framework less than one year before an election, the recent amendments enjoyed cross-party consensus and were the result of an inclusive process. Notable changes included the removal of the restriction on the right to vote for persons with mental disabilities and introduction of provisions for homebound voting for physically disabled voters. Other changes allow the establishment of special polling stations for the military and provide more detailed regulations for campaign and campaign finance. In addition, the Law on Judicial Power was amended in 2013 introducing a requirement for courts to publish all their rulings on the Internet, a measure aimed at enhancing the transparency in the work of courts.

Furthermore, the election law now provides a possibility for voters to cast ballots up to three days before election day, with ballots being “safe-kept” by commissions until the beginning of counting and voters being permitted to change this vote on election day. OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that although this practice is equivalent to early voting, it cannot legally be referred to as such since the Constitution stipulates that elections are held on a set, single day.

Notwithstanding the above commendable changes, the legal framework continues not to provide for independent candidacy, at odds with OSCE/ODIHR’s previous recommendations and contrary to paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.<sup>5</sup> The OSCE/ODIHR NAM was informed that a case is pending with the Constitutional Court challenging the constitutionality of this restriction in municipal elections. While this case does not specifically relate to parliamentary elections, some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed this

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<sup>2</sup> Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities of the Council of Europe, 3 January, 2014. See: [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/3\\_FCNMdocs/PDF\\_2nd\\_OP\\_Latvia\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/minorities/3_FCNMdocs/PDF_2nd_OP_Latvia_en.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> All previous OSCE/ODIHR reports on Latvia are available at: [www.osce.org/odihr/elections/latvia](http://www.osce.org/odihr/elections/latvia).

<sup>4</sup> Election law was amended on 12 September 2013 and 6 February 2014.

<sup>5</sup> Paragraph 7.5 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that “participating States will [...] respect the right to citizens to seek political or public office, individually or as representatives of political parties or organizations, without discrimination.”

constitutional process in that it might trigger the review of independent candidacy, as such. Other interlocutors stated that independent candidacy couldn't be accommodated within the current electoral system. In addition, although the 2014 amendments to the election law narrowed the scope of the lustration provisions so that it no longer applies to individuals who held technical support positions, the restrictions as such remain.<sup>6</sup>

The legal framework provides for general, direct, free and equal suffrage by secret ballot. The 100 members of the parliament are elected for four-year terms by proportional representation through open party lists. Seats are allocated by the *Sainte-Laguë* formula with a five per cent electoral threshold required at the national level.<sup>7</sup> A voter may cast a ballot for a constituency party list, and may indicate a preference for a candidate within a specific list, or reject a candidate by crossing out his or her name.

For parliamentary elections, the country is divided into five, multi-member constituencies.<sup>8</sup> Before each election, the CEC determines the number of parliamentarians to be elected from each of the constituencies in proportion to the number of voters in each, based on the data provided by the population registry.<sup>9</sup> Voters residing abroad are included in the Riga constituency. In February 2014, the president vetoed the amendments to the election law that introduced the possibility of voters who vote by post choosing their constituency. It was argued that the proposed amendments would have resulted in an unequal treatment of voters, as those voting by post would have been able to choose their constituency, while those voting at Latvia's diplomatic or consular missions would not have had such a choice.

### C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The upcoming parliamentary elections will be organized by three levels of election administration, led by the CEC and supported by 119 Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) and 952 Polling Station Commissions (PSCs), including 97 PSCs abroad.

The CEC is a permanent body with a four-year mandate tasked with overall responsibility for the conduct of the elections.<sup>10</sup> It is composed of nine members; eight appointed by the parliament on the basis of nominations from parliamentary parties, and one nominated by the Supreme Court from among its judges. In addition to the responsibility to administer the elections, the CEC has an authority to issue instructions regulating different election-related issues. All interlocutors met with by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM expressed full confidence that the CEC would administer the elections in a professional, transparent, and neutral manner.

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<sup>6</sup> In March 2006, the European Court of Human Rights stated in the case of *Zhdanoka vs. Latvia*, that "the Latvian Parliament must keep the statutory restriction under constant review, with a view to bringing it to an early end." European Court of Human Rights, Grand Chamber, Case of *Zhdanoka vs. Latvia* (Application Number 58278/00), Judgment 16 March 2006, available at: [www.echr.coe.int/ECHR](http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR). See also the case of *Adamsons vs. Latvia*, Application 3669/03, Judgment 24 June 2008, available at: [www.echr.coe.int/ECHR](http://www.echr.coe.int/ECHR).

<sup>7</sup> The *Sainte-Laguë* method is a highest quotient method for allocating seats in party-list proportional representation.

<sup>8</sup> These are Riga, Vidzemes, Latgales, Kurzemes and Zāmgales.

<sup>9</sup> According to a CEC decision adopted on 10 June 2014, 32 members of parliament will be elected in Riga, 26 in Vidzemes, 15 in Latgales, 14 in Zāmgales, and 13 in Kurzemes.

<sup>10</sup> The law allows CEC members to serve more than one mandate.

MECs consist of 7 to 15 members and are appointed by local councils upon nominations from political parties and groups of voters.<sup>11</sup> They are appointed for four-year terms, and generally are only operational during the election period. PSCs are formed ahead of each election and consist of seven members appointed by the respective MEC. Although the legislation grants the possibility for political parties and groups of voters to nominate members to the PSCs, some political parties met with by the OSCE/ODIHR NAM noted difficulties in identifying people who would agree to serve as commission members.

Out of the 97 PSCs abroad, 61 will also serve as commissions for postal vote applications. A voter choosing to vote by post will need to apply to one of these PSCs by providing a complete application form and a valid passport. As in regular voting, the voter's passport is stamped as a safeguard against multiple voting, but at the moment of filing an application. For the 2011 elections, only some 500 voters availed of this opportunity.

As an innovation for the upcoming elections, the CEC will introduce an electronic logbook to be used by PSCs on election day to record all their activities, including any complaints received. This measure was piloted during the European Parliament elections in May 2014 and proved to be a useful tool for the CEC to follow PSCs' operations through an online connection. In a welcome step, PSCs will also be filling in electronic protocols, which will be transmitted to the CEC for the preliminary results to be posted online immediately, broken down by municipality and polling station, an important transparency measure. However, the CEC leaves it at the discretion of each PSC whether to count votes manually or by using ballot scanners.<sup>12</sup>

#### **D. VOTER RIGHTS**

All citizens aged 18 years or older by election day are entitled to vote. There is no voter registration in Latvia.<sup>13</sup> Voters may vote at any polling station in any constituency regardless of their residence. A passport is the only identification document with which a voter can vote; individuals not possessing it cannot exercise this right. The OSCE/ODIHR NAM was informed by the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs that there are approximately 28,000 citizens, who only possess a national identification card. The potential disenfranchisement of a considerable group of voters was seen as a serious issue by the majority of OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors. In order to address this problem, the government decided to issue such voters temporary voting cards. While the procedural steps are still to be finalised, it was discussed that each such voter would be notified about the possibility of receiving a voting card at regional branches of the Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs.

#### **E. CANDIDATE RIGHTS AND REGISTRATION**

Every citizen who is at least 21 years old can stand for parliamentary elections, with the exception of those who are declared incompetent by a court decision, serving prison terms, sentenced for intentionally committed crimes, whose sentence has not yet been expunged, and those subject to remaining lustration provisions.

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<sup>11</sup> Groups of voters must include at least 10 people.

<sup>12</sup> The CEC informed the OSCE/ODIHR NAM that polling stations with 500 voters and more are likely to use ballot scanners, while smaller polling stations may prefer to count manually.

<sup>13</sup> There were 1,542,700 eligible voters in the 2011 early parliamentary elections.



In addition, as noted above, individual candidates are not allowed and a candidate can run only on a list of a political party or a coalition. A candidate may be included only in one candidate list. Candidate lists can be submitted to the CEC starting from 16 July, supported by security deposits of EUR 1,400 and declarations signed by candidates confirming their eligibility.<sup>14</sup> Following recent amendments, candidates are no longer required to submit a self-evaluation of their proficiency in the Latvian language.

As of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM, no candidates had yet been endorsed or nominated by the political parties. However, the majority of political parties met with by the OSCE/ODIHR announced their intention to contest the upcoming elections. Conversely, Zatlers' Reform Party has announced that it would dissolve and would not contest the elections.

## **F. ELECTION CAMPAIGN**

The campaign period starts 120 days before election day, which is 14 June for these elections, and finishes at midnight on 3 October. On 13 December 2013, the parliament adopted a new Law on Pre-Election Campaign, which consolidated campaign regulations for all elections. The law further clarifies the concept of public and outdoor places and specifies what activities can be performed at these places before elections. In addition, with the aim of preventing the abuse of administrative resources in election campaigning, the law imposes a restriction on state and local government publications to print interviews with or articles about candidates or individuals associated with political parties 30 days prior to the elections.

The OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors generally did not raise concerns about the ability of candidates to campaign freely. While the campaign has not yet started it will likely centre around issues of national security, events in Ukraine and their impact on the country, as well as on social issues and employment. All OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expected an active campaign conducted through small public meetings, posters, billboards, and advertisements in the media, as well as the active use of the Internet and social media.

## **G. CAMPAIGN FINANCE**

Campaign finance regulations are contained in the Law on Financing of Political Organizations, last amended on 29 November 2012. The latest amendments lowered donation limits both for legal and natural persons (currently EUR 16,000), as well as the campaign expenditure ceiling (currently EUR 422,000 per political party list). According to OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors, these changes followed the introduction in 2012 of state funding for political parties and coalitions that receive at least two per cent of the valid votes in parliamentary elections and sought to reduce the influence of private funding on parties' activities. OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors positively assessed existing campaign finance regulations, as further strengthened by the latest amendments.

The Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau (KNAB)<sup>15</sup> is tasked with the supervision of campaign finance regulations. In response to a recommendation by the Council of Europe's

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<sup>14</sup> According to the law, candidate lists are submitted from 80 to 60 days before election day. Security deposits are returned if the candidate list receives at least two per cent of the valid votes cast. It is otherwise transferred to the state budget.

<sup>15</sup> The abbreviation used for this agency is based on its Latvian-language name (*Korupcijas Novēršanas un Apkarošanas Birojs*).

Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), which noted the need “to take measures to strengthen the independence of the KNAB,” a working group was set up to prepare amendments to the Law on the Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau by 1 December 2014. However, GRECO noted concern that progress on this issue has been slow.<sup>16</sup> In addition, an internal personal conflict within the KNAB leadership was an issue widely discussed by all OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors. A separate commission was set up at the initiative of the prime minister to identify ways of solving the problem. While some OSCE/ODIHR interlocutors questioned the ability of KNAB to fulfil its duties in a timely and efficient manner, the KNAB expressed confidence that the current situation would not impact its work.

All media are obliged to inform the KNAB of campaign advertisement prices 150 days before election day and of contracts concluded with election contestants.<sup>17</sup> This information is used by the KNAB to ensure that the same prices are offered to all political parties. There are no obligations for interim reporting. However, all electoral contestants are obliged to submit campaign finance reports to the KNAB, including contributions and expenses incurred throughout the election campaign, no later than one month after election day. The KNAB has six months to review these reports and can impose a range of sanctions for non-compliance.

## H. MEDIA

The media environment is diverse, yet the majority of OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors considered it divided along linguistic lines. Many media outlets are perceived as being affiliated with influential businesses or political actors. Many alluded to the lack of balance and impartiality in media reporting, which was seen as particularly problematic in private electronic and print media.

The Law on the Pre-Election Campaign regulates the conduct of the campaign in the media. Contestants are entitled to a set amount of free airtime on public television and radio, at least one appearance in general pre-election broadcasting by public and commercial electronic media, as well as to paid advertising.

Following the 2014 amendments, paid political advertising in the media is prohibited in the last 30 days of the campaign. Many OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors welcomed this restriction as an equalizing measure, while some feared it could have an impact on the liveliness of the campaign. Representatives of political parties suggested that in light of this restriction, free airtime, which could take form of debates, could serve as a key campaign tool. Some, however, found the format of party spots and debates unappealing to the audience. The public broadcaster also raised this issue and suggested that it would look into ways of livening debates for viewers.

Media coverage of elections and compliance with legal requirements is overseen by the NEMC. Some OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed uncertainty as to the NEMC’s ability to provide sufficient oversight and to ensure balanced coverage. Absence of reporting by the

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<sup>16</sup> See GRECO Evaluation Report on Latvia, 28 March 2014: [http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/greco/evaluations/round3/GrecoRC3\(2014\)3\\_Second\\_ADD\\_Latvia\\_EN.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/monitoring/greco/evaluations/round3/GrecoRC3(2014)3_Second_ADD_Latvia_EN.pdf).

<sup>17</sup> Ahead of elections, media outlets are also obliged to inform the National Electronic Media Council (NEMC), the media regulatory body, of prices for paid advertising, which the Council is obliged to publish.

NEMC on its interim findings during a campaign was noted as one area requiring improvement in order to render the Council's work more effective and transparent.

A number of OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors commented positively on the practice during the recent European Parliament elections of broadcasting candidate debates both in the Latvian and Russian languages. The OSCE/ODIHR NAM was informed that the public broadcaster plans to repeat this practice during the forthcoming parliamentary elections and that extra state funding was being allocated to the broadcaster to further encourage the development of Russian-language content. This approach was welcomed by many of the OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors as contributing to the creation of a more balanced information space for the Russian-speaking population.

Overall, interlocutors suggested that in light of the segmentation of the media market, alleged imbalances in coverage, perceived insufficient oversight by the NEMC, and the absence of scrutiny by citizen observer groups, an assessment of media coverage of the campaign by the OSCE/ODIHR would be of added value.

## **I. ELECTION OBSERVATION**

Political parties contesting the elections are entitled to delegate up to two representatives to each election commission. Political parties met with by the OSCE/ODIHR stated their intention to use this opportunity. The legislation also permits media and people authorized by election commissions to act as observers. While OSCE/ODIHR observers have been granted full access to the electoral process in the past, the legislation does not contain any detailed provisions on accreditation procedures and rights of international and citizen observers. The OSCE/ODIHR previously recommended to "adopt a comprehensive regulation on the role of international and domestic non-partisan observers and accreditation procedures ahead of the next elections."

## **IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The OSCE/ODIHR NAM noted the confidence of interlocutors in the integrity of the electoral process and the professionalism and impartiality of the election administration. No significant concerns were expressed related to the respect for fundamental freedoms, transparency of the electoral process, candidate registration, and election day proceedings. However, OSCE/ODIHR NAM interlocutors stated that the legal framework, especially regulating media and media coverage of the campaign, as well as political party and campaign finance could benefit from review. They expressed interest in the OSCE/ODIHR's expertise in these areas and noted that a potential election-related activity and subsequent recommendations would be a useful contribution to the reform process. On this basis, the OSCE/ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Assessment Mission to specifically look into the issues outlined in this report, such as the application of the amended legal framework governing elections, political party and campaign finance, as well as media coverage of the campaign.

## **ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS**

### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs**

Valerijs Romanovskis, Deputy Director, International Organizations and Human Rights Department

Evija Klauze, Head of Consular Assistance Division

### **Central Election Commission**

Arnis Cimdars, Chairperson of the Commission

Karlis Kamradzis, Vice-Chairman of the Commission

Ritvars Eglajs, Secretary

### **Ministry of Justice**

Sanita Mertena, Director of Legal Department

Liene Zarina, Legal Advisor

### **Office of Citizenship and Migration Affairs**

Igors Gorbunovs, Head of Naturalization Board

Oskars Vaikulis, Deputy Head of the Projects and International Cooperation department

Ilze Silina Osmane, Senior Desk Officer

### **Corruption Prevention and Combating Bureau**

Vineta Ostrovska, Finance Control Division for Political Organizations

Dina Benefelde, Finance Control Division for Political Organizations

### **Political Parties**

Lolita Cigane, Member of Parliament, Unity

Rasma Karklina, Member of Parliament, Unity

Vineta Porina, Member of Parliament, National Alliance, the Union of Greens and Farmers

Karlis Kreslins, Member of Parliament, National Alliance, the Union of Greens and Farmers

Oskars Jepsis, Member of Parliament, National Alliance, the Union of Greens and Farmers

Boriss Cilevics, Member of Parliament, Harmony Center

Aleksands Sakovskis, Member of Parliament, Harmony Center

Valdis Liepins, Member of Parliament, Zatlers' Reform Party

### **Latvian Television**

Rita Rudusa, Editor

### **Latvian Radio**

Janis Siksnis, Board Member

Artjoms Konohovs, News Service Senior Correspondent

### **Civil Society**

Iveta Kažoka, Researcher, *Providus*

Anhelita Kamenska, Director, Latvian Centre for Human Rights

Gundars Jankovs, Director, *Delna*

Zane Siksnane, Project Coordinator, *Delna*