



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
15 October and 29 October 2017

OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission
Final Report



Warsaw
19 January 2018

TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	3
III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT	4
IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK.....	4
V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION.....	6
VI. VOTER REGISTRATION.....	8
VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION	10
VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT	11
IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE.....	15
X. MEDIA AND ELECTIONS.....	17
A. MEDIA ENVIRONMENT	17
B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK	18
C. THE OSCE/ODIHR MEDIA MONITORING FINDINGS	18
XI. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	20
XII. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS.....	22
XIII. PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES	23
XIV. ELECTION DAY (FIRST ROUND).....	23
A. OPENING AND VOTING	24
B. COUNTING AND TABULATION	24
XV. ELECTION DAY (SECOND ROUND).....	25
A. OPENING AND VOTING	26
B. COUNTING AND TABULATION	26
XVI. POST-ELECTION DAY DEVELOPMENTS	27
A. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS	27
B. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS	27
XVII. RECOMMENDATIONS.....	29
A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS	30
B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS	30
ANNEX I: ELECTION RESULTS.....	34
ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION.....	40
ABOUT THE OSCE/ODIHR.....	46

**THE FORMER YUGOSLAV REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS
15 October and 29 October 2017**

OSCE/ODIHR Election Observation Mission Final Report¹

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to observe the 15 October 2017 municipal elections, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) deployed an Election Observation Mission (EOM) on 13 September. The mission remained in the country to follow the second round on 29 October. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the elections with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and national legislation. For the first round on 15 October, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM was joined by a delegation from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). Each institution involved in this IEOM has endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation.

The statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued by the IEOM after the first round concluded that municipal elections “contributed to strengthening confidence in the democratic process. Elections were held in a competitive environment with candidates generally able to campaign without restriction and fundamental freedoms were overall respected. However, credible allegations of vote-buying, pressure on voters and isolated cases of violence occurred during the pre-election period. Overall, monitored media provided unbiased coverage of contestants and facilitated the opportunity for political debate. Despite organizational challenges, the election administration ensured that voters were able to exercise their voting rights”.

The statement of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions issued by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM after the second round concluded that “mayoral elections were competitive and the respect for fundamental freedoms contributed towards the conduct of democratic elections. The campaign was short and subdued, with parties vying for support from beyond their traditional base though occasionally using aggressive rhetoric. Isolated cases of misuse of administrative resources and vote-buying were reported. Media continued providing balanced coverage of contestants, but this was overshadowed by negative campaigning spots. Election day was overall professionally managed, although the performance of polling staff during counting could have been enhanced”.

The legal framework guarantees fundamental rights and freedoms and generally forms a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections. While amendments to the Electoral Code (EC) in recent years addressed a number of prior OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe recommendations, shortcomings remain, including undue restrictions on independent candidate registration, limited rights for legal redress and insufficient provisions for second rounds. In addition, a late revision of the EC relating to the SEC’s composition challenged the stability of the electoral process, at odds with international good practice.

The SEC was able to administer both rounds of the elections, yet it functioned along political lines. Its internal controversies resulted in missed deadlines and some of its decisions were in contradiction with the legislation. The SEC did not adequately plan for the second round, failed to implement a comprehensive voter education programme and, overall, lacked genuine transparency. Generally, mid-level commissions effectively performed their duties and some took additional measures to enhance

¹ The English version of this report is the only official document. An unofficial translation is available in Macedonian and Albanian.

transparency and stakeholders' trust in the administration of the elections. Positively, some steps to facilitate voting rights for persons with disabilities were introduced.

Some 1.8 million voters were registered for the elections. During online and in-person verification, only a small number of changes were requested, signalling growing confidence in the accuracy of the list. However, voters whose identification documents (IDs) expired or were to expire before the elections were excluded from the list, and thus effectively disenfranchised. This also applied to prisoners who were not able to update their IDs. In addition, the law does not provide for updating the lists between the rounds, hence voters who turned 18 during this period were not able to exercise their voting rights. The law also restricts suffrage rights for persons declared legally incompetent due to a disability, contrary to international obligations.

Following an inclusive registration process, 19 political parties and coalitions and 65 groups of voters fielded a total of 258 mayoral candidates and 370 candidates lists for council elections. Five per cent of candidate lists did not comply with the gender quota requirements, but were still registered. Voters were offered a range of choices, and highly-contested races took place in many municipalities.

The campaign took place in an environment where fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression were generally respected. However, isolated politically-motivated incidents occurred and credible allegations of vote-buying and pressure on voters persisted. Campaign strategies were designed centrally and modified prior to the second round to target undecided voters. Misuse of local government functions and administrative resources was observed in several municipalities and concerns were raised when the Prime Minister openly pledged government support for municipalities with mayors from the ruling coalition. This challenged the separation of state and party which is provided for by the OSCE commitments.

Campaign finance regulations, improved in recent years in line with OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe recommendations, generally provide for a level playing field and a degree of transparency. However, the latter was not fully realized due to untimely submission of reports, a lack of auditing requirements for interim campaign finance reports and enforcement provisions, as well as limited oversight authority of the State Audit Office. It reduced voters' ability to make an informed choice.

The legal framework provides for balanced and unbiased media coverage of the campaign. The public media offered all contestants free airtime, but only a few used it. The two larger parties dominated in paid advertising on private media. Debates were well organized, yet not all invited candidates participated. The effectiveness of adjudicating media-related offences was undermined by the courts missing legal deadlines and imposing lower penalties than prescribed by law.

Provisions to enhance gender equality were not always respected and the promotion of women's participation in public life was not featured in campaigns. The 30 per cent gender quota was met in the SEC composition, but not consistently upheld at lower levels of election administration. Fourteen per cent of all lists were led by women, while of all mayoral candidates, a mere six per cent were women.

Interethnic relations played a limited role in the elections. While some parties sought votes across ethnic lines, most candidate lists reflected the ethnic composition of a particular municipality. Confrontational intra-ethnic rhetoric was noted in municipalities where parties belonging to the same coalition at the national level competed locally. One serious election-related incident exposing a high degree of polarization in the Roma community occurred in Shuto Orizari district of Skopje.

The legal framework does not fully provide for effective legal redress in electoral disputes, with most decisions of the election administration not subject to judicial review, contrary to OSCE commitments. While many allegations of corrupt election-related practices were raised countrywide,

few complaints were filed with relevant authorities. Many OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors cited lack of trust in the ability of the election administration and courts to impartially handle cases.

Citizen observer access to all stages of the electoral process contributed to transparency and offered a non-partisan assessment of the elections. In total, some 3,000 citizen observers were accredited to follow election day proceedings. In addition, in several municipalities civil society made efforts to foster greater inclusion of persons with disabilities and vulnerable communities in the election process.

Both election days were generally well organised and were orderly in most parts of the country. However, some reoccurring irregularities, including family/group voting and compromised vote secrecy were noted. Procedural irregularities observed during the counting detracted from the positive assessment in both rounds. Tabulation improved in the second round. Also, after the second round, an immediate online publication of results by polling stations enhanced transparency.

The SEC received many complaints alleging irregularities on election day which could have constituted grounds for annulment. In both rounds all complaints were rejected. Cases were decided in open sessions and complaints and decisions published online, contributing to transparency. However, the manner in which many complaints were handled challenged the rule of law and due process, contrary to OSCE commitments and leaving substantiated cases without effective legal redress. The Administrative Court upheld all but one of the SEC decisions that were appealed.

Overall, the 2017 municipal elections were perceived as an important milestone in building the new government's credibility and contributed to strengthening confidence in the democratic process. The SEC certified the election results on 14 November, yet the outcome was not accepted across the political spectrum. The governing coalition endorsed the process, but the main opposition party refused to recognize the results due to alleged unsubstantiated widespread violations throughout the electoral process. Nevertheless, a peaceful transition of power across municipalities took place.

This report offers a number of recommendations to support efforts to bring elections in the host country further in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations relate to the need for an inclusive and timely legal reform, equal suffrage rights, transparency and accountability of the election administration, measures to ensure a level playing field in the campaign, the transparency in campaign finance, and the right to effective remedies. The OSCE/ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to improve the electoral framework and process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) established an Election Observation Mission (EOM) to observe the 15 October municipal elections. The EOM remained in the country for the 29 October second round. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM, headed by Ambassador Audrey Glover, comprised a 17-member core team based in Skopje and 20 long-term observers deployed throughout the country.

For the 15 October election day the OSCE/ODIHR EOM was joined by a 13-member delegation from the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe (Congress) from 12 Member States of the Council of Europe to form an International Election Observation Mission (IEOM). Each institution involved in this IEOM has endorsed the 2005 Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation. In total, 208 observers were deployed, and OSCE/ODIHR observers were drawn from 31 OSCE participating States. For the second round on 29 October, the OSCE/ODIHR

EOM included 17 experts in the capital, 17 long-term observers and 88 short-term observers deployed throughout the country. Observers were drawn from 25 OSCE participating States.

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM assessed compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. This final report follows Statements of Preliminary Findings and Conclusions for the first and second rounds, which were released at press conferences in Skopje on 16 October and 30 October, respectively.²

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM wishes to thank the authorities for the invitation to observe the elections, and the State Election Commission (SEC) and other authorities for their assistance. It also wishes to express its appreciation to civil society, political parties, media, and other institutions for sharing their views with the mission, as well as the international community representatives for their co-operation.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

After the 2016 early parliamentary elections, the formation of the government proved to be a challenge. In February 2017, the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Democratic Party for Macedonian National Unity (VMRO-DPMNE) which won the most seats in parliament, failed to reach an agreement with its traditional coalition partner, the Democratic Union for Integration (DUI). The DUI and other ethnic Albanian parties aligned with the Social Democratic Union of Macedonia (SDSM), yet the president did not give them a mandate to form the government.

The crisis escalated on 27 April, when after several unsuccessful attempts, an ethnic Albanian speaker of the parliament was elected. This triggered a confrontation in the parliament and resulted in a physical assault on its members, including senior members of the SDSM and Alliance for Albanians (AA). The political crisis de-escalated only after the president gave the mandate to the SDSM to form the government, which, following a six-month delay, was established on 31 May. Subsequently, municipal elections were postponed until 15 October. In July, the government endorsed economic, judicial and political reforms and a plan to address concerns on the misuse of administrative resources, pressure on public employees, unbalanced media coverage and lack of transparency of the election administration.

The country's long-standing aspirations to join the European Union (EU) and NATO, the continuously high unemployment and emigration rates formed the backdrop to these elections. Notably, the conduct of municipal elections was perceived by most OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors as having an impact on the ongoing EU and NATO integration processes.

IV. ELECTORAL SYSTEM AND LEGAL FRAMEWORK

Municipal elections are held every four years to elect mayors and councils in 80 municipalities and the City of Skopje. Councillors are elected by proportional representation through closed candidate lists.³ Mayors are elected through a two-round majoritarian system. If no mayoral candidate receives more than 50 per cent of all votes cast in the first round, a second round is held within two weeks. For the first round, a one-third voter turnout is required for mayoral elections; otherwise, the election is repeated for the corresponding municipality.⁴ There is no turnout requirement for the second round.

² See [previous OSCE/ODIHR reports on the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#).

³ The number of councillors per municipality varies from 9 to 33; the City of Skopje has 45 councillors.

⁴ The law does not establish when such a repeat election is to be held.

The elections are primarily governed by the 1991 Constitution and the 2006 Electoral Code (EC).⁵ The Constitution establishes a broad range of fundamental rights and freedoms that underpin democratic elections, including the protection of minority rights.⁶ The EC has undergone a series of positive amendments since its adoption and generally provides a sound basis for the conduct of democratic elections. Many of the amendments were in line with prior OSCE/ODIHR and Council of Europe's Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission) recommendations, with key changes improving the framework for separation of state and party, and campaign finance regulation.

However, some significant limitations, gaps and ambiguities relating to a number of aspects remain, including some noted in previous OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission recommendations.⁷ These relate to, among others, voting rights, candidate registration, electoral dispute resolution and, notwithstanding improvements, campaign finance regulations.⁸ In addition, despite amendments, the EC does not comprehensively and clearly regulate all aspects of the second round, at times leading to an inconsistent application of the law. This relates, for example, to voter list updates, applications for homebound voting, replacement of Election Board (EB) members, campaign donation limits, allocation of billboard and poster space, and the accreditation of observers.⁹

In 2017, two key amendments to the EC were introduced. Due to the delayed formation of the government, the timing of municipal elections was changed from May to October and the mandates of the sitting mayors extended. In addition, just weeks prior to the elections and contrary to good practice that recommends maintaining a stable electoral framework, the parliament was mandated to change the composition of the State Election Commission (SEC) to align it with the new composition of parliament.¹⁰ Moreover, this change was enacted under an expedited procedure, without broad consultation which is at odds with OSCE commitments.¹¹ The late adoption undermined the opportunity to seek timely judicial review of the amendment.

The Electoral Code should be comprehensively reviewed to address identified shortcomings, gaps and ambiguities, including provisions for second round of elections, to bring it in line with OSCE commitments, international obligations and good practice. The review and amendments should be conducted in a public procedure, after a broadly inclusive consultation process and sufficiently in advance of the next election.

Regulations adopted by the SEC supplement the EC; however, the timing and substance of changes to the regulatory framework at times challenged the integrity of the electoral process. The SEC approved and amended some regulations during the electoral period, at times on a last minute or retroactive

⁵ Other relevant laws include the Law on Political Parties, Law on Financing of Political Parties, Criminal Code, Law on Prevention of Corruption, Law on Administrative Disputes, and media-related laws.

⁶ The host country has ratified all key international and regional human rights instruments, including the United Nations (UN) [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women](#), [UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#) (CRPD) and the [UN Convention against Corruption](#) (CAC).

⁷ See the OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission Joint Opinions on the Electoral Code ([2011](#), [2013](#), [2016](#)).

⁸ As noted in a previous OSCE/ODIHR report, there is also a need to harmonize laws and regulations on court procedures with the provisions in the EC that provide exceptions to those procedures, for instance on review of SEC's draft decisions that affect minority interests and on disclosure of how judges voted in post-election cases.

⁹ For example, homebound voting provisions were inconsistently applied in the second round; some election commissions required approved homebound voters in the first round to reapply while other commissions did not.

¹⁰ The amendment was initiated by the Movement BESA (BESA), which entered parliament for the first time in December 2016. Section II.2.b of the 2002 Venice Commission [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) (Code of Good Practice) recommends that "the fundamental elements of electoral law, in particular the [...] membership of electoral commissions [...] should not be open to amendment less than one year before an election".

¹¹ Paragraph 5.8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) provides that legislation should be "adopted at the end of a public procedure".

basis.¹² Some regulations contradicted the law, such as the rules on the implementation of the gender quota and on the order of contestants on the ballot. Moreover, timely judicial review of SEC regulations is not provided for in the legislation.¹³

The SEC should maintain a stable regulatory framework and refrain from amending the rules during an electoral period, except to address emergency matters. The SEC should ensure that applicable rules are not contrary to or inconsistent with the EC. Consideration could be given to introducing an expedited process for challenges to the legality of election-related legislation and regulations.

V. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The municipal elections were administered by a three-level election administration, comprising the SEC, 80 Municipal Election Commissions (MECs) and the Election Commission for the City of Skopje, and 3,480 EBs. The second round was administered by 35 MECs where second rounds occurred and the 1,517 EBs under them. The SEC is supported by 34 regional offices and a secretariat made up of civil servants. Despite organizational challenges, the election administration generally ensured that voters had the opportunity to exercise their rights.

Based on the 2015 Przino Agreement, the EC was amended to change the SEC's composition from a political to a mixed model and from seven to nine members. Three SEC members have no political affiliation and are selected through open competition and the other six reflect the political composition of the parliament.¹⁴ The non-partisan members' five-year tenure is reasonably protected, while party nominees, following the 2017 amendments to the EC, had to be changed to align the composition of the SEC to the current parliament. Accordingly, on 22 September, a BESA member replaced the sitting Democratic Party of Albanians (DPA) member.¹⁵ The late change in the composition of the SEC was against international good practice. Furthermore, one SEC member was under indictment for misuse of office in 2013 municipal elections, thus compromising the public perception of the SEC.¹⁶

During the electoral period, the SEC did not always respect its internal procedures or members' terms of reference. SEC members' unnecessary involvement in the work of its secretariat resulted in missed deadlines, affecting primarily voter education and printing the braille ballot templates. Also, during the SEC's discussions on politically contentious issues such as complaints on denial of homebound voting, members lacked a collegial and professional approach and decisions were driven by party-nominated commissioners' political positioning, rather than by efficient and effective practise.

The SEC members should adhere to the legal requirement of impartiality and established procedures and respect the terms of reference set out for SEC members and the secretariat.

The work of the MECs was largely assessed positively by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM, and stakeholders generally placed trust in the MECs' actions and decisions. MECs comprise five members, who are

¹² For example, the regulation on gender quota was substantively changed after the candidate nomination deadline, the ballot lottery regulation was adopted at the same session the lottery was held, a regulation allowing use of expired identification cards in the second round was repealed a few days before elections, a decision prohibiting changes to EBs after the first round was adopted one week after the election day.

¹³ While the Constitutional Court has jurisdiction over the legality of regulations (and on breach of constitutionally-protected rights), the court has no deadline to decide on such cases.

¹⁴ The VMRO-DPMNE and SDSM have two members each as having the most seats in the parliament, followed by the DUI and BESA with one seat each.

¹⁵ The SEC member's term was to expire in 2020; his objection to dismissal filed with the Administrative Court and State Commission for Prevention of Corruption (SCPC) was rejected.

¹⁶ The pending indictment concerned charges of abuse of position by this member during adjudication of a post-election complaint.

public servants, randomly selected for a five-year term by a computer-generated algorithm. EBs are composed of two political appointees and three non-partisan members. The pool of public servants, from which MEC and EB members are drawn, is perceived by OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors as politicised and the selection process as such is not transparent, affecting trust in the election administration.¹⁷ For example, concerns were raised by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors over MEC members in Lipkovo who were perceived as supporters of the incumbent mayor.

To ensure that MEC and EB members possess appropriate professional experience and/or to reduce perception of bias in the election administration, their selection process should be made more transparent by publishing the list of prospective MEC and EB members, opening the computer programme for third party verification and facilitating observation of the process.

The EC sets ethnic and gender balance requirements in the composition of election administration at all levels.¹⁸ The gender requirement was met in the SEC, where three commissioners were women. In 13 MECs the gender quota was not upheld.¹⁹ Positively, 28 per cent of MECs had a female president. Countrywide data on a gender breakdown in EBs was not available. Appointments of EB members began in August and a few changes in the EBs continued throughout the country until after the first round, mainly due to the family or health reasons.

The election administration is required by law to make its work public.²⁰ However, in practice, the SEC lacked genuine transparency. While SEC sessions were open to the media and observers, they were not always announced in advance and substantive decisions were frequently made in closed meetings.²¹ Not all SEC regulations, decisions and guidelines were made public and the SEC's rules of procedure, which stipulate that the minutes should be posted within a week of a session, were often disregarded. The SEC and the secretariat made some efforts to improve transparency between the rounds, but delays in posting key information and minutes online continued, as did the practice of decision-making in closed meetings.²²

The level of transparency of MECs varied. While most did not apply measures to enhance transparency, some took initiatives to increase trust in their work.²³ For instance, the MEC in Novo Selo maintained a Facebook page, while the MEC in Jegunovce proactively informed stakeholders about its meetings and afterwards distributed minutes.

In order to increase transparency and public confidence in their work, the SEC and MECs should make their regulations, guidelines, decisions and minutes of sessions, including those related to procurement, public in a timely manner.

Before the first round, the SEC delivered three sets of timely and consistent training sessions to MEC members, who in turn trained EBs on candidate registration, early voting, and voting, counting and tabulation procedures. Nevertheless, on election day, filling in the results protocols proved to be a challenge for many EBs, hence, the SEC's secretariat identified EBs and MECs in need of additional

¹⁷ See also [EU Progress Report 2016](#).

¹⁸ No gender may comprise less than 30 per cent of any election commission. In municipalities where an ethnic minority is more than 20 per cent, the principle of adequate and equitable representation shall be applied.

¹⁹ Seven MECs had less than 30 per cent female members, while 6 had less than 30 per cent male members. No such data was available on ethnic representation.

²⁰ See also Article 19 of the [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#) (ICCPR) on the right of access to information and corresponding paragraphs 18 and 19 of [UN Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 34 to the ICCPR](#).

²¹ The SEC's rule requiring that invitations be sent two working days before a session was frequently disregarded.

²² For example, on 23 October, the SEC decided against changes to the EB composition in a closed session. The same decision was voted for again in an open session on 24 October.

²³ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM encountered lack of transparency in 30 MECs.

training before the second round. Those training sessions were neither standardised nor nationwide and those observed by the OSCE/ODIHR EOM were assessed as insufficient. Positively, six MECs organised trainings for EBs on their own initiative. The SEC also missed the opportunity to provide additional guidance and clarify instructions for MECs on how to correct results protocols with numerical errors, which was a source of confusion during the tabulation in the first round.

To improve MECs and EBs capacity and to ensure consistent conduct of elections, the SEC should provide timely and uniform trainings, in particular, on completing result protocols.

Local governments are responsible for financing municipal elections, although some failed to budget adequately. Municipalities whose accounts were blocked by a court decision due to unpaid debts were to receive funding from the state budget. Upon SEC's requests, the Ministry of Finance allocated MKD 38 million for 19 such municipalities, based on costs of previous elections.²⁴ However, the SEC did not transfer the money in time, nor foresaw budget for a possible second round.²⁵ Seven MECs made up financial shortfalls from their members' personal funds; at least 14 MECs lacked adequate premises and equipment.²⁶

Municipalities should ensure adequate and timely financial and operational planning, providing MECs with the necessary resources well ahead of elections. In addition, the relevant authorities should ensure that funds for any municipalities, including with blocked accounts, are transferred on time.

The SEC did not properly fulfil its duty to provide voter education.²⁷ It planned to outsource voter education services but due to procurement problems, this did not take place. The SEC therefore just modified a programme, originally designed for the 2016 parliamentary elections. Radio, TV, print and social media were used to disseminate the message that, while informative and useful, was assessed by OSCE/ODIHR EOM as barely noticeable. Voter education spots increased in the last week ahead of the runoffs, but the SEC's overall outreach efforts were minimal. Sign language was not added to the campaign spots and voter education materials for persons with visual impairments or mental and intellectual disabilities were not produced. Positively, the SEC, in co-operation with civil society, mapped polling stations that were accessible for wheelchairs and placed this information online. In addition, in several municipalities civil society made efforts to foster greater inclusion of persons with disabilities and vulnerable communities in the election process. In Kumanovo, a civic initiative was launched to assist persons with disabilities to exercise their voting rights; and in Prilep a CSO raised awareness on suffrage rights in the Roma community.

In order to enhance the effective exercise of voting rights, the SEC should develop and implement a comprehensive and nationwide civic and voter education programme, including for voters with various types of disabilities.

VI. VOTER REGISTRATION

²⁴ Approximately EUR 616,000; EUR 1 is an equivalent to MKD 61.

²⁵ For example, the SEC decided to transfer MKD 538,000 to cover transportation costs for the second round only on 25 October.

²⁶ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM was informed that MECs in Arachonovo, Demit Kapija, Konce and Plasnica had inadequate equipment; MECs in Gazi Baba, Gevgelija, Radochis, Tearce and Zhelino had inadequate office space. MECs in Bogovinje, Brvenica, Tearce, Vrapchishte, and Zhelino lacked funds.

²⁷ Paragraph 11 of the [UN Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 25 to the ICCPR](#) provides that "[v]oter education campaigns are necessary to ensure the effective exercise of article 25 rights by an informed community".

All citizens who reached the age of 18 have the right to vote, except those declared legally incapacitated by a court decision. Such a restriction is at odds with OSCE commitments and international obligations.²⁸ Furthermore, only persons with a registered address in the respective municipality and a valid identification card or a biometric passport are included in the voter register. This effectively disenfranchised eligible voters whose identification documents (IDs) had expired or were to expire before the election day and who were not able to renew them before the list was finalized. Such limitations contradict the constitutional provision for universal suffrage and are at odds with paragraph 7.3 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document.²⁹

As previously recommended, the EC should be revised to include all eligible voters in the voter lists, regardless of the validity of their identification documents. In line with international obligations, limitations on voting rights on the basis of legal incapacity should be removed, whilst necessary support mechanisms to exercise the right to vote should be provided.

In addition, the law does not have a provision for voters in hospitals, long-term care facilities and retirement homes, hence these voters were not able to vote. The EC contains a general provision for homebound voting, while the SEC regulation details eligibility criteria.³⁰ A cumbersome application procedure, however, unduly hindered the opportunity for eligible voters to cast their ballot, at odds with international standards.³¹ In several cases the SEC, breaching its own regulation, overturned MEC decisions and approved homebound voting for persons not falling under the categories listed in the regulation.

The law should provide an opportunity for all persons entitled to vote including persons in healthcare institutions, long-term care facilities and retirement homes to exercise their right. Consideration should also be given to revising the regulation for homebound voting eligibility to enhance participation.

Voter registration is passive; the SEC maintains the voter register based on data extracted from civil and population registers. Four times a year, it updates the register based on data provided by various state agencies.³² The day after an election is called, a supplementary update of the voter register is conducted. The SEC has the right to undertake random inspections for accuracy. For these elections, the SEC did not deem it necessary to undertake a comprehensive verification of the voter register.³³

Public scrutiny of voter lists took place from 21 August until 9 September. During this period, more than 220,000 voters checked their data online and in-person, but only 230 requested corrections.³⁴ On 16 September, two days after the deadline, parties, but not independent candidates, received a copy of

²⁸ Paragraph 7.3 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) commits participating States to “guarantee universal and equal suffrage to adult citizens”. Deprivation of the right to vote on the basis of legal incapacity is also inconsistent with Articles 12 and 29 of the CRPD. Paragraph 9.4 of the [2013 CRPD Committee’s Communication No. 4/2011](#) provides that “an exclusion of the right to vote on the basis of a perceived or actual psychosocial or intellectual disability, including a restriction pursuant to an individualized assessment, constitutes discrimination on the basis of disability”.

²⁹ See also sections I.1.1 and I.1.2 of the Code of Good Practice. Article 22 of the Constitution provides that “Every citizen on reaching 18 years of age acquires the right to vote. The right to vote is equal, universal and direct [...]”.

³⁰ The regulation includes an exhaustive list of health conditions that can form the basis for approval of homebound voting and establishes strict documentation requirements.

³¹ Paragraph 11 of the UN Human Rights Committee General Comment No. 25 to the ICCPR provides that “States must take effective measures to ensure that all persons entitled to vote are able to exercise that right”.

³² The Ministry of Interior (MoI) informs on changes in the residency and identification documents’ registry; basic courts update on persons deprived of their legal capacity.

³³ Nevertheless, the SEC informed the OSCE/ODIHR EOM that according to records received from the MoI, 7,007 persons with no registered address and some 600 with uncertain addresses were not on the list.

³⁴ During public scrutiny, 203,191 voters verified data online and 21,594 at the SEC regional offices. There were 133 requests for corrections of data, 65 additions, 22 removals due to death and 10 of another nature.

the voter list. Parties requested only a few changes.³⁵ As a result, many interlocutors acknowledged growing confidence in the integrity of the voter register, while some continued to express concern.

A total of 1,814,644 voters were registered for these elections.³⁶ The SEC approved final voter lists on 25 September, a day after the official deadline. Printed lists were sent to the MECs, which then delivered them to the EBs. There are no provisions for updating lists between rounds, effectively disenfranchising voters whose IDs expired and who turned 18 years old between the rounds, at odds with OSCE commitments and international standards on suffrage rights.³⁷ In addition 900 prisoners were unable to vote because they could not renew their IDs.

To improve the accuracy of the voter list and to facilitate voters' participation, an update of the voter lists between the rounds should be considered. Consideration should be given to extending the period of scrutiny of the voter lists and to bringing the deadline for changes closer to election day.

On 25 October, the SEC adopted a decision by which voters who were on the list, but whose IDs expired as of 9 September were not allowed to vote.³⁸ The SEC called on voters to renew IDs before the second round.

VII. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Any eligible voter residing in the respective municipality may stand for election, except those currently in prison or waiting to serve a prison term of more than six months. Candidates may be nominated by parties, coalitions of parties, or, for independent candidates, by groups of voters. The latter are required to support a nomination with signatures from 100 to 1,000 voters depending on the number of voters in the municipality, which is equivalent to 0.2 to 4.8 per cent of eligible voters residing in the respective municipality.³⁹ This impinges on the equality of citizens' ability to stand for election and goes against good practice, which recommends that supporting signatures should not exceed one per cent of registered voters.⁴⁰ Positively, as previously recommended by the OSCE/ODIHR, voters may now sign in support of more than one candidate. However, signatures are still to be collected in the presence of an SEC representative. In small communities, such requirements may have a dissuasive or intimidating effect on some voters.

Consideration could be given to standardising the required number of signatures for independent candidates at up to one per cent of registered voters in line with international good practice. In addition, as previously recommended, consideration could be given to providing alternative methods for signature collection in order to reduce the potential for intimidation.

Following a largely inclusive registration process, 19 parties and coalitions and 65 groups of voters fielded a total of 6,630 candidates on 370 lists for the council elections, and 258 mayoral candidates, including 19 independents, for the mayoral elections. Candidate registration ended on 19 September and lists were published on SEC website on 25 September, as well as displayed at MEC offices for

³⁵ Parties requested inclusion of or deletion of a total of 49 voters. Requests for inclusion were accepted, the ones for deletion were rejected by the SEC, as such changes are under the jurisdiction of the MoI, not the SEC.

³⁶ The total number of voters registered to vote in the second round was 844,716.

³⁷ The voter list was closed for changes from voters from 9 September until after the 29 October runoffs.

³⁸ As per the EC, voters must present a national ID or passport; it does not explicitly mention validity. The SEC also repealed a long-standing decision that had allowed voters to vote with expired IDs in the second round.

³⁹ In 18 municipalities the required number of signatures exceeds 2 percent and in 9 it is above 3 per cent of all registered voters. In Lozovo and Vevchani, it reached 4.8 per cent of registered voters.

⁴⁰ See Article 3 [ICCPR](#) and Section I.1.3.ii of the Code of Good Practice.

familiarization.⁴¹ As MECs decide on registration, no data was available nationally on the number and reasons for rejected lists or candidates.⁴² The OSCE/ODIHR EOM is aware of the rejection of five candidate lists, which was appealed to and dismissed by the Administrative Court in all of these cases.⁴³ However, approved lists and candidates are not subject to legal challenge. A legal challenge was made by a party against a coalition that ran with the same name and logo as the party; the complaint was rejected as it is not prohibited for a coalition or a list submitted by a group of voters to use the same name and/or logo as a registered party.⁴⁴ There is no provision for withdrawal of candidates.

The EC could be revised to prohibit coalitions and lists, submitted by a group of voters, from using the same name/or logo as a registered party and to regulate the withdrawal of candidates.

Contrary to the EC, the SEC held two lotteries on candidate order on the ballot; one for parties and coalitions, and the other for groups of voters. It discriminated against independent candidates, as they were placed at the bottom of the ballots.

To enhance gender equality, the EC requires candidate lists to include at least 40 per cent of the less represented gender. Also, at least one candidate of each gender must be placed within every three spots on the list, and additionally within every ten.⁴⁵ On 17 September, after the deadline for nominations and in a response to requests by political parties, the SEC amended a regulation detailing how the gender quota should be applied. It contradicted the EC and undermined the gender quota.⁴⁶ MECs registered 9 lists with fewer than 40 per cent female candidates; 11 lists did not have a woman in every third place and 6 did not have one in every tenth spot. MECs attributed this to oversight and arithmetical errors. Notably, however, one MEC that received a list with too few male candidates requested it to be corrected. Fourteen per cent of all lists were led by a woman, while of all mayoral candidates, a mere six per cent were women. Six female mayoral candidates progressed to the second round.

Political parties should comply with the gender quota requirements set out in the EC; while the SEC and MECs should strictly enforce the legislation. Approval of the lists should be subject to judicial review.

VIII. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

For the first round, the official campaign commenced on 25 September and ended at midnight on 13 October; for the second round, it lasted from 16 October until midnight on 27 October.⁴⁷ Campaigning prior to the official period, including holding meetings with voters to promote campaign platforms, is banned and subject to a high fine. While official campaign periods can be established for providing

⁴¹ Registration deadlines were extended in municipalities affected by a computer problem in Skopje Basic Court 1, which prevented the court from issuing certain required documentation to candidates for a few days.

⁴² The SEC does not require MECs to report to the SEC on all their decisions in the candidate registration process.

⁴³ Three of these lists were de-registered because a dedicated bank account was not opened within the legal deadline.

⁴⁴ The party Alliance for Albanians challenged the registration of the Coalition Alliance for Albanians; both ran in several municipalities. The SEC in the first instance and the Administrative Court on appeal took the case under consideration despite not having jurisdiction over the matter.

⁴⁵ In 2015 the gender quota was increased from 30 to 40 per cent, and the additional one in every ten spots added. These were the first municipal elections in which this enhanced gender quota was applicable.

⁴⁶ For example, the regulation provided that in municipalities with councils of between 11 and 19 members, a woman could be placed as low as the last place, instead of within the first ten places as required by the EC.

⁴⁷ While the EC does not specifically regulate the start of the campaign in the second round, it was assumed that campaign commences after the first-round election day.

special rights such as free media access and free space for campaign posters, as noted in previous OSCE/ODIHR reports, generally restricting campaign activity is contrary to international standards and constitutional guarantees of freedom of expression and assembly.

The EC comprehensively regulates campaigning and generally provides for a level playing field, although independent candidates are not granted full equitable conditions, such as designated billboard space and media coverage. The law aims to protect voters from undue pressure, prevent vote-buying, uphold a separation of the state and party during elections, as well as ban the misuse of administrative resources, including prohibitions against state and local governments making payments that are not already budgeted for, initiating new public infrastructure projects, and terminating or filling public positions.⁴⁸

The EC should guarantee independent candidates campaign conditions on an equitable basis with other contestants.

Prior to the official campaign period, on 5 September the government adopted a Declaration on Free and Fair Elections, calling on public and state officials to refrain from fraudulent activities and to respect voters' right to choose freely.⁴⁹ On 24 September at the SEC and MECs, most mayoral candidates signed a code of conduct pledging to uphold the law.⁵⁰ The pre-campaign environment was generally calm with a few isolated incidents, including some vandalised campaign offices.⁵¹ There were some instances of contestants campaigning in the silence period. Several complaints were made to law enforcement and the election administration on this matter.⁵²

The campaign took place in an environment where fundamental freedoms of assembly and expression were generally respected. Voters were offered a range of choices and highly-contested races took place in many municipalities. Campaigns commenced with festive rallies, where party leaders presented their candidates, unveiled slogans, and outlined policy platforms. Electoral contestants tended to focus on their party support base, conducted door-to-door canvassing and small-scale meetings. Large billboards appeared in urban centres, predominantly featuring mayoral candidates.⁵³ Some parties opened temporary campaign offices where centrally produced campaign goods were distributed.

Using social media was an indispensable campaign tool.⁵⁴ Many candidates opened official Facebook accounts, where they predominantly posted pictures from rallies and meetings rather than discussed policy issues or interacted with voters. Overall, candidates from larger parties, particularly the VMRO-DPMNE, used social media more frequently compared to other parties and independent candidates. Contestants also purchased advertisements in broadcast, print and online media.

⁴⁸ In May 2017, the Constitutional Court repealed two of the bans aimed at separating state and party in an election period on grounds they violated the constitutional principle of rule of law: the bans on managing public budgets and funds and on payment of non-regular subsidies. Notably, the SCPC, the body responsible for enforcing these provisions, informed the OSCE/ODIHR EOM that it considers these provisions still in force and not annulled.

⁴⁹ On 12 September, the government issued two manuals to state institutions outlining legal prohibitions on the conduct and activities of public entities and employees, and listed state resources not to be used for campaigning.

⁵⁰ While the EC requires political parties to sign a code of conduct for all elections, this did not take place.

⁵¹ On 24 September, the VMRO-DPMNE office in Kisela Voda and the SDSM office in Aerodrom were vandalized.

⁵² The SEC received a complaint alleging that the son of a mayoral candidate was campaigning at a polling station in Struga. The MoI received eight reports of alleged campaigning on second round election day.

⁵³ While contestants were provided free space for campaign posters, materials were often posted in prohibited locations; destruction of posters also occurred.

⁵⁴ The AA mayoral candidate from Struga had the highest number of followers on his Facebook page (56,000); the most active candidates posted 8 to 14 posts per day.

Strategies for municipal campaigns were drawn up at the central level and implemented locally. Prior to the first round, some party leaders, while holding rallies in administrative centres, campaigned on national issues of stability and integration and linked them to local issues of water, sanitation and infrastructure. The VMRO-DPMNE, and to a lesser extent, the SDSM, used negative messages and tone during rallies.⁵⁵ Regardless of this, OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors consistently noted an improvement in the campaign environment and conduct.

Smaller parties and independent candidates ran modest campaigns where they presented their visions for local development. A number of them complained to the OSCE/ODIHR EOM about the lack of a level playing field and noted that they had difficulties to fund their campaigns, pay campaign staff, and organize larger-scale campaign events in comparison to larger and better funded parties.

The generally peaceful atmosphere exhibited during the first round continued during the second round. Before the second round the AA announced a new coalition with BESA, while the SDSM reaffirmed its support for DUI. Campaign strategies were redesigned centrally, and candidates were given more autonomy locally. Overall the campaign for the second round was subdued, becoming dynamic only a few days before elections. Candidates focused on direct communication and face to face interaction with voters; only a few large-scale rallies took place and candidates reduced their presence on social media. Some contestants focused on communities where the turnout was particularly low during the first round. With a number of tight races in ethnic Albanian areas, the campaign rhetoric became more intense and occasionally aggressive, as compared to the municipalities with the SDSM versus VMRO-DPMNE runoffs. Positively, in Arachinovo the SDSM supported a female Albanian candidate from DUI, who was elected. OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that the second round was more competitive, with parties vying for support outside their traditional bases.

A strict separation of state administration from campaign activities was not always adhered to. On 19 September, using an urgent procedure, the government adopted several laws providing financial and social benefits to citizens.⁵⁶ During the election period, there was also a parliamentary debate on a controversial draft law on languages that includes the official status for the Albanian language. Prior to the second round, the Prime Minister, at times in his official capacity, addressed the electorate at SDSM rallies, and regularly used his official Twitter account to send campaign messages.⁵⁷ He promoted inclusivity, local development and EU and NATO integration. Some parties expressed concerns about the Prime Minister pledging government support for municipalities that elect an SDSM or DUI mayor.⁵⁸ These actions undermined the separation of the state and party, which is provided for by the OSCE commitments.⁵⁹

⁵⁵ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM observed 50 rallies in the first round and 5 in the second round. The large political parties held rallies in urban centers, rather than rural municipalities. Overall, rallies were well attended, with an average audience of 1,000 attendees.

⁵⁶ These increased the minimum wage, provided monthly payments to former public employees of privatized state bodies, and repealed a fee for broadcast service. As per the SCPC Opinion issued on 15 August, any legislative debates during an election period are prohibited by law.

⁵⁷ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM observed such events in Chair, Gazi Baba, Gostivar, Karbinci, Shuto Orizari, Staro Nagorichane, Struga and Vinica. In addition, for example, on 27 October, on a Twitter account dedicated to his official capacity as the Prime Minister and as SDSM leader, he promised to lower water prices by 10 per cent to all households in Shtip after the elections.

⁵⁸ A number of concerns were raised by the AA and BESA candidates.

⁵⁹ Paragraph 5.4 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document calls for “a clear separation between the State and political parties; in particular, political parties will not be merged with the State”. The 2016 [OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines for Preventing and Responding to the Misuse of Administrative Resources during Electoral Processes](#) provides that “in order to prevent the misuse of administrative resources to imbalance the level playing field during electoral competitions, the legal framework should state that no major announcements linked to or aimed at creating a favourable perception towards a given party or candidate should occur during campaigns”.

As previously recommended, authorities should exercise greater political will to ensure sufficient separation between state and party.

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM was informed by interlocutors about misuse of administrative resources in several municipalities and is aware of some complaints on this matter that were filed with the relevant authorities. Some concerned initiation of road construction and other infrastructure projects in contravention of the EC.⁶⁰ A number of cases related to terminations, transfers or hiring of public employees, in violation of the EC, were brought to the attention of the OSCE/ODIHR EOM. Other instances included a municipality advertising jobs for a private company and misuse of position by two incumbent mayors.⁶¹ In addition, charges were laid against two mayors for abuse of office, including one case involving direct use of administrative resources for the campaign.⁶²

Throughout the campaign, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM noted many allegations of pressure on voters, intimidation and vote-buying by different parties; some of these allegations were credible.⁶³ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM was informed by various stakeholders about such instances in at least 10 different municipalities, with pressure on vulnerable groups and threats of repercussions against public employees being the most frequent allegations.⁶⁴ However, only a few official complaints were filed with respective law enforcement authorities on these matters. Any actions that create an atmosphere in which voters feel that they are not able to freely cast their votes without fear of retribution are contrary to OSCE commitments.⁶⁵ In addition, one civil society organization (CSO) received many complaints of minors being used in the campaigns of almost all parties, which signalled significant concerns with regard to this issue.⁶⁶

All instances and allegations of pressure, intimidation, vote-buying and misuse of administrative resources should be thoroughly and effectively investigated and prosecuted by authorities in a timely manner. There should also be civic education aimed at alleviation of corrupt activities in election campaigns with input from respective agencies.

⁶⁰ For instance, official complaints alleged illegal initiation of infrastructure projects in Kisela Voda, Shtip, Brvenica, Kriva Palanka and Struga; the OSCE/ODIHR EOM observed a road construction in several municipalities, including Tetovo. In Gostivar, the local government requested through the media for proposals for urban development projects.

⁶¹ In Demir Kapija, a government notice posted on the municipal building called on citizens to apply for 200 jobs in a private company. A complaint was filed against the mayor of Centar Zhupa for allegedly distributing building materials and the OSCE/ODIHR EOM observed that the mayor of Pehchevo failed to allocate free space for campaign posters in breach of the law.

⁶² The mayor of Shtip was charged with misuse of office (not election-related). The mayor of Novo Selo was charged with misuse of office for allegedly distributing campaign materials while using an official vehicle.

⁶³ In the first round in Studenicani, a party offered voters employment in the administration, in Kochani, a candidate was investigated for vote-buying, in Demir Kapija a voter informed the police that money was offered for his vote. In Tetevo, a municipal notice posted in an apartment building promised that a water pump, valued at EUR 1,000, would be installed. In the second round 3 persons were charged with vote-selling and vote-buying in Struga and 1 in Shtip; in Cheshinovo-Obleshevo and Zrnovci 13 party activists were interrogated on vote-buying allegations.

⁶⁴ In the first round, in Chaska, state official threatened families with the loss of social security benefits; a similar case took place in Kochani against a Roma family and in Dolneni against persons living in a social care center. In Kavadarci, a person close to one party pressured two employees to collect 50 votes; after they refused, they were fired. In the second round, in Zrnovci, a party activist was summoned for interrogation about alleged intimidation of voters and in Veles, one person was under investigation for pressure on employees to vote a certain way. In Debreshte a state official close to one party was allegedly visiting voters' houses and requesting them to vote for that party.

⁶⁵ Paragraph 7.7 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document calls to "ensure that [...] neither administrative action, violence nor intimidation prevents the voters [...] from casting their vote free of fear of retribution".

⁶⁶ In addition, in Krushevo municipality, a report was lodged with the police regarding the distribution of VMRO-DPMNE campaign material by a student in an elementary school.

A few isolated politically-motivated incidents occurred across the country, related to attacks on campaign offices and violence against one candidate.⁶⁷ Prior to the first round, in Shuto Orizari the incumbent mayoral candidate for the Union of Roma from Macedonia (URM) was attacked and injured. Between the rounds, animosity between the candidates' supporters continued, resulting in a high police presence. Incidents in Shuto Orizari exposed tensions and a high degree of polarization in the Roma community.⁶⁸

The promotion of women's participation in public life did not prominently feature in campaigns.⁶⁹ During rallies, female candidates were often on the main stage, but rarely spoke. However, women candidates who met with the OSCE/ODIHR EOM did not express concern on the lack of equal opportunity to campaign. On average 23 per cent of attendees at rallies observed were women; a lower women's participation rate was noted at rallies in ethnic Albanian areas.⁷⁰ Within campaign management teams, women did not hold prominent leadership positions.

It is recommended that political parties and relevant institutions take initiatives to encourage the participation of women in the electoral process and in political decision-making.

IX. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign finance regulations have undergone significant development in recent years, in line with previous recommendations of the OSCE/ODIHR, Venice Commission, and Council of Europe's Group of States against Corruption (GRECO).⁷¹ However, some previous recommendations and limitations in the legal framework remain unaddressed, reducing transparency and accountability. In addition, concerns have been raised by the European Commission about a lack of political will to create an effective mechanism for monitoring the financing of campaigns, and overlapping mandates of various institutions and law enforcement agencies.⁷²

Campaigns are funded by party membership fees and private donations. Public, foreign and anonymous donations, among other sources, are prohibited. Donations are limited to EUR 3,000 for individuals and EUR 30,000 for legal entities, including in-kind contributions. The campaign spending limit is EUR 1.8 per registered voter in a municipality, for each round. All campaign transactions are to be administered through a dedicated bank account.⁷³ Campaign expenses are reimbursed by the local administration at a rate of EUR 0.24 per vote received for lists that obtain at least 1.5 per cent of all votes cast in a municipality.⁷⁴ Breach of most campaign finance rules results in

⁶⁷ At least 10 campaign offices of the BESA, DUI, SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE were vandalized. There was an attempted pepper spraying of the leader of the VMRO-DPMNE while he spoke at a rally in Skopje. The BESA candidate in Saraj received a threat after participating in a public debate that addressed corruption. Although not election-related, one candidate was killed in an incident in Kichevo.

⁶⁸ The URM is the party that was in power in Shuto Orizari and is a traditional ally of the VMRO-DPMNE. OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted that the change of government weakened the URM position locally and boosted the confidence of their competitors, in particular of the SDSM candidate.

⁶⁹ [OSCE Ministerial Council Decision No.7/09 Women's Participation in Political and Public Life](#) calls to "provide for specific measures to achieve the goal of gender balance in all legislative, judicial and executive bodies".

⁷⁰ In Albanian areas between 5 and 10 per cent of all attendees were women.

⁷¹ See the 2014 [GRECO Third Evaluation Round Second Compliance Report](#).

⁷² See [2016 European Commission Report](#) on host country's progress related to the EU accession process.

⁷³ The account must be opened within 48 hours of candidate list registration; failure to do so results in de-registration.

⁷⁴ Amounts in the EC are provided in EUR.

partial or full cancellation of the reimbursement and/or the application of strict fines, and in some cases prison terms.⁷⁵

Two interim reports were to be submitted to the SEC, State Audit Office (SAO) and SCPC by contestants prior to the first round (on 5 and 14 October) and one in the second round (on 28 October).⁷⁶ A large number of contestants failed to submit the interim reports by the deadline or at all resulting in limited access to campaign finance data for voters prior to casting ballots; many were sent by post for arrival after election day, including by VMRO-DPMNE in both rounds.⁷⁷ Despite a previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendation, there are no fines for failure to submit interim reports on time, limiting enforceability.⁷⁸ While interim reports are to be published by the relevant institutions and contestants, no deadline for this is provided; only the SEC promptly published most reports.⁷⁹

The Ministry of Finance issued a new reporting template that requires comprehensive information about all donors and donations and, in line with a previous OSCE/ODIHR recommendation, a detailed breakdown of expenditures thus improving transparency. However, the interim reports of some parties, including the SDSM, did not break down advertising expenses in the detail required by the template. In addition, according to the SDSM, its reports reflected only about half of its expenditures as many invoices had not been received, particularly for TV advertising.⁸⁰ Moreover, some parties spent in excess of reported income, reportedly using bank credit to fund the excess expenses, in contravention of the law.⁸¹ Some reports, especially those of groups of voters, used the outdated less detailed template. Larger political parties spent most of their campaign funds on paid advertising in traditional and online media;⁸² thirteen reports list zero income and expenditures.

The EC should require interim campaign finance reports be submitted electronically and establish suitable penalties for late or non-submission. The template should include a breakdown of expenses by municipality and require reporting of incurred expenses. In addition, the law should require the publishing of interim and final reports on the day of submission.

The SAO is responsible for campaign finance oversight, including handling complaints and referring violations to the relevant law enforcement bodies.⁸³ However, interim finance reports are not subject to any review, preventing early detection of irregularities. The SAO is required to audit the final reports, to be submitted within four months of the election, an unduly protracted deadline.⁸⁴ Contrary

⁷⁵ The EC and Law on Prevention of Corruption both include financial penalties for campaign finance violations; some of the fines contradict each other.

⁷⁶ According to the SEC and SCPC, they do not review the reports, only publish them on their websites.

⁷⁷ By the deadline, the SEC had received only 28 and 15 (out of 84) first and second interim reports, respectively, and only 5 (out of 10) interim reports in the second round. The SEC stamped VMRO-DPMNE's last interim report as received on the deadline date, although it was received by post days after the deadline.

⁷⁸ Reimbursement of campaign expenses can only be suspended until the interim report is submitted.

⁷⁹ The SAO and SCPC did not publish the reports on receipt, with the second and third reports published only after election day; while parties are required to publish their reports many did not do so on a timely basis or at all.

⁸⁰ The template requires reporting of only invoiced expenditures. The current template does not require expenses to be broken down by municipality, precluding determination of compliance with spending limits.

⁸¹ For example, the VMRO-DPMN, AA, BESA, DPA, DUI, Levica and several independent candidates reported more expenditures than income.

⁸² This refers to the SDSM, VMRO-DPMNE, DUI and BESA.

⁸³ Under the Law on Prevention of Corruption, the SCPC has responsibility for oversight of campaign finance regarding use of state resources and illegal source donations for campaigning. As required by law, in 2013 the SAO, SCPC, and SEC signed a cooperation memorandum on sharing information on campaign finance violations.

⁸⁴ Paragraph 200 of the 2011 [OSCE/ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulations](#) (Guidelines on Political Party Regulations) provides that "Reports on campaign financing should be turned into proper authorities within a period of no more than 30 days after the elections [...] In an effort to support transparency, it is good practice for such financial reports to be made available on the Internet in a timely

to good practice, the EC does not define the scope of audits and the SAO does not have investigative powers.⁸⁵ According to the SAO, it only verifies income and expenses, not aiming at detecting violations. Furthermore, not all reports are audited, due to its limited mandate and resources. This does not fulfil transparency and accountability requirements as outlined in international standards and good practice.⁸⁶ The SAO did not receive any complaints or referred any matters to law enforcement bodies.

The SAO should be mandated to conduct a review of interim reports, and to publish its findings and refer possible violations to appropriate authorities prior to election day. The deadline for filing final reports should be within 30 days after the election. The law should establish the scope of audits to ensure comprehensive review against any possible infringement, and SAO granted the necessary investigatory powers. Established penalties for all violations should be imposed.

X. MEDIA

A. Media Environment

The media landscape, characterized by a large number of operators in a small market, includes around 170 media outlets. Television is the main source of information, the circulation of newspapers is low, while growing Internet penetration has led to a significant development of online news websites. The Albanian language media market exists alongside the Macedonian one.⁸⁷ Overall, the media is divided along political lines and concerns still persist on low professional standards in a number of media outlets to the detriment of the public's right to receive objective and balanced reporting.⁸⁸

The public broadcaster Macedonian Radio and Television (MRT) operates MTV1, MTV2, a Parliamentary Channel as well as three radio stations. Public broadcaster MTV2 (Albanian language channel) and private TV station *Alsat-M*, are the two major nationwide Albanian language media outlets.⁸⁹ The private broadcasters *TV Sitel*, *Kanal 5* and *Telma* are the most watched channels in the country.

On 19 September 2017, the parliament abolished the broadcasting fee that financed the public broadcaster, the Agency for Audio and Audiovisual Media Services (AVMS) and Macedonian Broadcasting (MRD). From 1 October 2017, these institutions are funded only from the state budget. OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors noted concerns that such funding limits may hinder the AVMS and further weaken the MRT as a public broadcaster due to possible political interference.⁹⁰

manner". By law, the SAO has 60 days for audits, although it does not interpret this as a deadline for finalization of the audit.

⁸⁵ Paragraph 214 of the Guidelines on Political Party Regulations provides that "The regulatory authority should be given the power to monitor accounts and conduct audits of financial reports. The process [...] should be stated in relevant legislation". See also paragraph 220.

⁸⁶ Article 7(3) of the [CAC](#) recommends that "each State Party shall also consider taking appropriate legislative and administrative measures [...] to enhance transparency in the funding of candidatures for elected public office and where applicable, the funding of political parties". See also paragraphs 201-206 of the Guidelines on Political Party Regulations.

⁸⁷ There are 23 Albanian language television stations, 13 radio stations and 3 newspapers.

⁸⁸ The 2015 and 2016 amendments to the EC addressed some concerns, but key media reforms have not yet been implemented.

⁸⁹ *Alsat-M* also creates some of its own products in Macedonian language, and adds Macedonian language subtitles to Albanian programs.

⁹⁰ The MRT, AVMS and MRD will receive a total of 0.5 per cent of the 2018 state budget; 75 per cent of this amount will be devoted to the MRT. OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors believe that not less than one per cent is necessary.

B. Legal Framework

The Constitution guarantees freedom of expression and prohibits censorship. The EC requires all media, including news websites, to cover the elections in a fair, balanced and unbiased manner. However, the EC does not explicitly provide for equitable media coverage for independent candidates. The paid advertising in private media is strictly regulated as is MRT news coverage of elections.⁹¹ In addition, the MRT is required to provide political contestants with free airtime for political presentation within primetime hours. Prior to both rounds, the allocation of free airtime slots was determined according to the date of the candidates' requests, contrary to EC provisions.⁹²

Media compliance with the legal requirements is monitored by the AVMS, which refers potential violations and complaints to the relevant court. The AVMS conducted systematic media monitoring and regularly published reports on its website. The AVMS initiated 14 misdemeanour proceedings against nine media outlets on violations pertaining to paid political advertising, unbalanced reporting, the publication of opinion polls and violation of campaign silence.⁹³ The basic courts issued decisions in four cases, in three imposing fines lower than prescribed by the EC and in one case issuing an official warning. Two decisions were appealed by the AVMS on grounds that the fines were insufficient.⁹⁴ The AVMS has proved its professionalism during the elections, entirely fulfilling its mandate. However, the effectiveness of adjudicating media-related complaints was undermined by courts missing legal deadlines and imposing fines below those prescribed in the law. Furthermore, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors expressed concerns about the appointment of the AVMS Council. On September 2017, new amendments to the Law on Audio and Audiovisual Media Services have been proposed in order to change the election procedure of the AVMS Council and to ensure the independence from political interference.⁹⁵

To further safeguard the role of the AVMS, its members should be appointed in a manner that ensures its independence from political influence.

C. The OSCE/ODIHR Media Monitoring Findings

The OSCE/ODIHR EOM media monitoring results showed that, as required by the EC, the MRT provided all contestants with free-of-charge airtime within prime time.⁹⁶ However, only 26 candidates used this opportunity on MTV1 during the first round and 5 candidates during the second round. In neither round did any Albanian speaking candidates request free airtime on MTV2. Regrettably,

⁹¹ According to Article 76-a of the EC, the MRT had to devote 30 per cent of its daily newscast to campaign activities of the ruling parties, 30 per cent to the opposition parties, and 10 per cent to non-parliamentary parties all together. On private broadcast media, ruling and opposition parties could each purchase up to eight minutes per hour, while other parliamentary and non-parliamentary parties were each limited to one minute per hour.

⁹² According to the MRT internal policy, five and three minutes of free airtime were devoted to each mayoral candidate and each lead candidate of the list for municipal council elections, respectively.

⁹³ The AVMS started misdemeanour proceedings against five private national broadcasters *TV Alsat-M*, *TV Nova*, *TV 24 Vesti*, *TV 21-M*, *TV Alfa*. Three regional broadcasters: *TV Star*, *TV Edo* and *TV KTV*. One radio broadcaster, namely public radio *MRAI*.

⁹⁴ While the EC prescribes fine of EUR 8,000 and EUR 4,000 for such violations, only fines of EUR 4,500 and EUR 2,250, respectively, were imposed.

⁹⁵ The key changes proposed aim at ensuring more independence from political parties and require a proposed candidate to have a letter of support from one of several civil society organizations representing media practitioners or academia. Members to be appointed by a two-third majority by the parliament.

⁹⁶ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM media monitoring was conducted from 21 September to 15 October; and from 16 to 29 October, and included the quantitative and qualitative monitoring of election-related coverage of six main TV channels: MTV1, MTV2, *Sitel*, *Kanal 5*, *Telma*, *Alsat-M* and four daily newspapers: *Nova Makedonija*, *Sloboden Pecat*, *Vecer* and *Koha*.



overall the MRT lacked in-depth reporting, limiting the analytical information available to voters, and provided scant coverage to women candidates and politicians.⁹⁷

The MRT should strengthen its role as public broadcaster by improving the quality of the programmes. It should promote pluralism, provide a broader range of political viewpoints, professionalise journalism, disseminate voter education programmes and increase women's political participation by providing them with greater news coverage.

The MRT news coverage, while in line with the EC, disadvantaged smaller parties and independent candidates. In the first round, on MTV1, the SDSM received 37 per cent of coverage, the VMRO-DPMNE 32 per cent, the DUI 11 per cent and BESA 7 per cent. Other parliamentary parties were devoted a combined total of 9 per cent of coverage, while parties without seats in the parliament received 3 per cent and independent candidates 1 per cent. MTV2 dedicated more time to the ethnic Albanian parties.

In the run-up to the second round, monitored media mainly focused on the outcomes of the first round with limited reporting on second round campaigning. News coverage devoted to the contestants increased only in the final week of the campaign. The public broadcaster devoted, among others, 25 per cent of news coverage to the SDSM, 24 per cent to the VMRO-DPMNE, 20 per cent to the DUI, 15 per cent to BESA and 9 per cent to AA.

The legal requirement for the MRT to provide an exact amount of time in every newscast devoted to the coverage of parties' campaign activities should be replaced with a more general requirement to allow equitable access and news coverage of smaller parties and independent candidates, as well as preserving the balance between the principle of equal opportunities among contestants, pluralism of views and journalistic freedom.

During the first round, private media provided coverage predominantly to the SDSM, mainly through paid advertising. The SDSM received 47 per cent of the total coverage, followed by the VMRO-DPMNE with 29 per cent and DUI with 17 per cent. The SDSM aired negative advertisements throughout the first round campaign.

During the second round, private channels devoted 40 per cent of news coverage to the SDSM, 35 per cent to the VMRO-DPMNE, 9 per cent to DUI, 9 per cent to AA, 4 per cent to BESA and 2 per cent to DPA.⁹⁸ A high number of paid advertising spots, negative in tone, were used by the VMRO-DPMNE, and at times by the SDSM, as in the first round.

Both public and private broadcast media conducted debates among mayoral candidates in their respective municipalities and in the MRT studio in Skopje. The debates were well organized; however, the OSCE/ODIHR EOM media monitoring showed that a high number of invited VMRO-DPMNE candidates did not participate during the first round. During the runoff, there were fewer debates; eight debates between the SDSM and VMRO-DPMNE candidates were hosted by the public MTV1 and the private *Kanal 5*. No debate with ethnic Albanian and independent candidates took place before the runoffs.

Voter education spots produced by the SEC and *iVote* were frequently aired by all monitored media especially in the week before election day.⁹⁹ In the second round, voter education spots were shorter

⁹⁷ Within the news cast the MTV1 devoted six per cent and MTV2 five per cent to female political actors during the first round and one per cent and six per cent, respectively, during the second round.

⁹⁸ Overall, monitored private electronic media, demonstrated a rather neutral tone towards candidates in news coverage.

⁹⁹ *iVote* is a private company that won the SEC's contract to provide voter education.

and aired less frequently compared to the first round. The Albanian language channel MTV2 did not broadcast any voter education as according to the broadcaster the SEC did not provide any spots.

In both rounds, the monitored newspapers generally provided most coverage to the two main parties, the SDSM and the VMRO-DPMNE, and were neutral in tone, except the newspaper *Sloboden Pecat*, which showed a very critical coverage, including in tone, towards the VMRO-DPMNE party leader and candidates. The campaign silence period in both rounds was respected by all monitored media outlets with the exception of the newspaper *Sloboden Pecat*.

On 29 October, a journalist and a cameraman from the private broadcaster *TV 21-M* were threatened and prevented from performing their duties. On 2 November, during a court case in Skopje Basic Court 1, a cameraman from *TV 21-M* and photo reporter from an online news outlet of Kosovo, were detained by the police for more than six hours without being given the opportunity to inform the editorial office or their families. The Association of Journalists of Macedonia submitted a complaint to the MoI, strongly condemning the police action and asking for a full investigation.

XI. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The EC establishes a centralized election complaints process, with the SEC adjudicating cases in the first instance.¹⁰⁰ The MECs do not handle complaints, placing an unnecessary burden on the highest election body to consider potentially numerous complaints in a short timeframe.¹⁰¹ In addition, the SEC's legal department, established in 2014 in line with an earlier OSCE/ODIHR recommendation, was underutilized and did not function effectively partly due to the politicization of the commission.¹⁰² SEC decisions on complaints and annulments can be appealed to the Administrative Court, which is the final instance in almost all cases, while the basic courts have jurisdiction over election-related civil and criminal cases.¹⁰³ Deadlines for submission and adjudication of complaints and appeals are unduly short, preventing the right to seek effective legal redress.¹⁰⁴

Consideration could be given to the decentralization of the complaints process, and the MECs capacity to handle complaints could be strengthened. The SEC's functioning on legal matters could be enhanced through more effective use of its legal department. Deadlines for submission and adjudication of complaints should be in line with international good practice.

The judicial system is not structurally independent and various interlocutors lacked trust in the ability of the courts, law enforcement bodies, and the election administration to impartially and effectively

¹⁰⁰ Complaints against MECs' rejection of candidate lists are lodged directly in the Administrative Court.

¹⁰¹ The EC is unclear on the MECs jurisdiction on complaints; it lists the handling of complaints as a general competence of MECs but there are no specific types of complaints under their jurisdiction.

¹⁰² For example, the head of the legal department was unwilling or unable to provide a legal opinion to the SEC on request regarding its jurisdiction in a certain complaint matter. In addition, the legal department did not sufficiently prepare the SEC for its adjudication of post-election complaints, contributing to inefficiencies in the process.

¹⁰³ The only other SEC decisions that are subject to judicial review are those affecting minority interests, which can be appealed up to the High Administrative Court.

¹⁰⁴ Most deadlines are 24 or 48 hours. For instance, complaints about rejection of candidate lists must be submitted within 24 hours and then decided within 24 hours. On the other hand, the 7-day deadline to decide on complaints on campaigning in the silence period is too long. Section II.3.3 (95) of the Code of Good Practice states that "time limits must [...] be long enough to make an appeal possible, to guarantee the exercise of rights of defense and a reflected decision. A time limit of three to five days at first instance (both for lodging appeals and making rulings) seems reasonable. It is, however, permissible to grant a little more time to [the highest court] for their rulings".

handle election-related cases.¹⁰⁵ Some opined that there was no point in initiating cases through those formal channels. In addition, five Administrative Court judges, who are under pending indictment for the misuse of office in handling a key complaint in the 2013 municipal elections, continued to adjudicate cases in these elections, contributing to the perception of bias.¹⁰⁶

The EC provides only a limited framework for effective legal redress in electoral disputes. While certain decisions of the SEC and MECs are subject to judicial review, most are not, thus significant aspects of the electoral process are under the final authority of the election administration. This contravenes the constitutional guarantee and OSCE commitments.¹⁰⁷ In addition, stakeholders have only limited rights to seek a legal remedy for campaign-related violations.¹⁰⁸ Contrary to good practice, voters can only challenge decisions that strictly affect their personal right to vote; citizen observers do not have a right to file a complaint, and only contestants can challenge the results.¹⁰⁹

All decisions and (in)actions of the MECs and SEC should be subject to timely and effective judicial redress. Voters and citizen observers should be entitled to file any type of election-related complaint, including against the results.

Prior to the first round election day, the SEC received few complaints under its limited jurisdiction. It adjudicated on the merits of one case against a MEC decision that was not within the latter's jurisdiction and the decision was never published.¹¹⁰ The SEC considered nine complaints, regarding the denial of homebound voting, and upheld them, annulling the MEC's decisions made in line with the SEC's regulation. Not all decisions were made by the SEC within the four-hour deadline for cases concerning protection of the personal right to vote. Prior to the second round the SEC did not receive any complaints. On election day, the SEC ruled on complaints related to the right to vote and improperly denied jurisdiction over two complaints concerning campaigning on election day. In the latter cases, it did not issue formal rejections.

With only a central location, the SCPC has jurisdiction over complaints on violations of EC provisions aimed at the separation of state and party, misuse of state resources, vote-buying, and pressure on voters.¹¹¹ However, the SCPC informed the OSCE/ODIHR EOM that its effectiveness is limited due to insufficient powers and lack of cooperation from high level state bodies and law

¹⁰⁵ See the Senior Experts' Group Report from September 2017 ([Priebe Report](#)) that assesses the judiciary, law enforcement and independence of institutions, and offers recommendations to address their systemic shortcomings.

¹⁰⁶ As a precautionary measure, the Special Prosecution Office requested the basic court to prohibit the five judges from adjudicating election-related cases; however, the request was denied.

¹⁰⁷ Paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that "Everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity" See also paragraph 18.2 of the [1991 OSCE Moscow Document](#), as well as [Rec\(2004\)20](#) of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers on judicial review of administrative acts. The Code of Good Practice states "The appeal body in election matters should be either an electoral commission or a court. In any case, final appeal to a court must be possible".

¹⁰⁸ The EC provides only the right to lodge complaints to SEC about campaigning outside the official period and to court against other contestants for interference in campaign activities. Article 2.3(a) of the ICCPR obligates States "to ensure that any person whose rights or freedoms as herein recognized are violated shall have an effective remedy, notwithstanding that the violation has been committed by persons acting in an official capacity".

¹⁰⁹ Section II.3.3 of the Code of Good Practice states that "standing...in appeals must be granted as widely as possible. It must be open to every elector [...] to lodge an appeal. A reasonable quorum may, however, be imposed for appeals by voters on the results".

¹¹⁰ A political party challenged a MEC's approval of a coalition's candidate list, although decisions to approve lists are not subject to any review.

¹¹¹ The SCPC can overturn decisions of government and public entities which violate these provisions and otherwise may refer cases to law enforcement, which must inform it of measures taken.

enforcement agencies.¹¹² While various OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors raised many allegations of corrupt election-related practices countrywide, few complaints on these matters were submitted to the SCPC.¹¹³ Stakeholders noted that voter intimidation and vote-buying are difficult to substantiate, as witnesses were reluctant to come forward.¹¹⁴

The SCPC received 22 election-related complaints. It must act upon the complaints within five days of receipt, which was interpreted as a deadline to initiate deliberation of cases, not to adopt a final decision. Most cases concerned the termination or appointment of public officials in the election period; five were upheld, and in one case evidence of a politically-motivated termination was noted.¹¹⁵ Several cases alleged unlawful initiation of infrastructure projects and government purchases in the election period, and use of state resources to produce campaign material. Most were pending after the elections. As required by law, all cases were considered in public hearings and decisions posted within 24 hours.

Due to inconsistent interpretation of the bans on government and public entities during elections, on 15 August the SCPC adopted a general opinion on what types of actions are prohibited during campaign period. Nevertheless, the SCPC received more than 1,000 requests from state and municipal entities for opinions on whether specific budget-related actions could be taken. Notably, despite an SCPC's opinion that dismissal of the General Prosecutor would violate the EC, he was subsequently dismissed by parliament.¹¹⁶

The SCPC's investigative and enforcement powers and cooperation with law enforcement in election cases should be strengthened. State institutions should fully respect the SCPC's authority. Establishing regional SCPC offices or presence, especially in election periods, could contribute to tackling any election-related corruption. In addition, a concrete deadline for deciding on complaints will ensure timely and effective action.

XII. CITIZEN AND INTERNATIONAL OBSERVERS

Contributing to the transparency of the electoral process, the EC foresees citizen and international observers' access to all stages of the electoral process and the binding SEC Code of Conduct calls for observers' impartiality and non-interference in the electoral process. In a timely and inclusive process, the SEC accredited 6 citizen and 24 international observer organizations. Citizen observers monitored the preparations for the elections and conduct of the campaign across the country, which offered a non-partisan assessment of the elections.

The SEC accredited some 3,000 citizen observers for both rounds of the elections; 2,800 from MOST and 200 from CIVIL. Despite the absence of provisions for the second-round, the SEC allowed the submission of new lists of observers from already accredited organizations. Electoral contestants also appointed their representatives to observe both rounds of elections.

¹¹² The Priebe Report concludes that "beyond the weaknesses of the work of the SCPC, the anti-corruption system in general is marked by weak regulatory, institutional and capacity at all levels, which needs to be addressed".

¹¹³ The SCPC did not receive any complaints about voter pressure and vote-buying and the MoI opened investigations into a small number of cases on vote-buying, pressure on voters, and misuse of state resources.

¹¹⁴ The Ministry of Administration and Information Society set up a hotline for public servants to report election-related pressures but no reports were received.

¹¹⁵ Eleven of these cases were rejected, and one was still pending after the election period. Some decisions lacked clear reasoning and the remedial measures to be taken. Two rejected cases were unsuccessfully appealed to the court. One rejected case had been lodged by the SEC member whose mandate was terminated by parliament.

¹¹⁶ The opinion was adopted in response to a request from four VMRO-DPMNE members of parliament.

XIII. PARTICIPATION OF NATIONAL MINORITIES

Interethnic relations played a limited role in the 2017 municipal elections.¹¹⁷ Matters relevant to intercommunity relations did not feature prominently in the first-round campaigns. Confrontational and at times aggressive intra-ethnic rhetoric was noted during the campaign for the second round in municipalities where parties belonging to the ruling coalition at the national level competed locally.

Most candidates and lists reflected the ethnic composition of the particular municipality. In a few cases, candidates sought votes from across ethnic boundaries in runoffs between candidates of the same ethnicity. In some municipalities, coalitions formed for supporting candidates in the second round differed from the national level, hence putting pressure on relations between government coalition partners. This was the case of the alliance between the AA and BESA, most prominently in Gostivar and Struga.

Parties representing smaller ethnic communities nominated candidates in only a few municipalities where such ethnic groups are concentrated, including Turks in Centar Zhupa and Plasnica, and the Roma in Shuto Orizari. In other localities, smaller communities presented lists of candidates for councils either through the parties representing such communities or as members of larger coalitions. In municipalities where smaller communities' votes are known to be decisive, candidates reached out to the voters of such ethnic groups.¹¹⁸

Smaller ethnic parties complained to the OSCE/ODHIR EOM for not having a SEC member and being underrepresented in the MECs. The national media devoted little airtime and space to candidates representing smaller communities and themes relevant to them were afforded limited coverage.

Further measures could be taken to facilitate minority participation in public affairs and elections. In line with the EC requirement for an equitable representation of minorities in election management bodies, smaller communities should be better represented in election administration, both at the SEC and MEC level. Media should provide more equitable space for political parties representing smaller communities. Voter education and awareness campaigns, including on the right to vote without fear of retribution, should target minority communities and possibly be conducted in their languages.

XIV. ELECTION DAY (FIRST ROUND)

Early voting and election day proceeded in an orderly manner in most parts of the country; however, some procedural irregularities were observed, particularly during counting and tabulation. Nine cases on alleged vote-buying in five municipalities were reported to the police, three of which were referred for prosecution.¹¹⁹ Ten individuals were arrested for taking photos of their ballots.¹²⁰ Transparency was enhanced by the presence of party and citizen observes in 76 and 52 per cent, respectively, of polling stations observed. In 55 per cent of EBs observed, the chairperson was a woman and overall the female members formed the majority.

¹¹⁷ According to the latest census, held in 2002, 64.18 per cent of the population declared themselves as ethnic Macedonians, 25.17 per cent as ethnic Albanians, 3.85 per cent as ethnic Turks, 2.66 per cent as ethnic Roma, 1.78 per cent as ethnic Serbs, 0.84 per cent as ethnic Bosniaks, 0.48 as ethnic Vlachs and 1.04 per cent as others.

¹¹⁸ This was the case for example of the ethnic Turks in Gostivar.

¹¹⁹ The MoI informed the OSCE/ODIHR EOM about 89 reports concerning election day related offences; in a subsequent public statement it reported that 46 reports had been filed.

¹²⁰ The MoI initiated misdemeanor proceedings. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM observed one case of a voter photographing a ballot.

A. OPENING AND VOTING

Early voting was conducted on 14 October for a total of 6,916 voters (some 0.3 per cent of the registered voters), including voters in penitentiary institutions, internally displaced persons and homebound voters.¹²¹ It was negatively assessed in 14 of 96 cases observed. Vote secrecy was compromised in 13 cases, while in 7 cases EBs did not use the ballot box.

While voting in prisons was well organized and knowledgeable EB staff followed prescribed procedures, many inmates were not able to vote as they either were not included in the voter list or their ID had expired. Countrywide more than 900 voters in penal institutions could neither inspect the list during the public scrutiny period nor was renewal of their IDs facilitated by the relevant institutions. These voters were thus disenfranchised.¹²²

To guarantee that eligible voters in penitentiary institutions are able to exercise their right to vote, those authorities responsible for compiling the lists of voters in these institutions should ensure that all eligible voters are included on the voter list and have an opportunity to renew expired identification documents.

On 15 October, the opening was assessed as good or very good in 75 of 82 polling stations observed. Most polling stations opened on time or with a slight delay and some minor procedural irregularities were observed. In 14 cases, protocols were not filled in before opening; and in 5 observations, party observers were interfering in the process.

Voting was assessed positively in 94 per cent of polling stations observed. The most frequent irregularities included family/group and proxy voting (8 and 2 per cent, respectively), improperly sealed ballot boxes (2 per cent), and attempts to influence voter's choice (1 per cent). The layout of polling stations did not sufficiently protect vote secrecy in 2 per cent of observations. The SEC received requests from more than 10 MECs seeking instructions on how to address irregularities; several involved EB members giving voters multiple ballot papers.¹²³ In 3 per cent of observations party observers were interfering in the work of the EBs; some were reportedly tracking voters at the polling stations.¹²⁴ All OSCE/ODIHR EOM interlocutors opined that political parties and contestants should refrain from interfering in the work of the EBs and strictly follow their role.

Voters could not find their names on voter lists in 9 per cent of polling stations observed. The SEC received more than 45 complaints regarding the denial of the right to vote; mainly by citizens not on the list due to expired IDs.¹²⁵ Most were rejected as the list cannot be amended after its finalization.

B. COUNTING AND TABULATION

Counting was assessed as efficient and transparent in 69 out of 78 polling stations observed; however, in 9 cases, prescribed procedures were not followed, in 15 cases, EBs did not properly invalidate unused ballots and did not determine the number of voters who voted. In 11 cases, unauthorized

¹²¹ According to the SEC, 5,025 homebound voters, 1,882 voters in prisons and 9 internally displaced persons were registered for early voting.

¹²² The UN Human Rights Committee [Concluding Observations on the Third Periodic Report of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia](#) (2015) states that “The State party should ensure that voting rights are made accessible to all citizens, including persons with disabilities and persons deprived of their liberty. The State party should also take measures to rectify all administrative obstacles [...]”.

¹²³ At a session following election day, the SEC decided to refer the latter cases for criminal proceedings. The SEC was unable to examine and address some of the requests due to time constraints.

¹²⁴ It is a criminal offence to use voter lists to track voters; the SEC was informed that police confiscated a voter list being used by an individual tracking voters at one polling station.

¹²⁵ The SEC informed the OSCE/ODIHR EOM that various MECs also received such complaints from voters.

persons counted ballots. In 12 cases, EBs faced difficulties in completing protocols. One third of EBs observed did not display result protocols for public scrutiny.

During tabulation, in 65 out of 71 MECs observed, most procedures were followed. However, deficiencies in transparency (3 cases), insufficient space (12 cases) and disorganization (6 cases) prolonged the process in 6 MECs. In 14 MECs, observers did not have a sufficient view of the data entry process, which limited transparency.

During counting for both rounds, the validity of ballots was determined according to a SEC decision. In contradiction with the EC and international good practice, it required EBs to invalidate certain ballots on which the intent of the voter was clear.¹²⁶ This, in addition to a lack of provisions for spoiled and blank ballots, contributed to the high number of invalid ballots.¹²⁷ Good practice recommends making an attempt to “ascertain the voter’s intention.”¹²⁸ The number of invalid ballots decreased from 4.2 per cent in the first round to 2.8 per cent in the second, probably because voters were marking only one ballot paper in the second round.

MECs tabulated the results, entering the data from the EB’s protocols in the unified electronic result management system. The SEC did not detail procedures for correcting mistakes in protocols, its instructions lacked clarity and the corrected results protocols were not made public.¹²⁹ In addition, MECs entered data with numerical discrepancies in the results, leading to significant disparity between the ballots cast and the number of voters who voted.¹³⁰ Furthermore, provisions on uploading the results protocols and publishing them online are not provided for.

To ensure transparency and trust in the electoral process, all actual results protocols including those corrected later in the process should be uploaded online. Detailed procedures for correction of results protocols at the MEC should be provided.

Preliminary results are required to be published within 7 hours after the end of voting and within 10 hours for the City of Skopje. While some MECs complied with the short deadline, 49 MECs with more polling stations to process were unable to post results on time. Due to the improper packing of votes from prisons and logistical problems in delivering votes from prisons to the relevant municipalities, the results for the municipalities of Skopje were posted on the SEC website only on 17 October. The SEC announced preliminary voter turnout at 60 per cent.

XV. ELECTION DAY (SECOND ROUND)

Early voting and election day were overall well managed. However, procedural irregularities observed during the counting detracted from the positive assessment. The OSCE/ODIHR EOM is aware of five cases initiated by the police on voters taking photos of their ballots.¹³¹ Two cases of vote-buying in a

¹²⁶ The EC states that a ballot is valid if the candidate’s ordinal number is circled or it is marked in an “unambiguous” way. The SEC’s regulation and the EB’s training material stated that any mark other than a “complete circle” makes the ballot invalid. The Code of Good Practice reads: “In case of doubt, an attempt should be made to ascertain the voter’s intention”.

¹²⁷ In the first round, 7 municipalities had so many invalid votes that none of two candidates contesting elections received 50 per cent of all votes cast, and a second round was required.

¹²⁸ Section I. 3.2.2.4, of the Code of Good Practice.

¹²⁹ Some protocols were corrected without election materials being verified and protocols posted at polling stations did not include corrections.

¹³⁰ For example, nationwide, results had a discrepancy of 922 between all ballots cast and all voters voted in mayoral elections and a discrepancy of 310 in council elections, which was made possible by MECs’ use of a data entry code which overrode software designed to detect and inhibit errors.

¹³¹ The OSCE/ODIHR EOM directly observed two instances of voters taking photos of their ballots.

Skopje municipality were referred for prosecution.¹³² A robust police presence around polling locations in some municipalities was noted. Partisan and citizen observers were present in 92 and 54 per cent, respectively, of polling stations observed. In 53 per cent of observations, EBs were chaired by women.

A. OPENING AND VOTING

Early voting on 28 October was positively assessed in all 9 prisons and in 40 of 44 observations of homebound voting. Observers' negative assessments were attributed to compromised vote secrecy and the absence of the ballot box.

On election day, opening was positively assessed in 44 of 45 polling stations observed. The integrity of the process was not affected by a number of observed minor procedural irregularities. In five cases, protocols were not filled in, and in one municipality, the number of registered voters printed on EBs protocols was incorrect; the SEC was required to correct the error.

Voting was positively assessed in 97 per cent of polling stations observed. However, tensions outside some polling stations due to the presence of party activists were observed in two municipalities.¹³³ Observed procedural irregularities included family voting (6 per cent), compromised vote secrecy (2 per cent), and partisan observers overstepping their mandate (2 per cent). Following requests, the SEC advised three MECs on how to address various irregularities.

Braille ballot templates were available in 62 per cent of polling stations observed, a notable increase compared with the first round of elections where it was noted in only 8 per cent of observations. However, as during the first round, more than half of polling stations observed were not wheelchair-accessible. Positively, wheelchair-accessible voting booths were provided in more than two thirds of polling stations observed.

To encourage equal participation of persons with disabilities in elections, the election administration should take further measures to improve the accessibility of polling stations.

B. COUNTING AND TABULATION

Polling stations closed on time and most EBs followed closing procedures. However, counting was negatively assessed in 8 of 44 observations. In 14 cases, EBs did not properly determine the number of voters who voted, and in 9 cases, they did not count unused ballots. More than half of EBs observed did not display results protocols, undermining transparency.

The tabulation of results was efficient and transparent in all 35 MECs observed. The centralized result management system operated properly in all but one MEC. In 16 MECs, a number of EB results protocols with numerical errors were corrected, indicating insufficient training on how to complete them. Official complaints were erroneously filed at six MECs, rather than with the SEC, as provided in the law.

The SEC started publishing preliminary results online, by polling station, shortly after the closing of the polls. Unlike during the first round, the legal deadline was respected, and an improvement in the accuracy of the published results was observed.¹³⁴ Voter turnout was announced at 51.92 per cent.

¹³² In total, the MoI received 28 reports on various violations, including one case of an election-related physical attack. Criminal charges for voter intimidation were pressed against one individual on election day.

¹³³ The SEC received two complaints on pressure of voters at polling stations in Gazi Baba and Shuto Orizari. The Ombudsman received two similar complaints from a polling station in Shtip.

¹³⁴ Nationwide, there was a discrepancy of six ballots between votes cast and voters who voted.

XVI. POST-ELECTION DAY DEVELOPMENTS

A. POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

The SEC certified municipal election on 14 November. Among the elected mayors, 57 represent SDSM, 10 are from DUI, 5 from VMRO-DPMNE, 3 from AA, 1 from BESA, 1 from DPA, 1 from Democratic Party of Turks in Macedonia (DPTM) and 3 independents; among the elected, six are women representing only 7.4 per cent of all mayors. Council elections countrywide were predominantly won by the SDSM (41 per cent), VMRO-DPMNE (32 per cent), followed by DUI (10 per cent), BESA (5 per cent), AA (5 per cent), DPA (1 per cent), other smaller parties and independent candidates (4 and 3 per cent respectively). In total, 455 women were elected, representing 33.7 per cent of the councillors.

The post-electoral atmosphere was generally calm and a peaceful transition of power occurred. The municipal councillors and mayors who won in the first round, received their certificates from the respective MECs and commenced their official duties from 18 October.¹³⁵ The mayors elected in the second round took office from 1 November.¹³⁶ Overall, the 2017 municipal elections were perceived as an important milestone in building the new government's credibility and contributed to strengthening confidence in the democratic process.

The SDSM party leader declared the elections as free, democratic and peaceful, while the DUI leader stated his party's mayors would serve all citizens irrespective of their ethnicity. At the same time the VMRO-DPMNE declared that it would not recognize the election results as these were the worst elections organized since the country's independence, marred with large scale voter coercion and violence.¹³⁷ The VMRO-DPMNE proposed a seven-point plan to restore democracy.¹³⁸ The AA leader stated he would recognize all results except in Struga, where he lost.

B. COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

The SEC is mandated to adjudicate complaints concerning irregularities in the voting, counting and tabulation processes, and challenges to the results. These SEC decisions can be appealed to the Administrative Court. Contestants have the right to submit complaints within 48 hours from the publication of preliminary results.¹³⁹ However, the SEC announced a unified deadline, not considering the actual time when each MEC published its results.¹⁴⁰ This significantly shortened the timeframe for some complaints and undermined the right to seek an effective legal redress.¹⁴¹ In addition, the deadline set by the SEC for deciding complaints contradicted and shortened the legal deadline.¹⁴² For

¹³⁵ Only those elections against which no complaints were lodged were certified on 18 October. The remaining elected mayors and councilors were certified on 24 October, after the appeal process was exhausted.

¹³⁶ Only those elections against which no complaints were lodged were certified on 1 November. The remaining elected mayors, except Chair municipality, were certified on 6 November, after the appeal process was exhausted.

¹³⁷ After the second round, the VMRO-DPMNE also announced that the party would not lodge any additional complaints because it did not recognize the legitimacy of the results.

¹³⁸ The plan included, amongst other proposals, a call to organize early parliamentary elections conducted by a technical government and a new SEC President and AVMS Director to be appointed by the opposition.

¹³⁹ For complaints concerning irregularities in the voting process the SEC set a separate deadline of 48 hours from close of voting, although the EC does not clearly establish two deadlines for post-election complaints.

¹⁴⁰ In the first round, the SEC set the deadline at 02:00 on 18 October, based on an incorrect assumption that all MECs published preliminary results by 02:00 on 16 October. The last posting of results was at 22:00 on 17 October.

¹⁴¹ In fact, many complaints included mistakes and lacked clarity, indicators they were hastily prepared.

¹⁴² The SEC set a deadline of 48 hours from the deadline for submission of complaints, rather than the legal deadline of 48 hours from the receipt. Also, the complaints were decided randomly, rather than in the order of receipt.

the first round, the SEC was unable to meet the 48-hour deadline for adjudicating all the complaints.¹⁴³

Unduly strict provisions require the SEC to annul polling station results in case of any procedural irregularities, including minor ones, and even if the irregularity would not affect the results.¹⁴⁴ This could lead to disenfranchisement of voters and is contrary to good practice.¹⁴⁵ The EC does not sufficiently establish what types of evidence will be considered as probative of the issues to be decided in the adjudication of disputes and the holding of recounts is not regulated. In addition, for these elections the SEC amended its complaints procedure to include a provision that complaints will be denied consideration if the results protocols do not have a remark about the alleged irregularity by the complainant's representative.¹⁴⁶ This provision contradicts the EC and takes a technical approach that undermines the prospect of remedying legitimate complaints.

Provisions for annulment of polling station results should be amended to provide for annulments only where violations might impact the overall results. The law should establish clear and reasonable rules for evidence in complaints, and these should be objectively and consistently applied.

The SEC received 46 post first-round complaints, the vast majority lodged by VRMO-DPMNE, and 100 complaints were lodged after the second round, almost all by BESA and AA.¹⁴⁷ Complaints, which requested annulment of results, alleged various irregularities that fall within the established grounds for annulment of polling station results.¹⁴⁸

The SEC rejected all complaints in both rounds. Members decided the cases along political lines, in contravention of a requirement of impartiality, and the lack of organization and professionalism hindered the process.¹⁴⁹ Formalistic and discretionary approaches were taken with the apparent aim to identify reasons to reject cases, as opposed to delivering an effective legal remedy. While many cases were substantively examined in the first round, thoroughness varied and in the second round the extent of examination significantly diminished.¹⁵⁰ Many cases were rejected using arbitrary and unreasonable rules of evidence, and some decisions lacked a clear and sound legal basis.¹⁵¹ Several

¹⁴³ The SEC adjudicated all post-first round complaints in a 23-hour long session, and under the time pressure, significantly sped up its examination in the second half of the session.

¹⁴⁴ Other grounds include extra ballots in the box, voting in place of another voter and suspension of voting for more than three hours.

¹⁴⁵ Section II.3.3 (101) of the Code of Good Practice states that "appeal bodies [...] should have authority to annul elections, if irregularities may have influenced the outcome, i.e. affected the distribution of seats".

¹⁴⁶ If entry of the remark in the protocol is not permitted, the remark could be submitted to the MEC within five hours of the irregularity.

¹⁴⁷ First round complaints concerned all polling stations in the City of Skopje and more than 80 in nine municipalities and in the second round related to all polling stations in Chair, and a total of 25 stations in Struga, Tetovo and Chaska.

¹⁴⁸ Many complaints alleged giving voters extra or wrong ballots, small numbers of extra or missing ballots in the box, or protocol copies that were incomplete, unsigned, or the figures did not reconcile. Others included allegations of pressure on voters, group voting, multiple voting, and voting in place of another, as well as claims that many ballots showing the clear will of the voter were invalidated. There were various claims that EB members applied pressure on party observers not to enter remarks in the protocols or at the MEC about observed irregularities.

¹⁴⁹ The first round session was dominated by four members; the two VMRO-DPMNE-nominated advocated for the approval of their party's complaints, the two SDSM-nominated called to dismiss them. In the second round, the BESA nominee advocated to satisfy her party's complaints, while the DUI nominee called to dismiss them.

¹⁵⁰ In some cases, the SEC summoned lower-level commission members for questioning, examined election materials and conducted recounts. Other cases with similar allegations received little or no examination.

¹⁵¹ Grounds for rejection included, for example, the absence of a remark about the irregularity in the results protocol; the improper placement or insufficient quality of the remark; the presence of a remark in the protocol about the violation entered by an EB or MEC member; the fact that the SEC had instructed on request a MEC on how to address the concerned or similar irregularity; and the lack of serious nature of a substantiated violation.

cases were denied substantive consideration on technical grounds, with disregard for protection of electoral rights and at odds with international good practice.¹⁵² While all cases were decided in open session and complaints and decisions promptly published on the SEC website, adding to transparency, the overall manner in which complaints were handled challenged the rule of law and due process, contrary to OSCE commitments.¹⁵³

Twenty-eight of SEC's decisions on post-first round complaints and nearly all decisions on second round complaints were appealed to the Administrative Court, almost all within the short 24-hour deadline. The cases were decided by five-judge panels, randomly selected, with cases assigned by a computer system.¹⁵⁴ As a general rule, public hearings are not held in the Administrative Court, limiting transparency and public trust in election dispute resolution and contrary to the constitution and OSCE commitments.¹⁵⁵ However, the court held open sessions to provide information about the cases, as required by the EC. Its decisions were made within the 48-hour deadline and published.¹⁵⁶

All first-round appeals were unanimously rejected and all but one second round cases were rejected, leaving substantiated cases without an effective remedy. Three decisions from the second-round appeals were not unanimous with a vote of four against one, all adopted by the same panel of judges on complaints lodged by the same party; the decisions did not state which judges voted for and against, contrary to the EC. The one partially satisfied case resulted in the annulment of the voting in a polling station in Chair.¹⁵⁷ As the annulment affected the results, a repeat voting in the respective polling station was held on 12 November, in accordance with the law.¹⁵⁸

SEC members and administrative court judges should decide complaints with complete impartiality, strictly applying the law and due process. A technical approach to complaints should be avoided. To increase transparency, public court hearings in all election-related cases should be guaranteed.

XVII. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations, contained throughout the text, are offered to further enhance the conduct of elections in the host country and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments, other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with past OSCE/ODIHR recommendations that the host country has yet to address. The OSCE/ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to further

¹⁵² For example, a complaint proving the figures for votes of two parties were switched in the electronic system was denied consideration and the error not corrected, on grounds the complaint was delivered to a MEC, not directly to the SEC. Section II.3.3 (96) of the Code of Good Practice states that "it is necessary to eliminate formalism, and so avoid decisions of inadmissibility, especially in politically sensitive cases".

¹⁵³ Paragraph 5.10 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that "Everyone will have an effective means of redress against administrative decisions, so as to guarantee respect for fundamental rights and ensure legal integrity".

¹⁵⁴ The judges facing pending indictment for misconduct in a 2013 municipal elections court case were on the panels.

¹⁵⁵ The Constitution grants public court hearings; the Law on Administrative Disputes provides for closed hearings in the Administrative Court, except in defined circumstances. Paragraph 12 of the 1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document states that "proceedings may only be held in camera in circumstances prescribed by law and consistent with obligations under international laws and international commitments". See also Article 14 of the ICCPR.

¹⁵⁶ The Administrative Court website experienced intermittent technical problems, which caused some delay in posting decisions. As required by law, the SEC promptly published the decisions of the Administrative Court.

¹⁵⁷ The Court ruled the SEC had improperly not examined all election materials as the law requires full examination if a remark is entered in the EB protocol; a court-ordered recount determined an extra ballot in the box which is a ground for annulment.

¹⁵⁸ The results of the repeat vote did not lead to a change in the results in the respective municipality and no complaints were lodged.

improve the electoral process and framework and address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.¹⁵⁹

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Electoral Code should be comprehensively reviewed to address identified shortcomings, gaps and ambiguities, including provisions for second round of elections, to bring it in line with OSCE commitments, international obligations and good practice. The review and amendments should be conducted in a public procedure, after a broadly inclusive consultation process and sufficiently in advance of the next election.
2. The SEC should maintain a stable regulatory framework and refrain from amending the rules during an electoral period, except to address emergency matters. The SEC should ensure that applicable rules are not contrary to or inconsistent with the EC. Consideration could be given to introducing an expedited process for challenges to the legality of election-related legislation and regulations.
3. In order to increase transparency and public confidence in their work, the SEC and MECs should make their regulations, guidelines, decisions and minutes of sessions, including those related to procurement, public in a timely manner.
4. As previously recommended, the EC should be revised to include all eligible voters in the voter lists, regardless of the validity of their identification documents. In line with international obligations, limitations on voting rights on the basis of legal incapacity should be removed, whilst necessary support mechanisms to exercise the right to vote should be provided.
5. All instances and allegations of pressure, intimidation, vote-buying and misuse of administrative resources should be thoroughly and effectively investigated and prosecuted by authorities in a timely manner. There should also be civic education aimed at alleviation of corrupt activities in election campaigns with input from respective agencies.
6. The legal requirement for the MRT to provide an exact amount of time in every newscast devoted to the coverage of parties' campaign activities should be replaced with a more general requirement to allow equitable access and news coverage of smaller parties and independent candidates, as well as preserving the balance between the principle of equal opportunities among contestants, pluralism of views and journalistic freedom.
7. All decisions and (in)actions of the MECs and SEC should be subject to timely and effective judicial redress. Voters and citizen observers should be entitled to file any type of election-related complaint, including against the results.
8. To ensure transparency and trust in the electoral process, all actual results protocols including those corrected later in the process should be uploaded online. Detailed procedures for correction of results protocols at the MEC should be provided.

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

¹⁵⁹ In paragraph 25 of the [1999 OSCE Istanbul Document](#), OSCE participating States committed themselves "to follow up promptly the ODIHR's election assessment and recommendations".

9. The SEC members should adhere to the legal requirement of impartiality and established procedures and respect the terms of reference set out for SEC members and the secretariat.
10. To ensure that MEC and EB members possess appropriate professional experience and/or to reduce perception of bias in the election administration, their selection process should be made more transparent by publishing the list of prospective MEC and EB members, opening the computer programme for third party verification and facilitating observation of the process.
11. To improve MECs and EBs capacity and to ensure consistent conduct of elections, the SEC should provide timely and uniform trainings, in particular, on completing result protocols.
12. Municipalities should ensure adequate and timely financial and operational planning, providing MECs with the necessary resources well ahead of elections. In addition, the relevant authorities should ensure that funds for any municipalities, including with blocked accounts, are transferred on time.
13. In order to enhance the effective exercise of voting rights, the SEC should develop and implement a comprehensive and nationwide civic and voter education programme, including for voters with various types of disabilities.

VOTER REGISTRATION

14. The law should provide an opportunity for all persons entitled to vote including persons in healthcare institutions, long-term care facilities and retirement homes to exercise their right. Consideration should also be given to revising the regulation for homebound voting eligibility to enhance participation.
15. To improve the accuracy of the voter list and to facilitate voters' participation, an update of the voter lists between the rounds should be considered. Consideration should be given to extending the period of scrutiny of the voter lists and to bringing the deadline for changes closer to election day.
16. To guarantee that eligible voters in penitentiary institutions are able to exercise their right to vote, those authorities responsible for compiling the lists of voters in these institutions should ensure that all eligible voters are included on the voter list and have an opportunity to renew expired identification documents.

CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

17. Consideration could be given to standardising the required number of signatures for independent candidates at up to one per cent of registered voters in line with international good practice. In addition, as previously recommended, consideration could be given to providing alternative methods for signature collection in order to reduce the potential for intimidation.
18. The EC could be revised to prohibit coalitions and lists, submitted by a group of voters, from using the same name/or logo as a registered party and to regulate the withdrawal of candidates.
19. Political parties should comply with the gender quota requirements set out in the EC; while the SEC and MECs should strictly enforce the legislation. Approval of the lists should be subject to judicial review.

ELECTION CAMPAIGN

20. The EC should guarantee independent candidates campaign conditions on an equitable basis with other contestants.
21. As previously recommended, authorities should exercise greater political will to ensure sufficient separation between state and party.
22. It is recommended that political parties and relevant institutions take initiatives to encourage the participation of women in the electoral process and in political decision-making.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

23. The EC should require interim campaign finance reports be submitted electronically and establish suitable penalties for late or non-submission. The template should include a breakdown of expenses by municipality and require reporting of incurred expenses. In addition, the law should require the publishing of interim and final reports on the day of submission.
24. The SAO should be mandated to conduct a review of interim reports, and to publish its findings and refer possible violations to appropriate authorities prior to election day. The deadline for filing final reports should be within 30 days after the election. The law should establish the scope of audits to ensure comprehensive review against any possible infringement, and SAO granted the necessary investigatory powers. Established penalties for all violations should be imposed.

MEDIA

25. To further safeguard the role of the AVMS, its members should be appointed in a manner that ensures its independence from political influence.
26. The MRT should strengthen its role as public broadcaster by improving the quality of the programmes. It should promote pluralism, provide a broader range of political viewpoints, professionalise journalism, disseminate voter education programmes and increase women's political participation by providing them with greater news coverage.

COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

27. Consideration could be given to the decentralization of the complaints process, and the MECs capacity to handle complaints could be strengthened. The SEC's functioning on legal matters could be enhanced through more effective use of its legal department. Deadlines for submission and adjudication of complaints should be in line with international good practice.
28. The SCPC's investigative and enforcement powers and cooperation with law enforcement in election cases should be strengthened. State institutions should fully respect the SCPC's authority. Establishing regional SCPC offices or presence, especially in election periods, could contribute to tackling any election-related corruption. In addition, a concrete deadline for deciding on complaints will ensure timely and effective action.
29. Provisions for annulment of polling station results should be amended to provide for annulments only where violations might impact the overall results. The law should establish clear and reasonable rules for evidence in complaints, and these should be objectively and consistently applied.

30. SEC members and administrative court judges should decide complaints with complete impartiality, strictly applying the law and due process. A technical approach to complaints should be avoided. To increase transparency, public court hearings in all election-related cases should be guaranteed.

NATIONAL MINORITIES

31. Further measures could be taken to facilitate minority participation in public affairs and elections. In line with the EC requirement for an equitable representation of minorities in election management bodies, smaller communities should be better represented in election administration, both at the SEC and MEC level. Media should provide more equitable space for political parties representing smaller communities. Voter education and awareness campaigns, including on the right to vote without fear of retribution, should target minority communities and possibly be conducted in their languages.

VOTING, COUNTING AND TABULATION

32. To encourage equal participation of persons with disabilities in elections, the election administration should take further measures to improve the accessibility of polling stations.

ANNEX I: ELECTION RESULTS¹⁶⁰

Municipal Council Elections, 15 October

Party	Votes Cast (preliminary)		Council Members (total)	Female Council Members	
	Per cent	No. of votes		Number of Councilors	Per cent
SDSM	40.78	418,477	551	214	38.84
VMRO	32.75	336,075	432	150	34.72
DUI	8.73	89,586	128	40	31.25
AA Party	4.79	49,154	63	15	23.81
BESA	4.53	46,486	65	15	23.08
DPA	1.64	16,829	18	5	27.78
DPTM	1	10,262	17	3	17.65
MNTU	1	10,262	3	0	0
AA Coalition	0.33	3,386	2	0	0
GROM	0.53	5,439	3	2	66.67
Levica	0.59	6,054	3	1	33.33
NMM	0.44	4,515	7	1	14.29
URM	0.29	2,976	7	2	28.57
Independent	2.41	24,731	37	7	18.92

¹⁶⁰ According to final results published on the SEC website.

Mayoral Elections, First Round, 15 October

Municipality	No. of Registered Voters	Turnout (per cent)	SDSM		VMRO		DUI		AA		BESA		Independent		Other		Invalid		
			Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	
Aerodrom	65,910	65.58	22,559	52.19	18,707	43.28											1,955	4.74	
Arachinovo	9,366	55.68	3,067	58.81			1,025	19.65	841	16.13	272	5.22					109	2.09	
Berovo	11,169	70.78	5,006	63.33	2,899	36.67											307	3.88	
Bitola	83,692	62.65	31,337	59.77	17,715	33.79							1,315	2.51			2,063	3.93	
Bogdanci	6,890	73.40	2,800	55.37	2,031	40.16											226	4.47	
Bogovinje	27,237	41.23					3,817	33.99	3,118	27.77	2,717	24.20			1,328	12	249	2.22	
Bosilovo	12,323	61.47	4,075	53.80	3,281	43.31											219	2.89	
Brvenica	15,186	48.08	1,668	22.84	1,856	25.42					1,166	22.84	2,374	32.51			238	3.26	
Butel	33,275	60.97	10,063	49.60	7,845	38.67					1,172	5.78			304	1	905	4.46	
Centar Zhupa	6,810	35.17			648	27.06										1,688	70	59	2.46
Center	43,505	64.88	17,916	63.47	8,094	28.68										1,094	4	1,118	3.96
Chair	57,767	52.72			3,441	11.30	11,860	38.95	2,327	7.64	10,202	33.50				769	3	1,610	5.29
Chashka	6,017	66.43	1,970	49.29	931	23.29										970	24	126	3.15
Cheshinovo Obleshevo	5,704	73.00	1,938	46.54	1,977	47.48											249	5.98	
Chucher Sandevo	7,560	63.98											2,486	51.40	2,008	42	289	5.97	
City of Skopje	461,312	60.80	141,164	50.33	101,472	36.18			6,093	2.17	11,540	4.11				7,329	3	11,472	4.09
Debar	18,425	46.47			685	8.00	3,419	39.93	2,597	30.33	1,271	14.84				360	4	231	2.70
Debarca	4,625	68.06	1,785	56.70	1,212	38.50								55	1.75			96	3.05
Delchevo	15,032	61.24	5,100	55.40	4,105	44.59												635	6.90
Demir Hisar	7,313	78.57	3,185	55.43	2,304	40.10												257	4.47
Demir Kapija	3,405	84.23	1,419	49.48	1,347	46.97												102	3.56
Dojran	2,755	78.48	1,258	58.19	681	31.50							130	6.01				93	4.30
Dolneni	11,526	58.20	1,763	26.28	1,113	16.59	2,285	34.06	124	1.85	536	7.99				217	3	250	3.73
Gazi Baba	61,831	59.57	17,591	47.76	16,522	44.86										816	2	1,905	7.10
Gevgelija	19,413	78.80	8,345	54.55	5,982	39.11												969	6.33
Gjorche Petrov	37,797	64.76	13,115	53.75	10,481	42.82												840	3.43

Gostivar	79,632	42.72			3,543	10.41	12,095		11,600	34.10	3,104	9.12			2,467	7	1,213	3.57
Gradsko	3,152	70.24	930	42.01	780	35.23							410	18.52			94	4.25
Ilinden	14,042	65.01	3,288	36.02	5,235	57.34											607	6.65
Jegunovce	10,268	51.19	2,202	41.98	1,648	31.35	862	16.40			296	5.63					248	4.72
Karbinci	3,272	74.42	1,173	48.17	825	33.88									325	13	112	4.60
Karposh	53,906	68.40	21,278	57.70	13,607	36.90											1,991	5.40
Kavadarci	32,706	74.76	11,482	46.96	12,077	49.39									436	2	455	1.86
Kichevo	50,616	56.03			9,563	33.72	17,116	60.36									1,679	5.92
Kisela Voda	53,090	64.78	17,154	49.88	15,479	45.01											1,758	5.11
Kochani	33,280	62.58	11,622	55.80	7,895	37.91									298	1	1,013	4.86
Konche	2,781	76.95	1,182	55.23	887	41.45											71	3.32
Kratovo	8,285	71.51	3,384	57.11	2,274	38.38											267	4.51
Kriva Palanka	17,162	75.05	7,467	57.97	4,942	38.37											472	3.66
Krivogashtani	4,859	76.44	2,002	53.90	1,533	41.28											179	4.82
Krushevo	8,065	74.40	3,638	60.63	2,137	35.62											225	3.75
Kumanovo	92,764	53.95	26,289	52.53	14,839	29.65			2,950	5.89	2,925	5.84			524	1	2,522	5.04
Lipkovo	25,105	45.64	152	1.33			5,618	49.03	1,901	16.59	2,607	22.75			939	8	241	2.10
Lozovo	2,072	79.58	910	55.18	540	32.75									96	6	103	6.25
Makedonska Kamenica	6,764	73.05	2,437	49.32	2,271	45.96											233	4.72
Makedonski Brod	5,257	80.54	2,082	4917.00	1,239	29.26							704	16.63	61	1	148	3.50
Mavrovo I Rostusha	9,847	36.60	2,013	55.85	1,015	28.16							430	11.93			146	4.05
Mogila	5,554	66.94	1,313	35.31									1,415	38.06	872	23	118	3.17
Negotino	16,084	78.02	6,455	51.44	5,630	44.86							135	1.08			329	2.62
Novaci	3,079	72.52	781	34.98	1,004	44.96							366	16.39			82	3.67
Novo Selo	11,452	50.33	3,005	52.13	2,467	42.80									137	2	155	2.69
Ohrid	52,858	63.90	18,262	54.07	13,560	40.15							679	2.01			1,273	3.77
Pehchevo	4,261	74.89	1,680	52.65	1,359	42.59											152	4.76
Petrovec	7,642	67.42	1,619	31.42	3,197	62.05											336	6.52
Plasnica	4,969	49.33	945	38.56			1,449	59.12									57	2.33
Prilep	64,985	71.14	23,607	51.07	20,917	45.25											1,705	3.69
Probishtip	12,931	75.24	4,321	44.41	4,523	46.49									359	4	526	5.41

Radovich	24,404	60.84	7,443	50.13	5,563	37.47							1,040	7.00			801	5.40
Rankovce	3,096	81.59			958	37.93							1,472	58.27			96	3.80
Resen	17,119	58.78	5,537	55.02	3,956	39.31											570	5.66
Rosoman	3,411	79.48	1,338	49.35	1,241	45.78											132	4.87
Saraj	30,942	53.35					7,963	48.24	3,191	19.33	4,582	27.76			278		494	2.99
Shtip	42,159	68.87	13,930	47.97	13,966	48.10											1,141	3.93
Shuto Orizari	23,289	40.51	3,763	39.88			740	7.84			513	5.44			3,593	38	710	7.53
Sopishte	4,972	69.31	1,535	44.54	1,752	50.84											163	4.73
Staro Nagorichane	3,431	62.75	955	44.36	572	26.57									554	26	72	3.34
Struga	60,575	50.65	7,140	23.27	4,149	1352.00	7,916	25.80	9,289	30.27	1,060	3.45			230	1	939	3.06
Strumica	49,318	63.11	18,502	59.45	11,751	37.76											871	2.80
Studenichani	15,378	54.01	1,332	16.04			1,812	21.82	172	2.07	1,968	23.70			2,875	35	146	1.76
Sveti Nikole	14,893	72.47	5,415	50.17	4,818	44.64											560	5.19
Tearce	22,028	44.87	708	7.16	684	6.92	2,952	29.86	1,441	14.58	2,317	23.44			1,452	15	331	3.35
Tetovo	82,887	48.23			6,459	16.16	13,265	33.18	4,874	12.19	8,767	21.93			4,568	11	2,040	5.10
Valandovo	10,125	72.75	4,074	55.31	2,734	37.12							271	3.68			287	3.90
Vasilevo	10,451	65.66	3,604	52.52	3,046	44.39											212	3.09
Veles	46,612	64.00	15,962	53.51	12,293	41.21									287	1	1,121	3.76
Vevchani	2,069	79.12	870	53.15	686	41.91											81	4.95
Vinica	17,365	60.52	5,112	48.65	4,852	46.17											545	5.19
Vrapchishte	25,377	40.14	575	5.64			3,572	35.06	3,168	31.10	839	8.24			1,738	17	295	2.90
Zelenikovo	3,779	68.46	1,532	59.22	917	35.45											138	5.33
Zhelino	23,063	39.60					4,009	43.90	668	7.31	3,979	43.57			323	354	153	1.68
Zrnovci	2,628	62.06	460	28.20	791	48.50							310	19.01	27	2	43	2.64
TOTAL	1,814,644	59.51	579,584		451,503		101,775		54,354		61,833		13,697		46,181		45,551	

Mayoral Elections, Second Round, 29 October

Municipality	No. of Registered Voters	Turnout (per cent)	SDSM		VMRO		DUI		AA		BESA		Independent		Other		Invalid	
			Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent	Votes Cast	Per cent
Bogovinje	27,237	43.96					5,390	45.01	6,430	53.70							154	1.29
Brvenica	15,186	46.03			2,949	42.19							3,871	55.38			170	2.43
Butel	33,275	52.67	9,993	57.02	7,037	40.15											496	2.83
Chair	57,767	49.50					13,916	48.66			13,707	47.93					975	3.41
Chashka	6,017	53.81	2,253	69.58										890	27.49		94	2.90
Cheshinovo Obleshevo	5,704	75.70	2,155	49.91	1,992	46.13											171	3.96
Debar	18,425	46.20					4,430	52.04	3,918	46.02							165	1.94
Demir Kapija	3,405	85.14	1,627	56.12	1,228	42.36											44	1.52
Dolneni	11,526	61.48	3,148	44.16			3,845	53.94									140	1.96
Gazi Baba	61,831	51.85	17,173	53.57	13,799	43.04											1,089	3.40
Gostivar	79,632	42.39					15,955	47.26	16,920	50.12							883	2.62
Gradsko	3,152	71.80	1,211	53.51	978	43.22											74	3.27
Jegunovce	10,268	43.17	2,739	61.79	1,540	34.74											154	3.47
Karbinci	3,272	74.60	1,390	56.94	941	38.55											110	4.51
Kavadarci	32,706	76.54	11,538	46.09	13,180	52.65											316	1.26
Kisela Voda	53,090	55.61	16,207	54.89	12,277	41.58											1,041	3.53
Lipkovo	25,105	45.29					6,656	58.55			4,575	40.24					138	1.21
Makedonska Kamenica	6,764	73.98	2,714	54.24	2,105	42.07											185	3.70
Makedonski Brod	5,257	76.68	2,679	66.46	1,197	29.69											155	3.85
Mogila	5,554	67.25	1,913	51.22									1,735	46.45			87	2.33
Novaci	3,079	72.49	1,183	53.00	977	43.77											72	3.23
Probishtip	12,931	76.90	5,198	52.27	4,350	43.74											397	3.99
Rosoman	3,411	82.06	1,518	54.23	1,211	43.27											70	2.50
Saraj	30,942	55.02					8,896	52.26			7,952	46.71					175	1.03
Shtip	42,159	63.39	15,078	51.54	13,363	45.68											813	2.78

Shuto Orizari	23,289	36.79	4,936	57.61											3,333	38.90	299	3.49
Staro Nagorichane	3,431	61.50	1,379	65.36	670	31.75											61	2.89
Struga	60,575	46.48					13,945	49.53	13,157	46.73							1,054	3.74
Studenichani	15,378	51.87									3,737	46.85			4,161	52.17	78	0.98
Tearce	22,028	41.19					4,686	51.64	4,170	45.96							218	2.40
Tetovo	82,887	44.57					18,136	49.09			17,113	46.32					1,697	4.59
Vinica	17,365	61.42	5,570	52.23	4,682	43.90											413	3.87
Vrapchishte	25,377	43.38					5,184	47.09	5,642	51.25							183	1.66
Zhelino	23,063	46.03					5,099	48.03			5,443	51.27					74	0.70
Zrnovci	2,628	62.90	670.0	40.53	944	57.11											39	2.36
TOTAL	833,716	51.92	112,272		85,420		106,138		50,237		52,527		5,606		8,384		12,284	2.84

ANNEX II: LIST OF OBSERVERS IN THE INTERNATIONAL ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSION

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe

Karim	VAN OVERMEIRE	Head of Delegation	Belgium
Martine	ROUDOLFF		Austria
Renate	ZIKMUND		Austria
Marie	KAUFMANN		Czech Republic
Henrik-Brade	JOHANSEN		Denmark
Sékolène	TAVEL		France
Henrietta	BERO		Hungary
Remo	GRENGA		Italy
Mario	GAUCI		Malta
Robert	GRUMAN		Romania
Matej	GOMBOSI		Slovenia
Kateryna	MARCHENKO		Ukraine
Andrew	DAWSON		United Kingdom

OSCE/ODIHR EOM Short-term Observers, First Round

Manfred	ASCHABER		Austria
Anna-Katharina	DEININGER		Austria
Florian	DOSCHEK		Austria
Johannes	KOHLER		Austria
Thomas	MUEHLMANN		Austria
Hermann	PHILIPP		Austria
Florian	RAZESBERGER		Austria
Sigrid	STEININGER		Austria
Frederic	DE CONINCK		Belgium
Vessela	ATZEVA		Bulgaria
Nikola	NIKOLOV		Bulgaria
Ana	NIKOLOVA		Bulgaria
Darab	GAJAR		Czech Republic
Petra	KRATOCHVILOVA		Czech Republic
Lubor	KYSUČAN		Czech Republic
Václav	NEKVAPIL		Czech Republic
Caroline	RISTIC		Czech Republic
Pavel	TROUSIL		Czech Republic
Andreas	ALSØE		Denmark
Hanne	BANG		Denmark
Grethe	BILLE		Denmark
Svend	HANSEN		Denmark
Birgit	HJORTLUND		Denmark
Julia	JAKOBSEN		Denmark
Niels Henrik	NIELSEN		Denmark
Karsten	POULSEN		Denmark
Michael	STERNBERG		Denmark
Lilian	PALLUM		Estonia
Timo	KOISTI		Finland
Sanni	KOSKI		Finland
Saku	LINNAMURTO		Finland
Peggy	CORLIN		France
Nadia	JURZAC		France
Laurent	LEMARCHAND		France
Salim	MEJAHDI		France
Michel	RIVOLLIER		France
Mélodie	SAHRAIE		France
Claire	SCHMITT		France

Rüdiger Friedrich Uwe	DANAPEL	Germany
Thomas	DOEHNE	Germany
Irene	FELLMANN	Germany
Jens	GUZICKI	Germany
Ansgar	HANNOEVER	Germany
Maria Mechthild	HERKENHOFF	Germany
Michael	ICKES	Germany
Simon	ILSE	Germany
Petra	KAIFEL	Germany
Gudula	KILIAS	Germany
Rainer	KLEFFEL	Germany
Stefan	KOEPPE	Germany
Peter	KOHLMEIER	Germany
Wolfgang	LICHTER	Germany
Nikolai	LINK	Germany
Maik	MARTIN	Germany
Friedhelm	MEYER ZU NATRUP	Germany
Kirsten Katrin	MÜLLER	Germany
Dirk	NEUMEISTER	Germany
Susanne	NEYMEYER	Germany
Martin	NÖLLE	Germany
Tanja	POPOVIC	Germany
Melanie	PÖRSCHMANN	Germany
Heinrich	ROSENDAHL	Germany
Ilona	SALABA	Germany
Patricia	SCHERER	Germany
Johannes	SCHMID	Germany
Sabine	SMOLKA-GUNSAM	Germany
Hildegard	SÜHLING	Germany
Judith	VORRATH	Germany
Aron	ALBERT	Hungary
Erik	BAKTAI	Hungary
Gyozo Jozsef	GABRIEL	Hungary
Iván	KOVÁCS	Hungary
Christian	NUSSER	Hungary
David	TOTH	Hungary
Anne	CHOISEUL	Ireland
Kevin	CRONIN	Ireland
Padraic	MCDUNPHY	Ireland
Raymond	MURPHY	Ireland
Finbar	O'SULLIVAN	Ireland
Paul	TIGHE	Ireland
Maria Elena	AMADORI	Italy
David	CAPEZZUTO	Italy
Paolo	CARLOTTO	Italy
Luca	NUVOLI	Italy
Alessia	PAPPALARDO	Italy
Alessia	RIVA	Italy
Dana	TJURINA	Latvia
Lodewijk	BANNING	Netherlands
Margriet	TEUNISSEN	Netherlands
Serv	WIEMERS	Netherlands
Jorun	LUNESTAD	Norway
Carl	PETERSEN	Norway
Gent	RAMADANI	Norway
Robert	ADAM	Romania
Mariam	EL-HEK	Romania

Carmen	ILIESCU	Romania
Peter	GOLOB	Slovenia
Lennart	HAGGREN	Sweden
Erik	LARSSON	Sweden
Hanna	NORELL	Sweden
Lena	OHRE	Sweden
Peter	WALLBERG	Sweden
Marco	BATTAGLIA	Switzerland
Martin	DAMARY	Switzerland
Evelin	HUTSON-HARTMANN	Switzerland
Francine	JOHN	Switzerland
Martin	MINDER	Switzerland
Iris	OTT	Switzerland
Anne	COTTRINGER	United Kingdom
Christopher	CUNINGHAME	United Kingdom
Terence	DUFFY	United Kingdom
Jill	GOLDSMITH	United Kingdom
Fredrick	SUMMERS	United Kingdom
Mark	WALLER	United Kingdom
James	WILSON	United Kingdom
Karin	ACCORINTI	United States
Shane	AHN	United States
Syeda	ALI	United States
Shaun	BARCAVAGE	United States
James	BERK	United States
Joshua	BLOOM	United States
Jeffrey	CHINN	United States
Cheryl	COLLINS	United States
Kevin	CONNOLLY	United States
Phillip	DANIEL	United States
Douglas	DAVIDSON	United States
Daniel	DRIGOT	United States
Hedy	GLENN	United States
Andrew	GRIDINSKY	United States
Kathyrne	HARPER	United States
Ernest	JONES	United States
Jameson	LAMIE	United States
Catherine	LAWRENCE	United States
Winifred	NORTHCROSS	United States
Tara	O'CONNOR	United States
Margaret	O'SHEA	United States
Nancy	OSBORNE	United States
Sima	OSDOBY	United States
Constance	PHLIPOT	United States
Ann	RANDALL	United States
Robert	RAVENS CRAFT	United States
Matthew	ROBERTS	United States
Kathy	SCHNARE	United States
Miklos	SOLYOM	United States
Angela	SWAYZE	United States
Melinda	WALKER-STATEMAN	United States
Kira	ZAPORSKI	United States

OSCE/ODIHR EOM Short-term Observers, Second Round

Manfred	ASCHABER	Austria
Philipp	HERMANN	Austria
Laura	COGELS	Belgium

Hanne	BANG	Denmark
Grethe	BILLE	Denmark
Svend	HANSEN	Denmark
Birgit	HJORTLUND	Denmark
Niels Henrik	NIELSEN	Denmark
Timo	KOISTI	Finland
Peggy	CORLIN	France
Laurent	LEMARCHAND	France
Gottfried	BRAMER	Germany
Helmut	BROCKE	Germany
Edgar	BRUESER	Germany
Jana	BÜRGERS	Germany
Jochen	FREDE	Germany
Christoph Hubert Alexander	FREIHERR VON FEILITZSCH	Germany
Tom	HØYEM	Germany
Rainer	KLEFFEL	Germany
Stefan	KOEPPE	Germany
Katleen	KRUEGER	Germany
Andreas	KUCHER	Germany
Dorothea	LUKE	Germany
Melanie	PÖRSCHMANN	Germany
Yuna	RAULT-D'INCA	Germany
Kerstin	ROESKE	Germany
Ilona	SALABA	Germany
Sabine	SMOLKA-GUNSAM	Germany
Daniel	STOCKEMER	Germany
Hildegard	SÜHLING	Germany
Volker	WEYEL	Germany
Aron	ALBERT	Hungary
Erik	BAKTAI	Hungary
David	TOTH	Hungary
Anne	CHOISEUL	Ireland
Padraic	MCDUNPHY	Ireland
Paul	TIGHE	Ireland
Maria Elena	AMADORI	Italy
David	CAPEZZUTO	Italy
Luca	NUVOLI	Italy
Alessia	PAPPALARDO	Italy
Lodewijk	BANNING	Netherlands
Margriet	TEUNISSEN	Netherlands
Thomas Andreas	HUG	Norway
Jorun	LUNESTAD	Norway
Gent	RAMADANI	Norway
Lennart	HAGGREN	Sweden
Robert	HALL	Sweden
Erik	LARSSON	Sweden
Lennart	MYHLBACK	Sweden
Hanna	NORELL	Sweden
Lena	OHRE	Sweden
Maximo Juan	PRADES BARCELO	Sweden
Lilian	SKOGLUND	Sweden
Par	SKOLD	Sweden
Martin	DAMARY	Switzerland
Monica	GIAMBONINI	Switzerland
Pia Maria Dina	GIANINAZZI	Switzerland
Francine	JOHN	Switzerland
Martin	MINDER	Switzerland

Hans-Jürg	PFAFF	Switzerland
Anne	COTTRINGER	United Kingdom
Christopher	CUNINGHAME	United Kingdom
Terence	DUFFY	United Kingdom
Jill	GOLDSMITH	United Kingdom
Fredrick	SUMMERS	United Kingdom
Mark	WALLER	United Kingdom
James	WILSON	United Kingdom
Syeda	ALI	United States
James	BERK	United States
Jeffrey	CHINN	United States
Cheryl	COLLINS	United States
Phillip	DANIEL	United States
Douglas	DAVIDSON	United States
Daniel	DRIGOT	United States
Hedy	GLENN	United States
Andrew	GRIDINSKY	United States
Kathyrne	HARPER	United States
Catherine	LAWRENCE	United States
Tara	O'CONNOR	United States
Margaret	O'SHEA	United States
Nancy	OSBORNE	United States
Constance	PHLIPOT	United States
Ann	RANDALL	United States
Robert	RAVENS CRAFT	United States
Kathy	SCHNARE	United States
Miklos	SOLYOM	United States
Angela	SWAYZE	United States

LONG-TERM OBSERVERS

OSCE/ODIHR EOM Core Team

Audrey	GLOVER	Head of Mission	United Kingdom
Mišo	IMAMOVIĆ		Bosnia and Herzegovina
Vania	ANGELOVA		Bulgaria
Rishi	DATTA		Canada
Marla	MORRY		Canada
Lela	TSAAVA		Georgia
László	BELÁGYI		Hungary
Francesca	BOGGERI		Italy
Carlo	PAPPALARDO		Italy
Alessandro	ROTTA		Italy
Inta	LASE		Latvia
Angela	GHILASCU		Moldova
Max	BADER		Netherlands
Ivana	STANOJEV		Serbia
Ranko	VUKČEVIĆ		Serbia
Robert	BYSTRICKY		Slovakia
Oliver	GREEN		United Kingdom

OSCE/ODIHR EOM Long-term Observers

Margarete	LENGGER	Austria
Ivana	KRATKA	Czech Republic
Marketa	NEKVINDOVA	Czech Republic
Karen	SKIPPER	Denmark
Laurent	CAMPIGOTTO	France
Sabine	OHAYON	France
Kerstin	BRÖRING	Germany

Helmut	GÖSER	Germany
Wolfgang	GRAF VON SCHMETTAU	Germany
Pearse	MCCORLEY	Ireland
Riccardo	ALFIERI	Italy
Rocco	DIBIASE	Italy
Rune	HAUGER	Norway
Stig Lennart	GLANS	Sweden
Roman	ENZLER	Switzerland
Daniele	D'ESPOSITO	Switzerland
Kiron	REID	United Kingdom
Susan	TRINDER	United Kingdom
Robert	BRANDSTETTER	United States
Karen	REINHARDT	United States

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 obligations and standards for democratic elections and with national legislation. Its unique methodology provides an in-depth insight into the electoral process in its entirety. Through assistance projects, the OSCE/ODIHR helps participating States to improve their electoral framework.

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