

INTERIM REPORT
5 February – 1 March 2018

2 March 2018

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- The Russian Federation will hold a presidential election on 18 March 2018. The Central Election Commission (CEC) registered eight candidates, seven fielded by political parties and one, the incumbent president, as a self-nominated candidate standing for a second consecutive and a fourth overall term. One candidate is a woman.
- Several amendments to the election legislation were adopted since the last presidential election, most recently in December 2017, responding to some previous ODIHR recommendations. A number of other recommendations, including those pertaining to guarantees for freedom of assembly, association and expression, remain to be addressed.
- The campaign is generally low-key but has become more visible following the 23 February Defenders of Fatherland Day celebrations. Meanwhile, outdoor campaign events are limited in visibility. By contrast, concurrent get-out-the-vote initiatives, with a view to ensuring a high voter turnout, launched by a multitude of actors including local authorities, private and state enterprises, feature prominently across the country.
- The presidential election is administered by a four-tiered election administration that serves a five-year term. Preparations for the elections are underway and legal deadlines have so far been respected. The CEC has held regular, public, at times live-streamed, sessions with extensive discussions on various issues including alleged interference by local authorities into the electoral process. A comprehensive voter information campaign, launched by the CEC, is ongoing.
- The number of registered voters in the Russian Federation as of 1 January is 108,968,869, including 1,875,408 voters abroad. Some 1,306,800 voters have used the recent amendments to request to vote in a place other than their place of residence. Concerted efforts by the CEC to identify and remove duplicate entries in the voter register are ongoing.
- Prospective candidates must open a bank account dedicated to all campaign related transactions. Candidates are required to submit a financial report to the CEC upon registration and again within one month of the announcement of the election results. To date, the CEC requested five candidates to return donated funds mostly due to non-compliance with permitted sources of funding or to incomplete information of the source.
- The Constitution provides for freedom of expression and the right to information. Libel and insult of state officials remain criminal offenses. The legislation regulating media coverage of nominating parties and candidates during the official campaign period provides for free airtime on public broadcasters as well as free space in print media. Informational materials published by the media must be unbiased and respect the equality of candidates. The CEC oversees media's compliance with campaign regulations.

- Parties, candidates, media representatives, international observers and, following amendments in December 2017, observers appointed by civic chambers can follow the electoral process. The law does not provide for observation by citizen observers and organizations independently of the civic chambers.
- Election commissions and the courts adjudicate election disputes. As of 26 February, the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation received 60 complaints against CEC decisions, and dismissed 47 of them as inadmissible. Notably, the courts adjudicated two cases related to the constitutionality of legal provisions pertaining to the right to stand, upholding both CEC decisions.

II. INTRODUCTION

Following an invitation from the Central Election Commission (CEC) of the Russian Federation, and based on the recommendation of a Needs Assessment Mission conducted from 6 to 9 December 2017, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 5 February to observe the 18 March presidential election.¹ The EOM, headed by Ambassador Jan Petersen, consists of a 13-member core team based in Moscow and 60 long-term observers deployed in 31 subjects of the Russian Federation throughout the country on 14 February. Mission members are drawn from 25 OSCE participating States. Participating States have been requested to second 420 short-term observers to observe election day procedures.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Russian Federation is a presidential republic. According to the 1993 Constitution, it is “a democratic federal law-bound State with a republican form of government” and the president is the head of state who enjoys a wide range of powers.² President Vladimir Putin was first elected in 2000 and reelected in 2004. Having become prime minister in 2008, he entered his third non-consecutive term in 2012 and is now standing for reelection to a fourth term in office.

Legislative power is vested in the bicameral Federal Assembly comprising the Council of the Federation (upper house) and the State Duma (lower house). Six political parties are represented in the State Duma since the last parliamentary elections in September 2016.³ Four of them have publicly endorsed the candidacy of the incumbent president, including United Russia (ER), which holds a constitutional majority.⁴ There are 67 registered political parties: the number increased tenfold after the process was simplified in 2012. However, several opposition initiatives remain unregistered.⁵

¹ See previous [OSCE/ODIHR reports on the Russian Federation](#).

² The president may under specific conditions dismiss regional governors, the government and dissolve parliament, issue decrees in areas not covered by existing laws, outline government policy and preside at government meetings, propose judges to the Constitutional and Supreme Courts, the Chairperson of the Bank of Russia and the Prosecutor General and appoint the director of the state television and radio broadcaster. Out of 72 government bodies 19 answer directly to the president, including most ministries (see [Decree of the President of Russian Federation No. 636](#) from May 2012, last amended in April 2017).

³ Parties represented in the State Duma are: United Russia (ER; 343 seats), Communist Party of the Russian Federation (KPRF; 42 seats), Liberal Democratic Party of Russia (LDPR; 39 seats), Fair Russia (SR; 23 seats), Civic Platform (1) and Rodina (1).

⁴ Of the six parties in parliament, KPRF and LDPR nominated their own candidates.

⁵ For example, Party of Fifth December, and the Party of Progress that was registered in 2014 and deregistered in 2015. According to the ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the group had planned to file for re-registration in March 2018. On 22 February 2018, one of the former deputy chiefs of the Moscow Branch of Party of Progress announced his intention to register an entity under the name of Party of Progress and applied for registration with the Ministry of Justice.

The 18 March election was called by the decision of the Federation Council that entered into force on 18 December 2017.⁶

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The presidential election is primarily regulated by the Constitution, the 2002 Law on Basic Guarantees of Electoral Rights and the Right to Participate in a Referendum (the Law on Basic Guarantees), the 2002 Law on the Election of President of the Russian Federation (the Law on Presidential Election), and the Central Election Commission (CEC) resolutions.⁷

The legal framework was amended on several occasions since the last presidential election, most recently in December 2017, and some of the changes addressed previous ODIHR recommendations. The most significant amendments relate to voter and candidate registration, observers' rights, transparency measures as well as introducing administrative and criminal liability for unlawful issue and receipt of ballots papers, both for the election officials implicated and the voters.

The Constitution protects the freedoms of expression, association and assembly and stipulates that laws abolishing or diminishing human and civil rights and freedoms must not be adopted. Restrictions may be justified by a federal law on certain grounds – mainly for the protection of the constitutional order, morality, health and lawful interests of other people, as well as to ensure the security of the State.

A number of legal amendments introduced since the 2012 presidential election result in restrictions of some constitutionally guaranteed political rights and fundamental freedoms. The 2016 so-called “Anti-terrorist Law” grants authorities broad powers to limit civil rights, withdraw citizenship, and access private telephone and email communications.⁸ Amendments to several laws passed in 2012 and 2015 require domestic non-profit organizations, including those involved in election observation, that receive funding from abroad to register as foreign agents and permit the authorities to declare foreign or international organizations as undesirable without a judicial procedure.⁹ Amendments introduced in December 2015 to the Law on the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation, entitle it to declare decisions of international courts as unenforceable on the grounds of discrepancy with the Constitution.¹⁰

The president is directly elected in a single nationwide constituency for a six-year period. If no candidate receives more than 50 per cent of the votes cast, a second round takes place between the two candidates who gained the highest number of votes. A constitutional amendment from December 2008 extended the presidential term from four to six years. Although the law prevents an individual from

⁶ The 2002 Law on the Election of the President of the Russian Federation (the Law on Presidential Election), amended in March 2017 moved the date of the presidential election from the second to the third Sunday in March, i.e. from 11 to 18 March 2018.

⁷ Other laws applicable to the presidential election are the 2001 Law on Political Parties, the 2002 Law on State Automated System of the Russian Federation “Elections”, the 1991 Law on Mass Media, and the 2004 Law on Assemblies, Meetings, Rallies and Pickets.

⁸ The Law “On Making Amendments to Different Legal Acts of the Russian Federation Introducing Additional Measures to Counter Terrorism and Ensuring Public Security” adopted in July 2016 introduced amendments to over a dozen different laws.

⁹ In addition, an administrative fine is envisaged for those citizens and legal entities participating in certain types of activities of organisations declared as undesirable. Such activities include public events and mass actions, dissemination of information/materials published by these organizations. In case of more than one administrative conviction per year, deprivation of liberty from two to six years is also foreseen. See the Council of Europe’s Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) [Opinion on Federal Law No.129-FZ on Amending Certain Legislative Acts](#). See also the Venice Commission [Opinion of Federal Law No. 121-FZ on Non-Commercial Organisations](#).

¹⁰ See the Venice Commission [Opinion on the Amendments to the Federal Constitutional Law on the Constitutional Court of the Russian Federation from 13 June 2016](#).

holding more than two consecutive terms, it does not prohibit a person from being elected for a new term after an intermission and having already served two terms.¹¹

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The presidential election is administered by the CEC, Subject Election Commissions (SECs), Territorial Election Commissions (TECs) and Precinct Election Commissions (PECs).¹² Election Commissions at all levels serve for five-year terms. The CEC consists of 15 members, appointed by the State Duma, the upper house of parliament and the president each appointing five of them.¹³ The CEC Chairperson and the Secretary, are women. According to the CEC, 60 per cent of SEC and 63 per cent of TEC members are women. While women chair 61 per cent of TECs, at SEC level they head a mere 3 per cent.

As a collegial body, the CEC holds public sessions, involving lower-level commissions, at times via live-streamed video conferencing, regularly attended and followed by various stakeholders.¹⁴ Most sessions observed by the ODIHR EOM included substantive and extensive discussions on various issues, including alleged interference by local authorities into the electoral process and malpractice involving lower-level commissions.¹⁵ Allegations of coercion of voters aimed at increasing voter turnout were also discussed.¹⁶ The CEC also established two thematic working groups to review media and information related issues, and to address complaints submitted by stakeholders (See *Media and Complaints and Appeals* sections).

The ODIHR EOM noted that PECs in some regions are engaged in door-to-door visits to inform voters of the upcoming election. ODIHR EOM interlocutors have consistently mentioned the focus on boosting of voter turnout through a variety of initiatives. In some regions, governors and SECs have organized competitions among PECs and have offered monetary rewards for PECs with the best performance and the highest voter turnout.¹⁷

¹¹ As of 26 February, a total of 25 complaints, including one by candidate Ms. Sobchak, were filed to the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, challenging the CEC's decision to register the incumbent. Previously, the Constitutional Court had considered a petition initiated by the members of the State Duma asking the Court to determine whether the Constitution which was adopted in 1993 interrupted the term of office of the then President Yeltsin that commenced in 1991 and whether his term starting in 1996 was the first or second term in office. The Constitutional Court ruled, in its [decision of 5 November 1998](#), that the presidential term that had started following the 1996 election was Mr. Yeltsin's second term in office and that two terms of office in a row constitute a limit, the excess of which the Constitution of the Russian Federation does not allow. The decision did not clarify whether two terms should be the limit for a lifetime or a new mandate may commence after an interruption.

¹² By law, at least half of the members of SECs, TECs and PECs should represent eligible political parties, while state or municipal officials should not constitute more than half of the commission. In addition, election commissions and various public and voter associations are also entitled to nominate commission members.

¹³ The current composition of the CEC was appointed in March 2016.

¹⁴ Since the announcement of the election, the CEC has conducted 28 sessions and adopted approximately 280 decisions and regulations on a variety of issues, including voter registration, voting procedures, printing of ballot papers, media coverage and distribution of free airtime and space.

¹⁵ For instance, on 8 February, the CEC cancelled the decision of Moscow oblast SEC and issued a warning to the chairperson for exceeding the commission's competence by organizing an online-survey, so called "School Referendum" to be held on 18 March, and printing materials using the official images and logos of the election administration's voter information campaign. The subjects covered by the survey include extending the school week from five to six days.

¹⁶ During its 142nd and 143rd sessions, the CEC chairperson stated she was notified of allegations regarding coercion of employees and teachers in enterprises and schools whereby voters are required to register at a specific polling station, which reportedly will allow perpetrators to influence the choice of the voter.

¹⁷ Such competitions are organized by the Governor's office in [Sverdlovsk](#); by SECs in [Kursk](#) and [Yamalo-Nenetskiy Autonomous District](#).

In order to monitor voting, counting and tabulation on election day, the CEC has increased the number of polling stations equipped with close circuit television (CCTV) cameras, covering approximately 80 per cent of voters. On election day some polling stations will be equipped with ballot scanners and touch-screen voting machines. For the first time, PECs will prepare voting result protocols with QR-codes intended to expedite the processing of results and enhance their integrity.

The CEC produced comprehensive voter information materials and video spots on various aspects of the electoral process as well as those aiming to increase the voter turnout. Some of these videos are in sign language.

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

Citizens over 18 years of age by election day, with the exception of those serving a prison term or recognized by a court as incapacitated, are eligible to vote.¹⁸ Voter registration is passive and voter lists are compiled based on a registration system linked to citizens' place of residence.

As of 1 January 2018, there are 108,968,869 registered voters in the Russian Federation, including 1,875,408 abroad, and 13,951 in Baikonur city.¹⁹ Since 1 July 2017, the CEC has removed 563,000 entries following a voter verification exercise jointly carried out with relevant bodies. The CEC acknowledged the issue of duplicate-entries in the voter register and introduced legal amendments to tackle the matter.²⁰

Voter lists are prepared by TECs no later than 11 days before election day, based on data provided by the heads of local administrations or other relevant administrative bodies with the support of the *GAS Vybory* system.²¹ Voter lists should be delivered to PECs 10 days before election day and, in the case of early voting, no later than 21 days.²² Voters can be included in the voter list, including on election day, based on a court or a higher election commission decision.

Following legislative amendments from June 2017 voters who wish to vote in a place other than their place of residence, can submit an application to any TEC, to centers of state and municipal services, or online for inclusion in the list of voters in a polling station of their choice starting from 45 days before the election day up to 5 days prior to the election.²³ Following this period and up until 14:00 on the day prior to the election, such requests can only be submitted at the PEC of the voter's place of residence by completing an application form.²⁴ In all cases, the voter must specify the polling station s/he intends to vote in and must be removed from the voter list of their place of residence, either through the *GAS*

¹⁸ The European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR) ruled in [Anchugov and Gladkov v. Russia \(2013\)](#) that the automatic and indiscriminate removal of voting rights of persons serving a prison sentence irrespective of the nature or gravity of the offence or of their individual circumstances violates [Article 3 of Protocol 1 of the European Convention on Human Rights \(ECHR\)](#).

¹⁹ A city in Kazakhstan administered by the Russian Federation in connection with the Russian space programme.

²⁰ According to the CEC, there are 270,000 entries of people registered twice within the territory of the Russian Federation. There are also duplicate entries of voters registered both in the Russian Federation and in consulates abroad, but the numbers are not currently available. In February 2018, the CEC passed two amendments to its regulations related to voter registration and compilation and corrections to the voter lists with a view to facilitating the removal of these duplicates ahead of election day.

²¹ The system is a database developed for storage and exchange of information between election commissions.

²² Early voting is conducted for voters in remote areas, at polar stations and on vessels at sea on election day starting on 25 February. By law, voters residing abroad can vote from 2 March.

²³ Such a request can also be submitted to PECs from 20 to 5 days prior to the election. On 1 November 2017, the CEC adopted a decision further regulating and providing guidance for implementation of these provisions.

²⁴ To prevent multiple voting a two-part sticker is attached to the application. One part of the sticker is removed and attached to the voter list in the polling station of origin and the second part is attached to the voter list in the polling station where the voter votes. The application is invalid without the sticker.

Vybory system or manually. As of 28 February, 1,306,800 voters had submitted requests to vote at a polling station of their choice.

VII. CANDIDATE NOMINATION AND REGISTRATION

Any citizen with voting rights over the age of 35 by election day, with permanent residence in the country for the last ten years can run for president. The Constitution and the Law on Presidential Election deny the right to stand for individuals with a non-expunged or canceled criminal record, as well citizens with criminal records for grave or especially grave offences within the last 10 and 15 years, respectively.

Potential candidates can be self-nominated or stand on behalf of a political party. Self-nomination must be supported by at least 500 voters. Following the last presidential election, the legal framework governing candidate registration was amended in May 2012 to decrease the number of required supporting signatures from two million to 300,000 and 100,000 signatures for self-nominated candidates and those nominated by non-parliamentary political parties, respectively.²⁵ Of these, at least 20 per cent must be randomly verified by the CEC with the assistance of other relevant institutions.²⁶ Supporting signatures are not required for candidates nominated by parliamentary parties. Most of the ODIHR EOM interlocutors welcomed the lowering of the number of required signatures.

Thirty-six prospective candidates, including ten women, submitted their documents to the CEC.²⁷ Following the examination of documents, the CEC allowed 19 candidates to undertake signature collection.²⁸ Six cases of denial to proceed with signature collection were unsuccessfully challenged in the Supreme Court of the Russian Federation, including by a prominent opposition activist Mr. Navalny (See *Complaints and Appeals*).

Of sixteen candidates, including five women, who undertook signature collection, six were registered by the CEC as were a further two who were nominated by political parties represented in parliament.²⁹ In total, eight candidates were registered by the CEC, including one woman.³⁰

VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

The campaign started with the nomination of candidates and will end one day before election day. Outdoor campaigns of candidates were limited in visibility thus far, but have become more prominent,

²⁵ Signatures should be collected between 80 and 45 days before the election day in at least 40 different Subjects of the Russian Federation, with no more than 7,500 for self-nominated candidates and no more than 2,500 for candidates nominated by political parties in each of them.

²⁶ Candidates may be denied registration if more than five per cent of the total number of signatures selected for verification is found to be invalid. Signatures can be considered invalid for a variety of reasons: mistakes or technical inaccuracies, omissions of a full address of a signatory, omission of the date the form was completed, completing the form in pencil, or making corrections to the form.

²⁷ In order to be registered, each prospective candidate has to submit a plethora of documents, including notarized protocol of the meeting of the group of voters or decision of the party congress, income, expenditure and property declarations of both the nominee and his/her spouse for the past six years, and proof of opening an electoral fund account. All accounts in foreign banks must be closed by the time of submission of the documents.

²⁸ Grounds for not allowing prospective candidates to proceed with the signature collection process, included un-expunged criminal records, lack of compliance with the residency requirement, and failure to have the self-nomination endorsed by a group of 500 voters.

²⁹ Two candidates did not proceed with the signature collection and one candidate's registration was recalled by the CEC due to dual citizenship.

³⁰ Candidates were registered ahead of the 10 February deadline in the following chronological order: Vladimir Zhirinovskiy (LDPR), Pavel Grudinin (KPRF), Vladimir Putin (self-nominated), Grigory Yavlinsky (Yabloko party), Boris Titov (Party of Growth), Sergey Baburin (Russian All-People's Union), Ksenia Sobchak (Civic Initiative) and Maxim Suraykin (Communists of Russia party).

with several contestants holding events on 23 February to coincide with the Defenders of Fatherland Day celebrations. A growing number of billboards and posters are on display in main population centres. Small pickets and meetings with voters have been observed in many cities, and the ODIHR EOM observers have been informed that door-to-door visits and some rallies are planned before election day. Online campaigning and social media are actively used by most candidates.

The law grants all candidates equal campaign opportunities and the misuse of administrative resources is prohibited. Public gatherings are defined as a meeting of two or more individuals, and organizers are required to notify regional or local authorities between 10 to 15 days prior to the event. The notification must include information on the purpose, form, place and time of the event.³¹ Authorities may make a proposal for an alternative place and time, or disallow the event altogether under specific conditions, such as risk to public safety.³² In addition, local authorities allocate spaces and places for free-of-charge display of materials and holding of events, while candidates may hire additional spaces and venues at a cost. All printed campaign materials must contain imprint data and copies must be submitted to the CEC prior to their distribution.

Many ODIHR interlocutors have reported that in a number of regions contests and draws are organised to encourage voter turnout.³³ In addition, municipal authorities are organising public consultations on issues of local importance on election day.³⁴ According to some ODIHR EOM interlocutors, employees of state institutions, publicly and privately owned enterprises, students and parents of school children are invited to pre-register to participate in these public consultations on election day.

Candidates who hold elected federal or municipal positions are not required to step down from office to run for the presidency. However, the legislation prohibits taking advantage of the office or an official position when conducting election campaign. According to several candidates and most of the ODIHR EOM interlocutors, the incumbent remains unchallenged and enjoys unparalleled visibility through his public office.³⁵

Mr. Navalny, an opposition activist and unregistered nominee, called for a boycott of the election, with ‘Electoral Strike’ posters displayed in some cities, as observed by the ODIHR EOM.³⁶

³¹ The 2004 Law on meetings, rallies, demonstrations, marches and pickets. Amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences adopted in 2014 increased sanctions for violations from 10,000 RUB to one million RUB (1 EUR is approximately 70 RUB) and detention of up to 30 days.

³² The constitutionality of the law has been repeatedly challenged before the Constitutional Court, which ruled on 14 February 2013 that the obligation of the organisers to submit a preliminary notice of an event is in accordance with the Constitution.

³³ In [Altai Republic](#), young voters are invited to take photos of themselves on election day and post them on social media, for a chance to win a smartphone in a contest organized by a publishing house, in part financed from the local budget. A similar contest is organized by the Ural Gems foundation in [Pervouralsk](#) (Sverdlovsk Oblast). In [Lipetsk](#), contests and other extracurricular activities are organized to encourage voter participation. A nationwide drawing competition was organized, with children being invited to draw the incumbent president for a chance to win 400 RUB.

³⁴ For instance, as observed and reported to the ODIHR EOM in Rostov Oblast, Volgograd, Omsk Oblast, in several cities in [Arkhangelsk Oblast](#), [Primorsky Krai](#), [Republic of Bashkortostan](#), and [Yekaterinburg](#). According to a [news report](#), public consultations are to be held in 81 federal subjects.

³⁵ Three candidates [complained to the CEC](#) about the broadcast of a four-part documentary about the incumbent on state television during primetime hours. In response to these and other complaints on the matter, the CEC cancelled the broadcast of parts 3 and 4 of the documentary. One [candidate argued](#) that although the incumbent is certain to win, he regards participation in the election as an opportunity to urge the authorities to adopt a new economic strategy. Similarly, another [candidate remarked](#) that the incumbent will undoubtedly emerge the winner.

³⁶ A number of detentions of boycott activists have been reported in other cities: for instance, in Chelyabinsk found that one supporter of the boycott campaign had been summoned to the prosecutor’s office, as he believes, because of his political activities; in Kazan a local coordinator of the boycott campaign was detained because of participation in an unsanctioned mass event; in Tyumen that two activists had been detained while distributing boycott campaign

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

The law obliges electoral contestants to open a dedicated electoral fund account for their campaign expenses and to appoint authorized representatives for financial matters. The ceiling for campaign expenditure for the presidential election amounts to 400 million RUB (some 5,714,000 EUR).³⁷ Candidates are required to submit two financial reports to the CEC, the first with the submission of their registration documents and the second within 30 days from the official publication of results.³⁸

Although the CEC cooperates with other state authorities in its effort to control the legality of the transactions made through the electoral funds, it does not have investigative capacities. As of the start of the campaign, the CEC requested five candidates to return part of the donations transferred to their electoral funds, totaling an amount of approximately 29 million RUB (approximately 414,000 EUR). This was mostly due to incomplete data of donors, to donations by a legal entity whose foreign ownership exceeds 30 per cent or donations exceeding the ceiling for campaign expenditure.³⁹

X. MEDIA

There are several thousand officially registered media outlets. A number of them, including major television broadcasters, are founded, owned or supported by the state or affiliated structures.⁴⁰ Television remains the dominant source of political information. Tabloid newspapers prevail in the print media market. The Internet, including social networks, has become an important political source, yet primarily in urban areas.

The Constitution provides for freedom of expression and the right to information. Libel and insulting state officials are criminal offenses. Several ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that broad anti-extremism legislation and the strict regulatory framework induce self-censorship, and also questioned media diversity and independence, most notably with regard to television networks. The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media (RFOM) on several occasions condemned the continued physical attacks against journalists and media outlets, and criticized proposed amendments to the media legislation as disproportionate interference in the freedom of expression.⁴¹

The Law on Presidential Election and the Law on Basic Guarantees provide that registered candidates and the political parties which nominated them are each granted free airtime during the official media campaign period, in both national and regional state-funded broadcasters, as well as free space in national state-funded print media.⁴² The total time granted free of charge by each national state-funded station will be one hour per registered candidate and political party, respectively. Half of the time will

materials. An aide to Mr. Navalny and co-ordinator of the boycott campaign was detained by police on 22 February and sentenced to 30 days in prison for violating the established procedure for organizing a mass event.

³⁷ If the candidate-elect uses financial resources for his/her campaign other than those from their own electoral fund in an amount exceeding 10 per cent of the maximum limit of all expenditure, the Supreme Court may invalidate candidate-elect voting results.

³⁸ In their first financial report submitted to the CEC upon request for registration, there are significant differences in the costs indicated by candidates for the collection of signatures, ranging from less than 1 RUB (approximately 0.14 EUR) to 196 RUB (some 2.8 EUR) per signature.

³⁹ Mr. Grudin in was asked to return 174,000 RUB (approximately 2,500 EUR); Mr. Zhirinovskiy 270,000 RUB (some 3,890 EUR); Mr. Putin 7,520,000 RUB (some 108,287 EUR); Ms. Sobchak 16,500 RUB (some 237 EUR) and Mr. Titov 21,531,000 RUB (some 310,000 EUR).

⁴⁰ See reports from organisations dealing with freedom of expression, including Human Rights Watch, [Online and All Fronts](#) or IREX, [Media Sustainability Index – Russia 2017](#).

⁴¹ The OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media statements from [29 September](#) 2017, [23 October](#) 2017 and [22 December](#) 2017 and [26 January](#) 2018.

⁴² The official media campaign period started on 17 February.

be devoted to debates among candidates, one third to political parties, and the rest to candidates' spots. The Law on Presidential Election stipulates that informational materials published by the media shall be objective and accurate and shall not violate the equality of candidates.

The CEC oversees media's compliance with campaign regulations. For that purpose, a working group, consisting mostly of CEC members and staff, representatives of state institutions and state-funded media was established in January 2018. To date it has held two public sessions. In addition, the CEC conducts its own media monitoring, analyzing the quantitative side of candidates' coverage on more than 30 television channels.

On 5 February, the ODIHR EOM commenced qualitative and quantitative monitoring of seven TV channels, two radio stations, seven newspapers and four online media.⁴³

XI. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Voters and electoral contestants, as well as civil society organisations, observers and election commissions may challenge the actions, inactions and decisions of the election administration with the higher-level election commissions and the courts. Complaints against the CEC must be filed with the Supreme Court. The law provides that if an appeal is filed simultaneously with the court and the relevant election commission, the commission suspends consideration of the complaint until the court reaches a decision.

A number of complaints related to campaign violations were filed with local election commissions and the CEC. To date, some 68 complaints against CEC decisions were lodged before the Supreme Court.⁴⁴ A total of 47 complaints were rejected as inadmissible.⁴⁵ Approximately 200 applications for clarifications and petitions were filed with the CEC.

Two cases related to the right to stand were lodged to the courts.⁴⁶ In both cases, the Supreme Court ruled that the law had not been violated.

⁴³ The monitoring is conducted daily from 18:00 until 24:00 in the case of nation-wide *First Channel*, *Russia 1* and *NTV*. The main news programmes of the following outlets are monitored: *Ren TV*, *TV Center (Moscow-based)*, *5th Channel (St.Petersburg-based)*, *Dozhd TV* (Internet television), and radio stations *Vesti FM* and *Ekho Moskvy*. Also politics-relevant articles of the newspapers *Rossiskaya Gazeta* (state-funded daily), *Kommersant*, *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, *Moskovskiy Komsomolets*, *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, *Vedomosti*, (private dailies) and *Argumenty i Fakty* (private weekly) are monitored. The ODIHR EOM also follows election-related coverage in the online outlets www.iz.ru, www.lenta.ru, www.medusa.io and www.rbc.ru.

⁴⁴ Among these, six complaints by candidates challenged the CEC's decision to deny their registration on several grounds, such as: self-nomination not being supported by 500 voters as required by the law, lack of notification of the CEC on the meeting of the group of voters according to the legal time limits, residence permit in a territory of a foreign state, incomplete supporting documentation for registration. The Supreme Court upheld the CEC decisions in all six cases.

⁴⁵ The Code of Administrative Procedure provides several reasons for inadmissibility of an administrative complaint to the Supreme Court, such as the complaint being concurrently examined by another jurisdiction, or that the alleged violation does not directly infringe upon the applicant's rights, or cannot be proved that the contested decision or action violates the rights of the claimant, or that there exists already a legally-binding decision of another court on the same matter.

⁴⁶ In a first case, following a complaint filed by Mr. Navalny challenging the constitutionality of the restriction of the right to be elected for persons convicted of grave and particularly grave offences for deprivation of liberty, the Constitutional Court in its decision of 18 January, found no violation of the plaintiff's constitutional rights. Mr. Navalny had been convicted to five years' imprisonment conditionally with a trial period of one year five months and a fine of 500,000 RUB. In a second case, a candidate, Ms. Sobchak, contested with the Supreme Court the CEC decision to register the incumbent claiming that, according to the Constitution, his limit for presidential terms has been exhausted. The Supreme Court in its decision of 16 February found that the CEC acted within the framework of its mandate and the established procedure for registering a candidate. In addition, the Supreme Court also found that the registration of Mr. Putin did not violate Ms. Sobchak's electoral rights.

XII. ELECTION OBSERVATION

The legislation provides for observation of an electoral process by representatives of electoral contestants, media, international observers and, following the December 2017 legislative amendments to the Law on Presidential Election, observers appointed by civic chambers.⁴⁷ Each candidate can appoint up to 600 proxies, and a political party that nominates a candidate up to 100 proxies. While amendments expanded the possibility to appoint observers to civic chambers, the law does not provide for observation by citizen observers and organizations independently of the civic chambers.

The recent amendments removed a number of restrictions on the rights and work of observers. They can now be present in the polling stations specified in their registration documents without providing a three day notification. Moreover, an observer can no longer be expelled from a polling station without a court decision. Media representatives can only be accredited as observers if they have held an employment contract with a media outlet at least two months before the official announcement of an election.

Representatives of various citizen observer groups, including *Golos*, *Sonar*, *National Civil Monitoring* and others, informed the ODIHR EOM that they will mostly nominate observers through candidates or civic chambers. Federal and regional civic chambers plan to recruit 200,000 observers to achieve maximum coverage of the country.⁴⁸ They have established a number of co-operation agreements with various public associations and civil society organizations. Many ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed reservations about the recruitment process of observers by civic chambers and questioned the integrity of the observers they field.

XIII. ODIHR EOM ACTIVITIES

The ODIHR EOM opened in Moscow with a press conference on 5 February. The Head of Mission met with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the CEC, the Supreme Court, as well as representatives of candidates, political parties, media and the resident diplomatic community. The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly has announced that it will deploy an observer delegation for election day observation.

***The English version of this report is the only official document.
An unofficial translation is available in Russian.***

⁴⁷ The Federal Civic Chamber created in 2005 is mandated to support citizens' interaction with government officials and local authorities in order to take into account the needs and interests of citizens, to protect their rights and freedoms in the process of shaping and implementing state policies, and to exercise public control over the activities of executive authorities. Of the 168 members of the federal civic chamber, 40 are appointed by the president, 85 by regional civic chambers, and 43 by public associations. Members of regional civic chambers are appointed by federal or regional governments and by civil society organizations.

⁴⁸ On 30 January 2018, the CEC issued a regulation on observation by civic chambers. However, a number of technical issues, including recruitment and observation methodology remain unclear. The Federal Civic Chamber informed the ODIHR EOM that their work on regulating the above issues is ongoing.