



Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

REPUBLIC OF CYPRUS

PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

24 May 2026

ODIHR NEEDS ASSESSMENT MISSION REPORT

1-5 December 2025



Warsaw
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ODIHR Needs Assessment Mission Report

I. INTRODUCTION

In anticipation of an official invitation to observe the 24 May 2026 parliamentary elections and in accordance with its mandate, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) undertook a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) to Nicosia from 1 to 5 December 2025. The ODIHR NAM included Kseniya Dashutsina, ODIHR Senior Election Adviser and Martina Barker-Ciganikova, ODIHR Election Adviser.

The purpose of the mission was to assess the pre-election environment and the preparations for the parliamentary elections. Based on this assessment, the NAM should recommend whether to deploy an ODIHR election-related activity for the forthcoming elections, and if so, what type of activity best meets the identified needs. Meetings were held with officials from state institutions, as well as with representatives of political parties, media and civil society. A list of meetings is annexed to this report.

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

II. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The parliamentary elections for the 56 members of the unicameral House of Representatives are scheduled for 24 May 2026. The political background against which the elections unfold is shaped by growing socio-economic pressures, perceived voter disillusionment, emergence of several new political forces, as well as longstanding efforts to settle the Cyprus problem.

The election-related legal framework was amended in 2025 with the stated aim of increasing democratic engagement. Most of the amendments will become applicable in the next elections. The key changes relate to lowering the minimum voting age from 18 to 17 and making voter registration automatic. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed general satisfaction with the legal framework, welcomed the amendments and underlined the consultative nature of the legislative process. Notwithstanding, many prior ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to the need for a comprehensive review and harmonization of the legislation, introducing provisions enabling citizen observation, transparency and accountability of campaign finance, harmonization of deadlines to ensure equal treatment of candidates, timely election dispute resolution, media environment and measures to facilitate more balanced participation in political life.

The elections at all levels are administered by civil servants with the overall responsibility vested in the Ministry of Interior (MoI). All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed a high level of trust in the integrity and professionalism of the election administration, including in the conduct of election day procedures. Organizational arrangements are underway and in general, the bodies involved in election administration did not note any specific challenges concerning electoral preparations. Several provisions aimed at facilitating access to the electoral process for persons with different types of disabilities exist, but interlocutors called for a more comprehensive and systemic approach and

highlighted in particular a lack of publicly available disaggregated data or provisions for alternative voting methods, and insufficiently trained polling staff as obstacles to their independent participation.

Citizens aged 18 or older by election day who have had permanent residence in Cyprus for at least the previous six months are eligible to vote. The MoI maintains the centralized database of voters and voter lists are extracted from civil registry data and made available for display. For the last time, voter registration is active and compulsory and citizens older than 25 years old are required to undergo an interview with the relevant district authorities to get registered. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the accuracy of the voter register and welcomed the upcoming reform noting that the active registration requirements are burdensome. As of 2 October, there were 561,253 registered voters.

Citizens over the age of 21 years are entitled to stand as candidates, either individually or on a political party or coalition list. Individuals lacking legal capacity on the grounds of mental disability or disqualified by a court for any electoral offence are not eligible. Candidate nominations will be submitted to the respective district-level election administration on 6 May. All political parties met by the ODIHR NAM stated their intention to nominate a full list of 56 candidates and expressed confidence in the registration process.

Women are underrepresented in public and political life, with 8 out of 56 members (14.3 per cent) in the outgoing parliament, and 2 out of 11 ministers in the current government. The legislation does not provide for gender quotas in candidate nominations or party lists. Nevertheless, several political parties apply internal party measures.

The political parties the ODIHR NAM met with did not express any concerns regarding their ability to campaign freely. The campaign is largely unregulated, including on social networks and other online platforms, and the law establishes different legal deadlines for various aspects of the campaign, including in the media, which are not harmonized. Contestants informed the ODIHR NAM that they will campaign primarily through social networks, but also using traditional campaign methods; the latter is impacted by insufficient financial resources, as quoted in particular by smaller or newly-established political parties. It is widely expected that socio-economic issues, specifically housing and the increased cost of living, will dominate the discourse.

The majority of ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns about the lack of regulation of social networks and highlighted the absence of effective monitoring, as the Digital Services Co-ordinator was appointed late in the process, remains significantly under-resourced and lacks sufficient capacity to perform functions assigned to it under the EU Digital Services Act. While all ODIHR NAM interlocutors recognized disinformation and foreign interference as a growing global threat, no specific concerns were raised regarding their direct impact on the security and integrity of the electoral process in Cyprus and no institutional task force has been established to address these issues.

The legal framework pertaining to campaign finance remains largely unchanged, with prior ODIHR recommendations related to transparency, accountability and oversight capacity unaddressed. The legislation provides for public and private funding for both candidates and parties; caps on donations apply only to parties, whereas expenditure limits are only applicable to individual candidates. Third-party campaigning is not regulated nor monitored, and there are no provisions for interim reporting. While all ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the impartiality and professionalism of the main oversight authority, the Audit Office, they noted a need for an improved legal framework and practice, as they identified ample opportunities to circumvent the applicable provisions.

The media environment is pluralistic, notwithstanding the small market in which the media operate. A number of ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed concerns about concentration and lack of transparency of media ownership, as well as the influence of commercial interests on editorial policies. The media legal framework regulating the traditional media remains largely unchanged since the last elections. By law, broadcasters are obliged to ensure equal and fair treatment of all candidates during the electoral period; overall, contestants expressed general satisfaction with access to the public media. Paid political advertising can start anytime, but is regulated and monitored only 3 months prior to the election day. The media regulatory authority informed the ODIHR NAM about their plans to monitor all broadcasters; however, its human and financial resources are insufficient to conduct comprehensive monitoring, in particular when it comes to online media and social platforms.

There are no provisions for citizen and international election observation, contrary to OSCE commitments and prior ODIHR recommendations. Only candidate and party representatives and candidates themselves have the right to be present in polling stations. Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors opined that there is a high level of trust in the process, and observers are thus not needed.

Jurisdiction over election-related disputes is shared by various levels of election administration, with their decisions appealable to the Supreme Court. Complaints on violations of campaign provisions, except for media violations, are not prescribed by law. Standard administrative procedures apply, and the legislation does not provide for expedited election dispute resolution contrary to international good practice and prior ODIHR recommendations. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the impartiality and professionalism of the adjudicating bodies.

All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed a high level of confidence in the impartiality of the election administration and its ability to organize elections professionally and transparently, including on election day, and recognized the longstanding democratic tradition in Cyprus. At the same time, most interlocutors welcomed a potential ODIHR observation activity and acknowledged that an independent external assessment could further improve the electoral process. Areas that could benefit from closer attention include the conduct and regulation of campaigning and campaign finance, in particular online, institutional preparedness and effectiveness in identifying and responding to disinformation and potential foreign and domestic interference, accessibility of various stages of the electoral process for persons with disabilities, as well as the participation of women and other underrepresented groups. On this basis, the ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Expert Team for the upcoming 24 May 2026 parliamentary elections to assess the above-mentioned aspects.

III. FINDINGS

A. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

Cyprus has a presidential system of government with a unicameral legislature that is elected for a term of five years. The president is both the head of state and of government. Legislative powers are vested in the unicameral House of Representatives (parliament), comprising 56 members (MPs).¹

As a result of the last parliamentary elections of 30 May 2021, seven political parties gained representation with Democratic Party (DIKO), Democratic Alignment (DIPA), and Movement for Social Democracy (EDEK), forming a government. While other parties, including the Democratic Rally

¹ The House of Representatives comprises 80 members of whom 56 are filled by the Greek Cypriot community, and the 24 seats allocated to the Turkish Cypriot community remain vacant.

Party (DISY) and the Progressive Party of Working People (AKEL) obtained a higher number of seats, they formed the opposition.² Nikos Christodoulides (independent) won the 2023 presidential election.

Following consultations between the parliament, the presidency and other relevant institutions, in May 2025, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) announced the next parliamentary elections to take place on 24 May 2026. In line with the Constitution, the dissolution of the parliament is planned for 23 April to be followed by the proclamation of the elections in the official gazette on 24 April. On 6 December 2025, the President announced a cabinet reshuffle.

The political background is characterized by evolving inter- and intra-party dynamics, including the emergence of new political actors and shifts in voter alignment, which many ODIHR NAM interlocutors linked to perceived voter disillusionment with the current political environment.³ The run-up to the elections is further framed by challenges caused by growing socio-economic pressures as well as the longstanding efforts to settle the Cyprus problem.⁴

Women are underrepresented in public and political life, with only 8 out of 56 parliamentarians (14.3 per cent) in the parliament, and 2 out of 11 ministers in the government. The Speaker of the parliament is a woman.⁵ One out of the seven parties represented in the parliament is led by a woman. There are no legislative quotas to enhance the active participation of women in public and political life.

ODIHR has previously assessed four elections in Cyprus.⁶ Most recently, ODIHR deployed an Election Expert Team (EET) for the 30 May 2021 parliamentary elections. No observation activity was recommended by the NAM deployed ahead of the 2023 presidential election.

B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The legal framework for the parliamentary elections primarily consists of the 1960 Constitution, the 1979 Law on Election of Members of the House of Representatives (Election Law), the 2012 Political Party Law, the 2002 Law on Civil Registry, the 1998 Law on Radio and Television, and the 1959 Law on Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation. In addition, the Attorney General has the authority to provide clarification in the form of advisory opinions on legislation upon request from government institutions.⁷

² DISY obtained 17 seats, AKEL 15, DIKO 9, EDEK 4, National Popular Front (ELAM) 4, DIPA 4 and Movement of Ecologists - Collaboration of Citizens (Green Party) 3 seats.

³ There are currently 28 political parties [registered](#) in Cyprus, and 11 new parties registered in the last 2 years. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors highlighted the result of the 2024 European Parliament elections, in which independent candidate Fidas Panayiotou, a well-known TikTok and YouTuber, surprisingly finished in a third place with 19.4 per cent of the vote gaining one seat in the European Parliament.

⁴ Following a first meeting between the Greek Cypriot leader Nikos Christodoulides and the Turkish Cypriot leader Tufan Erhurman, who got elected in October 2025, the two announced on 20 November that they were ready to discuss the potential for relaunching long-stalled peace talks. The last round of talks between the two sides collapsed in 2017, with efforts to revive them at a stalemate since.

⁵ Article 13 and 14 of the 2023 [UN CCPR Concluding observations](#) on the fifth periodic report of Cyprus states that the “Committee remains concerned about the underrepresentation of women in decision-making positions, including in senior positions in the public and private sectors” [...]; the state party “should consider adopting a statutory quota and a gender parity system for nominations to government bodies to increase the representation of women in decision-making positions at all levels of the executive, legislative and judicial branches”.

⁶ See previous ODIHR election-related [reports](#) on Cyprus.

⁷ In its July 2025 [Rule of Law Report](#), the European Commission noted that “the reform of the Law Office is advancing, with the goal of providing a clearer distinction between the advisory and the prosecutorial functions of the Attorney General. With the reform, the Attorney General maintains its role as legal adviser of the state and head of the Law Office, while the powers relating to the prosecution are transferred to the new institution of General Public Prosecutor”. The ODIHR NAM was informed that the Attorney General has thus far not issued any opinions for the 2026 elections.

Cyprus is party to major international and regional instruments related to the holding of democratic elections.⁸

In the first half of 2025, the parliament unanimously passed several amendments to the election-related legislation with the stated aim of increasing democratic engagement, particularly among young people, as well as enhancing the transparency and accessibility of the electoral process. Key reforms include lowering the minimum voting age from 18 to 17 years old and the introduction of automatic voter registration; the latter addresses a prior ODIHR recommendation. Other amendments relate to voter and candidate registration, allocation of parliamentary seats, campaign finance and provisions for improved accessibility of persons with disabilities. The new provisions will enter into force as of 1 July 2027 and shall be for the first time applicable for the 2028 presidential election.⁹ The MoI informed the ODIHR NAM of its readiness to implement recent changes for the 2026 elections; however, political parties expressed a need for additional time to adapt to these significant modifications.

All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed general satisfaction with the legal framework, welcomed the amendments and underlined the consultative nature of the legislative process. However, many prior ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those related to the need of comprehensive review and harmonization of the legislation, introducing provisions enabling citizen observation, transparency and accountability of campaign finance, harmonization of deadlines to ensure equal treatment of candidates, timely election dispute resolution, strengthening institutional capacity and independence of media bodies and measures to facilitate more balanced participation in political life.

The 56 members of the House of Representatives are elected from six multi-member constituencies, which correspond to the six administrative districts of Cyprus, under a proportional representation system, with the number of seats allocated according to the number of registered voters in each area. On 4 December, the parliament approved changes to the allocation of parliamentary seats, which affected two constituencies. The capital Nicosia lost one seat and Paphos gained one due to population changes established by the cut-off date of 2 October.¹⁰ None of the ODIHR NAM interlocutors raised concerns with the reallocation of the seats or the equality of the vote. Voters may vote either for a list only from their own constituency or for a single independent candidate. If voting for a party list, voters may indicate a preference for one or more candidates.¹¹ Seats are allocated to lists first at the district level, then in a second stage nationally, with certain thresholds.¹²

Three constitutionally recognized minority religious groups (Armenians, Latins and Maronites) have one reserved parliamentary seat each. These representatives do not have voting rights in parliament and can present their views only on issues concerning their religious groups.

⁸ Including the 1966 [International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights](#), 1979 [Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women](#), 1965 [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#), 2003 [Convention against Corruption](#), 2006 [Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#), the 1950 [European Convention on Human Rights](#).

⁹ Applicable amendments to the May 2026 elections relate to the possibility for contestants to correct mistakes and omissions within 24 hours of the registration submission and the extension of the deadline for political parties to submit their financial reports from three to four months. See relevant sections of the report.

¹⁰ The June 2025 amendments set 2 October as a cut off deadline to determine the number of registered voters for distribution of parliamentary seats per electoral district. Following the reallocation, Nicosia has 19 seats, Limassol - 12 seats, Famagusta - 11 seats, Larnaca - 6 seats, Paphos - 5 seats, Kyrenia - 3 seats.

¹¹ Each voter is entitled to mark one preference for every four seats. Based on the existing distribution of seats in the six constituencies, the number of preferences may not exceed five in Nicosia, three in Limassol and Famagusta, two in Larnaca and Paphos, and one in Kyrenia. If a voter chooses more preferences, the ballot will still be considered valid, but the voter's choice will be ignored.

¹² In the first distribution, the system of simple proportional representation applies, whereas in the two phases of the second distribution, an enhanced proportional representation applies with percentages of 3.6 and 7.2, respectively.

C. ELECTION ADMINISTRATION

The election administration at all levels relies heavily on the permanent civil service and the overall responsibility for the organization and administration of elections rests with the MoI. The Ministry's Permanent Secretary serves as the General Returning Officer (GRO) and is supported by the permanent Central Electoral Office, which currently has four employees, two women and two men.¹³ All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed a high level of trust in the integrity and professionalism of the election administration, including in the conduct of election day procedures.

The structure of the second level of the election administration reflects the administrative division of the country. At the district level, District Officers, who also serve as District Returning Officers (DROs), are appointed from the civil service and manage election preparations within their respective districts.¹⁴ Two out of the six DROs are women.

At the local level, polling staff is drawn from public sector, public-law bodies private sector employees by 6 April; unemployed citizens with a university degree are also eligible to apply as polling staff. Interested individuals have to apply by April through a specialized website, and geographic criteria and professional experience are considered when allocating the available employees to individual polling stations. While no significant shortage of polling staff is expected, some ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that the ongoing presidency of Cyprus of the Council of the European Union in the first half of 2026 might pose an additional strain on the civil service.

Preparations for the elections are ongoing, and the MoI published the election calendar with applicable deadlines. Some 1,195 polling stations are envisaged; their exact number, location as well as distribution of voters per polling station will be announced by 8 May following the closure and finalization of the supplementary voter register for the quarter preceding the elections. Voter education efforts focusing on a go-out-and-vote campaign is planned from February 2026 onwards. In-person training of polling staff is to take place in the one month prior to the elections. To enhance transparency and speed of results announcement, an electronic transmission of results tested for the first time during the 2024 elections to the European Parliament will also be used this time.¹⁵

Several amendments aimed at improving the accessibility of the electoral process were adopted in 2025 following consultation with relevant CSOs. These include the creation of an accessible election website, provision of easy-to-read and large font size voter information, and subtitles for communication campaigns. The election administration informed the ODIHR NAM that most polling stations would be equipped with height-adjustable voting booths and temporary ramps. However, interlocutors from organizations representing persons with disabilities noted that, as most polling stations are located in schools, they remain inaccessible. Overall, some ODIHR NAM interlocutors opined that a more systemic and comprehensive approach is needed to align access of persons with disabilities to the electoral process with international standards and to enable their independent voting. Apart from the legal barriers related to the voting rights of persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, the interlocutors highlighted a lack of publicly available disaggregated data, not readily accessible election-related information, no provisions for postal or other alternative voting methods, and insufficiently trained polling staff. The legislation provides for assisted voting by a person of one's own choice, or by polling staff.

¹³ The GRO oversees the organization and conduct of the elections, issues instructions to lower-level returning officers, co-ordinates logistical preparations, and supervises voter registration, candidate registration, polling operations, and results tabulation.

¹⁴ They are amongst others responsible for forming and co-ordinating polling stations, overseeing training and appointment of polling staff, distributing and securing election materials, and results transmission.

¹⁵ These are unofficial results, and paper-based protocols remain as official results.

D. VOTER REGISTRATION

All citizens aged 18 and over by election day are eligible to vote provided they have resided in the country for at least six months before election day. The ODIHR NAM was informed that as of 2 October, 561,253 citizens are entitled to vote in the upcoming elections. Cyprus does not grant full passive suffrage rights to persons with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities under guardianship.¹⁶

For the last time, voter registration remains active for these elections. The centralized database is maintained by the MoI, which reviews and updates the data derived from civil registry data on a quarterly basis. Registration is compulsory, and all eligible voters must apply within 30 days from the date of acquisition of electoral qualifications and no later than the last day of compilation of the voter register, which for the upcoming elections is 2 April. While citizens of up to 25 years of age are required to merely apply, including online, older citizens must conduct an interview with the relevant district authorities and are obliged to submit a social security document to demonstrate their residence in Cyprus and additional proof of their address. Some ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that the additional requirements for new voters above 25 years old to register are burdensome and do not facilitate the exercise of suffrage rights.

Subsequently, all voters are issued a voting booklet, which is to be used as an identification document on election day. The 2025 amendments provide for the replacement of the traditional electoral booklet system with more flexible identification options, such as a national identity card or driver's license, and for removing individuals over 100 years old and who do not receive a statutory and/ or social pension in line with the legal requirements.

Voter lists are available for display at relevant district and municipal offices and voters may request corrections for a period of 10 days. No changes to the register are possible after this date. All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the accuracy of the voter register and inclusiveness of the voter lists and welcomed the upcoming reform as they considered the requirement for active registration cumbersome and impeding participation. The lower-level election administration expressed concerns regarding the logistical implementation of the new provisions.

Registration for out-of-country voting is to be finalized by 2 April. Out-of-country voting is organized in cities where the number of interested voters exceeds 30 for each constituency.¹⁷ The law does not provide for voting in hospitals, retirement homes or mobile voting. Separate special electoral lists are prepared for the representatives of the Maronite, Armenian and Latin Religious Groups as well as for those citizens who reside in areas not under the effective control of the government.

E. CANDIDATE REGISTRATION

Citizens of a minimum of 21 years of age, who have not been disqualified by a court for any electoral offence and if their right to stand is not revoked on the grounds of mental disability, are eligible to stand for elections either individually or on a political party or coalition list. Each party or coalition submits

¹⁶ See 2023 [UN CCPR Concluding observations](#) on the fifth periodic report of Cyprus Article 43 which notes that the “Committee is concerned about reports that persons with intellectual disabilities and persons with psychosocial disabilities are not adequately included, supported and trained to exercise their right to vote and to stand for election, with some also being legally deprived of those rights”.

¹⁷ Out-of-country voting applications are made online and voters should be registered in the permanent voter list to be included on the out-of-country voter list. Based on experience from previous elections, it is expected that polling stations will operate in Greece (Athens, Thessaloniki), and the UK (London).

a separate list for each electoral district with an equal number of candidates as the number of allocated seats.

Candidates are required to submit an electoral deposit of EUR 500 each, which is returned to those who obtain the number of votes equal to at least one third of the electoral quotient. Candidate nominations will be submitted to the respective DROs on 6 May. The June 2025 amendment, applicable for the upcoming elections, introduces the possibility to correct mistakes and omissions within 24 hours of the registration submission. All political parties met by the ODIHR NAM stated their intention to nominate a full list of all 56 candidates and expressed confidence in the registration process. Nevertheless, several of the smaller political parties consider the financial deposit an obstacle. Registration of religious minority groups is administered centrally by the GRO. Submitted lists are subject to inspection and objections.

The legislation does not provide for gender quotas for candidate nominations or party lists.¹⁸ Most political parties the ODIHR NAM met with do not see the need to introduce legislative gender quotas; several indicated that they apply their own internal quotas, including up to 50 per cent, or other internal policies to promote women candidates.

F. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

Fundamental freedoms of association, peaceful assembly and expression are provided for by the Constitution, and no ODIHR NAM interlocutor expressed concerns regarding the ability to campaign freely.¹⁹ The campaign is largely unregulated and the law establishes different legal deadlines for various aspects of the campaign which are not harmonized. While candidates are registered only 30 days before election day, by law, the official campaign period starts three months before the elections and ends 48 hours before the elections.²⁰ Negative campaigning is prohibited.

Campaigning on social networks and in online media is not regulated. The Cyprus Radio-television Authority (CRTA), the appointed Digital Services Co-ordinator (DSC), responsible for supervising, enforcing and monitoring the Digital Services Act (DSA), was assigned competences as recently as July 2025 and rebranded to Radio Television and Digital Services Authority (RTDSA).²¹ RTDSA informed the ODIHR NAM that they are severely under-resourced and lack sufficient capacity and know-how to perform their newly assigned functions adequately. At the time of conducting the NAM, there was no body monitoring the online space, and the vast majority of ODIHR NAM stakeholders expressed serious

¹⁸ See 2023 [UN CCPR Concluding observations](#) on the fifth periodic report of Cyprus, Article 14 which notes that “the State party should also take further steps to eliminate the obstacles in law and in practice preventing women from pursuing or being elected to public positions, including by encouraging gender parity in electoral lists by political parties”.

¹⁹ In July 2025 a new Law on Public Gatherings and Parades of Cyprus was adopted. ODIHR in its September 2025 urgent [legal opinion](#) concluded that “while the Law appears to strive for more communication channels between the police and the organizers to facilitate peaceful gatherings, it does not to adequately reflect the state’s positive obligations to protect, respect and facilitate the exercise of the right to freedom of peaceful assembly. It also contains overly broad wording of certain provisions, which may compromise legal certainty and open the door to arbitrary or disproportionate restrictions on the exercise of this right”. Following the criticism from both international and national bodies, the bill is currently being modified. The 2024 draft amendments to the Criminal Code regarding the dissemination of false information or content, including with respect to the re-criminalization of defamation, and the distribution of indecent or obscene communications were not adopted. See also the October 2024 ODIHR urgent [legal opinion](#) recommending a thorough review of the draft amendments as “they contain considerable deficiencies that render them incompatible with international human rights standards and OSCE human dimension commitments”.

²⁰ See *Media* section of this report for additional details on coverage of campaign in media.

²¹ In May 2025, the European Commission referred Cyprus to the European Court of Justice for failing to entrust the appointed DSC with the necessary powers to carry out its tasks under the DSA.

concerns about the lack of regulations of social networks and online media, also related to the spread of disinformation during the campaign.²²

Several interlocutors noted an increase in the use of derogatory rhetoric, in particular with respect to women and migrant communities and referred to the involvement of the church in the campaign, including its critical stand towards candidates advocating LGBTQ rights.

Political parties met by the ODIHR NAM stated that the campaign will focus on socio-economic issues, in particular housing, the increased cost of living, immigration, as well as solution of the Cyprus problem. Contestants informed the ODIHR NAM that they plan to campaign primarily through social networks, but also using traditional campaign methods, including assemblies, billboards and media advertising; the latter is impacted by insufficient financial resources, as quoted in particular by smaller or newly established political parties.

Some general concerns regarding disinformation and foreign interference as growing global threats were noted, but interlocutors did not raise any specific concerns regarding their potential impact on the security and integrity of the electoral process in Cyprus. While the ODIHR NAM was informed about co-operation efforts of the MoI with the Digital Security Authority to counter potential cyber-attacks, no special task force or co-ordination mechanism has been established to counter disinformation in the upcoming elections.

G. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign and party finance are primarily regulated by the election law and the Political Parties Law. Since the last elections, the legal framework pertaining to campaign finance remains largely unchanged with prior ODIHR recommendations related to transparency, accountability and insufficient oversight capacity unaddressed.²³

Political parties are entitled to receive public funding.²⁴ Both parties and candidates can receive private donations, both monetary and in-kind. While private donations from either physical persons or legal entities to parties are capped at EUR 50,000 annually, there are no limits for direct contributions to the candidates. By law, at least 90 per cent of a party's financial transactions shall be made via bank transfer, and donations of over EUR 500 are to be published.

Individual candidates' expenditure may not exceed EUR 30,000, but there are no overall expenditure caps for parties. In practice, candidates benefit from campaign activities organized and financed by their party and the related expenditure is not accounted for within the candidates' spending limit. Third-party campaigning is insufficiently regulated nor effectively monitored.²⁵

²² In March 2026, the ODIHR NAM was informed that the MFA was in the process of co-ordinating relevant government authorities with the aim to form a specific unit to deal with such concerns.

²³ The only applicable amendment, adopted in 2025, extends the deadline for political parties to submit their financial reports from three to four months. The ODIHR NAM was informed of several legislative initiatives to amend the campaign finance regulations, including electronic submission of all campaign finance reports, increase of individual candidate's expenditures and introduction of a joint spending limit for a political party and its candidates.

²⁴ Fifteen per cent of the public funding is distributed in equal shares among the parliamentary parties and the rest is divided proportionally to the votes received during the last parliamentary elections. Non-parliamentary parties are eligible to receive public funding if they nominated candidates for at least half of the parliamentary seats and obtained at least 3 per cent of the votes cast during the last parliamentary elections. There is no public funding for independent candidates.

²⁵ In cases where expenditure by a third party on behalf of a contestant is identified, such expenditure shall be included within the applicable spending limit.

The Audit Office, led by the Auditor General, is the oversight authority responsible for party and campaign finance. A new Auditor General was appointed in October 2024 after the former one was removed from his duties by a Supreme Court decision citing, amongst other issues, inappropriate conduct in the office.²⁶

Since the last elections, the Office's human resources were expanded in line with a prior ODIHR recommendation. Each candidate is obliged to report on all contributions received, but only the expenditures are subject to audit. There are no provisions for interim reporting, and candidates and parties have to submit their expenditures to the GRO within two and four months after publication of results respectively. The GRO subsequently forwards them to the Auditor General for review.²⁷ There is no proactive check of potentially unreported funds, and the review of campaign reports mainly focuses on advertising expenses, as these can be cross-checked against the information submitted by service providers; further verification is not undertaken.²⁸ The Auditor General prepares a report within 12 months from the elections, which is published on its website and in the official Gazette. In case of non-compliance, the GRO can apply administrative sanctions and cooperates with the Attorney General for the prosecution of criminal cases.

While all ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed confidence in the impartiality and professionalism of the Audit Office, they noted that the current legal framework and practice need to be revisited as they provide for ample opportunities to circumvent the applicable provisions.

H. MEDIA

The media environment is pluralistic notwithstanding the small market the media operate in. A number of ODIHR NAM interlocutors noted that the concentration of media ownership and limited transparency regarding ownership structures, combined with the influence of commercial interests may jeopardize the editorial independence.²⁹ While television remains a strong source of information, it has been overtaken by online sources and social networks.³⁰ The public broadcaster, the Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation (CyBC), operates several television and radio channels.³¹

The election-related media legal framework remains largely unchanged since the last elections. The country is currently undergoing the process of transposing the European Media Freedom Act as well as the EU Anti-SLAPP Directive, with public consultations launched by the Ministry of Justice and an implementing law submitted to the Parliament. A 2023 amendment to the Law on Radio and Television

²⁶ The former Auditor General has appealed his dismissal to the European Court of Human Rights alleging violations of his rights to free trial and freedom of expression.

²⁷ Reports must be published in two daily newspapers and on the website of the candidate or the party before they are submitted to the GRO.

²⁸ The Auditor General informed the ODIHR NAM about a planned amendment, prepared upon consultation with the MoI, that would allow the Audit Office to monitor only a sample of political parties. The bill is currently with the Attorney General before being reviewed by the Parliament.

²⁹ The European Commission noted in its July 2025 [Rule of Law Report](#) that “the legal framework relating to transparency of media ownership has not been improved. The lack of legislation and transparency in the field of state advertising, as well as the need to enhance the independent governance of public service media still need to be addressed”. According to the [World Press Freedom Index](#), Cyprus ranked on 76th position out of 178 measured countries in 2025, a decrease from the 65th position in 2024, and 55th in 2023.

³⁰ A 2025 Eurobarometer [survey](#) revealed that 76 per cent of Cypriots now rely on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram for their daily news intake, surpassing traditional media outlets.

³¹ The CyBC is funded by the state, and the amount of its funding is annually determined by the parliament. The CyBC is governed by a Board of Directors, which consists of nine members appointed by the Council of Ministers for a period of three years, and among other issues, prepares the Election Code of Conduct binding for all electoral contestants and deals with campaign-related complaints. The ODIHR NAM was informed that the CyBC intends to adopt an analogue Election Code of Conduct as during previous elections. See the full [list](#) of all TV and radio broadcasters.

allows for ownership of more than one media outlet by one person or entity, which, in the view of some ODIHR NAM interlocutors, might lead to unimpeded media control.³²

The rules for campaign coverage are defined in the Law on CyBC and the Law on Radio and Television, complemented by recommendations issued by the Radio Television and Digital Services Authority (RTDSA), former Cyprus Radio-Television Authority, the media regulatory body.³³ Broadcasters are obliged to ensure equal and fair treatment of all candidates during the election campaign. At the same time, the law requires equitable treatment of candidates for six months before an election in the public broadcaster and three months in private broadcasters, even if candidates are registered only 30 days before election day. The coverage shall be proportional based on the percentage of votes obtained in the last parliamentary elections, and by law, smaller and new parties shall not be neglected. Both public and private broadcasters informed the ODIHR NAM about difficulties in adequately covering the high number of candidates expected to contest the elections and called for improved and clearer legislation on equal treatment.³⁴

Paid political advertising can start anytime, but is regulated and monitored only 3 months prior to the election day.³⁵ Several ODIHR NAM interlocutors opined that the different and at times overlapping deadlines make the practical implementation of these provisions impossible and jeopardize equal distribution of airtime.

While overall, political parties the ODIHR NAM met with expressed general satisfaction with access to the public media during the campaign and considered the political and election coverage as fair and balanced, some noted favourable treatment of the President and his administration. Representatives of smaller political parties referred to a lack of financial means as an impediment to their stronger media presence.

The RTDSA, mandated with ensuring equal treatment of contestants, conducts monitoring of both public and private broadcasters. The RTDSA receives media-related complaints or can start investigations *ex-officio*; nevertheless, there are no deadlines for consideration of complaints, and while there is a variety of legally prescribed sanctions, including suspension and withdrawal of licences, these are only imposed after the elections. The RTDSA informed the ODIHR NAM that they are planning to conduct monitoring of all broadcasters; however, its human and financial resources remain limited for conducting comprehensive monitoring.³⁶ Breaches to the Code of Ethics in print, online and broadcast media are dealt with by a self-regulatory body, the Cyprus Media Ethics Committee.

I. ELECTION DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Complaints related to the general administration of the elections and voter registration are filed with the respective DROs. Omissions and non-inclusions in the voter lists can be challenged within 10 days of their publication. Standard administrative procedures apply and contrary to international good practice and a prior ODIHR recommendation, the legislation does not provide for expedited election dispute

³² Following the amendments, the media group Arktinos, owner of the second largest daily Politis and a radio channel, was acquired by a businessperson who is also a shareholder of Sigma TV, owned by another media group, DIAS Publishers.

³³ The RTDSA is composed of seven members appointed for a term of six years by the Council of Ministers.

³⁴ The ODIHR NAM was informed about a series of election-related programmes, including debates, panel discussions and interviews starting from January 2026 both on public and private broadcasters.

³⁵ Parties are entitled to a maximum of 100 minutes on all TV stations and 60 minutes on all radio stations. Independent candidates are allocated a maximum of 30 minutes on all TV and 12 minutes on all radio stations. All candidates shall be provided with the same financial terms, and all ads must be clearly marked. Paid political advertising shall cease 55 hours before election day.

³⁶ RTDSA currently operates with two staff members.

resolution.³⁷ Rejection or non-inclusion of a prospective candidate in a party list is treated as an objection against the election results, and such complaints are thus considered only after elections.

Election day complaints on procedural violations may be lodged with and are considered by presiding officers at the polling stations. The decisions of lower-level election administration are appealable to the Supreme Court. The Supreme Court serves as an electoral court with respect to challenges to the election results and requests for recounts, and takes decisions on the validity of the elections. The legislation specifies who has legal standing as well as grounds for the invalidation of results, but it does not set any deadlines for consideration of appeals. Complaints on violations of campaign provisions, except for media violations, are not prescribed by law.

All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed a high degree of confidence in the impartial election dispute resolution by adjudicating bodies, affirming that there is a longstanding tradition of well-administered elections.

J. CITIZEN OBSERVATION

There are no provisions for citizen and international election observation, contrary to OSCE commitments and prior ODIHR recommendations.³⁸ Only candidate and party representatives and candidates themselves have the right to be present in polling stations during voting and counting. Access to tabulation centres is restricted to civil servants responsible for tabulation. Many ODIHR NAM interlocutors opined that the presence of citizen observers is not needed as there is a high level of trust in the process and the watchdog function is guaranteed by the candidate and political party representatives.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

All ODIHR NAM interlocutors expressed a high level of confidence in the impartiality of the election administration and its ability to organize elections professionally and transparently, including on election day, and recognized the longstanding democratic tradition in Cyprus. At the same time, most interlocutors welcomed a potential ODIHR observation activity and acknowledged that an independent external assessment could further improve the electoral process. Areas that could benefit from closer attention include the conduct and regulation of campaigning and campaign finances, in particular online, institutional preparedness and effectiveness in identifying and responding to disinformation and potential foreign and domestic interference, accessibility of various stages of the electoral process for persons with disabilities, as well as the participation of women and other underrepresented groups. On this basis, the ODIHR NAM recommends the deployment of an Election Expert Team for the upcoming parliamentary 24 May 2026 elections to assess the above-mentioned aspects.

³⁷ There is a 75-day deadline for the submission of complaints against administrative decisions and no deadline for their consideration. Section II.3.3.g. of the Council of Europe's Venice Commission's 2002 [Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters](#) recommends that "[t]ime-limits for lodging and deciding appeals must be short (three to five days for each at first instance)". 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".

³⁸ Paragraph 8 of the [1990 OSCE Copenhagen Document](#) states that "the participating States consider that the presence of observers, both foreign and domestic, can enhance the electoral process for States in which elections are taking place. They therefore invite observers from any other CSCE participating States and any appropriate private institutions and organizations who may wish to do so to observe the course of their national election proceedings, to the extent permitted by law".

ANNEX: LIST OF MEETINGS

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Chrysostomos Stavrou, Head of the Department of Multilateral Affairs, International Organizations, Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Myrto Antoniadou, Desk Officer

Ministry of Interior

Menelaos Vassiliou, Chief Electoral Officer
Yiorgos Stylianou, Administrative Officer

District Office of Nicosia

Andreas Hadjipakkos, District Officer
Constantina Katelari, Assistant District Officer
Giorgos Charalambous, Assistant District Officer
Emily Tsaggari, Administrative Officer
Alexia Aggelodimou, Administrative Officer

Audit Office

Andreas Papakonstantinou, Auditor General
Marina Drakou, Senior Principal Officer
Lambrini Avraam, Senior Audit Officer
Loukas Philippou, Auditor
Elpida Seraphim, Auditor
Elena Galazi, Auditor

Political Parties (in alphabetical order)

Odysseas Michaelidis, Head of the Executive Secretariat, ALMA (LEAP), Citizens for Cyprus
Charalambos Theopemptou, Member of Parliament, Cyprus Green Party – Citizens Cooperation
Antigoni Papadopoulou, Vice-President, Member of Parliament, Democratic Alignment (DIPA)
Eleni Chrysostomou, Secretary of Parliamentary Group, Democratic Alignment (DIPA)
Nicholas Papadopoulos, President, Member of Parliament, Democratic Party (DIKO)
George Ioannou, Director of the President's Office, Democratic Party (DIKO)
Dimitris Dimitriou, Member of Parliament, Democratic Rally (DISY)
Marios Pelekanos, Spokesperson, Head of the Press Office, National People's Front (ELAM)
Sotiris Ioannou, Member of Parliament, National People's Front (ELAM)
Yiorgos Loukaides, Member of Parliament, Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL)
Andreas Pasiourtides, Member of Parliament, Progressive Party of the Working People (AKEL)
Morfakis Solomonides, Vice-President, Socialist Party (EDEK)
Elias Myrianthous, Member of Parliament, Socialist Party (EDEK)

Media

Petros Constandinou, Deputy Head of News, Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation
Panikos Hadjipanayis, Editor in Chief, Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation
Eva Argyrou, Editor in Chief, Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation
Constandinos Tsindas, Journalist, Cyprus Broadcasting Corporation
Michael Lambrianides, Radio-Television Officer, Cyprus Radio-Television Authority
Litsa Livera, Radio-Television Officer, Cyprus Radio-Television Authority
Elli Kotzamani, News Director, ANT1
Yiannis Kareklas, Head of News, Sigma

Civil Society

Michalis Avraam, SC Vice-President, NGO Support Centre

Charoula Matthaïou Project Manager, NGO Support Centre

Georgia Isaia, Executive Director, Oxygono

Nicolas Kyriakides, Member of the Executive Committee, Oxygono

Avgoustinos Kitromilidis, Member of the Executive Committee, Oxygono

Themis Anthopoulou, President, Cyprus Confederation of Organisations of the Disabled

International Community

Representatives of international community resident in Cyprus