Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights

THE NETHERLANDS

EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
29 October 2025

ODIHR Election Expert Team Final Report

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THE NETHERLANDS
EARLY PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS
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ODIHR Election Expert Team Mission Report[1]

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following an invitation from the Government of the Netherlands to observe the 29 October early parliamentary elections, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Expert Team (EET). The ODIHR EET assessed the compliance of the electoral process with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as with national legislation, with the primary focus on the election campaign, including on social media, and campaign finance and oversight frameworks.

The Netherlands is a constitutional monarchy, where the government holds executive power and a bicameral parliament exercises legislative authority. Following a government crisis over migration policy, the governing coalition collapsed in June 2025, less than a year after its formation, prompting the King to dissolve the parliament and call early elections for 29 October. The 2025 early parliamentary elections took place in a highly polarized political environment, with declining public trust in politics and ongoing debate over immigration.

The electoral legal framework is generally in line with OSCE commitments and international standards, and provides a solid basis for the conduct of democratic elections. While recent amendments have strengthened technical procedures for processing and determining the election results, human rights protections, and political finance regulation, several ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those concerning judicial appeals of election results; deadlines for handling election-related complaints; alternatives to proxy voting; and the establishment of an independent oversight body for political finance. The 150 Members of the House of Representatives are directly elected for a four-year term through a proportional representation system from open candidates' lists in a single nationwide constituency, divided into 20 districts for diversifying representation.

A total of 1,166 candidates registered on 27 political party lists, providing voters with a wide range of choices through an inclusive, although heavily paper-based, registration process. Campaigning was largely unregulated and conducted through traditional and online media, rallies, and debates, although access to media was uneven and tended to favour larger parties. The introduction of the EU's Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising Regulation on 10 October and the suspension of online political advertising by Google and Meta forced parties to rely more on traditional media and other methods to reach voters. The campaign tone was policy-focused but polarized. While parties and candidates generally campaigned freely, tensions over social issues created security concerns for certain parties during the campaign period. Women remained underrepresented, and persons with disabilities faced barriers to participation in campaign processes and events. All available party platforms included issues that specifically addressed youth population.

Online campaign activity intensified in the run-up to election day, mainly on X and Instagram. Concerns emerged regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate campaign content negatively impacting voters' ability to make informed decisions. Several state institutions undertook

[1] The English version of this report is the only official document. An unofficial translation is available in Dutch.

significant efforts to promote resilience and preventative measures against digital threats, but the lack of a legally mandated authority to oversee online campaign activities may have limited their effectiveness to safeguard electoral integrity. Some of these bodies did not communicate about their oversight activities, which diminished the transparency and accountability of measures undertaken. While state institutions reported to ODIHR EET having maintained effective communication with social media platforms regarding legal responsibilities and planned responses under the Digital Services Act, social media monitors reported that platforms did not always address reports of manipulative, misleading, or other content and cases that violated community standards in a timely manner.

The 2023 amendments to the Political Finance Act strengthened the framework for political party and campaign finance, implementing several previous ODIHR recommendations. Key changes include the introduction of donation limits and bans, as well as stricter reporting and disclosure requirements. A new Political Parties Act, pending before Parliament, aims to further improve transparency and establish an independent political finance oversight body, the Dutch Authority for Political Parties. Its adoption has been delayed following the dissolution of parliament, but the review process is expected to resume once the new parliament is in place.

In accordance with ODIHR's standard methodology, the ODIHR EET did not undertake a comprehensive and systematic observation of election-day procedures. The voting process appeared to be well conducted in the limited number of polling stations visited by the ODIHR EET. The final turnout announced by the Electoral Council was 78.3 per cent.

This report offers recommendations to support efforts to further align elections in the Netherlands with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. Priority recommendations focus on strengthening the response to digital and online threats through enhanced monitoring and a comprehensive strategic framework that clarifies institutional responsibilities and consolidates coordination mechanisms, and on improving the supervision of political finance through the establishment of an independent body and the strengthening of control and oversight capacity. ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

II. INTRODUCTION AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Following an invitation from the Government of the Netherlands to observe the 29 October 2025 early parliamentary elections and based on the recommendation of a Needs Assessment Mission (NAM) undertaken between 14 and 17 July 2025, the OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) deployed an Election Expert Team (EET).[2] The ODIHR EET, based in The Hague, was deployed between 15 and 31 October 2025 and consisted of three experts drawn from three OSCE participating States.

The ODIHR EET assessed the election campaign, including on social media, and the campaign finance and oversight frameworks for their compliance with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections, as well as with national legislation. In line with the ODIHR methodology, the EET did not undertake a systematic observation of the election-day proceedings but visited a limited number of polling stations.

[2] See all previous ODIHR election reports on the Netherlands.

The ODIHR EET wishes to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations (MoIKR) for their co-operation and assistance. The ODIHR EET also expresses its appreciation to the Electoral Council (EC), the Council of State (CoS), the Dutch Media Authority (DMA), the Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM), the Data Protection Authority (DPA), the Commission for Supervision of Political Party Financing, political parties, academia, and representatives of other institutions and civil society organizations for sharing their views.

III. BACKGROUND AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The Netherlands, the largest constituent country of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, is a constitutional monarchy.[3] The government is headed by the Prime Minister, who is appointed by the monarch following nomination by the parliament. Legislative power is vested in a bicameral parliament comprising the 150-member House of Representatives (*Tweede Kamer*), elected by direct universal suffrage, and the 75-member Senate, elected indirectly by the 12 provincial assemblies and four electoral colleges representing the Caribbean special municipalities and Dutch nationals abroad.[4] Members of both chambers serve a four-year term.

In the 22 November 2023 early parliamentary elections, 15 parties won seats in the House of Representatives. After protracted coalition talks, a new government was formed in July 2024 by the Party for Freedom (PVV), the People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), the New Social Contract (NSC), and the Farmer–Citizen Movement (BBB).[5] In the outgoing House of Representatives, women hold 39 per cent of seats, although representation of women in elected office remains limited.[6]

In autumn 2024, the government introduced a package of immigration reforms, declared a state of asylum crisis, and proposed emergency regulations that would have bypassed parliament's approval, but withdrew them following institutional backlash and criticism over the impact on democratic oversight and compatibility with European and international human rights obligations.[7] In June 2025, less than one year after its formation, the government resigned after the PVV withdrew coalition support over unresolved disagreements on asylum policy. The King subsequently dissolved the House of Representatives and scheduled early parliamentary elections for 29 October, marking the second consecutive early elections due to disagreement over migration policy.

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3 The Kingdom also includes three other self-governing Caribbean countries: Aruba, Curaçao, and Sint Maarten, which are autonomous except in matters of defence and foreign affairs. The country of the Netherlands itself comprises the territory in Europe as well as the Caribbean special municipalities of Bonaire, Saba, and St. Eustatius.

4 The Senate elections are scheduled for May 2027, following the provincial elections.

5 The governing coalition held 88 out of 150 seats: PVV – 37 seats, VVD – 24, NSC – 20, BBB – 7. The remaining parties entered the opposition: GreenLeft–Labour Party (GL–PvdA) - 25 seats; Democrats 66 (D66) – 9; Christian Democratic Appeal (CDA) – 5; Socialist Party (SP) – 5; Denk – 3; Party for the Animals (PvdD) – 3; Forum for Democracy (FvD) – 3; Reformed Political Party (SGP) – 3; Christian Union (CU) – 3; Volt – 2; and JA21 – 1.

6 Women currently hold 32 per cent of Senate seats, and 36 per cent of municipal council seats. As of 2025, the Netherlands descended in the Inter-Parliamentary Union Women's parliamentary representation ranking from 27th to 32d place, compared to 2023. In the outgoing government, women held 7 of the 17 ministerial posts.

7 The government introduced several immigration reform proposals. In July 2025, the House of Representatives passed legislation introducing stricter asylum rules, including reduced residency duration, limitations on family reunification, and a two-tier protection system. The bills were awaiting a vote in the Senate at the time of writing this report.

The 2025 early parliamentary elections took place in a highly polarized political environment, amidst declining public trust in politics and the country's direction.[8] Following the dissolution of the House, the NSC withdrew from the caretaker government coalition in August 2025, after Foreign Minister Casper Veldkamp resigned due to disagreement over potential sanctions against Israel, prompting the resignation of all NSC ministers and secretaries of state. Immigration remained a central and the most divisive issue in the public discourse in the run-up to the elections, and on 20 September, right-wing anti-immigration protests in The Hague led to clashes with police, damage to government buildings including the parliament, and vandalism of the D66 party office.

IV. LEGAL FRAMEWORK AND ELECTORAL SYSTEM

The legal framework for parliamentary elections is comprehensive and provides a solid basis for democratic elections. It is primarily composed of the 1954 Charter of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, the 2002 Constitution, the 1989 Elections Act that regulates the competences of election administration bodies, candidate registration, and election procedures, and the 1989 Elections Decree, which consolidates previous election-related regulations. Other relevant legislation includes the 2013 Political Finance Act (PFA), the 2009 General Administrative Law Act, and the 1994 Criminal Code. The Netherlands is a party to major international and regional instruments related to the holding of democratic elections, and the Constitution provides for the primacy of the ratified international treaties over the national law.[9]

The Constitution was reviewed in 2022 and 2023, primarily to strengthen human rights guarantees,[10] while the Elections Act was amended in 2024 and 2025 to improve the integrity and efficiency of electoral processes.[11] Positively, amendments to the PFA in 2023 introduced donation limits and strengthened reporting and disclosure requirements (*see Campaign Finance section*). Despite these changes, some previous ODIHR recommendations remain unaddressed, including those concerning judicial appeals of results, complaint deadlines, alternatives to proxy voting, and the establishment of an independent oversight body for political finance.

The 150 members of the House of Representatives are directly elected for a four-year term through a proportional representation system from open candidate lists in a single nationwide constituency, divided into 20 districts for diversifying representation. Voters cast one preferential vote for a

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8 According to a Norstat quarterly report released in October 2025, trust in government declined over the past year among 75 per cent of respondents, 39 per cent had no remaining confidence, 50 per cent felt the country was headed in the wrong direction, and 74 per cent "were very concerned about developments in the Netherlands."

9 Including the 1966 International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD), 1979 UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), 2003 UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC), 2006 Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). The Netherlands is also a party to the 1950 European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the 1995 Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities.

10 In 2022, constitutional amendments introduced guarantees of fundamental rights and democratic rule of law, and added a new provision related to the right to fair trial; revised the procedures for constitutional amendments; changed the regulation on the right to privacy of correspondence; and introduced and regulated the Electoral College for Non-Residents for the election of the First Chamber of the parliament. Disability and sexual orientation were added as non-discrimination grounds in the 2023 changes.

11 The Election Results Software Act of 20 March 2024 adjusted certain election deadlines, such as changing polling stations, and clarified the division of responsibilities among government bodies and election commissions. The Electoral Decree on Election Results, in force from 1 August 2025, made the use of the Electoral Council's software for processing and determining results mandatory nationwide. Previously, municipalities used the software on voluntary basis, except in the Caribbean. A new version of the software is being developed and will first be piloted in some municipalities during the March 2026 municipal elections.

candidate, which also counts toward the party list's total. Seats are allocated based on the number of full natural electoral quotas each party attains, with the remaining seats distributed using the largest average or largest remainder methods.[12] Each party's national seat total is then proportionally distributed among its district lists under the largest remainder method based on the party's electoral quota. Within each district, candidates receiving at least 25 per cent of the natural electoral quota in preference votes are elected, and any remaining seats are filled according to the list order.

V. ELECTION CAMPAIGN

A total of 1,166 candidates registered to contest on the lists of 27 political parties, offering voters a plurality of political options.[13] Eighteen parties contested in all 20 districts, while nine parties contested in between two and 19 constituencies.[14] The registration process was inclusive, but ODIHR EET interlocutors noted that the heavily paper-based requirements were time-consuming, particularly for smaller parties.[15] Registration requirements for non-parliamentary parties to submit 30 written support declarations filled in by eligible voters per each district for which they intend to be included on the ballot and pay a EUR 11,250 deposit were considered burdensome, particularly as raising the necessary funds proved challenging.[16] According to the Electoral Council (EC), the highest level of election administration, several non-parliamentary parties only completed the declaration collection during the two-day correction period.

To support a more efficient candidate registration process, the Electoral Council could consider digitizing it, including allowing the electronic submission of candidacy nomination documents.

The Constitution guarantees freedoms of association, assembly, and expression. There are no campaign regulations at the national level; apart from municipal bylaws on public gatherings and outdoor advertising, including on the posting of campaign material, election campaigns remain largely unregulated.

A. CAMPAIGN ENVIRONMENT

Campaign activities included canvassing, distribution of fliers, billboards, posters, rallies, candidate debates, media spots, and use of social networking platforms. The entry into force of the European Union (EU) Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising Regulation (TTPA) on 10 October, along with the suspension of online political advertising by Google and Meta just weeks before election day, impacted campaign modalities, forcing parties to adjust their strategies and rely on traditional media as well as alternative methods to reach voters.[17] For some parties, the suspension of online political advertising eliminated a cost-efficient method of reaching a wider audience, while the

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12 The law regulates the choice of the apportionment method depending on the number of allocated seats. The natural electoral quota is calculated by dividing the total number of valid votes by the number of seats in the House. For these elections, the natural threshold was 70,479 votes.

13 All eligible voters who are 18 at the time of nomination may stand for elections.

14 Parties which contested fewer than 20 districts include Libertarian Party (19), 50Plus (19), Pirate Party (18), Frisian National Party (16), Free Alliance (13), De Linie (10), NL Plan (9), ELLECT (5), and Party for the Rule of Law (2).

15 The EC reported that the lists of five parties were not registered after failing to correct errors in the required documentation.

16 Of the 20 constituencies, 19 require 30 declarations of support while one, Bonaire, requires only 10 declarations. The deposit is returned if the contestant gains at least three-quarters of the electoral quota.

17 Google restricted political advertising, as defined under EU Regulation 2024/900, as of September 2025. Meta suspended political, electoral, and social advertising as of 6 October 2025.

new transparency labelling requirements took up valuable space in expensive traditional advertising formats.[18]

Traditional media remained an important means of campaigning, but access was uneven. Parties with parliamentary representation or strong public opinion polling generally received greater media coverage and more frequent invitations to media events than smaller or non-parliamentary parties. Participation in televised debates was generally limited to parties achieving the top four to six positions in regular opinion polls.

The overall tone of the campaign was policy-focused but polarized, and intensified as election day approached. Many parties framed their campaign messages around effective governance and positioned themselves as providing solutions to political instability by promoting solidarity, co-operation, and quality government. Campaign topics included housing, migration, healthcare, the economy and cost of living, climate policy, geopolitical security and defence, national identity, and other socio-economic issues.

Parties and candidates were generally able to campaign freely, although the polarization of the political environment and tensions over social issues increased security concerns for some parties during the campaign period. Threats to candidates, party staff, and campaign volunteers, as well as vandalism of campaign offices, raised concerns about the exercise of freedoms of association and expression.[19] Increased security measures, including personal protection for lead candidates, sometimes limited campaign venue options and placed additional burdens on some parties' human and financial resources.

Women remained underrepresented in these elections. There are no legal requirements regarding gender balance on candidate lists and, according to civil society analysis, women made up approximately one third of candidates on the lists of parliamentary parties, marking a decrease from both the 2023 and 2021 elections.[20] Only one party reported an internal policy of alternating genders on their party list. ODIHR EET interlocutors noted that the rise of right-wing parties and the increasingly polarized political landscape, in which women politicians have been subject to harassment and attacks, including online and in government, deterred women from running in elections. However, gender-based attacks were not a feature of these elections. In addition, 11 of the 15 parliamentary parties' platforms addressed issues of particular interest to women.

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18 The Dutch Media Authority published guidance on labels and transparency statements related to the oversight of political advertising transparency.

19 On 21 September, D66 party headquarters were vandalized when anti-immigration protests in The Hague turned violent. PVV party leader Gert Wilders suspended his campaign from 10 to 15 October after being identified as a possible target of a suspected Islamic terrorist plot. On 12 October, the leader of the GroenLinks-PvdA, Frans Timmermans, was verbally attacked by masked men on the same day that far-right anti-immigration protesters chanted anti-Semitic insults directed at him. On 22 October, police arrested a man after he threatened politicians during a TikTok livestream. On 24 October, a young man in Leiden was arrested after threatening to kill two party leaders. On 27 October, GroenLinks-PvdA leader Frans Timmermans filed a criminal complaint after an AI-generated image of him was posted on a Facebook page administered by two PVV members of parliament, triggering posts of death threats against him. The ODIHR EET was informed of online, in-person, and via phone threats to volunteers, staff, and candidates of some parties.

20 The EC does not maintain gender disaggregated statistics regarding candidates, as identification of gender is not required for candidate registration. According to research by Vote for a Woman, a civil society organization, women made up 35 per cent of candidates on parliamentary party lists in 2025, 36 per cent in 2023, and 38 per cent in 2021.

While discrimination against persons based on disability is prohibited, efforts to engage persons with disabilities in the electoral campaign remained limited.[21] Positively, most parliamentary party programmes included consideration of accessibility issues, and apart from one, all parliamentary parties produced accessible versions of their party programmes.[22] Some parties reported additional measures to ensure access to information and activities during the campaign, however, most party websites lacked accessibility features.[23] In addition, ODIHR EET interlocutors noted that barriers remained to the participation of persons with disabilities both at campaign events and for general participation in party activities, such as inaccessible event venues or party offices.

To promote effective participation, political parties should take additional steps to make campaign information, materials, and activities accessible to persons with various types of disabilities.

Younger voters made up approximately 25 per cent of registered voters as well as approximately 21 per cent of candidates.[24] Of the 27 political parties contesting the elections, 19 included youth wings, and all available party platforms included issues that specifically addressed youth populations.

B. ONLINE CAMPAIGN

The Netherlands has high internet penetration throughout the country, and most Dutch people have basic digital skills with around half demonstrating above- basic competences, including online communication and information and digital literacy.[25] Online sources are widely regarded as the primary source of information, surpassing television and print media.[26] The growing reliance on social networking platforms, including for election-related information, particularly by young people, raised concerns about access to reliable information, exposure to disinformation, polarizing content, and foreign interference by profit-driven recommendation algorithms which lack transparency.[27] The national disinformation strategy, last updated in 2024, focuses on strengthening media literacy, supporting fact-checking, and enhancing international co-operation.

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21 Article 1 of the Constitution of the Netherlands prohibits discrimination "on the basis of religion, belief, political opinion, race or sex or on any other grounds whatsoever".

22 Programmes were available in such formats as easy-to-read, Braille, and audio versions.

23 Some parties took steps to improve accessibility, including consulting with disability organizations, ensuring accessible areas at campaign events, providing sign language interpretation during party congresses, adding subtitles on social media videos, and publishing transcripts of podcasts.

24 See the data of the Statistics Netherlands. The EC does not maintain statistics regarding candidate age groups. Data regarding candidate age is available on opwiekanikstemmen.nl, a citizen initiative.

25 According to Eurostat, over 99 per cent of households had internet access in 2024. According to a 2023 survey by the Statistics Netherlands, 80 per cent of Dutch people aged 12 or older had basic digital skills while 50 per cent were above average.

26 According to the 2024 Reuters Digital New Report, 75 per cent of the population obtained their news from online sources, including social media, while 62 per cent from TV, 37 per cent from print news, and 24 per cent from social media alone. According to the same study, the most widely used social media and messaging apps include: WhatsApp (used by 75 per cent of Dutch people); Facebook (55 per cent), YouTube (50 per cent), Instagram (41 per cent), TikTok (18 per cent), and X (13 per cent).

27 On 2 October 2025, the Amsterdam District Court ruled that Meta violated the Digital Services Act (DSA) by preventing Facebook and Instagram users from maintaining a non-profiled, chronological timeline unaffected by the platforms' algorithms, thereby undermining user autonomy. The court ordered Meta to implement corrective changes within two weeks. On 28 October, the Amsterdam Court of Appeal suspended the provisional enforceability of that order and granted Meta to comply until 31 December 2025, while the appeal on the merits remains pending.

While the Dutch legal framework does not explicitly regulate campaigning on social networks, the EU digital regulatory framework covers various components of the online environment.[28] The transposition of this complex, multi-layered framework into Dutch law required authorities to establish enforcement mechanisms to oversee online campaign practices, including content posting, targeting strategies, and transparency obligations. Oversight responsibilities are divided among different state institutions but no institution is explicitly mandated to oversee online campaign activities.[29]

In the run-up to election day, several institutions undertook significant efforts to promote resilience and preventative measures against digital threats. The MoIKR raised awareness of candidates and parties on cybersecurity, disinformation and digital resilience. The National Co-ordinator on Security and Counterterrorism (NCTV) provided registered political parties with guidance for online behaviour as part of their campaign risk assessments. The ACM communicated with platforms regarding their obligations under the Digital Services Act (DSA), and organized a roundtable with various social networks and electoral stakeholders to discuss these obligations as well as identify challenges and strategies to address disinformation, hate speech, and foreign interference during the campaign.

The MoIKR co-ordinated inter-institutional information exchange on election threats through an "election table", which met several times in the three months preceding the elections; however, some relevant institutions were not included.[30] Each national authority conducted oversight activities in line with its specific mandate but the lack of a legally mandated institution to oversee online campaign activities may have limited their effectiveness to safeguard electoral integrity.[31] The MoIKR resorted to its DSA "election flagger" status to request platforms to take down inaccurate or manipulative content only in cases that directly undermined the electoral process. As a result, the detection and reporting of manipulative content was primarily dependent upon non-state actors.

To ensure an effective and timely response to all forms of digital and online threats and further strengthen electoral integrity, consideration could be given to establishing a clear legal and institutional framework for monitoring the digital environment, including the definition of mandates, co-ordination arrangements among relevant bodies, and transparency safeguards governing response mechanisms.

Most institutions did not communicate about their oversight activities, which diminished the transparency and accountability of measures undertaken. While the MoIKR reported to the parliament data on content flagged in the framework of the DSA some months after elections, the ACM, which

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28 The EU digital regulatory framework encompasses the Digital Services Act (DSA), the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Act, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the Transparency and Targeting of Political Advertising Regulation (TTPA).

29 The Authority for Consumers and Markets (ACM) serves as the DSA focal point and oversees compliance by very large online social media platforms (VLOPs) and very large online search engines (VLOSEs); the Dutch Media Authority (DMA) serves as the primary oversight body for the TTPA; and the Data Protection Authority (AP) is primarily responsible for oversight of the GDPR. The AP is also responsible for oversight of several articles of the EU DSA, and the AP and ACM are also responsible for oversight of several articles of the EU TTPA.

30 Apart from the election authorities, participants included ACM, the NCTV and other security-related institutions, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG), as well as other institutional actors. However, the AP and DMA were not included in the election table, despite their key role in supervising algorithms and AI that pose risks to fundamental values and rights, and the transparency of political advertising respectively.

31 Section II.3 of the Explanatory Report of the 2024 Venice Commission's Interpretative Declaration on the Code of Good Practice in Electoral Matters as concerns digital technologies and artificial intelligence states that "The State has an obligation to take effective steps to ensure a supportive environment for robust public debate, preventing and punishing infringements of the voters' freedom to form an opinion,....".

receives complaints regarding platform responsiveness to reports of illegal content, did not make the number and nature of these complaints publicly available. Most state institutions reported to ODIHR EET having maintained effective communication with social networking platforms regarding the latter's legal responsibilities and planned responses under the DSA. However, several platforms declined or did not respond to an invitation to address the House of Representatives regarding their respective measures, relinquishing an opportunity to increase transparency and public confidence in their efforts.[32] Only two platforms provided data on efforts undertaken specific to these elections.[33] Social media monitors reported that platforms did not always address reports of manipulative, misleading, or other content and cases that violated community standards in a timely manner.[34]

Social media platforms should enhance accountability by providing timely responses to violations of platform policies and ensuring transparency regarding any election-specific mitigation measures, content moderation decisions, and responses to such violations.

Social networking platforms were widely used by political parties and candidates during the campaign. Among the accounts monitored by the ODIHR EET, most content was shared on X (45 per cent), Instagram (27 per cent), and Facebook (19 per cent), with TikTok least used (9 per cent). Online activity intensified toward election day, peaking on 28 October. Most posts conveyed general campaign messages followed by topics related to government formation, housing, and immigration. The tone of the campaign was largely neutral, with about half of posts showing a neutral stance. Among parties, positive messaging was observed most frequently in the posts of D66, while negative rhetoric was observed most frequently in posts by PVV leader Geert Wilders. Approximately 27 per cent of Mr. Wilders's posts included messages with manipulated framing or aggressive rhetoric. Due to the suspension of online political advertising by Google and Meta, some ODIHR EET interlocutors noted increased difficulties reaching target audiences, particularly younger voters, based on unpaid visibility alone.

Concerns emerged regarding the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to generate campaign content negatively impacting voters' ability to make informed decisions. Although AI-generated content represented only a minority of social media posts overall, social media monitors found that such content, including photo-realistic images, most of which lacked AI-disclaimer labels, was used by political parties, candidates, and third-party actors, particularly those aligned with right-wing parties, to communicate campaign messages, including racist and misleading content.[35] The AP advised

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32 In mid-October, Google, Meta, TikTok, and X either declined or failed to respond to invitations from the BBB, D66, GroenLinks-Pvda, NSC, and PVV to address the House of Representatives.

33 On 29 September 2025, TikTok launched an Election Center to provide Dutch users with dependable voting information and publicized its policies and efforts to prevent and address misinformation, deceptive behaviour, and AI-generated content. TikTok also reported removing over 400 videos and 950 accounts for violations of platform standards. Google publicized its efforts to provide Dutch users with access to official election information, its anti-abuse policy, and cyber resilience and AI-labeling measures on YouTube.

34 For example, The WebWatch project of civil society Democracy Defenders reported that X did not accept their suggested Community Notes to contextualize false information about marking ballots. The Post-X Society reported that TikTok did not remove an AI video depicting GroenLinks-PvdA leader Frans Timmermans being beaten after being flagged to the platform by a user, instead only removing it after a media article was published about the video. Post-X Society also reported that TikTok did not "adequately intervene" to address threats of death and violence and other abuses of community guidelines in the comments section during a livestream of the D66 party conference on 4 October or to address the accounts responsible for posting the content.

35 Campaigntracker.nl, an independent academic initiative monitoring the use of AI-generated content in the 2025 election campaign, found that AI-generated content made up 1.34 per cent of campaign content on social media between 17 September and 18 October 2025. Among political party accounts, PVV produced the most of such images, and among third-party accounts, those aligned with the political right posted the most of such content. *De Groene Amsterdammer* reported PVV fan accounts, including one run by two PVV parliamentarians, shared AI-generated images reflecting anti-immigrant narratives, many of which were developed with racist prompts.

voters against using AI chatbots to determine their voting choice, after research found that responses were often biased.[36] Media and civil society monitors also reported signs of co-ordinated inauthentic behavior, troll accounts operated from abroad, and automated bot networks promoting polarizing right-wing messages and political parties on multiple platforms.[37]

VI. CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Campaign and political party finance is regulated by the PFA, last amended in 2023. A new Political Parties Act (PPA), pending before parliament, aims to further enhance transparency and transfer oversight from the MoIKR to a new independent body in line with prior ODIHR recommendations, the Dutch Authority for Political Parties (NAPP), with broader powers. The adoption of the PPA has been delayed following the dissolution of the House of Representatives.

A. FUNDING SOURCES AND CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURE

The PFA establishes a mixed system of financing, allowing political parties to be funded through public subsidies as well as monetary and in-kind donations from Dutch citizens and legal entities. Parties with at least one MP and at least 1,000 members paying an annual registration fee of EUR 12 qualify for public funding, which is allocated based on membership size and parliamentary representation.[38] Political parties may designate ancillary institutions that are eligible for earmarked public funding.[39] In 2025, the total amount of public funding allocated to all parliamentary parties and their affiliated entities amounted to approximately EUR 28 million.

While previously donations from private individuals and legal entities to parties and candidates were unrestricted, the 2023 amendments to the PFA introduced limits and bans in line with previous ODIHR recommendations. Anonymous donations over EUR 250 are now prohibited, and only Dutch citizens or legal entities registered with the Dutch Chamber of Commerce may donate to political parties.[40] For corporate donations, political parties must record the name and address of the ultimate beneficial owner (UBO).[41] Donations from Dutch-registered legal entities owned by foreign subjects

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36 The AP's research found that either PVV or GorenLinks-PvDA were recommended in over 56 per cent of cases, while smaller parties were mentioned less frequently or not at all.

37 RTL Nieuws identified over 550 fake X accounts mostly operating from abroad that promoted political and polarizing content primarily from right-wing political and influencer accounts and boosted the popularity of small anonymous accounts posting polarizing messages. Civil society organization Defend Democracy reported signs of co-ordinated inauthentic behaviour through spamming political party Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube accounts with anti-EU or pro-right-wing party messages and artificially increasing shares and likes. Research institute Justice for Prosperity identified an automated bot network which promoted Mr. Wilders as of 12 July 2025.

38 For 2025, the basic subsidy was set to approximately EUR 300,000 per party; additionally, parties received approximately EUR 95,000 per seat, and an apportionment of EUR 3,478,823, depending on party membership. Further subsidies are earmarked for youth organisations (the total budget is EUR 2,169,893), international co-operation organisations (in 2025, EUR 1,960,459 in total) and research entities (EUR 229,687 per party and additional EUR 23,892 per seat).

39 The PFA provides that a political party may designate one political science institute, one political youth organization and one institution for foreign activities.

40 See 2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, paragraphs 229-231 on foreign funding of political parties and election campaigns, according to which "Donations from foreign sources to political parties may be prohibited by domestic legislation. (…) This restriction aims to avoid undue influence by foreign interests, including foreign governments, in domestic political affairs, and strengthens the independence of political parties."

41 Article 10a(1) of the Money Laundering and Terrorist Financing (Prevention) Act defines the ultimate beneficial owner as "the natural person who ultimately owns or controls a company or other legal entity".

are not explicitly prohibited, creating a legal gap that could potentially be used to circumvent the ban on foreign funding. [42]

The annual aggregate donation limit is set at EUR 100,000 per donor. It applies to political parties, including their affiliated entities and candidates during election campaigns, as well as to independent candidates. However, it does not apply to local political parties or local branches of national parties.[43] In these elections, contesting parties received approximately EUR 9.2 million in donations, 80 per cent of which came from individuals, and reported EUR 20 million in debts. While the PVV reported a single donation of EUR 1,000, GL–PvdA, the Socialist Party, and D66 reported receiving much larger amounts: EUR 2.2 million, EUR 1.5 million, and EUR 1.2 million, respectively.[44]

To prevent circumvention of donation limits and bans, consideration could be given to applying donation limits to local political parties and local branches of national parties, and to introducing additional safeguards to ensure that corporate contributions originate from national sources.

Third-party campaigning is not defined or regulated by law. Although ODIHR EET interlocutors did not raise concerns with regards to third-party involvement in recent elections, this regulatory gap may create vulnerabilities, including potential avenues for foreign influence or malign interference, particularly online.[45]

During the campaign, political parties spent substantial amounts on online political advertising, with a notable surge ahead of Google and Meta's decisions to suspend such advertising and the entry into force of the TTPA on 10 October. According to analyses and reports by journalists and fact-checking organizations, contesting parties spent approximately EUR 536,000 on online political advertising from 6 June, when the elections were called, until Meta's decision on 6 October, with around 70 per cent of this amount disbursed in the month before the TTPA came into force. Spending varied considerably, with Forum for Democracy and D66 accounting for the largest shares, at approximately EUR 142,000 and EUR 86,000, respectively.[46] Yet the unrestricted surge in political ads during this

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42 While the draft PPA would require parties to record the nationality of the UBO, it would not close the existing gap regarding donations from Dutch-registered entities owned by foreign subjects.

43 The new PPA foresees the allocation of a structural budget of EUR 8 million to local parties and party branches and extends donation limits and transparency requirements to them, including an obligation to report and disclose donations and debts on their websites.

44 All data and figures are based on the financial information submitted by political parties in their interim reports, published by the MoIKR on 22 October. Corporate donations amounted to EUR 1.8 million, compared with EUR 7.4 million in individual contributions.

45 See 2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation, paragraphs 255-256, according to which "Third parties should be free to fundraise and express views on political issues as a means of free expression, and their activity should not be unconditionally prohibited. However, it is important that some forms of regulation, with comparable obligations and restrictions as apply to parties and party candidates, be extended to third parties that are involved in the campaign, to ensure transparency and accountability."

46 There is no legally defined campaign period in the Netherlands. For the purpose of assessing online spending, the observation period was defined as the time between the calling of the elections on 6 June and the date on which Meta suspended online political advertising (6 October). Due to new transparency policies introduced by Meta and Google following the implementation of the TTPA, Ad Libraries are no longer easily accessible. Consequently, the analysis of online political advertising relies on information published across various sources and on triangulating findings from fact-checking organizations and media reports. The main sources used include the WhoTargetsMe Netherlands database, WebWatch monitoring findings on political advertisements, the Justice for Prosperity analysis, and an NOS article on social media spending.

campaign highlights a broader regulatory gap, where the law does not set campaign spending limits, falling short of international standards and good practice.[47]

Consideration could be given to introducing expenditure limits for electoral campaigns to prevent excessive funding requirements for contestants.

B. DISCLOSURE AND REPORTING

Under the amended legal framework, political parties and candidates are subject to stricter reporting requirements. Political parties and heads of individual candidate lists are required to report all donations exceeding EUR 1,000, with contributions over EUR 10,000 to be reported to the MoIKR within three working days. There is no legal requirement for political parties or candidates to maintain a dedicated bank account, contrary to good practice.[48]

No later than two weeks before election day, political parties must submit interim reports on donations and debts from 1 January of the previous year up to 21 days before the vote.[49] These reports are reviewed by the MoIKR, sent to the Commission for Supervision of Political Party Financing (CSPPF) for advice, and published no later than the seventh day before election day. One month after the election, parties winning at least one seat must provide reports covering the final 20 days of the campaign, which are then reviewed and published within two months of the election. Contrary to good practice, there is no obligation to report on campaign expenditures before or after the election.[50]

For these elections, interim reports were due on 15 October and published by the MoIKR on 22 October.[51] All 27 political parties submitted their reports, which consist of Excel spreadsheets compiling donations and debts. The system is declarative and does not require supporting documentation. Most parties met by the ODIHR EET, particularly smaller parties, expressed concerns about the administrative burden of the new reporting requirements. Some interlocutors also noted a potential chilling effect from lowering the disclosure threshold, as donors might be reluctant to contribute amounts above it to avoid having their names published or being seen as affiliated with a particular party.

Parliamentary parties must submit their annual financial reports, certified by an auditor appointed by the party, to the MoIKR by 1 July. Pursuant to the PFA, these reports must provide an accurate picture of the party's financial standing and include information on income, expenditure, debts, and assets.

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47 See Paragraph 19 of General Comment 25 to Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights: "Reasonable limitations on campaign expenditure may be justified where this is necessary to ensure that the free choice of voters is not undermined or the democratic process distorted by the disproportionate expenditure on behalf of any candidate or party. The results of genuine elections should be respected and implemented". See also Article 9 of Recommendation Rec(2003)4 of the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers to member states on common rules against corruption in the funding of political parties and electoral campaigns: "States should consider adopting measures to prevent excessive funding needs of political parties, such as, establishing limits on expenditure on electoral campaign".

48 Paragraph 247 of the 2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation states that "one way to enhance transparency is (...) having in place provisions requiring all financial transactions to go through a single bank account".

49 The reporting period for candidates spans from 1 January 2023 to 8 October 2025.

50 Paragraph 261 of the 2020 ODIHR and Venice Commission Guidelines on Political Party Regulation states that "it is good practice to require the following reports: (...) final reports after the election and certification of results, to provide a complete and comprehensive account of all campaign financing". Also see paragraph 259.

51 Final reports must be submitted by 29 November and published by 29 December. All political parties, except one, submitted their final reports within the deadline. In line with the MoIKR's standard procedure, the non-compliant party was granted a second deadline, which it met.

While there is no legal deadline for publication, the MoIKR informed the ODIHR EET that, as a good practice, it publishes the reports in October of the same year.[52]

To enhance campaign finance transparency and enable a comprehensive review of campaign financial transactions, all contesting parties could be required to open a dedicated bank account for campaign purposes and provide post-election reporting of campaign expenditures.

C. OVERSIGHT

The MoIKR oversees political party and campaign finance, with the Minister exercising the main decision-making function, including imposing sanctions. The Minister acts upon advice from the CSPPF, which issues opinions upon request to provide an independent perspective.[53] The sanctions range from the temporary withdrawal of public subsidies, used as the main enforcement tool due to its dissuasive effect, to administrative fines of up to EUR 25,000, which have not yet been applied in practice. MoIKR decisions can be appealed to the Council of State. In cases of criminal violations, the MoIKR must refer matters to the Public Prosecutor. The MoIKR also provides guidance to political parties ahead of annual and campaign finance reporting deadlines.[54]

Discussions on transferring oversight responsibilities from the MoIKR to an independent body began after the 2017 parliamentary elections, with the new PPA pending before parliament, designed to achieve this goal. Initiated by the MoIKR, the draft PPA consolidates rules on the functioning, financing, and oversight of political parties, introduces subsidies for local parties, establishes stricter disclosure requirements, and provides for a graduated sanctions regime. While all ODIHR EET interlocutors expressed support for the establishment of an independent oversight body, the Dutch Authority for Political Parties (NAPP), with investigative and sanctioning powers, concerns were raised about its actual independence, given that NAPP members would be appointed by royal decree with government approval and that the body would remain organizationally and financially linked to the MoIKR.

The new PPA should clearly define the appointment process for members of the Dutch Authority for Political Parties to help ensure the independence and impartiality of its oversight role. The Authority's mandate, resources, staffing, and enforcement powers, including investigative and sanctioning powers, should be clearly established in law to enable it to effectively carry out its functions.

VII. ELECTION DAY AND POST-ELECTION DEVELOPMENTS

In line with ODIHR's standard methodology, the EET did not undertake a comprehensive or systematic observation of election-day procedures but visited a limited number of polling stations.

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52 In 2025, 19 parliamentary parties submitted annual financial reports for 2024. The MoIKR published these reports on its website on 22 October 2025. Parties receive 80 per cent of annual public funding at the start of the year and must report expenditures to receive the remaining 20 per cent. If spending is lower than anticipated, the remaining funds are reduced. In 2024, BIJ1 submitted incomplete reports and consequently did not receive the full remaining 20 per cent. Some parties may submit annual reports with reservations. For example, BBB's 2021 report included reservations, but as the party did not receive public funding that year, no sanctions were applied.

53 The CSPPF is composed of three members, appointed by the MoIKR for a four-year term, which can be renewed twice. The independent members of the CSPPF cannot be affiliated with governing parties. They are also subject to a four-year cooling-off period after holding political or administrative office.

54 For instance, the MoIKR provides responses to Members of Parliament on emerging issues such as crypto donations (Bitcoin) and adopts regulations to inform political parties and candidates of their legal and accounting obligations ahead of upcoming reporting deadlines.

Election day proceeded calmly, with only isolated incidents, including a CDA member removing PVV posters and misinformation about voting procedures circulating on social media.[55] Parties and candidates remained active online, as there is no campaign silence period. The final turnout announced by the Electoral Council was 78.3 per cent.

For these elections, a new ballot paper design template was tested in five municipalities (Alphen aan den Rijn, Boekel, Borne, Midden-Delfland, and Tynaarlo). Early indications suggest that invalid ballots decreased compared to the 2024 electoral cycle, the ballot was easier to handle and read, and counting was simpler and faster. The development of a new ballot design is in line with a previous ODIHR recommendation and has received broad support. Authorities plan to further develop and implement this design in the 2026 municipal elections.

The Credentials Committee of the outgoing House of Representatives reviewed the election records on 6 and 7 November 2025. The Electoral Council declared the official results on 7 November and submitted them to the Speaker. The Committee presented its findings on 11 November, and the newly elected House was installed on 12 November, when members were sworn in. Of the 27 parties that contested the elections, 15 gained seats in the House of Representatives. Five candidates were elected through preferential votes. The PVV and D66 each secured 26 seats, followed by the VVD (22), GL–PvdA (20), and CDA (18), while smaller parties shared the remaining seats. As no party obtained an outright majority, a coalition of at least 76 mandates is required to form a government.

Despite sharing claims of voting irregularities on his social network accounts, Mr. Wilders acknowledged that D66 received the most votes in the elections and congratulated its leader.[56] Shortly after the announcement of the results, D66, which received approximately 30,000 more votes than PVV, began discussions with CDA to form a government.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

These recommendations, as contained throughout the text, are offered with a view to enhancing the conduct of elections in the Netherlands and to support efforts to bring them fully in line with OSCE commitments and other international obligations and standards for democratic elections. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with prior ODIHR recommendations, which remain to be addressed.[57] ODIHR stands ready to assist the authorities of the Netherlands to further improve the electoral process and to address the recommendations contained in this and previous reports.

A. PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS

1. To ensure an effective and timely response to all forms of digital and online threats and further strengthen electoral integrity, consideration could be given to establishing a clear legal and institutional framework for monitoring the digital environment, including the definition of

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55 See articles from NieuwRechts and nu.nl from 29 October 2025.

56 See the NL Times.

57 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". The follow-up of prior recommendations is assessed by the ODIHR EET as follows: recommendation 8 from the final report on the 2021 parliamentary elections and recommendations 9 and 15 from the final report on the 2017 parliamentary elections are fully implemented. Recommendation 3 from the 2021 final report and recommendation 14 from the 2017 final report are mostly implemented. Recommendation 7 from the 2021 final report and recommendation 3 from the 2017 final report are partially implemented. See also the ODIHR electoral recommendations database.

mandates, co-ordination arrangements among relevant bodies, and transparency safeguards governing response mechanisms.

2. The new Political Parties Act should clearly define the appointment process for members of the Dutch Authority for Political Parties to help ensure the independence and impartiality of its oversight role. The Authority's mandate, resources, staffing, and enforcement powers, including investigative and sanctioning powers, should be clearly established in law to enable it to effectively carry out its functions.

B. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

3. To support a more efficient candidate registration process, the Electoral Council could consider digitizing it, including allowing the electronic submission of candidacy nomination documents.

4. To promote effective participation, political parties should take additional steps to make campaign information, materials, and activities accessible to persons with various types of disabilities.

5. Social media platforms should enhance accountability by providing timely responses to violations of platform policies and ensuring transparency regarding any election-specific mitigation measures, content moderation decisions, and responses to such violations.

6. To prevent circumvention of donation limits and bans, consideration could be given to applying donation limits to local political parties and local branches of national parties, and to introducing additional safeguards to ensure that corporate contributions originate from national sources.

7. Consideration could be given to introducing expenditure limits for electoral campaigns to prevent excessive funding requirements for contestants.

8. To enhance campaign finance transparency and enable a comprehensive review of campaign financial transactions, all contesting parties could be required to open a dedicated bank account for campaign purposes and provide post-election reporting of campaign expenditures.

ANNEX: FINAL RESULTS[58]

Eligible voters: 13,589,128
Total votes cast: 10,640,324
Total valid votes: 10,571,990
Total blank votes: 40,128
Total invalid votes: 28,206

List no.	List name	Votes	Seats
1	PVV (Freedom Party)	1,760,966	26
2	GroenLinks (Green Left) / PvdA (Labour Party)	1,352,163	20
3	VVD (People's Party for Freedom and Democracy)	1,505,829	22
4	NSC (New Social Contract)	39,408	0
5	D66	1,790,634	26
6	BBB (Farmer-Citizen Movement)	279,916	4
7	CDA (Christian Democratic Appeal)	1,246,874	18
8	SP (Socialist Party)	199,585	3
9	DENK	250,368	3
10	PvdD (Party for the Animals)	219,371	3
11	FvD (Forum for Democracy)	480,393	7
12	SGP (Reformed Political Party)	238,093	3
13	ChristenUnie (Christian Union)	201,361	3
14	Volt	116,468	1
15	JA21	628,517	9
16	Vrede voor Dieren	16,819	0
17	BVNL(Belang Van Nederland)	18,477	0
18	BIJ1	40,360	0
19	LP (Libertarian Party)	8,248	0
20	50PLUS	151,053	2
21	PP (Pirate Party)	10,575	0
22	FNP	9,331	0
23	Vrij Verbond	1,048	0
24	DE LINIE	3,478	0
25	NL PLAN	2,299	0
26	ELLECT	205	0
27	Partij voor de Rechtsstaat	151	0

58 Announced by the Electoral Council on 7 November 2025.

ABOUT ODIHR

The Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR) is 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.

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 150 staff.

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, 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. ODIHR implements a number of targeted assistance programmes annually, seeking to develop democratic structures.

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 people, 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**, 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. 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.

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).